SYNTHESIS Report
Language Education and Social Cohesion (LESC) Initiative

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Synthesis
Report

Language Education and Social Cohesion (LESC) Initiative
in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand
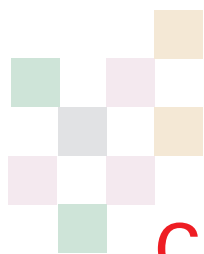
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Foreword

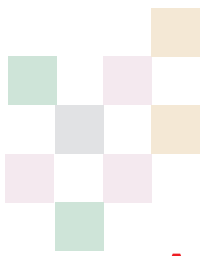The fourth of the new Sustainable Development Goals commits us to ensuring that every child receives an inclusive and equitable quality education. The international discussions leading up to the adoption of this goal focused on the rights and needs of every child, and also on the belief that education can play a critical role in ensuring sustainable development and promoting peaceful co-existence.

In partnership with the Government of the Netherlands, UNICEF is currently participating in a global Peacebuilding Education and Advocacy Programme, a key component of which in the East Asia and Pacific region is a Language, Education and Social Cohesion (LESC) Initiative, designed to strengthen our understanding of the links between language, education and conflict.

This report, titled a Synthesis Report: Language, Education and Social Cohesion Initiative in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand, is part of that initiative. It consolidates research and experiences from Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand and proposes some options for strengthening cohesion and unity in our increasingly multicultural and multilingual nations. Notably, its concludes, from extensive fieldwork and research across these three countries, that inclusive and equity-based language education policies can, when properly implemented, play a vital role in improving social cohesion and building trust between governments and minority communities, as well as improving the lives of children.

Among its 10 key findings, it highlights the importance of genuine involvement by ethnic and linguistic minorities in the development of language education policy and implementation, as well as the importance of aligning language-related education policy with national education sector plans. The research also confirms the benefits to children of early learning and literacy in their mother tongue, because this provides them with an excellent foundation for future learning of national and other languages.

A high rate of functional literacy can help a child gain access to cultural capital, to material success through better skills acquisition, and to enhanced employability. It is a critical part of a quality education, and it improves children's chances of experiencing better health and social well-being throughout their lives. A well-educated child is also more likely to participate actively and constructively in decision-making processes and therefore to become an asset in national political processes.

Thus, the right education decisions and investments by governments can improve individual children's lives and make positive contributions to economic productivity, competiveness, resilience and to peaceful coexistence. The decisions then benefit individuals, communities and nations.

We hope this report serves as a useful tool to help governments and others see the benefits of well-designed mother tongue-based multilingual education programmes, and build language education policies that contribute to children's well-being and to peace and development.

Daniel Toole
Regional Director, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office
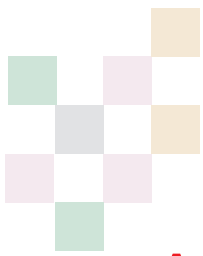
Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CO	Country Office (UNICEF)
CESR	Comprehensive Education Sector Review (Myanmar)
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EAP	East Asia and Pacific
EAPRO	East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (UNICEF)
HCNM	High Commissioner on National Minorities (OSCE)
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
LESC	Language, Education and Social Cohesion (EAPRO)
MINE	Myanmar/Burma Indigenous Network for Education
MLE	Multilingual Education
MTB-MLE	Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NUCC	National Unity Consultative Council (Malaysia)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PBEA	Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme (UNICEF)
SEAMEO	Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund (formerly United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

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Glossary of terms

Resilience

Both within UNICEF and among its partners, programming that contributes to the resilience of children, communities and institutions in contexts of increasing shocks and stresses (disaster risk, climate change, persistent conflict/violence, epidemics and global fuel and food price hikes) including in regions of high vulnerability, has in recent years gained much attention. This in part is due to increasing evidence that shocks are impeding and reversing development gains and creating greater vulnerability, particularly amongst the already marginalized and excluded (e.g., girls, children with disabilities, children in indigenous communities). UNICEF defines resilience as, "The ability of children, communities and systems to withstand, adapt to, and recover from stresses and shocks advancing the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged." (UNICEF definition of resilience [draft])[1]

Peacebuilding

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

Education and Peacebuilding

Education may be a driver of conflict, but it also can play a significant role in supporting peacebuilding. Education is not a marginal player in peacebuilding, but a core component of building sustainable peace (UNICEF 2011). While the relationship between education and conflict is recognized, education's role in peacebuilding is not fully realized. Education as a peace dividend is accepted. However education can contribute to other dimensions of peacebuilding, such as conflict prevention, social transformation, civic engagement and economic progress (UNESCO 2011). For example, education can contribute to improved governance by addressing underlying inequities that fuel conflict, providing education and employment opportunities to disenfranchised youth, empowering adolescent girls and women as actors in the peacebuilding process, imparting civic and political education, and modelling democratic participation and decision-making. Creating an enabling environment for education to contribute to peace requires a long-term view that includes education sector system building and strengthening. Practices of good

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1   Nairobi Resilience Workshop, June 2013.

governance, conflict-sensitive education policy (that which is delivered in a way that does not exacerbate social cleavages or cause conflict), transparent collection and use of information, and equitable distribution of education resources and materials are important signals of strengthened institutional capacity and are crucial to the peacebuilding process.

The Contribution of Peacebuilding to Resilience

While every individual, community or system has a natural level of resilience, some are more resilient in withstanding and recovering from adversities. Violent conflict reduces the resilience of people, communities, and systems by undermining or breaking down interpersonal and communal relationships and trust. It can erode social capital[2] and undermine values and norms that promote cooperation and collective action for common good. Communities in conflict-affected and fragile situations often face multiple risks, have weaker institutions, and are more vulnerable to risks and shocks. Peacebuilding helps individuals, communities, and systems become more resilient to conflict. Over the long term it strengthens local capacities for managing conflict, building peace and promoting social cohesion in conflict-affected contexts. When people, communities, and societies are able to anticipate and manage conflicts without violence, and are engaging in inclusive social change processes that improve the quality of life then they have truly become resilient.

Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding

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

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

Key elements of Conflict Sensitivity:

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

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2   Social capital is defined as "the norms, values, and social relations that bond communities together as well as the bridges between communal groups and civil society and the state". World Bank Social Capital Initiative Working Paper No. 23 (2000).

Peacebuilding (defined in the previous page)

Key Elements of Peacebuilding:

- Peacebuilding explicitly aims to address **the affects and underlying causes of conflict**.
- Peacebuilding focuses at the individual, community and systemic level.
- Peacebuilding programming articulates **a clear vision** that is aimed at building long-term sustainable peace
- The goals and objectives of such initiatives can be **integrated** into other programme areas.
- Or programming can be **stand-alone** initiatives.

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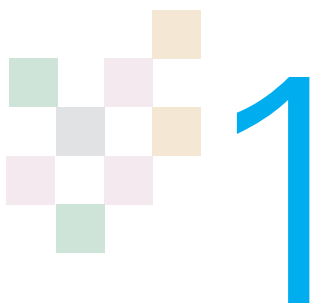
Executive summary

This is a brief summary and consolidation of the purpose, methodology, key findings and policy implications of the Language, Education and Social Cohesion (LESC) Initiative of the United Nations Children's Fund – East Asia and Pacific Region Office (UNICEF EAPRO), conducted in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand.

The EAPRO LESC Initiative was a component of UNICEF's Learning for Peace, Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) Programme, a four-year global initiative (2012–2015/16), funded by the Government of the Netherlands and designed to strengthen resilience, social cohesion and human security, to encourage practical interventions to alleviate conflict and advance peace through the education sector, as well as to support research into conflict analysis and information about education and peacebuilding. This *Synthesis Report* discusses the main facets of the LESC Initiative which involve elements of action research, facilitated dialogues, language policy development support, consultations and situation analysis, professional development and training, and the core activity of action study/research. All this work has been motivated by the need to find a response to the risks that children face in educational and non-educational settings associated with language and ethnicity issues.

The risks that impact the lives of children are interconnected and include: violence, insecurity and long-standing conflicts; social and political unrest; high rates of poverty; the rise in economic and social inequalities; exclusion of marginalized communities, such as ethno-linguistic minorities, the very poor and people living in rural and remote areas; and those resulting from rapid urbanization, migration, climate change and frequent natural hazards. In response to some of these risks, the research and activities of the LESC Initiative, designed and implemented by Prof. Joseph Lo Bianco of the University of Melbourne, with the support of the EAPRO and the country offices of UNICEF in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand, examined the role of language policy and planning in multi-ethnic and multilingual settings. A key approach was participatory action research, a method of working which makes use of deliberative processes to foster a culture of dialogue to help solve apparently intractable problems in education.

A key general finding of the LESC Initiative is that conventional analyses of conflict have underestimated the role of language and ethnicity differences in generating original conflicts and in sustaining conflicts once they have commenced. However, the overriding message of the LESC Initiative is a positive one. While language policy, whether in education, law, or public administration, is often associated with conflict and can erode social relations between different groups of people, consultative language planning informed by research evidence creates opportunities for stakeholders to reflect and engage with critical issues, invariably playing a major productive role in increasing social cohesion. In its work in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand, the LESC Initiative has shown that governments, especially but not only through education, can influence whether language issues contribute to social cohesion or continue as causes of social conflict.

If minority populations achieve high rates of functional literacy in their mother tongues and the official languages of their society, they are more likely to gain meaningful access to the narratives, skills, knowledge and practices of the wider society. This cultural capital enhances the prospects of material success in education, and processes of citizenship integration. Success in schooling makes access to higher education possible, improves skills acquisition, labour market access and ultimately produces greater economic productivity and competitiveness.

Most of the discussion in this report is about education, social cohesion and minority rights, however economic dimensions, and especially access to jobs, higher education and expanded opportunities that come from success in schooling, need to be kept in mind. Deriving from participatory research in the three countries, a series of findings are distilled below and a range of actions identified. Collectively these comprise 'language planning', collective discussion and agreement about the communication resources of a society. Discussion of language questions in this way can lead towards the formulation of language policies that promote social cohesion, national unity, respect for differences and economic modernization. These findings and actions are intended for researchers, policymakers and community activists involved in language rights and social cohesion:

1. There is a large gap in understanding between perceptions of minority groups and officials on questions of language, in education specifically and across other social domains. Language questions are a repeated and serious grievance among ethnic and indigenous groups and demands for linguistic recognition take the form of claims for social inclusion, cultural recognition and alleviation of intergenerational inequality. Officials typically stress overarching needs for national unity and economic or administrative efficiency, and often interpret demands for multilingual rights as socially disruptive, administratively inefficient or, in the most extreme cases, as politically seditious.

2. In such cases where language issues, in education and beyond, are a cause of disagreement, tension, conflict and overt tension can be relieved, greater understanding promoted and, in many cases, a working consensus can be achieved, through focused and well-prepared interventions. The most successful of these interventions were the Facilitated Dialogues, led by a professional moderator and conducted with the participation of key stakeholders.

3. Collaborative decision-making informed by research evidence selected for its relevance and applicability to local problems and language disputes has proven very effective in the Facilitated Dialogues. This collaborative decision-making involves officials, experts and community representatives engaging in open-ended but guided dialogue to devise new policy positions on questions of language, or to modify and improve existing policies.

4. A wider public acceptance that language is a complex and multifaceted resource needs to be promoted so that language policies can include bottom-up processes as well as top-down delivery of decision-making on language. Bottom up planning should not be just to gain support or understanding for top-down policies, but a genuine process of decision-making in its own right. Language policy should be seen as a process of planning at diverse levels, and should be supported to achieve deeper understanding of language problems and an agreed course of action or consensus on the aims and content of national and local language policy.

5. All Facilitated Dialogues should be preceded by detailed and linguistically informed situation analysis to determine what local language problems can be most effectively dealt with in Facilitated Dialogues. Some key disputes require extensive knowledge of linguistics, sociolinguistics or applied linguistic research (such as script or orthography reform), others require general focus on dialogue

and persuasion on evidence-based decision-making (mother tongue use in primary schooling or kindergarten) according to the specific nature of language disputes being discussed in the Facilitated Dialogues.

6. There is an urgent need for locally focused success stories to be documented and shared to encourage curriculum innovation, local problem-solving and greater involvement of community stakeholders in language policy writing.

7. There is an urgent need for widespread and sustained public education on multilingualism in education and society. Widespread misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the role of multiple languages in the lives of communities and societies was frequently encountered, and often used as an argument against recognition and granting of language rights.

8. There is an urgent need to complement official top-down decision-making about language use in government administration, especially in health and legal domains, with processes of local bottom-up language planning to inform government decision-making. To be maximally effective, language planning needs to adopt consultative decision-making procedures and should take account of all communication needs of communities. Deafness and visual impairment, and special needs related to disability, need to be included in language planning processes. An important focus for bottom-up language planning is to modify and adjust national policy directions and prescriptions. One way in education is to seek a transfer of a percentage of curriculum time for local determination. In health, legal and administrative domains local language planning can aim to modify nation-wide decisions with specific content, individual languages, or other adjustments to reflect the local communication situation.

9. Language planning to foster social cohesion needs to be an ongoing activity, and revisited regularly to ensure that policies are informed by new research and respond to new and emerging needs. It is also important to devote attention in Facilitated Dialogues to overcoming the fragmented, uncoordinated and partial way in which language decisions are currently made.

10. The most productive focus for language policy and planning is to include domains beyond education in a comprehensive approach to address all social, economic and educational questions linked to language. In this way majority and minority community needs and interests can be combined in a single activity that can treat language as a community resource and foster social cohesion.

These findings are discussed in more detail in Section 5.

The outcomes of the LESC Initiative have been very positive, leading to significant public involvement in setting new policy directions in language education, and many social cohesion promoting meetings between various stakeholders to explore collaborative solutions to chronic problems of inequality, and hostility. To make the most of the achievements of LESC, it is proposed to write and distribute widely practical guides for addressing language problems in the context of peacebuilding objectives of PBEA. Such materials could be used by UNICEF staff, government officials, policymakers and practitioners and would greatly assist in implementing effective language programmes aimed at redressing educational inequality. These would also provide advice on how best to go about deliberation processes to ensure that equitable and consultative education and language solutions are conceived and implemented by communities where language issues are a source of tension and conflict. In doing so, the development of LESC-inspired guidance documents would help design and support inclusive education and language planning processes. These documents would inform initiatives within East Asia and Pacific (EAP) countries that were part of the LESC Initiative, other countries in the region, as well as supporting region-wide initiatives.

Semporna Elementary School, Sabah
Credit: UNICEF Malaysia/2014/G. Pirozzi

Specifically, the following two activities are recommended:

1. Develop a UNICEF Regional Strategy for the broader guidance and implementation of these activities including a proposal in support of multilingual language planning and policy initiatives across the EAP region; and
2. Develop evidence and experience-based methodological guidelines for problem-solving local dialogues to serve as a technical compendium to support all relevant actors engaged in inclusive, participatory language planning and policy endeavours.

The LESC Initiative also submitted a range of recommendations to advance country specific initiatives, building on groundwork developed through the initiative. The LESC research took place in both conflict and non-conflict situations.

In the case of Thailand the research was situated in the context of minority language groups and their educational prospects, improving access to the curriculum and its representativeness, and enhancing learning outcomes. This education focus took place within a wider context of paying general attention to policy developments to make the lives of children safer, the delivery of education more effective and social relations more secure. Three studies were developed, detailing recommendations and action proposals for language planning and policy undertakings focused on the Southern provinces of the country. Further work and funding is needed for implementation of the action proposals for the three initiatives aimed at addressing broader societal, as well as educational factors in alleviating language-related tensions. The three initiatives were:

1. An exploration of how to grant administrative status for the Patani Malay language.
2. Scaling up: methods for expanding bilingual education.
3. An exploration of curriculum reform at the Upper Primary and Junior Secondary levels, to infuse global skills and intercultural learning for all students.

In Malaysia, the LESC Initiative found that Malaysia needs to move towards an ambitious programme of social inclusion, fostering a sense of participatory citizenship, educational equality and cultural democracy reflected in its language policy. Recommended actions include the funding and administration of a conference on indigenous languages and multilingualism for Sabah and Sarawak in 2016–2017, leading to a longer-term initiative developing an Indigenous language policy. This would include a comprehensive staged and public language planning initiative. Details of these recommendations can be found in Section 7 and Appendix 1.

In Myanmar, significant work has been undertaken through the LESC Initiative in establishing and developing relationships, trust and consensus; in identifying and negotiating aims and expectations; and in moving towards a common and harmonious representation of the language and education needs in Myanmar. Recommended actions for Myanmar include support to assist state-based ethnic groups in gaining access to knowledge around advocacy for Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) and in the development of state-based language policies to work in conjunction with a national language policy. Training is required on multiple fronts to support MTB-MLE, including teacher training in multilingual methodologies; the development of writing systems and vocabulary; the development of literacy and numeracy materials; and the scaling up of Multilingual Education (MLE). Further details can be found in Section 7 and in Appendix 2.

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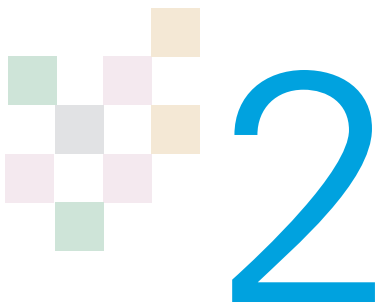
Drivers of conflict and theories of change

The PBEA aims to encourage practical interventions to alleviate conflict and advance peace through the education sector, as well as to support research into conflict analysis and evidence generation about education and peacebuilding. The overall aim of the UNICEF EAPRO's PBEA programme is to attend to two significant drivers of conflict: 1) low levels of institutional capacity to address issues of inequality, inequity, conflict and social cohesion in a strategic and systemic manner; and 2) the lack of adequate evidence on education-relevant conflict drivers that can limit effective planning of conflict-sensitive education activities.

In alignment with UNICEF's *Strategic Plan for Education 2014-2017* (UNICEF 2013), EAPRO's mission is to give priority to strengthening the organization's involvement in systemic reduction of vulnerability to disasters and conflicts faced by children and their families through risk-informed country programmes that help build resilience. In seeking to attend to specific drivers of conflict, EAPRO aims to address issues of inequality, inequity, conflict and social cohesion in a strategic and systemic manner.

The LESC Initiative was based on two theories of change: 1) if the capacity and awareness of UNICEF country offices, governments, educational practitioners, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other key stakeholders are strengthened to include peacebuilding/social cohesion components into policies and programming, they will be better able to support conflict reduction and social transformation in their respective countries; and 2) if education policy and programming are informed by adequate and rigorous evidence, then, governments and UNICEF country offices will be better positioned to address and mitigate education-relevant conflict drivers.

2.1 LESC – Engaging with language as a driver of conflict

In focusing on the relationship between language problems and social cohesion, the LESC Initiative explored the ways that language status and language education can be a cause of social conflict and tension. The research examined the role of language policy, planning and theory, in the context of multi-ethnic and multilingual settings, through a participatory action research method. It also applied deliberative processes in fostering a culture of dialogue as a critical methodology to solving apparently intractable problems in education in the three target countries – Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand. The initiative sought to build greater ability for people, ordinary citizens and various CSOs, linked with governments to lead and shape change in their societies, despite the presence of longer-term economic, political, and conflicted-based obstacles.

The LESC Initiative has shown that language policy, and how it is put into practice in schools, as well as at a societal level, can play a vital role in increasing social cohesion and improving the lives of children. Encompassing extensive fieldwork, the LESC Initiative involved well over 100 onsite consultations and observations spread out across each country, 35 local conferences, seminars and workshops, and upwards of 90 interviews and consultations. All of this involved over 500 personnel from more than 320 organizations. This extensive fieldwork has provided a wide and representative understanding of the links between questions of language and social cohesion, and how these links are perceived and can be better understood by governments, people and organizations across the Asia-Pacific region.

2.2 Language and social cohesion/conflict

One of the biggest challenges for multilingual societies lies in ensuring equitable social prospects for all inhabitants. This equitable approach to social structures is complicated by the relationship between language, literacy and education, and opportunities for social, citizenship and economic advancement. Access or a lack of access to a dominant language often creates hierarchies in societies, and minority, rural, and disadvantaged groups are often excluded from the full benefits of a prosperous society because they are not able to fully participate in their community. Language differences come then to carry the weight of ethnic and cultural differences, but those with limited access to the dominant language can also be burdened with socio-economic disadvantages.

Language is a factor in conflict in several key ways. Some of these are overt and evident, while others are camouflaged. This is because language is both an expression of identity, as well as a tool to access cultural, symbolic, political and material resources. Academic language is the source of children's advances in literacy and education (Tochon 2014), while specialized language enables adults to enter trades, occupational or professional fields. Language is also the means through which narratives of nation building are produced, so it plays a critical role in providing people with access to citizenship and political engagement and participation. Another key role for language is in the dissemination and perpetuation of culture and religion. As language and language-related decisions can be used to include or exclude people, they are key determinants in marginalization, but, also in social cohesion and breaking down societal barriers. Existing language related tensions can then be exacerbated further by failing to discuss problems openly and respectfully, leading to further feelings of marginalization and cultural minimization.

The LESC Initiative examined how language issues have led to and/or contributed to fragility in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand, and clearly demonstrated that unlike some other sources of tension, especially religion, ethnicity and socio-economic inequity, language-based tensions are more amenable to dialogue-based resolution supported through local and relevant international research and exploration of practical school models of MLE.

The LESC Initiative confirmed the possibilities which can be achieved, improved on and mitigated through consultative, collaborative processes and planning around multilingual policies.

Critical to the development of the LESC Initiative was an awareness of the specific and unique language problems faced in each particular context where peacebuilding activities are taking place.

In Thailand, the main focal point of research was in the country's South, commonly referred to as the 'Deep South', where 80 per cent of the population is Muslim and Malay speaking (Jitpiromsri and McCargo 2008), whereas Muslims comprise only 2.5 per cent of Thailand's overall population of 64 million. Education and language have been points of tension directly impacting on and marring educational opportunities for children (Suwannarat 2011; Premsrirat 2015). Important developments sponsored by the Royal Institute are promoting a new multilingual approach, gaining partial official endorsement in 2010, to transform the dominant representation of Thailand from national unity and a single national language, to national unity within language pluralism.

Thus, language plays a crucial role in conflict, but also in its resolution. Substantial effort is required to develop the inclusive role of language by producing practical, clear and accessible approaches to creating comprehensive language planning and policy.

In Malaysia, education as a state activity has long been closely linked with the creation of national unity through the management of ethnic differences (Singh and Mukherjee 1993; Haque, 2003). Language and language rights are implicated in the rise of different school systems for Malay, Tamil and Chinese students (Tollefson and Tsui 2004; Munusamy 2012); entrenched, poor educational outcomes for the indigenous peoples of Peninsular Malaysia, the Orang Asli, and a lack of access to education and high dropout rates of stateless children, particularly in Sabah and Sarawak (Nicholas 2010). In studies on Malaysia's indigenous populations, whether in West or East Malaysia, similar findings are repeated. In general contexts of disadvantage and often of poverty, struggles for land rights and cultural recognition, children's education demonstrates sharply restricted achievements: the majority completing only primary schooling, few progressing to secondary schooling and only a tiny number to post-school education (Kamaruddin and Jusoh 2008; Nicholas 2010; David and McLellan 2014).

In Myanmar, many decades of civil war and open conflict have been linked to demands by what are called 'national races', the main indigenous/ethnic populations seeking various measures of autonomous governance, with grievances linked to language and culture (Ganesan and Hlaing 2007). Denial of language and ethnic rights by successive military governments has resulted in intergenerational educational and economic inequalities and disadvantage for many of Myanmar's minorities (Callahan 2003; Lall and South 2014). Aye and Sercombe (2014) identify an overarching national policy of 'Myanmarization' or the enforcement of a single national identity, of the large and geographically distinct main ethnic clusters. This has been reinforced through constitutional measures, but recent developments have achieved some recognition of a pluralist vision of the nation, and recognition of sub-national languages, a process in which the LESC Initiative has played a significant role.

In all three contexts, language issues, and especially the linguistic human right (de Varennes 1996) to use native ethnic languages in education, and in society more broadly, have been and remain sources of social tension at the local area. These tensions occur within a growing worldwide trend of discussion about flexible approaches to delivery of MLE in an age of mobility and globalization (Weber 2014; and see Section 2.2) and approaches to social cohesion that are expanding the traditional understanding of this notion. Important in this regard is the policy-oriented examination of social cohesion in fast-growing developing countries by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2011), focusing on the three dimensions of social inclusion, social capital and social mobility.

According to the OECD study, a cohesive society is one that works for the well-being for all its constituent members, but also that actively resists the exclusion or marginalization of any group and that tries to create a feeling of belonging among all, thereby promoting mutual trust throughout society. The OECD approach to social cohesion links questions of upward social and economic mobility, the material realm of life, with symbolic and identity issues. Language relates to and is associated with all of these dimensions of social cohesion and reinforces them.

In its work in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand, the LESC Initiative has shown that governments, especially but not only through education, can influence whether language issues contribute to social cohesion or continue as causes of social conflict. 'Language' must be seen as a multidimensional force in social life, being present as literacy and language of instruction in schools, the medium for socializing children in families, as the mechanism for maintaining culture connections within ethnic traditions, as literature and as cultural memory for different communities, but also as the medium of exchange between citizens and the government.

Language issues also influence how competitive an individual will be in the labour market, and can influence the economic competitiveness of entire countries in the global economy. An important outcome and finding of the LESC Initiative has been to show that how language is treated by governments is tied directly to social inclusion, social capital and social mobility.

2.3 Driving change — Multilingual Education

Improving educational outcomes for children is immensely important in alleviating and preventing poverty, increasing health, political participation and social tolerance. UNICEF's Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 (UNICEF 2013) articulates that:

> To the degree that any child has an unequal chance in life — in its social, political, economic, civic and cultural dimensions — her or his rights are violated. There is growing evidence that investing in the health, education and protection of a society's most disadvantaged citizens — addressing inequity — not only will give all children the opportunity to fulfil their potential but also will lead to sustained growth and stability of countries. This is why the focus on equity is so vital. It accelerates progress towards realizing the human rights of all children... (UNICEF 2013, I.1).

It is for these reasons that equitable universal education has been a key goal of United Nations agencies, with the express aim of creating a fair, healthy and socially inclusive world. As the *Education for All Global Report* emphasizes, "education enables people to escape from the trap of chronic poverty and prevents the transmission of poverty between generations" (UNESCO 2014, p. 144). There is a strong link between education and healthier populations due to a range of factors including willingness to seek professional help for health concerns, understanding medication routines, accepting vaccinations, and awareness of basic health standards in relation to the transmission of and protection from diseases.

Research combined with a strong international rights-based mandate helps support MLE, as children's ability to achieve high levels of education success is strongly dependant on the language of instruction in schools (see Section 2.4). Rights to language and language use have been stated or clearly implied, over numerous decades, in a wide range of international conventions including:

- European Convention on Human Rights, CETS No. 5, November 4, 1950 (Council of Europe, 1950).
- American Convention on Human Rights, 'Pact of San Jose, Costa Rica,' November 22, 1969 (Organization of American States 1969).
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, December 16, 1966 (United Nations 1966).
- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, June 27, 1981 (Organisation of African Unity, 1981).
- Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 'Protocol of San Salvador,' November 16, 1999 (Organization of American States 1999).
- Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, 27 June 1989 (International Labour Organization 1989).
- European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, CETS No. 148, November 5, 1992 (Council of Europe 1992).
- Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, CETS No. 157, February 1, 1995 (Council of Europe 1995).
- Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001 (UNESCO 2001)
- Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 17 October 2003 (UNESCO 2003a).
- Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003a).
- Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 20 October 2005 (UNESCO 2005).
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 61/295 of 13 September 2007 (United Nations 2007).

UNESCO has consistently supported the use of vernacular languages in education since the release of *Monographs on Fundamental Education VIII: The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education* (UNESCO 1953). This was most recently reiterated in *Education in a Multilingual World* (*Education Position Paper*, UNESCO 2003a). Equitable access to education and the rights of children to use their own language are also preserved in the Convention on the Rights of Children (United Nations 1989), particularly in Articles 3, 17, 20, 29 and 30.

The crucial first step is to recognize that mother tongue learning both the spoken language and bilingual literacy is often a key factor associated with school persistence, effective learning, and confident participation in educational activity across the board, and responding positively to the challenges this poses for education authorities (Benson 2009; Ouane and Glanz 2010). The next step is to try and move towards a consensus on aims, methods, models and ultimate outcomes desired for MLE. These kinds of decisions can be called language planning, and their outcome is a language policy. To be maximally effective, language planning takes into account the positions, views and needs of relevant stakeholders. While this can be a complex enough process, it is also important that such consultations draw on research, local and relevant external research, and consider available and effective models as a basis for decision-making.

For these reasons, the LESC Initiative focused on MTB-MLE within the context of a wider approach to language policy. More importantly, the LESC Initiative designed and conducted workshops for the difficult but crucial task of developing and expanding ideas and concerns about how best to implement such changes, as well as providing safe and supportive spaces to voice language concerns more generally.

2.4 Conceptual approach to the LESC Initiative

The LESC Initiative was based on extensive and collaborative consultations. This involved interviews, bilateral meetings, Facilitated Dialogues, and other collaborative and informational forums (see Section 3). The interventions and recommendations were conceived as a multi-layered and long-term process that drew from these consultations, as well as broader research, to come up with practical and applicable ways language could be used to alleviate tension and increase social cohesion. The activities undertaken through the LESC Initiative reinforced the notion that by providing the methods and linguistic tools to foster understanding, language policy and planning can function as a means to increase social cohesion, ethnic and cultural understanding, as well as economic and health benefits in conflict-prone areas.

This approach is situated within a broader peacebuilding initiative that aims to entrench the ideals of sustainable systemic peace. This builds upon Johan Galtung's conception of peace as more than just the absence of physical violence, but the absence of 'structural violence', that is, the absence of institutional marginalization and suppression, whether based on race, gender, class, religious, or language (Galtung 1969).

Building on this approach to 'negative' peace, the LESC activities are consistent with concepts of 'positive peace' that aim to not only limit the presence of physical and structural conflicts, but seek to create communities and societies that promote conditions that are conducive to fostering understanding, cross-cultural communication and mutual respect amongst diverse populations. Striving to create social conditions which limit structural violence experienced by minority populations is a complex, multi-layered and long-term process. The LESC Initiative is a rare instance of sustained multi-country attention to MLE in the context of a more general focus on language planning. As a result, the outcomes and findings from the LESC Initiative play a critical role in UNICEF's broader goals of social equity, as well as offering valuable lessons and ideas for the peacebuilding goals of minimizing structural violence. See Section 3 for an overview of the key mechanisms involved in language planning and policy processes employed through the LESC Initiative.

> *If minority populations achieve high rates of functional literacy in their mother tongues and the official languages of their society, they are more likely to gain meaningful access to the narratives, skills, knowledge and practices of the wider society. This cultural capital enhances the prospects of material success in education and processes of citizenship integration. Success in schooling makes access to higher education possible, improves skills acquisition, labour market access, and ultimately produces greater economic productivity and competitiveness.*

2.5 Challenges and constraints

There are numerous challenges and constraints in undertaking peacebuilding, education and social cohesion initiatives in the EAP region, particularly given a range of contingencies which must be negotiated, including ongoing civil conflict; political and social unrest; natural disasters; and entrenched discrimination in the education system through inequitable access to schools and to the curriculum. The LESC Initiative was undertaken across three complex, multilingual societies with differing historical, educational and economic contexts, as well as differing political and environmental challenges. A significant encumbrance across all three projects was the complexity and range of activities which language planning encompasses, and the limited number of people who have professional training in the field. The level of engagement with language-related issues in each context, and the ability to achieve consensus and progression around these issues therefore varied significantly. While the aim of comprehensive language policies should be to ultimately address the full range of communication needs of a society, this was beyond the remit of the initial LESC Initiative.

However, the importance of developing competence and training in the language planning and policy field will only grow as language problems in the global age become more and more complex. Multilingualism across the globe already presents many unmet challenges for the education system and for progressing educational inequality. These challenges are becoming more complex due to ongoing and increasing mobility across the globe, and because networking and communication technologies allow networks of people to form and stabilize outside of the home territory of ethnic groups. This results in language communities also developing outside traditional home territories. All of these changes mean that the delivery of education must change rapidly to meet existing, as well as evolving, education and language needs.

A vital aim of the LESC Initiative has been to develop a new and better understanding of the links between language and its broader roles in society. A deeper understanding of the complex interaction between language and conflict in multi-ethnic societies under contemporary conditions is urgently required. More specifically, a detailed understanding is required as to how these links manifest between language in use, language education, language in society and language policy, and questions of social tension, conflict, mobility, resilience and cohesion.

The risk inherent in initiatives such as the LESC Initiative is ensuring sustained and long-term progression within politically unpredictable and conflict-prone or affected contexts. A constraint is the need to repeat and reinforce the outcomes of Facilitated Dialogues and knowledge sharing activities. A single Facilitated Dialogue at a state or a national level is far from sufficient – it often just begins the process of understanding language needs and problems better. These issues need to be revisited several times in order to reach the point of full agreement about new directions and to ensure momentum is gained and that action ensues. Another challenge is ensuring the participation of the senior and appropriate public officials.

A key outcome of the LESC Initiative involves systematically mapping language and conflict according to a matrix. This will take the form of practical guides as well as academic writing and will be informed by conclusions drawn from the overall LESC Initiative, as outlined in Section 5. Additionally, a range

of country and region specific recommendations for advancing language, education and peacebuilding initiatives has been outlined in Section 6 (see Section 6.8 for a summary) and provides guidance and direction for UNICEF and other regional actors already involved in peacebuilding and language and education initiatives across the Asia-Pacific region.

3

The UNICEF PBEA Programme and the LESC Initiative

The LESC Initiative is a component of the UNICEF 'Learning for Peace', PBEA Programme, a four-year global initiative (2012–2015/16) between UNICEF, the Government of the Netherlands and the national governments of the 14 participating countries, designed to strengthen resilience, social cohesion and human security. The PBEA is an innovative, cross-sectoral programme supporting peacebuilding through education across diverse and complex contexts. The PBEA Programme is focused on five outcomes which intend to:

1. Increase inclusion of education into peacebuilding and conflict reduction policies, analyses and implementation.
2. Increase institutional capacities to supply conflict-sensitive education.
3. Increase the capacities of children, parents, teachers and other duty bearers to prevent, reduce and cope with conflict and promote peace.
4. Increase access to quality and relevant conflict-sensitive education that contributes to peace.
5. Contribute to the generation and use of evidence and knowledge in policies and programming related to education, conflict and peacebuilding.

The UNICEF EAPRO PBEA Programme has contributed particularly to outcomes 2 and 5.

3.1 Drivers of conflict, theories of change and LESC

Conventional analyses of conflict have underestimated the 'contribution' of language and ethnicity differences in generating original conflicts and in sustaining conflicts once they have commenced.

In the LESC study it was found that language plays both covert and overt roles in conflict. At their most extreme, language contributions to conflict involve hate speech and political discourse which is exclusionary, stigmatizing or inflammatory, especially when directed towards minorities; and the reaction of the minorities to such language used about them may also contribute to conflict. On the other end of the spectrum are covert contributions which can be seen as institutional marginalization of people denied access to social resources or opportunities via the slow operations of language in education, such as unequal access to standard language literacy. From direct, targeted and explicit exclusion to the indirect workings of language in education which slowly tracks minority populations into menial occupational or social positions, language is a central vehicle producing this wide spectrum of effects. It is rarely the case

that language operates alone or that the aim of such uses of language is itself language, but language is an essential ingredient in these ways in which conflict is produced or sustained.

Occasionally, both ends of this spectrum of language use deal with language itself, usually targeted against minority languages or against the idea of multilingualism as such. In these cases the same range of overt to covert contributions of language about language issues can best be thought of as existing on a continuum. On one extreme, there are outright attempts to eradicate minority languages (overt). On the other is the slow intergenerational entrenching of poverty and marginalization for minority groups, stigmatizing their languages as intellectually or culturally inferior to dominant national languages and marginalizing these languages in education delivery (covert) (see Figure 1). The latter has been shown through numerous research studies to produce academic underachievement among minority populations (Cummins 2000; Chumbow 2013; Kosonen, Young, and Malone 2006; Tochon 2014; Premsrirat 2015).

Figure 1: Examples of language-related drivers of conflict

- Lack of, or stigmatized proficiency in, or low literacy, in languages of power
- Subsequent exclusion from access to social services, educational, economic and legal opportunities and rights
- Intergenerational entrenchment of educational and economic inequality

- Hate speech or inflammatory language directed towards minority groups, or exchanged between groups in society
- Explicit denial of rights to use, enjoy, transmit and develop minority languages
- Denigration or denial of mother tongue education

In the cases surveyed in this synthesis, language and ethnicity differences are often present in originating conflicts and their failed resolution has exacerbated these conflicts by eroding trust in national institutions and between groups in society. The evidence for this is clear in the overt grievances of various armed groups in the three countries (Jitpiromsri 2014; McCargo and Hongladarom 2004; Jitpiromsri and McCargo 2008; Suwannarat 2011). Though less extreme, ethnic and linguistic tensions in Malaysia are also associated with struggles over language rights, and the role of different languages across society (David and McLellan 2014). This is deeply true in Myanmar as well (Lall and South 2014; Michaels 2014). Asia-wide documentation of ethnic conflicts shows that they rarely have a single causal explanation (Brown and Ganguly 2003) and hence it has been a key assumption, and conclusion, of the research reported here that ethnic conflicts are multi-causal, and that language itself is a phenomenon with multiple functions, simultaneously a symbol of ethnic and national identity and a practical tool for delivery of education and a tool for economic, social and political development.

3.2 The LESC context

Across Asia and specifically within Southeast Asia, a number of long-standing intra-state conflicts have beset national development in recent years. Education has been used to exacerbate conflict in some cases, inculcating violence, fear and mistrust of different groups, whether they be political, ethnic, racial or religious 'others' (see, e.g., Novelli and Smith 2011; Sercombe and Tupas 2014; Brown and Ganguly 2003; UNICEF 2008b, 2013). In areas of protracted conflict, education is often one of the first rights denied to children. This is partly because of direct physical danger involved in travelling to attend school, or the exposure of school buildings and open playgrounds designed for accessibility, or due to mistrust that grows between state institutions and minority populations, and also because of ambiguous legal status of some groups of children, such as stateless, undocumented, refugee or displaced children.

In 2012, in the initiation of their mission to develop risk-informed programmes to build resilience and reduce conflict hindering children's educational development, UNICEF EAPRO commissioned a desk review of existing documents on the relations between ethnicity, language education conflict and peacebuilding in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand. It focused specifically on education policies and practices related to minorities and minority languages, and social cohesion. The desk review discussed work on MLE and MLE-MTB; policies and practices relating to ethnicity and education; as well as views and opinions of key stakeholders at national and local levels.

The three countries involved in the desk review are all linguistically, ethnically and religiously complex. Thailand shares a contiguous border with both Myanmar and Malaysia and together they share a long history of both cooperation and societal challenges. All three countries formally acknowledge freedom of worship, while favouring a specific form of religious adherence, so that the state is closely associated with Theravada Buddhism in the case of Myanmar and Thailand, and Islam in the case of Malaysia. However, each country is also comprised of large religious minorities, both within the dominant ethnic formation and also among individual minority populations. Across the three countries, there is immense linguistic diversity, both at the level of named individual languages, and recognized dialects, but also across language families. In Myanmar, there are 116 living languages; in Malaysia, 138 living languages; and in Thailand, 74 living languages. This includes languages of the country, including sign languages, as well as immigrant languages (Lewis, Simons, and Fennig 2015a, b and c). In all three contexts, a close relationship exists with extra-national languages, and especially with English as an international language.

Through the on-site consultations and research undertaken for the EAPRO report in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand, context-specific links between education, language and social cohesion were identified and became the focal points of the expanded LESC Initiative. The following looks at the educational context of the three countries that took part in the LESC Initiative.

Malaysia: Since political independence from Britain and in response to its great multilingual diversity, education has been closely linked with fostering national unity and promoting economic modernization. Malaysia has undertaken notable efforts in official language policy to promote and develop its national language, Bahasa Malaysia. Promotion of unity through a common national language has seen Malaysia engage in multiple forms of language planning, especially official status and corpus development, over the entire period of its national history (Omar 1979), from initial desires to fully replace English through a series of shifting attitudes and positions on English (Lo Bianco 2013b) to its current position of Bahasa Malaysia plus English. Throughout, there has also been a sub-national language policy process,

Dayak Bidayuh Bilingual Preschool, Sarawak, 2014
Credit: J. Lo Bianco

especially in the continuation of primary school systems to cater to the large Chinese and Tamil speaking communities, though within an integrated overall national curriculum, and varying positions on the vastly complex language ecology among indigenous and ethnically non-Malay immigrant populations (David and McLellan 2014).

Within the dominant language framework of Bahasa Malaysia plus English across the country, minority language groups are pushed by socioeconomic and political/educational circumstances to accommodate to the main languages. These questions were the main focus of the LESC Initiative in Malaysia, in addition to some attention in research on schooling for stateless children, as formal public school education is reserved for citizens. This latter question is particularly evident in the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak where the large migration of workers to palm-oil plantations has resulted in large numbers of undocumented children with intermittent, infrequent or no education facing barriers of language, legal status and distance from schools (Lo Bianco 2013a, p. 16). Specific challenges in language, literacy and academic achievement also need to be addressed for Peninsular Orang Asli students. The Orang Asli are the indigenous peoples of Peninsular Malaysia, a majority of whom live in poverty and experience poor educational outcomes and high attrition rates from schooling (Noor 2012). Three Facilitated Dialogues occurred in the Malaysian LESC research, along with a large number of consultations, observations, literature analysis and interviews, and the preparation of government advice papers on national unity and its relationship with language policy.

Myanmar: Since shortly after its formal independence in 1948, Burma, later and controversially renamed Myanmar, has experienced civil unrest (Callahan 2003). During this time, central political authorities have

resisted appeals by ethnic groups for "ethnically defined regional autonomy as described under the post-colonial federal union of Burma" (UNICEF 2014, p. 24). Successive governments have persisted with use of Burmese, the language of the Burman ethnic group, the majority community of the country (today called Myanmar language, though often also Burmese), as the exclusive medium of instruction in schools and higher education. Following the military coup of 1962, national governments have confronted ideological political contestation in addition to the demands of ethnic groups for greater autonomy or for outright secession (Aye and Sercombe 2014). Alongside Burmese, English has been retained, and, in the wake of recent political liberalization, has re-assumed primacy in education, squeezing space from curriculum for minority ethnic languages. For this reason, language and the rights to use native ethnic languages can be a key driver of conflict in Myanmar. In Myanmar, the LESC Initiative concentrated on the link between language and educational equity and focused on MTB-MLE as a key driver of social cohesion and violence reduction in the context of the Comprehensive Education Sector Reviews launched by the Ministry of Education in 2012. A distinctive feature of the Myanmar work has been to use Mon state as a model for trials of a locally based bottom-up approach to language policy writing via Facilitated Dialogues, which has since expanded to incorporate the entire country. The Myanmar LESC Initiative consisted of a large number of country-wide site visits, Facilitated Dialogues, consultations with government officials in education and other ministries, interviews, observations, literature analysis and public speaking engagements.

Thailand: The main focal point of the LESC research was on language and education in the country's South. The initiative addressed questions of language education; MTB-MLE; the choice of scripts for writing systems (Thai, Rumi, Yawi); intercultural education and the status of Patani Malay in the context of Thai language; among other interconnected issues. The process was informed by rich, participatory research and fieldwork activities including interviews, consultations, bilateral meetings and a Facilitated Dialogue. Many individuals belonging to over 70 organizations, institutions and government departments across Thailand contributed to the LESC activities and important groundwork towards progression around language-related issues was established.

The LESC Initiative focused on four aspects of language/ethnicity/education in the Southern province. First, research was conducted into mechanisms whereby regional administrative status could be granted to Patani Malay alongside Thai. Second, research and modelling was produced on how existing experimental pilot programmes in bilingual education could be expanded with a view to full implementation across the Southern provinces to improve education outcomes of local children and raise the status of both languages. Third, was a project exploring how to infuse multicultural perspectives across the entire curriculum of Thai schooling so that its messages of national identity and belonging could be more inclusive of local differences. The final aspect was to conduct a Facilitated Dialogue and a range of consultations with local people to ascertain the level and degree of commitment to such changes and whether they could be employed to alleviate conflict, as well as redress educational inequality.

3.3 Language and conflict

There is considerable evidence that language, in its many manifestations, whether it concerns the official status accorded to one language in multi-lingual settings, or to contested language choices made in education (Tollefson and Tsui 2004), is often associated with conflict. It is a key finding of the LESC

Initiative, related to the researcher in many interviews and regularly in Facilitated Dialogues in all three LESC countries, that language questions are underestimated as a cause, aggravator and vehicle of tension. Addressing the link between language and conflict in India and Israel, Harel-Shalev (2009) has commented that:

> In a deeply divided, bilingual or multilingual society, the tension that accompanies the ethnic or national division is reflected in linguistic and educational policy. After all, a language is a national symbol and one of the most important social institutions in a state. Language signifies deep cultural associations, employment opportunities and other important aspects of the state (p. 954).

Because language often acts through other media or is camouflaged in its various roles in society, it is not always separately seen for the impact it has on conflict or cohesion. For example, language is present in education and mediates opportunities as a tool for economic success – some people achieve better or more critical literacy abilities, or learn dominant languages more proficiently than other people, or are assisted by schooling or home background to be more persuasive and articulate in their speech or writing. Through such differences, language abilities become a tool of advantage for some over others. But in other functions, language is a symbolic identifier of culture, history and ethnicity. The wide range of ways in which language interacts with society can make it difficult to grasp specific effects of language in social conflict or cohesion. Yet the evidence is clear, as seen in many historical instances across the world. For example, it was disputed language policy that provoked the Bangladesh independence struggle. On 21 February 1952 many (East Pakistani) students were killed by armed forces for demanding equal recognition of Bangla/Bengali, with Urdu, the main language of West Pakistan. The exclusive Urdu proclamation was the spark for a long bloody war of independence (Mohsin 2003; Uddin 2006).

Similarly, the announcement of compulsory Afrikaans in teaching school arithmetic and social studies in South Africa on 16 June 1976 was "the immediate cause of the … Soweto uprising" (Juckes 1995, pp. 147–149), which hastened the end of Apartheid (Webb 2002; Soudien and McKinney 2016). Since most contemporary conflicts are 'subnational', language issues are almost always implicated, with conflict specialists calling for better understanding of language problems (Parks, Colletta, and Oppenheim 2013).

In an Asia-wide study of relations between language, identity and social conflict, Brown and Ganguly (2003) show how important different kinds of language planning can be. In this study, teams of researchers collected data across 15 Asia-Pacific countries to understand ethnic violence. They concluded that in all but two of the 15 cases, governments dealt with ethnic language issues either 'poorly' or 'disastrously'.

Hence, one of the main conclusions of the LESC Initiative is that it is important for United Nations agencies, national governments, NGO representatives and CSOs to become more language aware, and more committed to multilingualism and language rights.

The LESC Initiative is informed by a more contemporary approach to language policy and planning than many of the studies cited above, most of which were undertaken by political scientists or historians and economists, since language-planning analysis is the specialist professional focus of the principal LESC researcher. The continuum of covert and overt language actions apply to all three of the aspects of social cohesion identified by the OECD analysis (2011): social inclusion, social capital and social mobility. This means that public policy actions should promote social

inclusion of all groups in a nation in the decision-making processes, and in benefiting from its resources and opportunities. It also means that all groups should gain the social capital, that is, the knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes to participate fully in public life to the extent of their personal desires. And, finally, it means that public policy actions should promote mobility, so that each generation can aspire to better occupational, health, educational and financial circumstances.

That these concerns are global is evident from recent European experience as well. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), through its High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), has recently reflected on the crucial role multilingual recognition plays in fostering social cohesion. In a statement entitled 'Majority and Minority Languages' the HCNM has stated:

> *When the legitimate concerns of both majorities and minorities regarding language use are accommodated, tensions are greatly reduced. Both sides need to compromise and recognize their mutual rights and responsibilities. This can be achieved through efforts to ensure multilingualism throughout society, and through using positive rather than punitive measures. If one language is promoted at the expense of others, this can be a considerable source of inter-ethnic tension. The High Commissioner frequently advises states to ensure that minority language rights are respected (HCNM 2015).*

Recent work that stresses the importance of language and peace in education contexts includes the *Guidance Note on Conflict Sensitive Education* issued by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE 2013) and guidance offered in Kotite (2012). The latter involves work for UNESCO on education for conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and argues for avoidance of 'inflammatory' talk and in favour of 'non-offensive language' as part of a process of improving social relations through civilized discourse.

The INEE *Guidance Note* focuses on the importance of ensuring "that conflict sensitivity is incorporated into education proposals, policies and programmes" (INEE 2013, p. 12). It provides advice on the choice of language of instruction for schools in States recovering from conflict, where tensions are still high and in which institutions might still be fragile or unstable. The INEE *Guidance Note* further argues that States should ensure that students should not have to face a linguistic 'barrier to access' education and its many benefits and that language policies should not reflect any 'group bias' and that language policies should not be 'imposed' on particular ethnic groups by dominant national or local ethnic groups, as this practice could reignite tension, violence or even war.

Both of these works are valuable, and express important advice on minimizing educational marginalization in States rebuilding infrastructure and social relations after periods of conflict. However, by their very nature, generic manuals have a limited perspective on the multiple and deep-rooted connections between language and conflict. The key points of the INEE *Guidance Note*, and indeed the need for 'civilized dialogue' as argued by Kotite (2012), are important in the general process of minimizing inequality in education provision, access and outcomes. Yet they do not address many questions specific to language education, language planning, multilingualism and language rights that impinge on conflict resolution and peacebuilding (see, e.g., Bostock 1997; de Silva 1998; de Votta 2003; Jitpiromsri 2014; Joll 2010; Michaels 2014; Jitpiromsri and McCargo 2008; Mohsin 2003; Vaddhanaphuti 2005). It is crucial for the wider conflict literature and conceptualizations of peacebuilding to build on the growing body of research and incorporate concepts and experiences specific to language in conflict. In this way a more robust

and substantial view of the ways in which language and conflict are linked, and what kinds of policy and educational interventions can mitigate, resolve and prevent conflict can be produced.

Future work will also need to take account of two major initiatives within the United Nations system that directly impact on this discussion of language and conflict and the current and future work of the LESC Initiative. These are the Sustainable Development Goals and UNICEF's *Progress for Children: Beyond Averages – Learning from the MDGs* report.

In August 2015 the United Nations General Assembly adopted Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, building on the previous Millennium Development Goals. Goal 16 is to "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." Education Goal 4 seeks to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all."

Sub-Goal 4.7 states that 'By 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.' Also relevant to the question of language and conflict is the Progress for Children report (23 June 2015, Division of Communication, UNICEF, New York). This document outlines key goals and limiting factors in striving to achieve 'UNICEF's Core Message on Equity Agenda' through the message that: "Providing a fair chance for every child is the best and most effective way to achieve truly sustainable development and a more peaceful, prosperous world" (UNICEF 2015a).

> *In short, it is paramount that the role of language in conflict and peacebuilding is conceived with an awareness of specific language problems in particular contexts where peacebuilding activities are taking place.*

The outcomes and findings of the LESC Initiative are closely aligned with the above components of the Sustainable Development Goals and their achievement requires countries to respond to the legitimate demands for language recognition of diverse societies. UNICEF's 'core message' can only be advanced in recognition of the diversity of language and culture that is characteristic of the world's children.

3.4 Multilingual Education (MLE)

A growing body of evidence is showing the various ways in which children's ability to achieve high levels of education success relates to various aspects of language in education, especially the choice of language of instruction in schools but certainly not limited to this. Also relevant are the design of bilingual programmes, choices about how much time is devoted to different languages in a bilingual programme, at what ages transition between languages takes place, the extent of 'deep learning' (Tochon 2014, 2015) that children are able to do in the various languages of their immediate linguistic environment, and also how dialects and non-standard forms of language are treated in schooling. In multilingual societies, educators and language planners need to collaborate to design learning interventions for students that respond to the specific linguistic situation that prevails in those settings and to develop the best possible

and flexible multilingual (Weber 2014) dialect sensitive pedagogies. What is essential is for students to remain in school, to acquire age-appropriate levels of literacy, and to master the language forms, both spoken and written, that will permit them to continue learning in subject areas.

Students whose home language is different from the language of instruction in school face the difficult challenge of learning in their second language, with schooling in an unfamiliar language partially accounting for the lack of academic success of minority and indigenous children, in comparison to other children (Ball 2011). Large scale research and case studies have shown that mother tongue-based learning programmes that support, at least, transition to national language acquisition can lead to significantly better educational outcomes for minority children (e.g., Chumbow 2013; Cummins 2000; Kosonen, Young, and Malone 2006; SEAMEO and The World Bank 2009; Taylor and Coetzee 2013; UNESCO, 2006, 2007b, 2008b). However, it is highly desirable that first languages are not discarded from education delivery if and when transition to national or dominant languages takes place since the first language/mother tongue/first dialect is the means of original learning that a child has utilized and remains a resource for concept growth, skills development and identity formation.

The main benefits that emerge from properly designed MLE in linguistically diverse environments can be grouped into three categories: 1) a better and fairer education; 2) stronger identity and citizenship, and enhanced prospects for peaceful coexistence; and 3) higher levels of social participation by all groups in society.

3.4.1 Better and fairer education

The consistent, repeated and overwhelming body of research evidence on academic success for minority language populations shows that responsive, flexible and first language sensitive MLE improves cognitive skills, educational outcomes, school retention and opportunities for children (see, e.g., Baker 2011; Bialystok, et al. 2005; Bialystok, Peets and Moreno 2014; McField and McField 2014; McIlwraith 2013; Premsrirat 2015; Sullivan, et al. 2014; UNESCO 2006, 2007a). This is especially true of the most disadvantaged children, of rural, isolated, immigrant, indigenous and female children (Benson 2005), who are over-represented among those facing academic limitations with all the consequent life-limiting effects of inadequate education.

Additive MLE refers to an aim of ensuring that the child 'adds' extra language abilities and skills, rather than simply uses his or her first language or mother tongue for only brief periods and then transitions completely to schooling imparted in the national language. Rapid, early and total transitions often lead to what is called 'subtractive' bilingualism, in which the child eventually loses his or her proficiency in the first language as it is fully replaced with the second language. Schooling should therefore aim to achieve ultimate bilingual abilities as well as to use the language resources a child has on entering school to assist them to learn effectively. This requires use of all the language resources of a bilingual or multilingual child to acquire reading and writing skills and for general cognitive development and academic learning. The classroom should affirm both the spoken and written forms of the child's mother tongue, script differences where these exist, along with the spoken and written forms of the national or official language, where these are different (Malone 2005; Hornberger 1997, 2003; Williams 2007; Nakamura 2014) in an explicit intention to produce bilingual and biliterate capability.

The benefits of this additive bilingual model are higher standards of academic performance in general, better literacy rates in national and international testing (Nakamura 2014), and better acquisition of

both national and foreign languages, all of which enhance children's likely success in schooling, and post-schooling economic prospects, as well as supporting personal or self-determination (see, e.g., Heugh and Skutnabb-Kangas 2010; Taylor and Coetzee 2013). For ethnic minority children, especially the most disadvantaged, rural and female children, MLE practices create inclusive learning environments that are less likely to further marginalize children based on their social, ethnic or gender groups (Benson 2005). Despite the complexities of planning and resourcing for MLE, practical experience and research evidence concur that when societies commit themselves to achieving education success for all the constituent groups in society they are investing in a better and fairer system of general education.

3.4.2 Stronger ethnic identity and more robust national citizenship

As well as benefiting children's academic performance and language development, well-designed and implemented MLE can also foster intergenerational ethnic connections, increases family cohesion, and supports cultural identities (see May 2012). Alongside bolstering of ethnic and cultural identities, the curriculum should promote a wider sense of belonging. The formal compact of citizenship between a political entity and the ethnic groups which comprise its population should encourage a sense of inclusion. In this way a curriculum and the experience of schooling in general promotes both local and national attachments. By creating strong links with cultural heritages alongside a tolerating, inclusive and affirming national attachment, a reinforced sense of belonging is made possible. When minority populations are affirmed in their unique identities the nation becomes a place of inclusion and participation rather than exclusion and alienation. By allowing a deeper connection with cultural and ethnic histories and traditions, multilingual policies can materially and symbolically build national bridges and foster conditions that increase social cohesion.

Policies need to address local, national and international domains and to prepare learners for participation in the 'extra-local', that is, the domains beyond their immediate community, which is a world of interconnected multilingualism through increased mobility and linked through communication technologies and online information (e.g., Petroska-Beska, et al. 2009; Portera 2011; UNESCO 2013).

3.4.3 Fostering peace and improving social cohesion

Refusal to acknowledge differences in language and cultural identity of minority populations, and more extremely, efforts to suppress or deny them, can provoke social minority alienation, interethnic suspicion, hostility and tension. Sustained over time, these erosions of social cohesion can damage social relations and produce conflict and even violence. There is an emerging consensus globally that recognition of cultural diversity and language rights for the component parts of a country serve to enhance identification with the wider national community (see, e.g., Banks 2006; Kymlicka and Pattern 2003).

However, many studies and much practical knowledge also show that education ministries and public attitudes are not always in favour of mother tongue-based education and that more flexible MLE often presents significant challenges to societies which are used to thinking about education delivery as being more efficient if it is restricted to one or at most two languages. Past practices, and negative attitudes, lead to a series of obstacles being placed before a more responsive language education approach, including political, pedagogical, resourcing and financial impediments. As a result, some of the key aims of the workshops and Facilitated Dialogues under the LESC Initiative were to provide space for participants,

whether community representatives or public officials, to express scepticism, concerns or hesitations about the desirability and feasibility of MLE.

In this context, the Facilitated Dialogues provided extensive, rich and targeted information on research around MLE, and on models and experiences from other countries, in Southeast Asia and globally. These were discussed and critiqued, and stimulated the development and expansion of alternatives, on whether external models were applicable locally, and if not then what changes were needed, what local and relevant research could be sourced to inform local decision-making, and brainstorming about options, possibilities, new lines of development and partnerships. A set part of all the Facilitated Dialogues was focused on how best to implement changes and to address the challenges of MLE in each specific context through local innovation, borrowing from elsewhere, and debating problems to understand the true nature of the challenges facing local communities in light of national, regional and global trends.

One clear conclusion that emerged from these intense and creative discussions was that MLE should be pursued because of the three clusters of reasons identified above, that it leads to better and fairer education; that MLE encourages stronger identity and citizenship with the payoff of enhanced prospects for peaceful coexistence; and finally that well-designed MLE is needed to bring about higher levels of social participation by all groups in society.

4

LESC activities – Research in action

Essentially, all the activities undertaken through the LESC Initiative represent action research to support effective, participatory language planning and policy endeavours. The conceptualization of the LESC Initiative was based in an increasingly shared international literature, and a growing body of common concepts on language policy, linguistic human rights, literacy and MLE. Particularly important is the discipline of language policy and planning, which includes language education policy and planning as a subset (Spolsky 2012; Lo Bianco 2010a, 2010b, 2012). Not all language policy is explicitly declared, often it is subsumed within other policy, such as education delivery, or testing of children's reading abilities.

When language issues are addressed openly and directly, especially when this is done in a facilitated process such as the Facilitated Dialogues that are a key mechanism for the LESC Initiative, language is temporarily isolated from its context in education, law, the labour market etc., and becomes the focus of discussion and decision-making. By focusing directly on language, there is a move to explicit language planning that represents an opportunity to address important questions that otherwise are not systematically dealt with (Warotamasikkhadit and Person 2011).

The main methodology of the LESC Initiative was to draw on a range of research and dialogue mechanisms to encourage and model comprehensive language education planning. In the specific sites where these dialogues occurred in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand different questions were discussed. For example, in Hat Yai, Thailand the discussion focused on the relationship between the two languages of South Thailand throughout society. In Malaysia, some Dialogues looked at Chinese and Tamil in relation to English and Malay, or the languages of Borneo and their place in kindergarten or schools. In the Myanmar Dialogues, discussion often focused on how to encourage national reconciliation and ethnic rights, how to support small minority languages in schools where other non-dominant languages had more speakers, how to improve literacy and education in the national language, how and when to support and introduce English, and how to build a culture of dialogue and ethnic interaction. What unites these and other points of discussion is the general activity of language planning and language policymaking. The following sections provide an overview of the range of language planning and policy mechanisms utilized in working towards the LESC aims.

4.1 Language status planning

Status refers to the legal standing of a language. Developing a greater understanding of this concept among participants has been an important component of the LESC activities. A language can have

a status allocated to it through law, as in a constitution, or it can gain a powerful status through the economy, technology or the military strength of countries that use that language, or it can have prestige that comes from cultural products, such as popular music, film, or ancient traditions. Participants in all Dialogues have shown keen interest in how multilingual societies work, how different languages can have different functions, and how countries all across the world attempt to solve the challenges of a multilingual population. Because the Dialogues often brought together people and organizations with very different and sometimes antagonistic views, the facilitator used methods and activities to encourage understanding of different positions, and to show how relatively small compromises can greatly affect the severity of conflict and contribute to a sense of a more cohesive society.

In all three LESC countries, minority populations' relationships to official languages and to a narrow interpretation of what it means to declare one language official has created friction, misunderstanding and hostility. These sentiments can be alleviated by exploring policy alternatives, or by understanding the various ways in which it is possible to acknowledge, whether in law, administration or just in social practice, a legal or semi-legal status of minority languages.

In Thailand, the LESC researcher conducted a survey, in the form of a 'communication audit' of how several government departments and offices relate to local communities in written, spoken and telephone-based communication. This audit was a study of 'how the state speaks' with its citizens, responding to a report of the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) which in 2006 in response to grievances from Malay speakers suggested that Patani Malay should be granted official working

Facilitated Dialogue, Naypyidaw, July 2014
Credit: J. Lo Bianco

status in the Southern provinces. The research documented the levels of Thai, Malay and mixed communication, and the methods used to communicate, and frequencies of use of interpreters and other supports. This was done to show that the region could benefit from assigning Patani Malay official regional status to provide better information flow between government and citizens, which would alleviate a common grievance of the linguistic majority in the Southern provinces.

The report contained a large number of practical, relatively inexpensive options that would improve communication. Many countries in the world with a geographically localized large minority (in the Thai case the minority is a majority in three provinces) have alleviated ethnic violence and agitation by similar measures. If undertaken it would be a concession on the part of Thailand that could potentially have a very large practical and symbolic impact, not only making life easier for Patani Malay speakers on a practical level, but also recognizing their historical presence and unique culture.

In Myanmar, LESC addressed the question of the status of languages through expert input to the Comprehensive Education Sector Review, with input to the committee drafting a new education law, with professional development for education officials on MLE language policies, and with a series of Facilitated Dialogues in the national capital, Naypyidaw, and in two states, Mon and Kayin. Out of this process, a series of national principles, known as the Naypyidaw principles, were agreed and have since become the basis for an extension of the LESC Initiative entitled 'Peace Promoting National Language Policy for Myanmar'. As in the other national settings, the research and action work in Myanmar ranges well beyond education into related areas of law, municipal administration, community-school networks and links, and public education.

In all three countries, there is high demand for English, with the role of English expanding from a subject on the curriculum of schools to increasingly being used as a medium of instruction in higher education and secondary schooling. English has a central function in the overall Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) project, which has used English as a *lingua franca* amongst its member states since its inception (Kirkpatrick 2010). Language planning processes need to accommodate the demand for learning of English, whose status must not be at the expense of other communicative needs, or used as a pretext to avoid providing adequate language services to minority, rural and economically disadvantaged children. It is significant that in all three LESC countries, and in Southeast Asia more generally, English learning is intensely stratified by geography (rural-urban) and socio-economic status, which can exacerbate language-based problems and increase educational inequity (Lo Bianco 2011, 2013). It is crucial that English is incorporated into wider language policy discussions and decisions, but it is also paramount that it does not distort language policies to the detriment of local language communities.

The LESC Initiative promoted comprehensive language planning that led to language policies sensitive to multiple language needs. It has attempted to model the process of language policy writing so that local communities can further develop and deepen their language planning over time. The LESC model of language policy writing (Lo Bianco 2010a, 2010b, 2012) is based on collective, dialogue-based, expert-coordinated planning. This seeks to combine in a single and coordinated process, both top-down and bottom-up activities of language decision-making. The question of language status is a controversial issue in all three countries, made worse by the lack of any comprehensive approach to language planning, to which the LESC Initiative has responded.

4.2 Corpus planning

Much less needs to be said about corpus planning within LESC but it remains an important aspect of the research in action approach taken in the Initiative. Corpus planning refers to the linguistic development of a language. This includes the establishment and development of orthographies, the standardization of varieties of a language, and modernization of languages to ensure that a language can meet the educational, technological and economic needs of a community.

Corpus planning is vital when focusing on mother tongue education, and its aims are closely related to status planning. A number of the Facilitated Dialogues included educative and participatory components focused on corpus planning and its importance in moving towards increasing the domains of use for language, particularly leading to the development of literacy materials for educational and other contexts. Corpus planning is often a very highly specialized activity within linguistics. If professionals develop new norms, vocabulary or writing systems for a language, however, these will only succeed if community members and educational institutions are actively involved in negotiating, agreeing to and adopting these norms or changes (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997). Corpus planning issues are important in many parts of Thailand, and in the Deep South in relation to the development of Patani Malay.

The script used to write the language (*Rumi* or Roman, *Jawi* or old Arabic, or Thai) and the general development of the language, and its relationship to the standard Bahasa Malaysia used in Malaysia are important questions with both practical relevance in teaching, public signage and wider use of the language, but very important from a symbolic point of view. All across Malaysia's indigenous language repertoire, 137 spoken languages, many similar corpus planning issues arise. In Myanmar this is even more complex due to the existence of a wider range of scripts and so corpus planning questions become relevant in all language policy exercises in these and similar settings.

4.3 Language in education or acquisition planning

Acquisition planning has been the major focus of the LESC activities. It focuses on the best ways and times to develop and acquire language abilities, in the existing language of the learner and in new or additional ones, but also literacy, in and out of the formal education system. Children and adults are always learning, in and out of formal education. In recognition of this fact that language and learning are not confined exclusively to formal institutions, but occur *informally* in society and inside the family, and also '*non-formally*' outside the structures of schools, colleges and universities, the LESC Initiative employed an 'ecological' understanding of acquisition planning.

Language acquisition takes place across the continuum of informal, formal and non-formal activities, each one contributing a different aspect of what we acquire, use and develop of our language abilities. A sensitive and comprehensive approach to language planning should take account of this reality of learning, which is especially important for minority, indigenous and isolated populations who often have limited access to the formal settings. An ecological framework or understanding stresses the interconnections across all the communication resources and needs of individuals and groups within a particular society. Some of these are more flexible than others, some are learner-centred, others are directed and didactic,

some are assessed and examined, others are not, some are negotiated between learner and expert, and others are imposed through text books, dictionaries and syllabuses. These patterns of learning a language are linked to how a learner is socialized, meaning how the learner becomes a social member of a particular group, whether it is a professional group, or adulthood, or membership in an ethnic community, a gender role or another kind of role the individual plays. Language is critical to all of these roles and LESC Initiative through the Facilitated Dialogues discussed with participants this idea that in planning language the social context is also being shaped and changed.

Across the three countries, attention was given to language and communication needs at multiple levels, in order to understand which languages and language requirements need to be addressed through which parts of the education system. This includes the national languages of each context, the sub-national languages of ethnic and regional populations, as well as English and other international languages, including languages of migration in each country. The communication needs of blind and deaf populations and of the non-literate, or those with low levels of literacy, also formed part of the focus of the discussions. As the LESC Initiative focused on aspects of language planning and policy, and on building understanding of and demand for these processes across each context, fully comprehensive policy development was beyond the remit of the first phase of the Initiative. However, the aim of comprehensive language policies should be to ultimately address the full range of communication needs of a society and this is what has since occurred in the case of Myanmar, where the LESC Initiative phase one has expanded into a major new activity of comprehensive nation-wide language policy writing, accompanied by a major international conference at the University Mandalay in February 2016.

4.4 Solving language problems

Language problems were identified in the LESC Initiative through the specially designed 'Facilitated Dialogues' (see below for further explanation). The broad aims of the Facilitated Dialogues were to collectively address a range of language problems and respond to them in evidence-based facilitated seminars, aiming to foster understanding and debate on the nature of these language problems and to move towards consensus and collaboration on how they should be resolved. Inevitably what individual participants considered to be the most important communication problems varied greatly. Depending on the social position, language, ethnicity and national experience of individuals a wide range of different problems were named, with considerable debate and disagreement about which ones should be given policy attention and which ones could be left to the 'private' realm of family, community, village or township.

The process of the Facilitated Dialogue involved many hours devoted to understanding various aspects of what language problems were raised by participants, and included misunderstandings between stakeholders; differences in priorities; differences in socio-political viewpoints; and in cases of conflict around language an often serious legacy of distrust. In the very positive evaluations of the Facilitated Dialogues, the hundreds of participants often singled out the process of deep engagement with this topic as a great benefit. In one Facilitated Dialogue in Myanmar, a senior education official commented that it was the first occasion in her long professional career as a senior official that she had listened to indigenous people describe language problems faced by their children, something she found emotionally moving and compelling.

In another dialogue in Myanmar, a different and equally senior individual in a non-education ministry pointed out that the process was promoting what he called "a culture of dialogue", and that it wasn't simply "us experts who will fix things, but we can talk about it". In one compelling case, indigenous people modified their demands and grievances against the state and were able to negotiate a compromise with Ministry officials, agreeing that their children should acquire the national language. Throughout the LESC Initiative there were many achievements of this kind, through a culture of giving space and agency to diverse aggrieved parties with little experience of direct interaction with each other. Conflict and hostility in relations between groups was anticipated and the design of the Facilitated Dialogues allowed for collaborative work across differences, for evidence to be introduced to help participants re-frame and re-think their positions, for emotions to cool and for genuine debate and discussion to occur. The Mae Sot Dialogue (see below), conducted in several languages, with 68 people, representing 22 organizations and 12 Myanmar ethnic groups, produced a 32-page agreed statement, created an organization – Myanmar Indigenous Network for Education – issued an agreed press release and has continued to shape developments in Myanmar education (Michaels 2014).

Deliberation processes can lead to a sense that language problems that provoke conflict can be 'tractable', that is, they can be addressed or even solved with structured facilitated discussion. An additional aim was to experiment with the new skills and methods for solving language problems so participants could gain the ability to participate in language policy debates in an informed way, becoming more adept at negotiating with public authorities, writing alternative policy prescriptions, making evidence based demands, preparing submissions, doing research on local problems and needs, and representing their case for change or improvement in effective and systematic ways. A central part of all the Facilitated Dialogues was this process of taking a stand, agreeing on the framework, writing new positions and locating evidence to bolster the case being made. Such activities are important in conflict-affected areas, where trust building is a necessary component of co-existence in civil society and political life. Contentious language and education policy issues can be discussed both to address the specific problems at hand, and also to model practices of collective decision-making in technically specific fields such as corpus development of a language.

More than 500 individuals from over 320 organizations participated in the deliberative processes conducted by Prof. Lo Bianco and local partners and UNICEF country offices in Myanmar (four Facilitated Dialogues in Mae Sot [Thailand], Mawlamyine and Naypyidaw), Thailand (one Facilitated Dialogue in Hat Yai) and Malaysia (three Facilitated Dialogues in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak), supplemented by on-site visits, post-deliberation consultations and ongoing discussion.

4.5 Training in language planning

Capacity building to create more responsive institutions that react more quickly and effectively to issues affecting children's rights is one of UNICEF's key goals, as well as one of the outcomes of the Learning for Peace programme. Capacity building was an integral component of the Facilitated Dialogues. Specific training in methods of writing language policies was communicated to officials and community organizations throughout the project. In a regional effort by UNICEF EAPRO and the University of Melbourne, evidence and experience-based methodological guidelines for problem-solving local dialogues and a regional strategy for their broader implementation, including a fundraising proposal, will be developed as part of the LESC Initiative. The aim is to give communities, governments and organizations the proven, research-

based skills and tools to navigate difficult issues and create more socially equitable and cohesive societies by tackling the corrosive effects of unresolved language problems and inequalities.

4.6 Public education on contentious issues

Methods of dealing with controversial topics were included in all Dialogues, talks and meetings across the Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand contexts. These included the general question of how to provide educational access and how to raise education achievement in poor multilingual environments and the role of languages other than national languages in the education system. The dialogues also looked at how to approach the challenge of multiple languages in a single school, district or state, and what kinds of policy decisions can be implemented to provide adequate education for all children. In some Dialogues, questions of written script in schools were also addressed; the role of English in high ethnic areas; the timing and sequence of new languages in education, and the best age and method to introduce new literacy in a new language.

Other contentious questions involved how to designate different languages, for example, what is an 'official', 'national' or 'regional' language? What are 'language rights'? What is the best education for disadvantaged children and adolescents? How can the best educational opportunities be provided for isolated, itinerant and undocumented children and adolescents, who have little ability to influence or change their situations?

4.7 Mitigating conflict

Efforts to directly contribute to mitigating conflict associated with unresolved politics of language, or tensions and grievances around language issues has been a major focus of the LESC work from its inception. The most explicit way this was done was through the processes and the outcomes of the Facilitated Dialogues, and especially by transforming often angry grievances and hostile advocacy into a more systematic series of evidence-based demands, collaborative agreements negotiated collectively, and through identifying which changes in language arrangements can be made locally and pursuing those, and which ones require action in law or administration and are therefore higher processes.

It frequently transpires in dialogues that in the absence of information, data and research, some questions which appear controversial, intractably difficult to resolve or incomprehensible, can be allayed, mitigated or redressed through information gathering activity. Through surveys of alternative models and policies, new ideas and possibilities were considered in many of the Facilitated Dialogues and new approaches explored, having the effect of shifting attention away from conflicts that had become 'fossilized' into the rigid position taking that antagonistic groups often practice.

Conflict can be around symbolic questions as well as pragmatic/practical questions. In the latter category, we find a clear connection between language and social disparities such as literacy and academic achievement dictated by different language abilities among learners and social groups. Access to national languages, prestige forms of academic communication and articulate expressive ability are all questions of language which are typically underestimated in public policy, in conflict

resolution practices and in activities aiming to foster national unity. These questions are highly amenable to conflict reduction if Facilitated Dialogues or other processes can produce a shared project of raising education standards for all, informed by the special needs of minority groups.

4.8 Writing guidelines and developing theory and understanding

A vital aim of LESC Initiative was to develop new and better understandings of links between language and its broader roles in society. More specifically, these links manifest between language in use, language education, language in society and language policy, and questions of social tension, conflict, mobility, resilience and cohesion. A key outcome of the project involves systematically mapping language and conflict according to a matrix along the above lines. This will take the form of practical guides as well as academic writing. A deeper understanding of the complex interaction between language and conflict in multi-ethnic societies is urgently required under contemporary conditions of rapid and deep globalization of economies, vast mobility of populations, and the diffusion of information and networking technologies. This question of deepening understanding and developing theory and more strategic interventions in future is an important task for future development in PBEA and LESC.

4.9 Extensive research using written documents

A review of relevant documents including legal texts, educational jurisdiction documents and academic literature in relation to each site was complemented by looking at supra-national sources (e.g., documents produced by UNICEF, ASEAN, NGOs); and public media; among other materials.

Facilitated Dialogue, Kuala Lumpur, April 2014
Credit: J. Lo Bianco

This desk research produced a local situation analysis, which formed the basis for the design of each Facilitated Dialogue, ensuring that it was designed to respond to actual debates and real problems of language, which were then raised and refined in the dialogue itself.

4.10 Facilitated Dialogues

The central component of the LESC Initiative has been the use of Facilitated Dialogues. The Facilitated Dialogues as applied in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand, for national and sub-national groups, and some Asia-wide consultations for high level officials on language policy, were designed and utilized by Prof. Lo Bianco in language policy and conflict resolution in Sri Lanka (1998–9 and 2000–2, 2004); Scotland (2002); Alberta, Canada (2004); Samoa (1980s), and in various Pacific Island Countries during the late 1980s; originating in the process of writing the National Policy on Languages in Australia (Lo Bianco 1987). These deliberation methods have evolved over time to include the growing body of concepts and understandings of language planning, sociolinguistics, multilingualism in education and society, and the general idea of language and communication problems.

The general approach of a language problem solving dialogue has also been shaped by reference to a vibrant academic literature on 'deliberation' and 'deliberative democracy'. Deliberative democracy has become an important feature of research into public policy problem solving in general, and democratic practice in particular, in several social science disciplines in recent decades. When linked to the solving of practical problems using democratic procedures to facilitate consensus, agreement, compromise, and to deepen understanding of issues, these methods can be seen as part of a surge in thinking about the limits of conventional government policymaking as practiced for many years (e.g., Dryzek 1990; Dryzek and Niemeyer 2006; Uhr 1998).

The Facilitated Dialogues applied in the LESC Initiative bring together these various approaches into a highly focused, intensive, facilitated language planning exercise and are discussed at length throughout this report and specifically in the country sections below. Facilitated Dialogues offer an optimistic prospect for negotiating change at any level, from local through to national and regional levels, and even at the global level. The essential aim is to create policy alternatives for problems already being debated and which are the cause of conflict, tension or policy paralysis. For this reason, Facilitated Dialogues are a practical and cost-effective way to immediately and flexibly address language issues. New approaches to understating all language as interactive dialogue are also important in the Facilitated Dialogues methodology.

Through interactive dialogue participants display and negotiate identity, position themselves and others in particular ways, and negotiate, understand and deliberate on information. This means Facilitated Dialogues that take language problems as their focus lend themselves to awareness-raising on how dialogue – that is language in use – influences how people think, and how they make decisions, reach agreements, diverge and converge with the views of others. This means Facilitated Dialogues that address language problems through dialogue have the added advantage of being able to raise awareness of the role of language in thinking, decision-making, interaction and social relationships. For this reason the Facilitated Dialogues are a tool of building social cohesion and collaboration and of promoting shared local identities of participants.

The Facilitated Dialogues contained many exercises, simulations and other mechanisms to raise general awareness of language in social and intellectual life, including practical questions of how to manage multilingual societies and what counts as a language problem or language issue. In the context of the LESC Initiative, the intention of the Facilitated Dialogues has been to promote consensus and mutual understanding among stakeholders in relation to educational rights, equity and diversity for all children in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand. They are language planning in action. The dialogues have sought to create policy ideas to assist marginalized, disadvantaged and indigenous or minority children for whom educational inequality perpetuates cycles of poor educational outcomes and to foster alignments of interests among groups. The procedures and processes of Facilitated Dialogues should be detailed in separate material as experience-based methodological guidelines for problem-solving local dialogues. This is described in 1.8 Recommendations, above.

5

LESC – New understandings and achievements

The LESC Initiative involved more than 100 onsite consultations, observations and site visits; 35 local conferences, seminars and workshops; and 90 interviews and focus meetings; involving over 500 personnel and over 320 organizations. It produced an extended database for analysis of perceptions and documented links between questions of language and social cohesion. Twelve Facilitated Dialogues have been completed across Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand and have produced written policy principles, and involved the discussion and classification of a range of language problems.

Work has commenced on drafting inclusive and evidence-based language policies with an appreciation of realistic and achievable goals. These policy alternatives have been collectively authored by participants, and the experience of participating in designing viable alternative policies is part of the sustainability design of the LESC Initiative. In all cases the results of the Facilitated Dialogues have been submitted, in person and in writing, to education officials. In Malaysia, they were incorporated into a government cabinet submission, and in Thailand they have been directly submitted to senior education officials at the local and national level. In Myanmar, two states, Mon and Kayin, have already prepared state policies, the national level has issued a set of 10 agreed principles for developing national language policy, and these have been adapted to the situation of special needs for deaf and visually impaired children, to the Mon and Kayin states, and progressively in Shan, Kachin, Kayah and Chin states. Other processes are being devised to extend these principles to districts, regions and states not yet covered. In addition, a major international conference is to take place in February 2016 to discuss progress towards the adoption of a 'peace promoting national language policy', a conference that has received the endorsement of the Myanmar Minister of Education and the various other high level agencies.

The involvement of government officials, community representatives and experts has ensured that a broad cross section of participants have come to understand the perspective and priorities of other groups better and are more willing to participate in policy writing exercises which take each other's needs and interests into account.

The evaluations completed as part of many of the LESC Initiative Facilitated Dialogues showed practically universal enthusiasm for the process, and high appreciation of the effect of consultative and guided language decision-making. Participants often expressed surprise at how much progress is possible in collaborative and guided facilitation. The great majority of participants have acquired an enhanced awareness of language problems and some insight into how to tackle these problems.

Many issues of dispute, such as arguments about when to introduce minority languages or when to replace them as language of instruction with the national language were debated with participants distinguishing between 'ideal' models and practical compromises.

Other issues included whether it is possible to move from teaching ethnic/indigenous languages merely as after school time subjects to using them as teaching languages within the mainstream timetable, and if so what are the syllabus, textbook, teacher training, assessment, classroom and lesson planning issues that need to be resolved. Often the Facilitated Dialogues devoted attention to local resources and what can be done to complement, supplement or extend what schools are able to do. In some cases full policy alternatives and different models of practice were designed, press releases issued, participants role played being Ministers of Education making supportive or negative responses to the Facilitated Dialogue recommendations and then prepared responses, thereby learning skills in persuasive argumentation, using data and evidence to build a case for change and improvement.

In addition to direct feedback received following each Facilitated Dialogue on ranked evaluation sheets, strong appreciation of the significant progress achieved and value of the Facilitated Dialogues was publicly expressed at the 'Regional Language, Education and Social Cohesion Knowledge Sharing Workshop', organized on 15–17 September 2014 in Yangon, Myanmar. The workshop served as a platform whereby the LESC participating countries – Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand – shared best practices, lessons learned and initial findings from the work that had been undertaken in their respective countries.

All three country reports presented at the 'Knowledge Sharing Workshop' articulated the significant and positive impact of the Facilitated Dialogues and expressed a desire to see the development of written documentation of the processes and methods utilized in order to continue their endeavours towards greater social cohesion. The workshop also allowed other countries facing tensions, conflict or erosion in social cohesion – Cambodia, Indonesia (Papua and West Papua province), and Vietnam – to acquire an understanding of the process of the Facilitated Dialogues and their effectiveness from their counterparts. Representatives of these countries made strong declarations of support for the ideals and aims of the LESC Initiative as it was implemented in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand, and stated that the benefits and value of LESC would be equally applicable in their setting. Each country delegation identified areas of specific concern in regard to social cohesion that they felt could potentially benefit from the processes undertaken in the initial LESC Initiative.

The country reports presented at the Yangon 'Knowledge Sharing Workshop' provided evidence of how the expert, organized structure of the Facilitated Dialogues generated constructive and positive relationships among stakeholders. The Malaysia report underscored how the Facilitated Dialogue process created a sense of ownership and agency around language and education by indigenous representatives in the two Facilitated Dialogue sessions in Kota Kinabalu and Kuching. The extent of take up and local effects across the three countries, however, varied considerably between them (see Appendices 1 and 2, and the UNICEF Country Reports).

The most significant progress has been made in Myanmar, where, initially, some very hostile and belligerent views among individuals and groups were transformed in the course of the Dialogues.

This was mediated through the process of coming to understand how to meet the challenge of multilingualism, either through direct discussion with community representatives or by reflecting on international evidence of language rights and multicultural policy in different parts of the world. Some minority group representatives who recalled suffering and oppression under military rule, and who were initially unwilling to negotiate compromise positions with majority community representatives, have likewise acknowledged that the Facilitated Dialogue process and informed supportive dialogue has assisted them and can strengthen their democratic and cultural rights.

Several public officials who had originally declared that any legal or policy concessions towards minority cultures and languages would be divisive and unacceptable, have become supporters of the need for more tolerant, inclusive and pluralistic policies. Public officials admitted on several occasions that they had never before had the opportunity to hear a reasoned case for mother tongue education. In several cases, such individuals reported to being 'won over' to the needs and challenges for minority groups. While not all Facilitated Dialogues led to such high levels of consensus, the experience of jointly authoring policy preambles and declarations was universally considered a powerful practice of learning alternative ways of thinking, of coming to appreciate the validity of different views, and even the forging collaborations and friendships.

A particular outcome has been the persuasion of public officials that comprehensive multilingual language policy can be prepared collaboratively at the national and state levels, with significant national benefits in the education of minority children, improved social cohesion and greater impact on peacebuilding through relationships between all sectors of society (Woolman 2006). Significant advancements were achieved in the Malaysia and Thailand contexts, although further initiatives are required to advance peacebuilding language-related activities there, as has been recommended. A summary of the processes utilized and the outcomes achieved through the LESC Initiative is provided in Figure 2.

The figure below (Figure 2) depicts the main elements of the process of the LESC Initiative and key outcomes. The far left boxes account for the main methods used, the box in the middle captures the main outcomes from a social cohesion and community relations perspective, and the up and down arrows depict the effects in language planning and community relations terms.

Overall, the LESC Initiative has been very effective not merely in providing information and educative experiences about language problems and their solution, but in practical experience of policy writing. This activity itself, because it is done with individuals and groups of different interests, and several times hostile and antagonistic ones, has performed its own outcome, of fostering collaborative socially cohesive dialogue.

The specific focus of the dialogues is language and its links to conflict. The interplay between language status, education and conflict, and language policy processes appears to be precisely what PBEA aspired to do. This was to analyse and understand conflicts better, and create tools for redressing and mitigating such conflicts.

It is clear from the LESC Initiative that language policy processes can play a vital role in generating consensus, trust, and collaborative approaches to decision-making and enactment as well as building better language solutions to communication and language problems.

Figure 2: LESC process and outcomes

Facilitated Dialogues Policy Forums Workshops Bilateral meetings Consultations	1. Understanding of differing stakeholder values 2. Constructive engagement 3. Engagement with academic research and evidence in language and literacy 4. Increased sense of ability to effect change 5. Increased trust 6. Convergence of ideas 7. Consensus 8. Collaborative action 9. Fostering a culture of dialogue 10. Scrutiny of existing models of good practice	• Language planning and policy development • Collaborative decision-making • Inclusive policies • Educational progression
Information sessions on langauge planning and policy and multilingual education Knowledge sharing		• Language tension • Poor educational outcomes

5.1 Language and social cohesion

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

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

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

This understanding of social cohesion places a considerable burden on civil collaboration and if a definition of this kind is adopted, particular challenges arise in the devolution of authority for local communication practices, for effective communication, and for the progression of networks of social discourse to facilitate the cooperation implied. Rapid development and growth is a feature of the Asia-Pacific region and with each new stage of development and change, all societies face new challenges and demands which can often compound unresolved questions of ethnicity and language.

Within these complex, multi-causal dilemmas, language is clearly implicated and some focus on its status in law, public administration and education is needed to progress towards a solution of the conflict.

Recognition of the symbolic value of linguistic diversity, both in the education system and more broadly in the community, is critical for improving social cohesion. By supporting the right of people to remain associated with their language and culture, by supporting this through MLE, children and young people generally are supported to attain greater access to literacy skills and the content and knowledge of curriculum subjects. These abilities lead to better educational outcomes, which in the long term, can improve access rates to higher education, and improve completion rates in schooling and post-school study or training. There is ample evidence also of improved health outcomes and greater economic productivity and competitiveness.

An impediment to progression on this issue, in part, is concern on the part of governments around more regional and local forms of autonomy and the devolution of decision-making – what are the consequences for political unity? Yet research, and the ongoing conflict, tension and rising educational inequality in conflict-affected societies, shows that refusal to acknowledge differences in language use can often provoke precisely the problems feared.

The following schematic representation (Figure 3) details some of the variables, identified through the LESC Initiative, which could facilitate links between language and social cohesion. Figure 3 applies language and communication factors, including language planning processes, as identified in the LESC Initiative to the three OECD dimensions of social cohesion (inclusion, capital and mobility).

Figure 3: Facilitating links between language and social cohesion
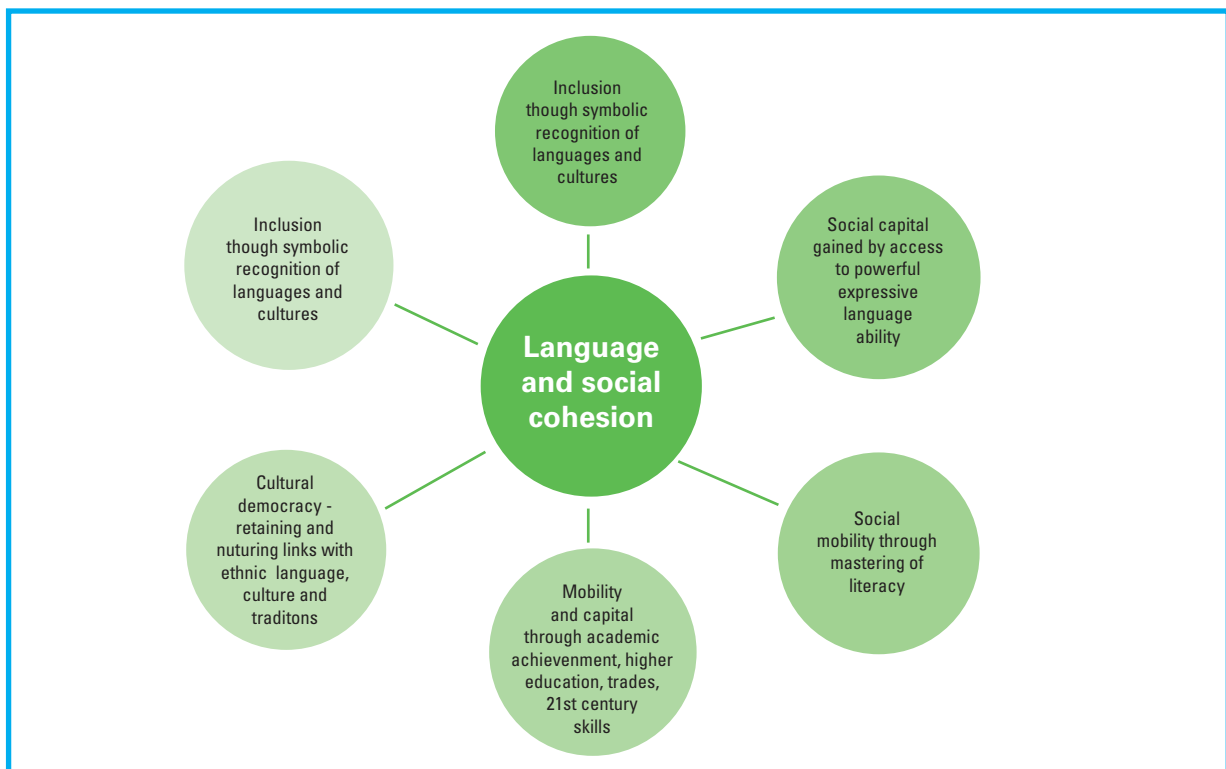
5.2 Language planning and policy

The practical methods for resolving language tensions which have proved effective and popular through Facilitated Dialogues and other activities of the LESC Initiative have illuminated an attainable pathway for community organizations, public officials and others interested in the relationship between language and social cohesion. The challenge for language policy formulation throughout the EAP region now is how to expand these successes and build new appreciation of the non-threatening role that multilingualism can play in social and education policy. A key aim for the future is to shift the attitude that prevails in policy circles that sees multiple languages as a hindrance to social and technological modernization, education delivery and economic modernization. The first and essential move in policy is to adjust public perception of diversity so that it is accepted and acknowledged as a normal, natural and inevitable aspect of society. The second and equally essential move is to create the institutions and programmes to ensure that widespread learning of languages occurs. The aim must be to secure common languages of communication and national unity and cohesion, within a framework where languages of local and ethnic identity are valued and supported.

One part of this is to engage in processes such as the Facilitated Dialogues and to discuss the role of multilingualism within united cohesive societies. A functional approach to the diverse roles of languages and what they are called and perceived to be – national, official, ethnic, regional, global, indigenous, identity based – would be a valuable reflective exercise that can encourage discussion of citizenship, national identity and its relationship to diversity. On the other hand, there is an urgent need to address the abilities of schools and higher education institutions to support higher levels of educational attainment and of employment and professional advancement beyond schooling. The latter focus concerns achievement, skills, capabilities and knowledge. These two directions, affirming identity and encouraging ability, are both related to and dependent on language. In the contemporary world in which the majority of the science and technical literature of higher education and trades is available mostly or exclusively in English, many students will need to have at least a reading ability in English.

Similarly, most national education systems will rely on the standard form of national languages. For all learners therefore, knowledge of these languages will be an expected part of both citizenship and economic advancement. However for large numbers of students, both of these, the national language and the global language, are a second and third language. Education systems need to be reimagined to include multilingual progression, from mother tongues, to national languages, to global language skills, each language being retained in the later stages, so that the aim is to be fully functional in three languages. Of course not all students will fit into this model, some will involve just the national language and English, with other global and local languages offered to ensure a rich array of possibilities and three-language study for all students.

If the above can be seen as a set of ultimate aims, a specific pathway needs to be designed according to different, local situations of communication, and this will require language policy and planning processes.

Language is directly important for economic life and the various interrelated studies undertaken as part of the LESC Initiative work together to bridge the broad span of issues upon which language questions impact. Critically, literacy achievements in schooling have a direct and large impact on the employment prospects and health of people. The first language as we have seen is often critical to success in schooling,

and for highly disadvantaged populations the mother tongue at initial years of education is essential for continuation and persistence in attendance. Without these basic steps the most ambitious national modernization and economic development plans will be vulnerable because there will be large-scale inequality in education access, grievances from minority populations that education is unrepresentative and non-inclusive, and the three principles of the OECD approach to social cohesion (inclusion, mobility, capital) will be violated.

Language and education planning activities should take account of the need for all students to:

i.   gain full access to knowledge, skills and abilities imparted through the general curriculum and in subject areas such as science, mathematics, geography, history, health and hygiene and civics;
ii. gain full literacy and speaking competence in the mother tongue, the national language, English, or other relevant languages; and
iii. gain the expressive ability to conduct conversations in a persuasive, inclusive and harmonious way, and to participate as an active citizen in public life.

These activities need to be supported through the development of comprehensive communication strategies, which involve collaboration by relevant parties including all levels of government, educational authorities and practitioners, communities, minority and ethnic groups, and CSOs. Key to the success

Language questions span a vast range of issues and therefore only a negotiated, expert-informed and comprehensive approach, can aspire to realistically address language problems.

of a comprehensive language planning are a combination of technical skills and knowledge, based on contemporary research knowledge and evidence, linked to the discursive process of deliberation, as modelled in the Facilitated Dialogues. In conflict-affected areas, language planning of this kind can support development of confidence and trust between citizens and government and among different groups within the population and in this way make an independent contribution to peacebuilding.

6

Findings

Collaborative processes of decision-making informed and guided by research evidence are urgently needed and have proved very effective in the LESC Initiative. Bottom-up and expert-guided processes of language planning need to be enacted. The aim should be to achieve deeper consensus on language policy than has previously been achieved. Despite impressive historical and technically expert experience of language planning on behalf of their main national languages, significant challenges remain in the three countries for minority languages.

The LESC Initiative has shown that there is serious disparity between the perceptions of minority groups and officials. New methods and practices of language planning are urgently required to foster national unity – methods which go far beyond 'consultation' as a modality of seeking endorsement or compliance of populations. These outcomes must be integrated into main planning documents of the government. The most general claim therefore, from the present LESC research, is for a drastic need of evidence-based consultative processes of decision-making on disputed issues of language and on the general activity of language policymaking. Recommendations for such activities have been in all of the three country reports and briefly detailed in this regional synthesis report. Regional recommendations follow.

The LESC Initiative was undertaken across Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand, each a complex, multi-ethnic society with its own historical, educational and economic specificity. Despite these differences, and the diverse avenues through which the LESC Initiative has been enacted in each country, the overall Initiative has demonstrated that a range of shared and common mechanisms for addressing social cohesion/language problems can be effectively harnessed to alleviate language tensions. Generalizable findings from the Initiative are as follows:

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

Social conflict based on ethnic, religious, or economic tensions or antagonism is often more difficult to influence than language-based conflicts. Facilitated Dialogues have shown that it is possible to achieve a high level of agreement about language education goals in a relatively short period of time if the discussions are guided by research evidence, professional mediation and good will. While some kinds of human identities exclude others for example, racial and religious identities, by contrast, language identities are much more flexible. Because it is possible to foster and produce high levels of bi- and trilingualism through appropriate language education planning; because language can be used as a

Facilitated Dialogue, Mae Sot, February 2014
Credit: J. Lo Bianco

means for bringing about better social relations; and because language has a tangible material impact on an individual's performance and competitiveness in the economy at a time of rapid globalization, more effort should be invested in language policy development.

6.2 Collaborative decision-making informed by research has proven very effective in the Facilitated Dialogues

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

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

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

Given that the LESC Initiative found a serious disparity between the perceptions of minority groups and officials, it is critical that this issue is addressed through consultative processes for seeking consensus and common aims, as well as the devolution of decision-making and implementation so that through their actions, people and groups at the local level can effectively implement sustainable and long-term changes.

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

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

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

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

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in specific subjects is also potentially very useful to further language policy decisions, as are a multitude of diverse delivery modes, including various

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

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

Evidence-based decision-making means drawing from the best and most disciplined research in the world. However, this evidence requires localization to make it convincing and applicable. The LESC Initiative found evidence of education schemes of the highest calibre in all three countries. These initiatives need to be better documented and used to encourage improvement through lighthouse modelling of excellence.

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

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

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

National language-planning activities should address, in a comprehensive way, the totality of the communication needs of a society. These include the needs of all major groups but also of small minority communities. Deaf and blind communities and the communication needs of special populations (such as children with special needs and persons with disabilities) should be incorporated into a single coherent process of national language policy writing. Multilingualism is a resource upon which long-term health and vitality should be cultivated. The learning of economically and strategically important foreign languages should form a natural part of this endeavour. The reasons and advantages of a comprehensive approach

are many – one of the most important relates to the fact that the activity itself will be widely seen as responding to the needs of the overall community and not merely to single groups – and because it can be more efficient and effective to incorporate a wide focus rather than a narrow one. There are also ample opportunities for mutual learning and exchange.

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

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

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

The LESC research produced ample evidence that when a more inclusive approach is taken there is an increased likelihood of community understanding of other citizens' language needs and rights. Beyond education, language policy involves areas such as the status of languages in a multi-ethnic society; the official recognition of minority and regional languages; access to literacy and mother tongue teaching, access to prestige international languages; learning of the national language; script policy and the special communication needs of disabled children, and of sign language, public signage, use and training of interpreters and translators; among others. Reaching beyond education into civic and economic life also has the benefit of supporting national unity and pride in the nation that would take its citizens' unique communication needs seriously. In this way language policy processes can promote social cohesion by responding to the claim by some groups that the priority must be to stress national unity and cohesion at the same time as supporting minority, indigenous, migrant and disadvantaged populations who often are seeking redress for injustices, repression, marginalization and exclusion.

7

Recommendations

In order to build on the successful outcomes from the LESC Initiative, it is critical that personnel, including government officials, policymakers, educational practitioners and CSOs have a clear vision and stronger technical capacity in the area of LESC and MTB-MLE in the EAP region.

As requested by the UNICEF country offices involved in the original LESC Initiative and the 'Knowledge Sharing Workshop', disseminating and sharing the successful processes and methods developed through the LESC Initiative is a crucial capacity-building exercise. Such an activity would also greatly assist in attaining the PBEA goals of disseminating good practice, tools and methods for peacebuilding and social cohesion in the EAP region. The development of such documents, as detailed below, will support the endeavours of and serve as a guide for UNICEF staff, government officials, policymakers and practitioners from EAP countries (and elsewhere) in developing and implementing effective LESC/MTB-MLE programmes.

It will also assist in designing and supporting inclusive education and language policy planning processes that aim to create inclusive and equitable education and language policies geared towards upholding language rights and therefore human rights. These documents would inform initiatives within EAP countries which were part of the initial LESC Initiative, other countries in region, including Cambodia, Indonesia (Papua and West Papua province) and Vietnam who have already signalled their interest in participating in language planning and social cohesion activities, as well as supporting region-wide UNICEF initiatives aimed at defending and championing children's fundamental rights.

The following two activities are recommended:

7.1 A UNICEF regional strategy on LESC/MLE for the broader implementation of these strategies, including a fundraising proposal

A Regional LESC Strategy could build on the extensive documentation and research produced within the LESC Initiative in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand. The strategy would guide the UNICEF Regional Office and the country offices in the region to better plan their LESC and MTB-MLE related interventions. Specifically, the documentation will articulate both an overall regional strategy, along with country specific strategies. Both sections of the strategy should detail LESC/MTB-MLE Initiatives which could be undertaken and supported with the guidelines (outlined below), and detail why and how these activities will build on social cohesion within each country and across the EAP region.

The country by country component would identify strategies for three LESC-covered countries. First, it would incorporate the requests for assistance, articulated through the 'LESC Knowledge Sharing Workshop' and its report, by Cambodia, Indonesia (Papua and West Papua province) and Vietnam. Second, it would argue for support of the implementation of recommendations from the initial LESC Initiative, such as adoption of the recommendations from the Malaysia LESC Country Report, which have been presented as part of the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) submission, to the Malaysian cabinet in early February 2015. The mandate of NUCC is to prepare a National Unity Blueprint and national framework for the promotion of national unity, social cohesion and national reconciliation in Malaysia. Thirdly, the country by country section would identify strategies in additional countries across the region, including, identifying and building on the work of important actors in MLE related activities already underway.

A further critical component of the regional strategy is a fundraising prospectus. While the first component of the strategy would include information about what type of LESC and MBT-MLE initiatives should be undertaken, the fundraising prospectus would provide guidance for what it may cost to implement the strategies. Overall therefore, the regional strategy would provide clear identification of potential initiatives across the EAP region, accessible argumentation as to how and why these initiatives will contribute to and build on the aims of the PBEA programme and its LESC Initiative, and cost estimates for potential donors being sought to support the country-specific and region-wide initiatives.

7.2   Evidence and experience-based methodological guidance for problem-solving local dialogues

The proposed guide should be a technical compendium to support UNICEF staff, government and Ministry of Education officials, language policymakers, communities and other relevant actors involved in language policy development to engage in more inclusive, participatory and effective language policy planning processes and to use relevant participatory methodology such as a Facilitated Dialogues and negotiated democracy.

The guide would include, but not be limited to, a step-by-step template for initiating and implementing language planning and social cohesion initiatives, including details of the Facilitated Dialogue procedures. They would also include an accessible academic overview of key concepts in language planning and policy, and other relevant academic fields, outcomes and feedback from similar processes from the LESC Initiative, and case studies of effective practices across the region. Relevant visual materials will be incorporated such as photos, graphs and tables.

Both the Regional Strategy and the Methodological Guide should be developed with the aim of providing direction for UNICEF country offices and other development partners in their support for their government counterparts, Ministries of Education, policymakers and other education actors and practitioners in planning and implementing efficient LESC/MTB-MLE programmes and in developing solid language education policies that promote social cohesion.

7.3 Recommendations at the country level

The findings from the LESC Initiative also led to the recommendation of a range of actions to build on groundwork developed through the context-specific initiatives in each country. The following section provides a brief contextual overview of challenges in each country, along with recommendations for actions. Individual Country Reports and Appendices 1 and 2 provide a summary of activities, findings and recommendations for Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand.

7.3.1 Malaysia

The LESC Initiative in Malaysia focused on current practices and prevailing attitudes and values relating to language across the education spectrum. It involved a specific focus on the role of language status and language planning in creating or alleviating educational tensions and inequity, particularly for the main ethnic groups. The LESC Initiative in Malaysia was informed by rich, participatory research and fieldwork activities. These include bilateral meetings, interviews, consultations and Facilitated Dialogues with over 150 individuals belonging to over 100 organizations, institutions and governmental departments across Malaysia.

Among many positive outcomes, the Dialogues revealed a strong conviction of the need for an indigenous language policy, supported by a conference on indigenous languages and multilingualism for Sabah and Sarawak in 2016–2017. A key observation has been that the programmes and initiatives that currently make up the bulk of the activity of national unity promotion are essentially motivated by an ethos of overcoming existing problems, and only occasionally comprise of problem prevention. Tackling problems is important. Yet the LESC Initiative found that Malaysia needs to move towards an ambitious programme of social inclusion, fostering a sense of participatory citizenship, educational equality and cultural democracy reflected in its language policy.

Recommended actions

Funding is sought for a conference on indigenous languages and multilingualism for Sabah and Sarawak in 2016–2017, for a longer-term initiative developing an indigenous language policy, and for a comprehensive staged and public language planning initiative to:

- Forge a new language planning platform based on multilingualism
- Secure widespread public understanding and consensus for MLE and planning, and
- To ensure effective multilingual language planning

This initiative would take place through a series of Facilitated Dialogues, to be undertaken with indigenous groups as required, at the local level with government, education, CSOs and indigenous participants, along with a broader, national-level Facilitated Dialogue to ensure broader understanding of the issues and support for policy outcomes.

7.3.2 Myanmar

The LESC Initiative in Myanmar focused on the crucial task of fostering and integrating coordinated, comprehensive, evidence-based language policy. The specific policy goals include improvements to early

childhood education, primary schooling and post-primary education by creating inclusive language policy parameters that are aware of the sociolinguistic and ethnic diversity of Myanmar. The LESC Initiative in Myanmar was informed by rich, participatory research and fieldwork activities. These include bilateral meetings, interviews, consultations and four Facilitated Dialogues (three in Myanmar, one in Thailand) with over 200 individuals belonging to over 150 organizations, institutions and governmental departments across Myanmar. The LESC activities utilized concrete methods of language planning to support MLE in ethnic minority languages, in Myanmar and in strategic foreign languages.

The most important recommendation from the Myanmar Initiative was for the preparation of a peacebuilding and social cohesion-promoting national language policy for the Union. Based on the documented success of the original Initiative, on the expressed desires of participants and on the consensus and trust that was attained during the original activities, an extension of the original Initiative was granted by UNICEF in 2015. The process of developing a national language policy, with accompanying documentation and specialist reports is underway in 2015–16.

Recommended actions

Significant work has been undertaken through the LESC Initiative in establishing and developing relationships, trust and consensus; in identifying and negotiating aims and expectations, and in moving towards a common and harmonious representation of the language and education needs in Myanmar. Donor support is required to assist state-based ethnic groups in gaining access to knowledge around advocacy for mother tongue education and in the development of state-based language policies to work in conjunction with a national language policy.

Training is required on multiple fronts to support mother tongue-based education, including teacher training in multilingual methodologies, corpus planning and the development of literacy and numeracy materials, and the scaling up of MLE. The level of engagement with these challenges is affected by ongoing civil conflict in certain States and regions of Myanmar, along with recurring national disasters. In some cases, support could be provided through Facilitated Dialogues to develop a greater understanding of language and education and the role of MLE, while in other cases, progression may be further along and support may be required, for example, to implement newly developed language policies, for teacher training, or for assistance with the development of a writing system, and educational resources in a mother tongue.

7.3.3 Thailand

The LESC Initiative in Thailand centred on the Southern provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani, Songkla and Yala. The initiative addressed questions of language education, MTB-MLE, the choice of scripts for writing systems (Thai, Rumi, Yawi), and intercultural education and the status of Patani Malay in the context of Thai language, among other interconnected issues. The process was informed by rich, participatory research and fieldwork activities including interviews, consultations, bilateral meetings, and a Facilitated Dialogue. Many individuals belonging to over 70 organizations, institutions and government departments across Thailand contributed to the LESC activities and important groundwork towards progression around language-related issues was established.

Recommended actions

Three specific studies were developed, detailing recommendations and action proposals for language planning and policy undertakings in South Thailand at both the regional level – Southern Thailand – as well as the national level. Further work and funding is needed for implementation of the action proposals for the three initiatives aimed at addressing broader societal, as well as educational factors in alleviating language-related tensions. The three initiatives include:

- A Regional Status for the Patani Malay Language – Recommended actions include the development of a public communication strategy taking into account the existing multilingualism in Thailand's South; further research into cost effective models for improving multilingual written and spoken communication at the institutional level; and Facilitated Dialogues focused on gaining consensus and local ownership of the communication strategy and effective improvements in institutional settings.

- Scaling Up: Expanding bilingual education in Southern Thailand – Recommended actions include the expansion of current bilingual initiatives, linking with local academic institutions, supporting training in multilingual methodologies for teachers, as well as linking the bilingual initiatives in minority, rural and indigenous areas to general language policy developments.

- An Upper Primary and Junior Secondary School Intercultural Education Framework – It is recommended that the integration of intercultural education across the Thai curriculum should be undertaken in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education so that the content can be linked to an e-platform delivery for teacher support, as well as other cross-cutting activities of the Ministry such as Life Skills and ASEAN initiatives in education. Additional training should be provided for teacher educators, and supported through the development of a best practice guide, which would serve as a permanent record for lead teachers in how to implement Intercultural Methods within existing curricula and how to support novice or inexperienced teachers in its implementation.

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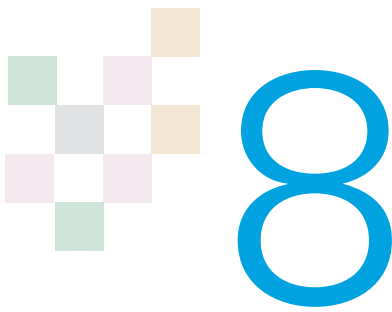
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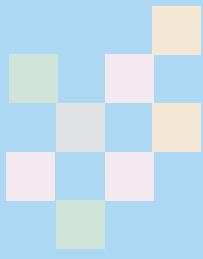
Appendices

Appendix 1: LESC activities by country: Malaysia

The LESC Initiative in Malaysia has been focused on language-planning activities for the main ethnic groups. Specifically, it has focused on the relations between the three streams of education in Malaysia, that is, the national schools where the medium of education is Malay, and Chinese-medium and Tamil-medium schools. An additional focus was placed on the special circumstances of indigenous communities (Orang Asli/Orang Asal children in peninsular and East Malaysia – Sabah and Sarawak). A brief overview of the LESC Malaysia Initiative is provided in this section. A detailed documentation of the LESC Malaysia processes and outcomes can be found in the final Malaysia Country Report.

Under the LESC Initiative, the following Facilitated Dialogues were conducted in Malaysia.

1.1 Language, Education and Social Cohesion Facilitated Dialogues, Kuala Lumpur, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching, Malaysia

Three Facilitated Dialogues were held in Malaysia:

i. Language, Education and Social Cohesion. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 9–10 April 2014 (41 participants)
ii. Language, Education and Social Cohesion. Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia, 7–8 May 2014 (46 participants)
iii. Language, Education and Social Cohesion. Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, 27–28 August 2014 (44 participants)

All three Facilitated Dialogues had the same aims, although each Dialogue focused on different, localized communities and issues. The broad aims of the Dialogues were to develop a framework for a language policy and planning framework for Malaysia, with a focus on fostering human rights, improved educational outcomes and national unity.

1.1.1 Kuala Lumpur

The general aim of the Kuala Lumpur Facilitated Dialogue was to address language problems and challenges for national unity and social cohesion with specific reference to the vernacular/Malay question. Specifically, this involved looking at Chinese and Tamil language maintenance and Malay language learning, as well as the specific challenges in language, literacy and academic achievement for Peninsular Orang Asli students. The Orang Asli are the indigenous peoples of Peninsular Malaysia,

a majority of whom live in poverty and experience poor educational outcomes and high school dropout rates (Noor 2012). The Kuala Lumpur Dialogue was attended by 41 participants from 34 organizations involving government agencies (Ministry of Education and Department of National Unity and Integration), academics and researchers from Malaysian universities, and CSOs (human rights organizations, and organizations belonging to indigenous peoples, women, youth, children, refugee, parents and teachers).

The broad history of language planning in Malaysia since independence formed a key backdrop to the Facilitated Dialogue, necessitating a clear focus on the role of English. In language terms, therefore, the Dialogue aimed to explore the prospects of a new national language dispensation for the country in the domains of education; social and cultural life; the economy; legal; and health. The outcomes were positive. A deeper understanding of how language policy can be designed to foster national unity was achieved. Another positive outcome was training in how language policies are written, the scope and components of a policy, and the functional role of languages in a multilingual society, while increased consensus was reached on the benefits of MLE.

1.1.2 Kota Kinabalu

The general aim of the Kota Kinabalu Facilitated Dialogue was to address language problems and challenges for national unity and social cohesion with a specific focus on language, education and maintenance for minority indigenous languages. The Dialogue was attended by 46 participants from 32 organizations including government agencies (Ministry of Education and Department of National Unity and Integration), academics and researchers from Sabah universities, and CSOs (human rights organizations, organizations belonging to indigenous peoples, women, youth, children, refugee, parents and teachers).

Feedback from participants at the Facilitated Dialogue in Sabah was positive. In particular, the knowledge, preparation and effective communication of the facilitator in creating a positive learning environment was expressed by the participants. The group sessions were the most popular and the participants appreciated the interactive activities organized by the facilitator. Group problem solving with regards to language planning and policy writing activities were a particular high point. These activities elicited crucial 'Group discussion' by focusing on activities relating to 'writing up policy' with 'input from trainer and other group members'. Other useful and enjoyable aspects of the Dialogue included the sessions on isolating language problems, and discussing the roles of multilingualism, mother tongue-based learning and bilingualism in education and broader society.

Activities that were less successful included writing the preamble to the Minister. This was mostly due to participants being unsure as to the specific purpose of the activity, combined with insecurities as to how best to articulate themselves in such a task. Suggestions for further improvement largely focused on the provision of presentation materials and further bibliographic material so participants could further investigate areas of interest on their own.

Positive outcomes from the Dialogue include an increased understanding of language policy processes and writing and an increased consensus on the benefits of MLE. Other beneficial outcomes included training and information exchange concerning language policy writing and development. Perhaps most importantly, participants developed a strong conviction of the need for a conference on indigenous

education in Malaysia, including mother tongue and bilingual education and language policy development focusing on Sabah and Sarawak in 2016–2017.

1.1.3 Kuching

The general aim of the Kuching Facilitated Dialogue was to address language problems and challenges for national unity and social cohesion. As with the Sabah Facilitated Dialogue, there was a specific focus on language, education and maintenance for minority indigenous languages. The Dialogue was attended by 44 participants from 17 organizations. These included government agencies (Ministry of Education and Department of National Unity and Integration), Sarawak government officials representing a range of departments, CSOs (human rights organizations, organizations belonging to indigenous peoples, women, youth, children, refugee, parents and teachers).

The participants in the Kuching dialogue were emphatic in their feedback concerning the preparedness and general competency of the facilitator in creating an effective and productive positive learning environment. In general, the feedback indicated that all participants were happy with the content and delivery of the Dialogue. One hundred percent of participants agreed that the meeting was very good or excellent in its content and delivery, which reveals the importance of consultative methodologies in discussing and addressing language problems in multi-ethnic societies. Of particular relevance to the participants were questions relating to the use of mother tongue as language of instruction, as well as bilingualism more generally. As one participant clearly articulated, "the session on bilingual education" was particularly valuable, "because of its widespread relevance and application". This was supported by other participants who enjoyed learning about how children learn languages and the importance of mother tongue-based learning in their cognitive development.

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

1.2   Site visits

Site visits were conducted at the Sekolah Wawasan Vision School, Subang Jaya, the Kampung Numbak Learning Center, Sabah and at MLE Preschools in Sarawak.

1.2.1 Sekolah Wawasan Vision School

The purpose of the visit was to become familiar with a unique Malaysian approach to national integration by locating autonomous vernacular and national schools on a single campus. The Wawasan is the most extended of the several types of the Wawasan models. The visit to all the component schools and interaction with the teachers and administrators, along with National Unity officials of the Prime Minister's Department, was very productive and illuminating for the possible options that could be pursued in social

cohesion planning. It became clear that while the co-location of different schools onto the one campus has many advantages, the level of integration of activities and opportunities for students from different racial and language backgrounds to interact is rather limited. A more substantial kind of interaction should be explored.

1.2.2 Kampung Numbak Learning Center, Sabah

This learning centre is supported by UNICEF and offers education to refugee and undocumented children. The aim of the visit was to learn about the work of the school and its role in fostering cohesion and integration of minority children. The visit indicated that the school operates under very difficult conditions and greater initiatives in fostering learning and integration would be beneficial.

1.2.3 Multilingual Education (MLE) Preschools in Sarawak

Visits to these preschools were aimed at seeing how national unity is fostered at the preschool level and how indigenous language support can operate. The visit proved very useful in grounding the work of policymaking in the concrete experience of education delivery and the challenges of minority language education.

1.3   Outcomes and recommendations

1.3.1 Submission to the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC)

The Facilitated Dialogues and site visits in Malaysia have involved well thought out and generous collaboration from a diverse range of organizations and individuals across Malaysia. The contributions of all participants have shaped and informed the findings of the LESC Malaysia Country Report. This in turn, has informed the development of the Malaysia Country Programme Document for the UNICEF office in Malaysia, as well as this document. Importantly, the contributions of participants from a broad and diverse range of governmental and civil organizations has informed a further collaborative undertaking between the University of Melbourne and the UNICEF Malaysia Country Office, which resulted in the production of three reports. These reports are intended to facilitate the submission of the UNICEF Country Office to the NUCC, who are currently charged with the development of a National Blueprint on Unity for Malaysia. How Language Education can Support National and Social Cohesion in Malaysia was developed with extensive feedback and collaboration with the UNICEF Malaysia office. The report was submitted to the Chairman of the NUCC, Yang Berbahagia Tan Sri Samsudin Osman for NUCC's consideration in their development of the National Blueprint on Unity. Further consultations are being arranged between the UNICEF Malaysia office and NUCC to deliberate on how to take forward the recommendations in the report (see Figure 4).

1.3.2 Implications and recommendations

Malaysia stands at an important phase in its development as a sovereign, stable, independent nation. In recent years, Malaysians have been right to celebrate their economic and social progress, which has been remarkable in world terms, elevating the nation in economic, technological, scientific and productive

fields. This enviable success and its many benefits have transformed the physical infrastructure of the country and elevated its research, economic productivity and international competitiveness.

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

Figure 4: Facilitating links between language and social cohesion
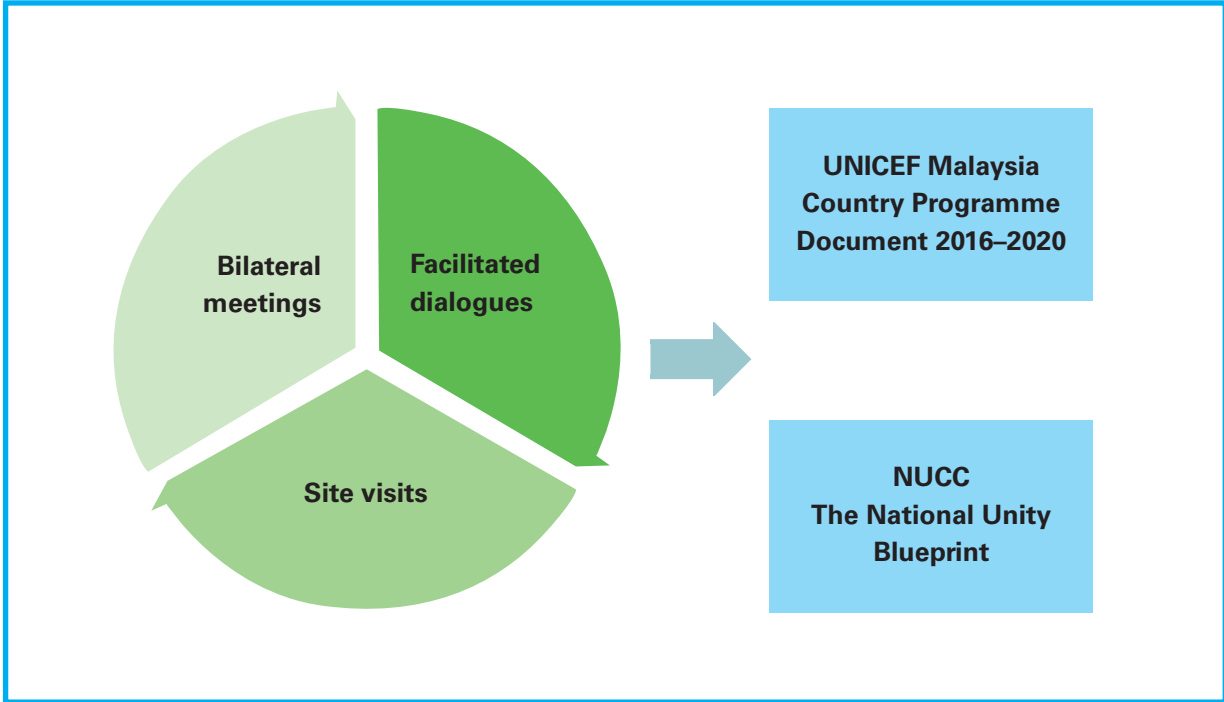
The overriding sense that strikes the well-disposed outsider in relation to questions of language and ethnicity in Malaysia is one of a persisting unresolved burden on the full development of the society, its cultural unity, its educational standards and its social cohesion. A key observation has been that the programmes and initiatives that currently make up the bulk of the activity of national unity promotion are essentially motivated by an ethos of overcoming existing problems, and occasionally comprise of problem prevention. Tackling problems is important but Malaysia should move beyond this in its language policy, towards an ambitious programme of social inclusion, fostering a sense of participatory citizenship,

educational equality and cultural democracy. While some of the dimensions of this are beyond the scope of the LESC Initiative, the need for comprehensive language planning is the strongest single conclusion of our work.

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

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

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

Appendix 2: LESC activities by country: Myanmar

In Myanmar, in the context of the Comprehensive Education Sector Review, overseen by the Ministry of Education, it was decided to focus on developing skills in and programmes of language planning. Key concepts included language rights in education focused on the main ethnic clusters within Myanmar, as well as issues to do with the acquisition of Myanmar language and English. A key part of the methodology to support this research included specific case studies in Mon and Kayin states as exemplars where practical new language education policies could be applied as a Union-wide model. (Participation in the LESC Initiative was voluntary, with the Mon and Kayin states choosing to participate in the Initiative). The Myanmar initiative was guided by the following principles:

- Language and literacy education must be integrated. This implicates a wide range of matters including medium of instruction; the relation between first, second and additional languages; the linking of literacy and curriculum content; pedagogy; notions of bilingualism and conceptual development; identity and interculturalism; and transition points and sequencing in multilingual curriculum;
- A priority for exploration is a shift from English to bilingual (Myanmar/English) medium of instruction in mathematics and science subjects in upper secondary grades; this too, and related questions of assessment, training and materials development, should comprise part of the comprehensive approach;
- The beginning point was to explore gaps and deficits in language and literacy development and to identify aims and outcomes to be achieved. Collaborative work was to be undertaken to develop proposals to reach these outcomes;
- The work focused on literacy school participation across both state and non-state school systems; equitable access to educational opportunities; drop out and discontinuation of education and re-entry possibilities; how identity and citizenship impact on access to education; and the impact of educational outcomes on the economy and labour market;
- The approach was guided by principles around equitable access to education and effective language and literacy outcomes. This includes addressing language rights and opportunities to access education through ethnic languages, as well as the national language; the importance of recognizing diversity and pluralism in order to strengthen social cohesion and national unity; and the opportunity for all, mainstream and minority populations alike, to gain the spoken proficiency, literate and cultural knowledge and skills to support equal opportunity and full participation in national life.

The Myanmar initiative has been informed by rich, participatory research and fieldwork activities involving over 200 individuals belonging to over 120 organizations, institutions and government departments across Myanmar. A detailed documentation of the LESC Myanmar processes and outcomes can be found in the final Myanmar Country Report. A brief overview of the LESC Myanmar Initiative is provided in this section.

Four Facilitated Dialogues were held in relation to the Myanmar initiative.

2.1 Language Policy Forum, Eastern Burma Community Schools, Mae Sot, Thailand, 12–14 February 2014

The aims of the Mae Sot Facilitated Dialogue were focused around developing a consensus position on the content and aims of language policy, either as a pan-ethnic or localized document. This included deepening understandings of the forms and possibilities of language planning for fostering peace and justice in order to enhance the educational lives of children and youth, supporting their learning of ethnic languages, the Union language and English. It also included identifying and addressing impediments to effective language planning while encouraging consensus on action, research and teaching required for socially just, educationally effective language planning. The dialogue also sought to develop participants' working knowledge of MLB-MLE with an eye at developing a pan-ethnic policy document on 'ethnic education'.

The Mae Sot Facilitated Dialogue was attended by representatives from 22 organizations and 12 different ethnic groups. The 68 participants explored a range of fundamental challenges, including what communities envisioned for the educational and economic future of their children, their languages and their culture, and their participation in Myanmar society. Through detailed informational and participatory processes, the participants worked collaboratively to develop a research and action plan, focusing on both individual community needs and the potential of collective, and pan-ethnic language planning and action. Through the processes of the Facilitated Dialogues, conducted in six languages, participants developed a deeper understanding of language planning and policy processes, and MLE.

Participants also gained a sense of ownership and agency over their linguistic and cultural heritage and rights, as demonstrated by the immediate and longer-term actions to come out of the Dialogues (see Achievements below), and was instrumental in the formation of a pan-ethnic advocacy group. This group is now working towards substantial improvements in educational access and outcomes for children across their communities.

2.1.1   Achievements

Many significant achievements emerged from the Mae Sot Facilitated Dialogue. A Declaration of Ethnic Language and Education was drafted during the gathering and a press release issued shortly after the meeting, declaring the launch of the Myanmar/Burma Indigenous Network for Education (MINE). The press release introduces MINE as an advocacy and action group for the indigenous communities, provides information as to the mission of MINE and outlines its petitions on behalf of their communities. Their petitions are as follows:

On International Mother Language Day, MINE is calling for:

- Comprehensive language planning to support preservation of indigenous languages and improve learning of Burmese and English by indigenous people.
- A MLE system in our country, promoting the language of the Union and English along with the indigenous group's mother tongue.

- Indigenous children to have the right to education in their mother tongue.
- The right for ethnic school children to be taught using an inclusive curriculum, which values their own culture.
- The right for indigenous people to produce their own culturally appropriate curricula and to produce texts in their own language for use in schools.

Saw Kapi, a spokesman for MINE and director of the Salween Institute for Public Policy, stated that MINE intends to engage with the Myanmar Ministry of Education to work towards mother tongue education at the early primary levels, with the Myanmar language, and then a third language, most likely English, introduced from grades four to six. Given the challenges of implementing mother tongue education in a highly multilingual context, Saw Kapi recognizes that solutions will have to vary for different schools. However, Saw Kapi argues that "We want these decisions to be made at the local level, not the ministerial level … we do not want the central government or the Ministry of Education telling us what to do and what curriculum to use" (Michaels 2014, n.p.).

Building on the knowledge of language planning and policy mechanisms acquired through the Facilitated Dialogues, and resulting belief that as a group they could drive change and take action themselves, the association released an Ethnic Languages and Education Declaration on 15 June 2014 in English and in Myanmar. The document details the schooling context in remote, ethnic nationality areas of Myanmar for indigenous children and youth. It also sets out a framework for recommended actions. The report situates the challenges faced by communities in relation to the Myanmar constitution and the review of the national education law and identifies a range of structural impediments to educational and linguistic outcomes for children in MINE communities. The declaration calls for the following goals to be included in Myanmar's national education policy:

- The right to mother tongue education in the earliest years of schooling and continued throughout education.
- The right to learn the Union language of Burmese equally well with the main community of the Union for equal rights to citizenship.
- The right to learn English as the international language and the main language of ASEAN.
- National language planning to promote preservation of ethnic languages and cultures and peace in Myanmar.

The MINE declaration then calls for a range of actions to be considered for mainstreaming into the education system, including: teaching and learning reforms; research goals; assistance for individual languages; the establishment of advisory structures; support for ethnic education systems; support for ethnic language departments at the tertiary level; and the devolution of curriculum planning and implementation, alongside with the development of a multicultural national curriculum.

An ongoing commitment to advance the aims of the MINE collaboration was demonstrated through the development of a long-term working plan, which was based on continuing language planning and policy work and regular meetings. The plan focuses on advocacy for mother tongue education, MLE, decentralization of educational decisions, intercultural education, policy decision-making and participation, and an all-inclusive education.

2.2 Language, Education and Social Cohesion Facilitated Dialogues, Mawlamyine, Myanmar

1. Language, Education and Social Cohesion Facilitated Dialogue, Mawlamyine, Mon State, Myanmar, 27–28 May 2014 (36 participants)
2. Language Education and Social Cohesion Facilitated Dialogue, Mawlamyine, Myanmar, 6–7 November, 2014 (32 participants)
   i. Technical issues in writing a language policy Facilitated Dialogue: Mon State. Mawlamyine, Myanmar, 6 November 2014 (32 participants)
   ii. Policy issues in writing a language policy Facilitated Dialogues: Mon State. Mawlamyine, Myanmar, 7 November 2014 (22 participants)

Both of the May and November Mawlamyine Facilitated Dialogues focused on the language planning and policy activities for the people of the Mon State. These Dialogues explored alternatives to the mandated use of Myanmar as exclusive medium of instruction in state schools. This practice has been a significant barrier for children from non-Myanmar speaking households enrolled in primary grades. This exclusion has also been a barrier for students entering high school and results in school dropouts and poor results in national schools, especially for predominantly Mon-speaking areas in the southern and more rural parts of the State (UNICEF 2015b).

The aims of the first Facilitated Dialogue were to develop a comprehensive language planning and policy framework. This included the writing of a preamble and principles relevant to the focus areas. The Dialogue focused on ways in which to foster national unity, social cohesion and collaborative social relations in Myanmar. It also sought to promote understanding of the forms and possibilities of language planning for fostering human rights, improved education and social cohesion in order to identify, define and examine problems that require special attention with regards to capacity development in language and social cohesion planning. The Dialogues were designed to foster improvements in language learning and to make a contribution to enhance and improve the educational lives of children and youth in Myanmar.

The Facilitated Dialogue held in May was attended by 36 participants from a wide range of interested organizations, including government officials; researchers and academics, and CSOs. Through a combination of informational sessions and whole group and small group activities and discussions, the participants explored challenges in MLE, literacy and languages development in Myanmar. The focus then moved to writing a consensus statement and model language policy for Mon State. The policy preamble focuses on MLE in schools and classrooms, multilingualism in the community, and how children think and develop in more than one language.

2.2.1 Achievements and progressions

An outstanding achievement for the people of the Mon State, resulting from the Facilitated Dialogue and extensive commitment and work of those involved, was a consensus and commitment towards the adoption of a comprehensive multilingual language policy for Mon State. This was particularly significant due to the high level of doubt and uncertainty towards the aims of the Facilitated Dialogue, where, for example, public officials admitted on several occasions that they had never before had the opportunity to hear a reasoned case for mother tongue education. These misgivings were apparent in the initial

discussions. However, after the first Facilitated Dialogue and a subsequent series of meetings, a shared view and consensus began to form among many participants including parliamentarians, ethnic leaders and non-stakeholders. The policy dialogue process created a sense of trust across the different stakeholder groups and a belief in the role of language in peacebuilding endeavours. Stakeholders, particularly the state government, moved from an observer role to one of ownership and commitment, leading to the emergence of a singular group constructed of government officials and civil society partners, directing the process and seeking assistance from partner organizations.

The policy preamble and its conceptualization were not just limited to the Mon language itself, but were inclusive of all the languages within the state, such as Pa'o, Karen and Mon, as well as Myanmar, the official national language. A clear focus of the policy would be on principles of mother tongue education for children. The beginnings of the wider development are shown through the measures detailed in the following preamble and press release prepared through the Facilitated Dialogue, which detailed objectives and activity schema as a basis for a comprehensive, inclusive language policy.

The second Facilitated Dialogue, held in November 2014, ran over two days, incorporating a decision makers level meeting (32 participants), followed by a technical meeting (22 participants). Both of these meetings were informed by activities undertaken in the Naypyidaw Facilitated Dialogue which focused on the development of a national language policy (see below). The decision makers-level meeting focused on the aims and objectives of the Mon State language policy, as part of Myanmar wide language policy, addressing critical questions including what should the Mon State policy achieve for the Mon language, for Mon speaking children, and for non-Mon speaking children in Mon State. It also addressed the implications for other languages as well as critical problems and issues to be addressed in Mon State language policy such as teacher availability, levels of continuation of Mon and Myanmar languages, English, and other languages. The meeting also designed a timetable for 2015 and explored the links between the Mon State policy and Union-wide language policy with attention to special education needs in relation to sign language and minority languages. Lastly, the meeting focused on special initiatives to support policy including a central language school and bilingual methodologies.

The subsequent technical meeting addressed the tasks and responsibilities for achieving the writing of language policy, the delegation of responsibilities, the research requirements to support policy development, and the special initiatives.

The constructive and positive relationship that has been formed between all stakeholders though the Facilitated Dialogue processes and associated meetings has not only created a sense of ownership and an increased belief in the ability of participants to create change around language and education, but resulted in the transfer of collaboration more broadly. Due to the positive relationship among stakeholders, it has been easier to work on other project activities such as school grant disbursements for non-state schools through the state education office and coordination among stakeholders across the education sector.

2.2.2   Evaluations

The Myanmar Country Office report to the regional workshop, the 'Knowledge Sharing Workshop' of UNICEF EAPRO 15–17 September 2014 stated that the Facilitated Dialogues "held in Mon state has laid

a very strong basis for the development of detailed language policy in that state as a model for extension to other parts of Myanmar".

The overall feedback from Dialogue participants was very positive. The vast majority of participants had their expectations met or exceeded, with the strong points identified as the quality of input and the quality of the presenters. Most participants found that the emphasis on mother tongue learning and MLE, as well as how to teach languages through action-oriented learning were the most beneficial aspects of the discussions. When asked what was most beneficial participants identified: "explanations of how to teach ethnic languages in schools by applying mother tongue based multilingual education" reflected the participants' interest in the theoretical foundations of MTB-MLE and how it could best serve children and youth in Mon State. Particular emphasis on the practical ways of teaching in both native and national languages was also recognized as of crucial importance by the participants. This was demonstrated by the dialogue participants' enjoyment of the focus on "explanations of action oriented language teaching methods". Other highlights included the Dialogue's focus on the ways in which policy can be conceived through consultative discussion to alleviate tension in multilingual environments, which included specific exercises into "problem solving, discussion about issues and [how to] lay down education policy".

When asked what information the participants of the Facilitated Dialogues would like more of, a theme emerged that further Dialogues should contain more detail on practical ways in which mother tongue learning can be used while maintaining adequate proficiency in the national language to promote further and better lifelong education. Participants also desired further information on "how to apply mother tongue based multilingual education in the classroom where many ethnic children are schooling in a particular place". For the participants, future Dialogues could also incorporate more international case studies where MTB-MLE is working; how mother tongue learning applies to classrooms where children have many different native tongues; as well as bringing more government officials into discussions about how to implement mother tongue learning methodologies in early childhood education comprehensively across the Union of Myanmar.

The response from the participants in the Mon State Facilitated Dialogue recognized its critical importance in progression in language and education related challenges. The overwhelming response was that not only was the Dialogue positive, but that more events of its kind should be organized and undertaken in Mon State, other ethnic states, as well as Union-wide.

The writing of the Mon State language policy is now continuing under the extension of the LESC Initiative in Myanmar with the INICEF Myanmar Country Office (see below).

2.3 Language, Education and Social Cohesion Facilitated Dialogue, Naypyidaw, Myanmar

Language, Education and Social Cohesion Facilitated Dialogue, Naypyidaw, Myanmar, 29–30 July 2014 (21 participants)

The key objectives of the Naypyidaw Facilitated Dialogue were to discuss perspectives, and seek inputs and recommendations to advance the following fields:

- Social Cohesion: by promoting an attitude of inclusion and participation for ethnic and indigenous minorities;
- Education skills: by improving school attendance, academic standards and literacy;
- Employment skills: by raising standards in Myanmar, English and mother tongues, where relevant, to help young people enter the competitive labour market including in trades and professions;
- Service delivery: by implementing literacy, Myanmar language and communication planning to make sure that public administration are communicating effectively with all citizens;
- International connections: in order to support trade, diplomacy and travel through widespread knowledge of English, and learning of strategic languages;
- Inclusive communication planning: by integrating support for blind, deaf and other communication disabled citizens.

The Facilitated Dialogue was attended by 21 representatives from a wide range of organizations and included senior government officials from the Planning and Training, Education, and Social Welfare Departments; Language Committees and Parliament; researchers and academics; and CSOs, including language and literacy groups, ethnic organizations and educational committees.

2.3.1   Achievements

A significant outcome from the Naypyidaw Facilitated Dialogue was the persuasion of public officials that a comprehensive multilingual language policy could be prepared in a collaborative way, with significant national benefits in the education of minority children, improved social cohesion and greater impact on peacebuilding through relationships between all sectors of society.

Significant work was undertaken to achieve the drafting of a set of policy principles and a preamble for a Union-wide language policy. The policy principles to emerge from the initial Facilitated Dialogue are as follows:

- Unity: by supporting all to learn Myanmar language and literacy, for common and equal citizenship
- Diversity: by supporting ethnic and indigenous communities to maintain, enjoy and transmit their languages to their children
- Cohesion: by promoting inclusion and participation for ethnic and indigenous minorities
- Education: by improving equitable access and participation, literacy, vocational and life skills, and academic standards
- Employment: by raising standards in Myanmar, English and mother tongues, where relevant, to help young people enter the competitive labour market including trades and professions
- Service delivery: by supporting communication planning to make sure that public administration are communicating effectively with all citizens especially interpreting and translation in health, legal contexts and social services
- International relations: in order to support trade, diplomacy and travel through widespread knowledge of English, labour migration in the context of ASEAN mobility, and learning of strategic foreign languages
- Inclusive communication: by integrating support for visually and hearing impaired persons, and other communication disabled citizens
- Ethnic rights: by recognizing the unique cultures and traditions of Myanmar's indigenous people

These principles present a major achievement of the meeting, with a preamble being elaborated as part of the new LESC Initiative in Myanmar (see below) for the development of a Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion Promoting National Language Policy.

2.3.2   Evaluations

Participants of the Dialogue conducted in Naypyidaw were extremely positive with regards to the quality, knowledge and effectiveness of the presenters and facilitator. Overall, it was noted by participants that the atmosphere was friendly and conducive to effective and positive learning. While participants had a broad spread of activities that they enjoyed, the sessions focusing on language problems, mother tongue-based learning and approaches to policy writing expressed in both presentations and group activities, were all noted as high points of the dialogue. Participants also found examples from other countries to be insightful in providing important contextual foregrounding to language and educational issues.

With some specific exceptions, the overall feedback from the participants was that the role of ethnic languages in education needed more attention. It was also noted that in order to deal with such complicated issues, the length of the dialogue was insufficient. It was noted that three to four days for the workshop would be more appropriate than two days. It was also expressed by many participants that they would benefit from a follow up workshop that looked more specifically at responses from policymakers and government officials, particularly with regards to ethnic children and young learners and the use of mother tongue learning in all schools.

2.4 Recommendations and outcomes

The most important recommendation emerging form the LESC Initiative is for the preparation of a peacebuilding and social cohesion promoting national language policy for Myanmar. Significant work has been undertaken through the initial LESC Initiative in establishing and developing relationships, trust and consensus; in identifying and negotiating aims and expectations; and in moving towards a common and harmonious representation of the language and education needs in Myanmar. The use of Facilitated Dialogues, policy environment scans, observations and interviews, field trips, and community consultation have been key components of the original Initiative and would again form the cornerstone of a participatory process of language policy development by and for the people of Myanmar.

Building on the initial inputs of the LESC Initiative the main outcomes of this new Initiative should include:

- The development of Union-level language policy;
- The development of state-level (Mon and Kayin) language policies;
- The development of model policies for other states and districts of the country based on the above;
- Integrated implementation plans at state and Union levels, responding to a series of identified language and communication problems;
- A suite of integrated policy documents, envisaged to consist of two volumes (see below)
- Documented outcomes from the MLE in Southeast Asia conference, and
- Other publications and information provision as required.

2.5 Extension of LESC Initiative

Due to the relative success of the first phase of the LESC Initiative, its continuation was realized in early 2015, with the remit to continue the progression of language policy processes. This consists of three key components:

1. Development of the language policy principles through consultation with the relevant working groups and the incorporation of feedback and questionnaire feedback.
2. Dialogues and consultations – this component of the project will involve carrying out:

   a. Facilitated Dialogues in each of Kayin and Mon states
   b. Union-wide Facilitated Dialogues; the first to seek feedback and discussion of draft principles for language policy and its endorsement and a secondto discuss, modify and endorse the final policy draft
   c. On-site consultations in Shan and Kachin States for policy input negotiations
   d. Consultations in relation to a special needs component to the language policy

3. The commissioning of four specialist inputs – the language policy development process will be informed by detailed papers written by experts in the languages of Myanmar, English as an international language and special needs education, as well as a case study and photo essay of MLE practice in Myanmar to be undertaken by the Shalom Foundation.

The final policy document will consist of a range of integrated but separate publications. It is envisaged that these would appear in separate volumes. The first will be comprised of the policy goals – the nationally agreed and endorsed principles for a Union-wide language policy. Related and integrated state-level policies for the Mon and Kayin states will be included. Following from field visits and other consultation processes and the above, state models will be templates for language policy development processes, in general, and for states/districts and other parts of Myanmar to devise locally relevant applications. This compendium, either in the same volume or separately, will also include an action-implementation plan and donor promises to support the overall plan or individual components.

As part of the Myanmar LESC Initiative, a major international conference on language policy in multicultural and multilingual settings is to be held at the University of Mandalay, Myanmar on 7–9 February 2016. Convened by UNICEF, The University of Melbourne, the Shalom Foundation, the Thabyay Education Foundation and the Pyoe Pin Programme, the conference will address the state of MLE and language policy in diverse countries. The three main themes are:

1. The development of indigenous languages and cultures in diverse, multilingual societies;
2. The development of social cohesion; and
3. The advancement of economic development and social equity.

The conference will be attended by local, regional and international actors including advocacy representatives, government officials, teachers, community members and academics to present on numerous aspects of multilingual language policy and its implications in Southeast Asia and more widely.

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