

MOTHER TONGUE-BASED MULTILINGUAL
EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH:
LESSONS LEARNED IN
SHARE EDUCATION PROGRAM

W. JAMES JACOB

SHARE Education Monograph 4

**Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in Bangladesh:
Lessons Learned in SHARE Education Program**

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Series Editor's Note

The European Union-funded Supporting the Hardest to Reach through Basic Education (SHARE) Program aims to contribute to the achievement of Bangladesh's development goals and to a national basic education framework. It comprises four discrete projects: Aloghar, SHIKHON II, SUSTAIN, and UNIQUE II, which are implemented by NGO partners. Together the projects will reach about 0.6 million of the hardest to reach children spread over 219 Upazillas (sub-districts) in Bangladesh. The total EU grant amount for this six-year programme (2011-2017) is about EUR 50 million. A technical assistance (TA) is embedded into the program tasked with knowledge management, capacity building, and coordination. The TA is implemented by a consortia led by Human Dynamics, KG of Austria.

As part of the strategic upstream activities the TA has facility to support research and studies that will benefit the NGO partners' program activities as well as the larger NGO community and Government agencies working in the NFE sector. The research and studies focus on issues of high relevance to non-formal primary education (NFPE) or alternative schools operated by the NGOs and led by experienced international and national experts in association with SHARE partners and ideally completed in a shorter period of time.

Research topics may cover a wide area that will likely contribute to NFPE sub-sector development. Indicative areas include: policy planning and strategy, financing, and advocacy of the NFPE sub-sector; teaching-learning quality improvement; enhancing school effectiveness; school-community networking; managing schools under emergencies and natural disasters; innovations and best practices in teaching-learning; multi-lingual/mother tongue based education; sustainable schooling for hard to reach children; effective cooperation and networking among NGOs and Government agencies.

The research findings/outputs are documented and published in the SHARE Education Monograph Series for wider dissemination and discussion and are uploaded on the SHARE website (www.share-education.org) as knowledge products.

The contents of this Monograph are based on a research study undertaken by Dr. W. James Jacob in Bangladesh in 2015. Key findings of this study were presented by the author at a seminar held in Dhaka in December 2015. Professor Jacob is the Director of the Institute for International Studies in Education (IISE) at the University of Pittsburgh, USA.

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I. Introduction

There is a growing body of evidence from the literature that mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) is the most optimal approach for young people who do not use national or international languages at home and/or local communities (Benson 2006; Burton 2013; Thomas and Collier 1997; UNESCO Bangkok 2015b; Wisbey 2013).¹ A recent review of the MTB-MLE literature emphasizes the importance of not only reading literacy skills, but more particularly oral or speaking proficiency as a foundation for learning in schools (Aboud and Hossain 2011; Brock-Utne 2000, 2007; Jacob, Cheng, and Porter 2015). Children who are unable to speak in the language of instruction are less likely to be able to learn to read compared to their peers who have this oral proficiency.

I define MTB-MLE as classroom instruction that begins in children's mother tongue² and then gradually shifts toward national and/or international language(s) as the children advance through primary education. MTB-MLE focuses on helping children to gain a solid literacy foundation in their native language first, which enables them to better learn additional languages afterwards. MTB-MLE encourages the eventual transition to and use of national and/or international languages, but only after a solid literacy foundation is established in children's native language.

MTB-MLE involves a gradual transition into national and/or international languages over time (e.g., generally over a four-to-five-year period). MTB instruction should ideally begin at the pre-primary education level where available, or in the early grade levels otherwise. Ideally, this bridging period between MTB to MLE should span much, if not most of the basic education experience of children (generally the transitional process should begin in Grade 2 and continue until it is fully bridged by Grade 5 or Grade 6).³

Optimal MTB-MLE programs have a combination of necessary elements in place that provide an enabling environment for sustained success. These elements include (1) a guiding policy framework coordinated by the government and adhered to by all pre-primary and primary education providers (public and private); (2) a strategic plan⁴ based upon the policy framework; (3) ensuring that schools are places of safety;⁵ (4) ensuring that language learning is stigma free;⁶ (5) strong advocacy at all levels from the government, media, and other stakeholders; and (6) sustained funding for quality teachers, curriculum materials, and adequate school infrastructure for the delivery of education (see Figure 1).

Once an enabling framework is established, there are four key areas that help ensure optimal MTB-MLE delivery. These four areas often overlap with each other, which is highlighted by the several interactive feedback loops displayed in Figure 1. And, just as languages, teaching methods, and learning strategies evolve, an optimal MTB-MLE framework should also be flexible enough to adapt as needed over time.

The first key area is widespread support from the government, families, local communities, and development partners. Government support is intentionally listed first, due to its central role in the national and local education process. This role includes

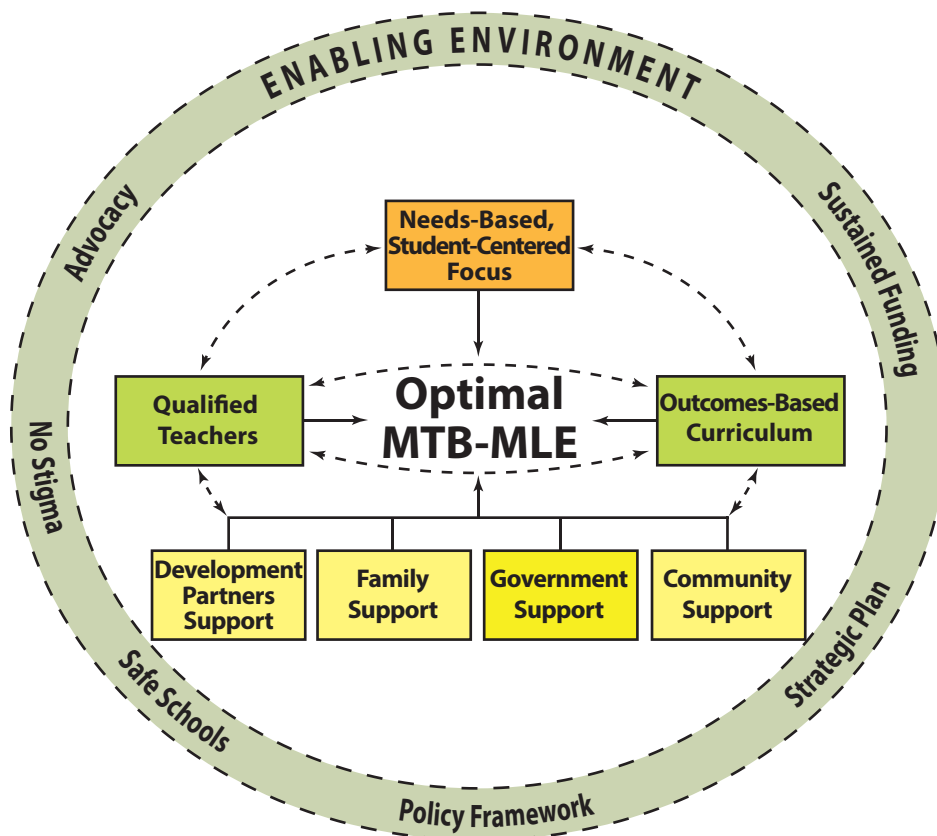


Figure 1. Optimal MTB-MLE Framework

providing guidelines for teachers, school infrastructure, and curricular materials. Parents are essential in indigenous language preservation and in helping their children learn to read and write. “Families using indigenous languages in everyday normal conversations within the home is the gold standard for language preservation” and for literacy development (Jacob 2015, p. 133). Community support is also fundamental for MTB-MLE, especially when qualified indigenous language speaking teachers will most likely come from local communities. Local community members are also crucial to helping provide support in the development of curricular materials and speaking opportunities for students and teachers.

Second, qualified teachers are necessary to help children learn in their native languages as well as in the transitioning or bridging process into the national/international languages. Providing sufficient qualified teachers requires widespread government support, especially at the pre-service level in training teachers with sufficient language and subject-matter skills. Many of the most qualified teachers choose to remain in urban locations, where salaries are traditionally higher and where there are generally greater economic and educational opportunities for themselves and their families. Within this context, government intervention is required to establish competitive recruitment and retention strategies to help ensure that salaries are competitive for those willing to take up posts in rural and remote locations. Incentive packages may help offset salaries, including

providing housing and transportation allowances. Also, teachers need opportunities for professional development and personal growth in the education system.

Third, MTB-MLE delivery efforts should be needs based and student centered. Within classroom contexts there are many challenges that must be met, but none greater than meeting the individual and collective needs of the student learners. Teachers need to be trained to recognize these needs. In most classroom settings there are students who are at different literacy mastery levels, regardless of age. In other, smaller village-based school settings, there may only be a handful of pupils at one grade level and only 20-50 students total in all grades. It is financially unpractical for the government to provide a teacher for only three students; thus teachers in these smaller-school contexts should be trained to work with one-classroom schools with students of differing age and literacy levels. Within this context, teachers need to be prepared to adapt the curriculum to the needs of each student and help each student advance from their mother-tongue instruction to the national language as soon as they are ready.

The fourth key area is an outcomes-based curriculum. This curricular approach focuses on the needs of students, especially helping children learn first in the language with which they are most familiar. Alan Williams and colleagues (2014, p. 1) recognize the “potential reward of mother tongue instruction is the achievement of higher outcomes by children because they are learning in a language that is familiar to them. The consolidation of the children’s mother tongue provides a foundation for the development of literacy skills and the learning” in national and international languages. With so much hinging upon children’s ability to learn to read and write, there needs to be a clear MTB-MLE outcome-based curriculum designed from the outset (at pre-primary and/or early grade levels) of their learning experience. An outcomes-based curriculum approach recognizes mother tongue instruction as essential, and this supports the literature where optimal MTB-MLE programs help increase student interest in learning and attending school, while at the same time reduce student repetition and dropout rates (see for instance MacKenzie 2009; Brown 2014; Jacob, Cheng, and Porter 2015).

Other influential MTB-MLE models from the international literature, include the work of Susan E. Malone (2010) of SIL International, Carol Benson and Kimmo Kosonen (2013), and W. James Jacob (2015). Malone’s pioneering work in South Asia and other regions is particularly helpful for the Bangladesh case in 2015, including her emphasis that we need to fully understand and work with all stakeholder groups in MTB-MLE programs, features of strong MLE programs, the need for an effective bridge between children’s mother tongue (L1) and the national/international language(s). Benson and Kosonen argued that the most successful MTB-MLE programs follow a participatory evaluation process, emphasizing the need for continual improvement. Finally, Jacob emphasizes how important it is for all stakeholders in the MTB-MLE process to understand and strive to eliminate the stigma so often associated with indigenous and ethnic minority languages.

Teacher attitudes are crucial to early language learning in schools. According to Nag and colleagues (2014), “Teacher attitudes may also work in tandem to under value home language, with robust evidence that the child’s linguistic heritage is ignored in school. These factors, along with the absence of children’s books in the home language, drive a wedge between the language of the home and school” (p. 11).

The Prevention of Indigenous Language Stigma Model (Figure 2) highlights the many challenges ethnic minority learners face regarding stigma (Jacob 2015). The model identifies ways in which indigenous peoples encounter stigma, at the individual, family, group, tribe, nation, and global society levels. Stigma can take place at three levels that span a spectrum—*macroaggression*, *microaggression*, and no stigma. A macroaggression is something that is openly opposed to an individual using her/his indigenous language. Examples of macroaggressions include peers teasing children for speaking in a non-national language, parents teaching their children that their mother tongue is not as important as the national (or international languages) because of one reason or another (e.g., they won't be able to get a job in their native language), and government policies that prohibit the use of indigenous tongues in school settings. Microaggressions are generally more subtle than macroaggressions, and they are often done without the perpetrator knowing that they are triggering a form of indigenous language stigma. Some examples of microaggressions include when parents who speak an ethnic minority language choose to only use a national language at home when speaking with their children, early grade instruction at school is only given in a national language, or when governments provide an overemphasis on national assimilation language policies (not realizing that these education policies may endanger the preservation of ethnic minority and indigenous languages).

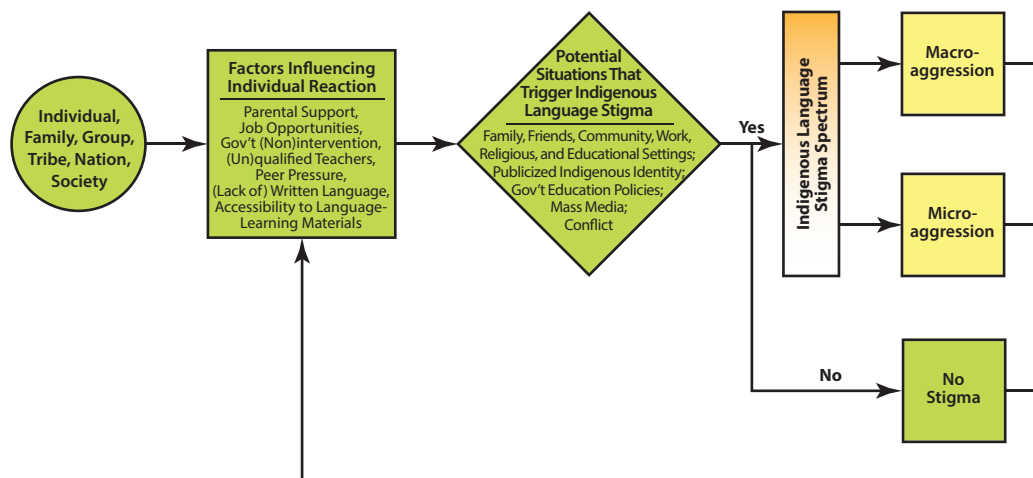


Figure 2. Prevention of Indigenous Language Stigma Model

Many factors influence how an individual reacts to stigma—regardless of whether it is deemed macroaggression, microaggression, or no stigma. These factors include the amount of parental support an individual receives in learning her/his indigenous language, employment opportunities where the indigenous language can be spoken, and government intervention through specific policies that support and/or protect indigenous languages. Often governments have little or no interventions, which constitutes a lack of support for language, culture, and identity preservation. Other important factors that contribute to language stigma situations include how qualified teachers are to deal with indigenous languages in educational settings, peer pressure (including bullying for using

non-dominant languages), whether or not a language is available in written format, and the amount of language-learning materials that are available in the indigenous tongue.

The aim of this monograph is to review MTB-MLE in Bangladesh, including the role leading projects play in the delivery of MTB-MLE. The paper will also examine leading projects of the SHARE Education Program in the delivery of MTB-MLE, including the Aloghar Lighthouse Project (Caritas Bangladesh), SHIKHON II Project (Save the Children), SUSTAIN Project, UNIQUE II Project (Dhaka Ahsania Mission), and BRAC. Lessons learned and best practices are highlighted from each of these projects. The paper concludes with suggestions for improvement and recommendations toward sustained MTB-MLE integration in the Bangladesh education system.

II. An Assessment of the Current Situation of MTB-MLE in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is the eighth most populous country⁷ on earth and is widely recognized as the most densely populated of the 20 countries with the largest populations. Of the approximately 161 million citizens in 2015, 29.4 percent of the population was between the ages 1-14 (UNPD 2015, p. 27). As with most former colonial nation states, Bangladesh's current national boundaries were established with little to no consideration of the indigenous inhabitants⁸ in mind. Thus, many of the 75 recognized indigenous groups in Bangladesh reside in geographic areas in which arbitrary "national" boundaries divide their ancestral or indigenous homelands.

The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has insufficient financial, human, and curricular resources to focus on multiple languages in all divisions and social levels throughout the country. Certain dominant languages enjoy more currency and upset the multilingual balance, similar to the situation that exists in India and Pakistan (Canagarajah and Ashraf 2013).

Table 1. Bangladesh Education Statistics Compared with Other Countries in the Region

Geographic Region	Literacy Rates			Gross Enrollment Ratios				Primary School Dropout Rates	Primary Teachers to Teach	Primary Teacher to Student Ratio	Primary Education Expenditure
	Adult (ages 15 and older)	Youth (ages 15-24)	Pop with at least some secondary education (ages 25 and older)	Pre-Primary (% of school-age children)	Primary (% of school-age children)	Secondary (% of school-age population)	Tertiary (% of school-age population)	(% of primary school cohort)	(%)	(number of students p/teacher)	(% of GDP)
	2015 [†]	2015 [†]	2010	2010-2014 [*]	2010-2014 [*]	2010-2014 [*]	2012-2014 [*]	2003-2014 [*]	2010-2014 [*]	2010-2014 [*]	2005-2013 [*]
Bangladesh	61.6	83.2	26.7	32.8 ^c	114.2 ^{c‡}	53.7 ^d	13.2 ^d	33.8	57.8 ^c	40.2 ^{c‡}	1.9 ^a
China	96.4	99.7	65.3	73.6 ^e	126.4 ^e	92.4 ^e	29.7 ^e	–	–	16.9 ^e	1.9 ^a
India	72.1	89.7	38.7	58.1 ^e	114.1 ^d	71.5 ^d	24.7 ^e	–	–	35.2 ^{c‡}	3.6 ^d
Indonesia	93.9	98.9	44.5	50.9 ^e	108.5 ^d	83.1 ^e	31.5 ^d	12.0	–	18.6 ^d	3.9 ^d
Myanmar	93.1	96.3	17.8	9.1 ^b	114.2 ^b	50.2 ^b	13.4 ^d	25.2	99.9 ^b	28.2 ^b	0.8
Nepal	64.7	89.9	28.3	86.5 ^f	132.8 ^f	67.0 ^f	17.2 ^e	38.3	93.6 ^f	23.9 ^f	4.1 ^e
Pakistan	58.7	75.6	33.2	82.1 ^{e†}	92.1 ^e	38.3 ^e	9.8 ^e	39.0	84.9 ^e	42.5 ^e	2.5 ^e
Sri Lanka	92.6	98.8	74.0	90.4 ^e	98.3 ^e	99.2 ^e	18.8 ^e	2.7	82.4 ^e	24.4 ^d	1.7 ^d
Vietnam	94.5	98.1	65.0	81.9 ^e	104.9 ^e	–	24.6 ^e	2.5	99.6 ^d	18.9 ^e	6.3 ^d

Notes: *Most recent year available for each country during the range specified; †UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) estimate, ‡National estimate, ^a2009, ^b2010, ^c2011, ^d2012, ^e2013, and ^f2014.

Sources: Barro and Lee (2013), BSS (2012), UIS (2015), and World Bank (2015b).

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) only publishes statistical data on 64 tribal groups in its annual *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh*. In 2011, the GoB indicated that there were 1,586,141 people of ethnic minority decent (BBS 2013, p. 52). The vast majority of people in Bangladesh are Muslim, comprising 90.39 percent of the total population in 2011; these statistics further reported that 8.54 percent of the population were Hindu, and 1.07 adhered to another religious belief (BBS 2013, p. 51).

The GoB ratio of spending on education as a percent of its total GDP is less on average when compared to neighboring countries in South Asia in recent years (see Table 1); it is also less in comparison to most other lower-middle-income countries (World Bank 2013). Bangladesh lags behind all but Myanmar in terms of eligible-age children who attend pre-primary school. And while the gross enrollment ratio of primary level school-age children in Bangladesh was at 114.2 percent in 2013, only 76.4 percent completed their primary education (UIS 2015). The literacy rate among 15-24 year olds rose from 35.7 percent in 1981 to 83.2 in 2015, however, the rate remains considerably lower than nearly all other countries in the region (see Tables 1 and 2). Gender parity in overall literacy rates have improved dramatically in Bangladesh over the past 30 years, where in 1985 only 32.6 percent of 15-24-year-old females were literate (compared to a 48.1 percent literacy rate for males). In 2015, these gender disparities were reversed where 85.8 percent of female youth were literate compared to 80.6 percent of their male counterparts (UIS 2015).

Table 2. Literacy, Pre-Primary, and Primary Education Trends in Bangladesh, 1985-2015

	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Literacy Rate, 15-24 years (%)	40.2 [†]	44.7 ^b	54.2 [†]	63.6 ^c	–	–	83.2
Literacy Rate, 15-24 year females (%)	32.6 [†]	38.0 ^b	49.1 [†]	60.3 ^c	–	–	85.8
Literacy Rate, 15 years and older (%)	32.3 [†]	35.3 ^b	41.4 [†]	47.5 ^c	–	–	61.6
Literacy Rate, 15 years females and older (%)	21.9 [†]	25.8 ^b	33.3 [†]	40.8 ^c	–	–	58.5
GER, % of pre-primary age children	–	75.3 ^a	–	17.0	11.2	13.1 [*]	32.8
GER, % of primary school-age children	67.5	80.6	–	–	98.5	104.5 [*]	114.2 ^g
GER, % of secondary school-age population	20.1	20.2	–	47.8	45.0	49.9	53.7 ^g
GER, % of tertiary school-age population	5.0	4.1	–	5.4	6.2	11.8 [†]	13.2 ^g
Primary Teachers Trained to Teach (%)	–	–	–	–	53.4	58.1 [†]	57.7 ^f
Pupil- Pre- Primary Teacher Ratio (number of pupils p/teacher)	–	36.7 ^a	–	24.4	23.1 ^d	–	–
Pupil-Primary Teacher Ratio (number of pupils p/teacher)	47.0	63.0	–	–	47.0	43.0 [*]	40.2 ^f
Education Expenditure (% of GDP)	1.2	1.6	2.0 [†]	2.4	2.4 [†]	1.9 ^c	–

Notes: *National estimate, [†]Author's estimate, ^a1998, ^b1991, ^c2001, ^d2002, ^e2009, ^f2011, and ^g2012.

Source: Based on data obtained from UIS (2015).

Literacy rate data highlights much of the education inequality that exists in Bangladesh. Compared to the national literacy rate average of individuals 7 years or older (51.8) in 2011, there were several districts that fell below 40 percent, namely Bandarban (35.9), Jamalpur (38.4), Netrokona (39.4), Sherpur (37.9), and Sunamganj (35.0). Dhaka (70.5), Jhalokati (66.7), and Pirojpur (64.9) led the nation. The three districts that comprise the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Region each fell below the national average literacy rate in 2011 (BSS 2012).

There are also great education disparities between Bangladeshi children in urban and rural settings. Children in rural and remote locations often face several challenges that are difficult to overcome. Some of these challenges include unqualified teachers, high teacher turnover, low government monitoring and evaluation of schools, remote villages with very small numbers of students, some ethnic minority languages do not have a written form (or the script is not commonly used any more), and many children in the CHT Region need to help their families for three months during the seasonal Jhum cultivation period.

A disturbing trend indicates that the inequality gap is widening at two distinct areas of the Bangladesh education system—at the pre-primary level and at the post-secondary level (Osmani 2015; World Bank 2013). Ethnic minority children are among the groups⁹ with very little data available to ascertain the full extent of their education needs.

Much of the education (under)developments that exist today among the ethnic minority groups in Bangladesh have roots that date back to precedence established during the late British colonial rule era and independence afterwards. Perhaps most shocking was the

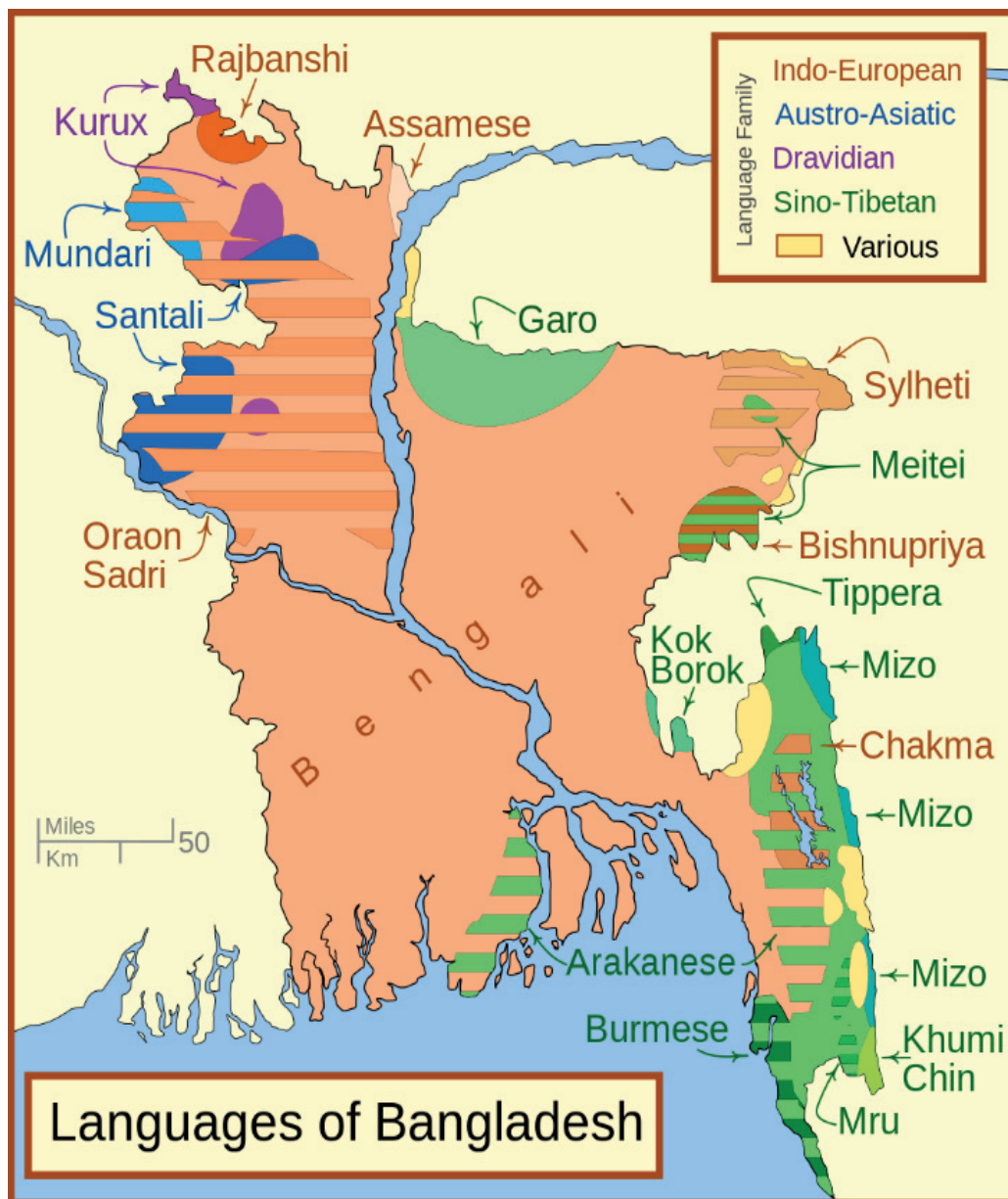


Figure 3. Languages of Bangladesh by Geographic Region

assignment of the Chittagong Hill Tracts to Pakistan in 1947, when this region was comprised of approximately 98 percent non-Muslims (van Schendel et al. 2001).¹⁰ Tensions did not ease with independence from Great Britain, and continued even when Bangladesh declared independence from Pakistan in 1971. The fight for indigenous recognition and rights continued for over two decades until the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord was signed in 1997. The CHT Region remains one of the most undereducated regions of the country due largely to the conflict and post-conflict contexts. It also has many villages disbursed in remote locations with no road access.

Primary school enrollments in the CHT Region are less than 60 percent, with a high dropout rate. According to Matt Wisbey (2013), “One of the most critical contributing factors is that children do not understand the language of instruction (Bangla) and the curriculum does not relate to their culture” (p. 7).

Lewis and colleagues (2015a), distinguish 41 living languages in Bangladesh. Four of these languages have been institutionalized, 12 are developing (vigorous) and eight are in trouble (p. 6).

Education thus provides both opportunities and threats to the survival of indigenous languages, cultures, and identities. Significant societal pressures cause many indigenous minorities to leave their ancestral homelands for more opportunities in urban centers, like Dhaka. Those who succeed in the formal education system often attend higher education institutions and pursue lives within the advanced national economy. Most jobs are not in traditional indigenous tribal homelands. To succeed in secondary and higher education, indigenous peoples must first gain mastery of the Bangla (and/or English) language. In many cases, this national language emphasis causes indigenous peoples to not fully recognize the value of gaining or maintaining fluency in their own tribal languages (Jacob, Liu, and Lee 2015).

III. Policy Framework for MTB-MLE

Four government ministries currently deal with MTB-MLE in Bangladesh—Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME), Ministry of Education (MOE), the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MOCHTA), and the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA). The Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) under the MOPME is responsible for implementing much of the MTB-MLE policies nationwide. The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) also plays an important role in producing the curriculum, textbooks for all mediums of instruction, and determining what is included on the Primary Education Completion Exam (PECE).

MOCHTA has played a key role in the post-Peace Accord in the development of the CHT Region, including in the oversight of MTB-MLE initiatives in the region. In collaboration with MOE, DPE, and the Tribal Cultural Institute, MOCHTA plays a leading role in introducing MLE for children from pre-primary to Grade 2 (MOWCA 2009). Three MOCHTA Hill District Councils are implementing the Promotion of Development and Confidence Building in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Project, which is supported in part by UNDP. It is being implemented in 131 pre-primary schools in Bandarban, Khagrachhari, and Rangamati Districts. This project hires and trains local teachers with sufficient language skills to implement MLE programs in participating government schools (Kamal et al. 2014).

The MOWCA (2011a, 2011b) was instrumental in laying the ground work and finalizing two key government policies in 2011—the *National Children Policy* and the *National Women Development Policy*. The *National Children Policy* ensures the

best development and growth . . . of all children and adolescents irrespective of their age, sex, religion, occupation, social regional and small ethnic group identity in matter of rights concerning education. (p. 4)

Primary education shall be free. For economically or otherwise small ethnic group children shall be given special incentives including education material. (p. 7)

All rights of children’s progress and development for under privileged communities and minor ethnic groups shall be ensured. Steps shall be taken [so that] children [from] minor ethnic groups may develop and [preserve] their own tradition[s] and culture[s]. (p. 10)

The *National Women Development Policy* provides assurances toward the equal rights of women of all ethnic backgrounds, including in the preservation of their respective cultures and heritages.

While the constitution does not explicitly include the terms indigenous peoples or ethnic minorities, there are several articles that address issues of equal rights and access to education. In direct reference to indigenous peoples and ethnic minority education, the constitution specifically ensures an “equality of opportunity to all citizens” regardless of “religion, race, caste, sex or place of origin” (Part II, art. 19 and art. 28). The constitution also highlights the need to help preserve and build upon the rich cultural diversity within

the country:

The State shall adopt measures to conserve the cultural traditions and heritage of the people, and so to foster and improve the . . . literature and the arts that all sections of the people are afforded the opportunity to contribute towards and to participate in the enrichment of the national culture. (Part II, art. 23)

Article 23 was recently amended in 2011 to include the following:

The culture of tribes, minor races, ethnic sects and communities.—The State shall take steps to protect and develop the unique local culture and tradition of the tribes, minor races, ethnic sects and communities. (Part II, art. 23A)

The constitution also provides direction on addressing the inequalities that exist between genders and between urban and rural citizens, with an especial focus on meeting the specific and unique needs of those “in the rural areas through . . . the improvement of education . . . so as progressively to remove the disparity in the standards of living between the urban and rural areas” (Part II, art. 16).

The *Operational Framework for Pre-Primary Education* produced by the MOPME (2008) does not specifically mention MTB-MLE, nor does it advocate for pre-primary and primary-aged children to learn to read in their mother tongue. But it does recognize the needs ethnic minority children have in the learning process: “early childhood care and education (ECCE) is about meeting the child’s multiple needs... that will help their development through physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional growth and change; with due attention to children of disadvantaged groups, children with special needs, and children of ethnic minorities” (p. 16).

The MOWCA (2009) was also instrumental in developing the GoB’s *Comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Framework*, that focuses on the promotion of better learning outcomes for pre-primary and primary-aged children through age 8. By recognizing that children from many indigenous communities “lack sufficient health care and educational opportunities,” this document notes how indigenous children “are often ostracized and shunned” (p. 38). This document outlines how “All children, irrespective of gender, special needs, ethnicity, religion, geographical location and economic status, are nurtured, valued and loved; and have the best start in life for reaching their full potential” (p. 13). The GoB has made meeting the needs of ethnic minority children and those living in rural and remote locations of the country a priority and ensuring that they have equal opportunities as all other children in Bangladesh.

The *National Education Policy 2010* (MOE 2010) is the key guiding document of the GoB on education, that establishes a foundation of equality, access to educational opportunities, and an understanding about the purpose and role of education in Bangladesh. While many of the policy recommendations outlined in the *National Education Policy 2010* have not yet been implemented, the foundation is set to help make implementation possible in the near future. Some of the highlights related to indigenous education include:

- Foster creative and thinking faculties among the learners through a system of education that contains indigenous spirit and elements and which will lead to a life-oriented development of knowledge of the learners. (p. 1)
- Promote and develop the languages and cultures of the indigenous and small ethnic groups. (p. 3)
- Facilitate learning in the mother languages of the indigenous peoples and small ethnic groups at the primary level of education. (p. 5)
- Measures will be taken to ensure the availability of teachers from ethnic groups and to prepare texts in their own languages so that ethnic children can learn their own indigenous languages. In these initiatives, especially in preparing textbooks the inclusion of respective indigenous communities will be ensured. (p. 8)
- Special assistance will be provided to the marginalized indigenous children. (p. 8)
- Indigenous people and other communities who observe different religious faiths, other than the four major religions, will have opportunities to learn about their own religions and concerned values. (p. 22)

The needs of ethnic minority children are also addressed throughout the *National Education Policy 2010*. Some of the highlights related to primary education and MTB-MLE include

- Equal opportunities will be created to ensure access [to] all sections of children to primary education irrespective of ethnicity, socio-economic conditions, physical or mental challenges and geographical differences. (pp. 4-5)
- This 8-year long primary education will be ensured for all children of the country, regardless of gender, socio-economic conditions and ethnicity by 2018 through the implementation of appropriate methods. (p. 6)
- There are areas where no primary school exists. Primary schools will be set up in these areas inhabited by ethnic people, both in hilly or plain lands. In some areas, there is a thin ethnic population. So the schools may suffer from dearth of children. So, in order to create opportunities of enrollment of sufficient number of children, residential facilities for teachers and learners have to be created. This also claims necessary attention. (p. 8)
- Measures will be taken to provide residential facilities, special help and [higher education] scholarships for the children of freedom fighters, of small ethnic communities and socially backward groups for sundry reasons. (p. 24)
- Special [fine arts and crafts education] opportunities will be created for the students belonging to backward classes and small ethnic groups. (p. 27)

Once the *National Education Policy 2010* is fully implemented, it will have the potential to help serve as a guiding document in the preservation of indigenous and ethnic minority languages, cultures, and identities through the education system.

The Ministry of Planning (MOP) highlighted many of the inequalities that exist among the most disadvantaged populations and sub-groups in Bangladesh, including among ethnic minority groups in its *Sixth Five-Year Plan, FY2011-2015* (MOP 2011). Since most ethnic minority peoples live in rural and remote locations of the country, including in the CHT Region, they are at a geographic disadvantage when it comes to socioeconomic issues, lack of access to the best teachers and schools, and limited education opportunities for children in pre-primary and early grade levels to learn to read in their mother tongue. “To combat these issues, the Sixth Plan aimed to ensure ethnic people their social, political and economic rights; ensure security and fundamental human rights; and preserve their social and cultural identity” (MOP 2015, p. 680).

Many of the shortcomings identified by the MOP and not yet achieved through the *Sixth Five-Year Plan* will be addressed by the GoB in the *Seventh Five-Year Plan, FY2016-2020*. “This will be achieved by providing [ethnic minority peoples] with improved health and education services, promoting their employment [opportunities], as well as protecting their rights to land and other resources” (MOP 2015, p. 680). The MOP (2015) has made it clear that helping to provide greater education and socioeconomic opportunities for the most disadvantaged groups, which includes ethnic minority groups, is a continued priority of the GoB.

The DPE launched Primary Education Development Program (PEDP) II (2004-2009) and PEDP III (2011-2017). PEDP II focused on helping indigenous children gain greater access, equity, and quality in the pre-primary and primary education opportunities (UNICEF 2004). Eight steps were identified by Kamal and colleagues (2014, pp. 22-23) in PEDP II as essential to help improve education opportunities for indigenous children in Bangladesh:

1. Appoint teachers for the indigenous children who know both local and indigenous languages,
2. Provide tailored teacher training to the appointed teachers,
3. Establish pre-primary schools and the use of mother tongue as the MOI,
4. Incorporate indigenous culture and values into text books,
5. Engage guardians in school management,
6. Build new schools and develop the necessary infrastructure to operate them,
7. Monitor and supervise the curriculum, and
8. Introduce a school calendar that takes local circumstances into account.

PEDP III objectives that are likely to be achieved include giving ethnic minority children the “opportunity to study in their mother tongue and ethnic teachers are given priority in areas where ethnic people are residing” (MOP 2015, p. 569). The MOPME also plans to make textbooks available in five ethnic minority languages throughout the country, though this has not yet happened as of December 2015 (World Bank 2015a).

The *Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Rights Act* (BIPRA) is a Bill prepared by the Parliamentary Caucus on Indigenous Peoples to provide security and protection of

indigenous people's rights within the provision of the law. The Bill is projected to be presented to Parliament in the near future.

So the foundation is laid to help Bangladesh realize an enabling environment that can lead to an Optimal MTB-MLE Framework as was outlined at the beginning of this monograph (see Figure 1). However, much more needs to be done in terms of implementing these constitutional directives and the *National Education Policy 2010*. To date, the GoB has not funded nor implemented MTB-MLE in any of its schools. Significant progress has been made to launch this national initiative, but it will most likely not happen until January 2017.

IV. SHARE Education Program MTB-MLE Projects

In this section, I provide an overview and evaluation of three MTB-MLE projects within the SHARE Education Program in Bangladesh: Aloghar Lighthouse Project, SHIKHON II, and UNIQUE II. A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOC) analysis is used to examine and compare each of the three projects. Because of its prominent influence in Bangladesh and its pioneering role in MTB-MLE, the education for indigenous children (EIC) initiatives of BRAC is also included in this analysis. In summary, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges are highlighted in Figure 4.

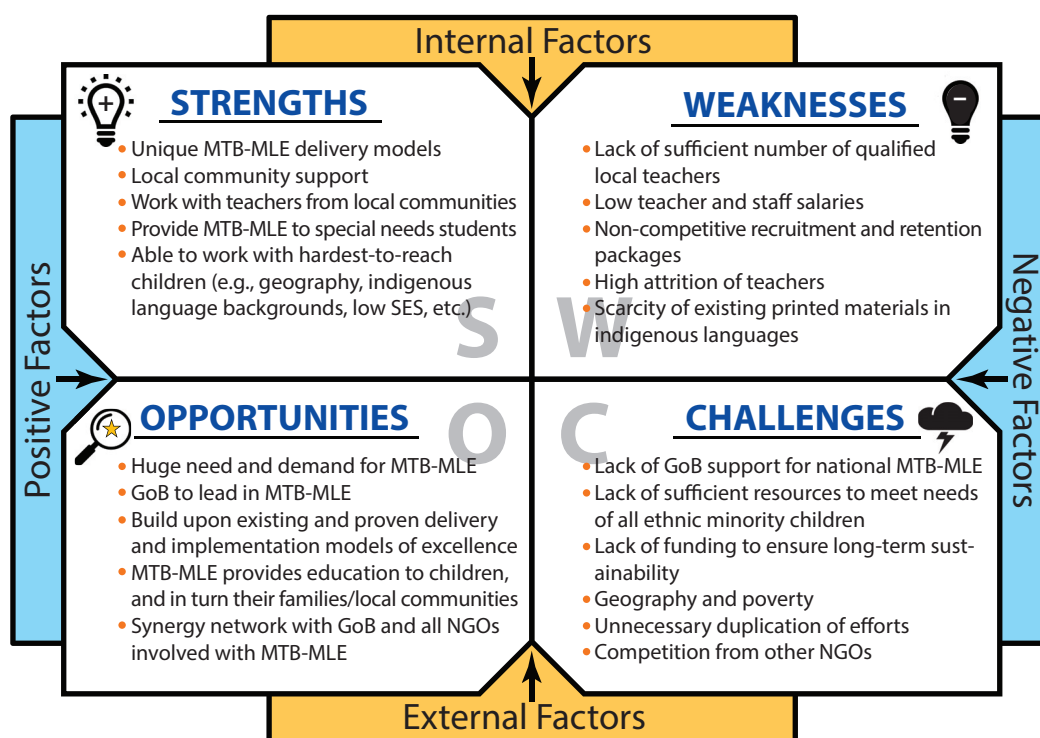


Figure 4. SWOC Analysis Highlights of the Leading MTB-MLE Projects in Bangladesh

Aloghar Lighthouse Project (Caritas Bangladesh)

Based on the vision that education leads to sustainable development, Caritas Bangladesh established the Aloghar (Lighthouse) Project (AP) in November 2011. Total funding of this project comes from two sources—95 percent from the EU-funded SHARE Education Program (9,935,700 Euros), and the remaining 5 percent from Caritas France. The project will continue for 72 months through 2017.

The focus of the project is to bring education to marginalized children due to poverty, rural and remote geography, and those who are from indigenous minority groups. At present, the AP operates in 998 villages (or schools)¹¹ from 384 union councils in 104 sub-districts.¹² As of May 2015, there were 57,914 children who have participated in the

AP at both the pre- and primary levels. Of these students, approximately 19,000 are from ethnic minority origin and 7,000 are considered special needs students.¹³ A total of 166 staff members and 1,327 teachers administer the AP.

The project supports pre-primary to Grade 2 level MTB-MLE. The goals of the AP include: (1) to increase literacy, (2) self-reliance, and (3) better social integration of the disadvantaged and hardest-to-reach children. “The hardest-to-reach children enjoy the rights to a quality and basic education at pre- and primary levels and equal opportunity for inclusion in mainstream education at the secondary level,” said Noel Gonsalves (2015). There are five expected results from the AP:

1. Disadvantaged community have ready access to effectively functioning education centers and conducive learning environments;
2. Indigenous children at pre- and primary level have the opportunity to learn in their native languages in addition to Bangla;
3. Effective inclusive education is assured for the children with special needs, by providing supplementary materials and other supportive educational materials;
4. Balance of the hardest-to-reach children are sensitized to family life skills, such as literacy, numeracy, sanitation, hygiene, climate change, disaster risk management, (by organizing life skills sessions at the community level); and
5. Effective advocacy mechanisms in place for education mainstreaming of the hardest-to-reach communities through establishing a strong network, which includes community-based organizations, civil society organizations, and government agencies.

As of November 2015, Caritas Bangladesh has developed materials in eight languages.¹⁴ The focus of these materials has been up to Grade 2, as Caritas Bangladesh administrators recognize that it is the GoB that is responsible for the production of curriculum materials in the more advanced grade levels.

Even though AP is entirely administered by Caritas Bangladesh, AP works to support the GoB in its efforts to deliver education opportunities to many of the nation’s hardest-to-reach children. Caritas Bangladesh works closely with several government agencies, including using the existing NCTB produced textbooks as the primary curriculum. They also produce quality teacher’s guides and other supplementary materials in indigenous languages. Caritas Bangladesh follows the national curriculum guidelines for teaching children in AP schools with a multi-grade approach.

AP provides a seven-day orientation training period for all new teachers that includes teaching methods, strategies, classroom management, and evaluation techniques. The orientation training takes place at one of Caritas Bangladesh’s six Regional Offices. In 2012, all teachers participated in a five-day subject-based training. Caritas Bangladesh partners with the GoB by hiring Primary Teacher’s Training Institute (PTI) instructors to provide subject-based training to AP teachers on an as-needs basis. There is also an ongoing in-service training program that occurs on a bi-monthly basis. This training includes refresher courses and thematic topics. AP also arranged training for community

leaders on advocacy, life skills, and multi-grade teaching methods, etc. The in-service trainings occur at the local Caritas Bangladesh AP Area Offices.

Strengths of the Aloghar Lighthouse Project

Community participation and support is a strength of the AP. Local communities provide the land for the schools and also provide local support, participation, and security.

Caritas Bangladesh hires local teachers selected by local communities to teach in the AP.

Inclusive education is another strength. Those who are disabled or special needs students, are entitled to attend the same classroom as normal students. Teachers work closely to help with this inclusive education.

For those students who are extremely disabled, AP provides a full-service facility to meet the needs of the blind, deaf, and lame. This is a strength that AP provides so many children can continue their learning.

They are able to work with children in rural and remote locations of the country. AP teachers work with the GoB's curriculum and textbooks, which is another strength, especially when it comes time to transition the MTB-MLE schools into the care of the government once a national MTB-MLE program is implemented. Already five schools have been transitioned from AP to GoB schools since the beginning of the AP in 2011.

Weaknesses and Challenges

Most of the education centers are situated in hard-to-reach, remote geographic areas. As such, there are many students who are not able to enroll in school. One of the greatest challenges AP leaders face in these remote locations is there are relatively few children compared to the national average of a single class level and school.

Language barriers remain a significant challenge for AP administrators. Helping children and teachers to be able to successfully bridge from their mother tongue to Bangla is an ongoing challenge to the indigenous children.

Another significant challenge is the need to provide MTB-MLE opportunities for the most disadvantaged students in the country. In addition to those in remote areas as has already been mentioned as a challenge, the most disadvantaged students include the very poor and those with special needs and disabilities (especially those with extreme disabilities, such as the blind, deaf, and lame).¹⁵ Often the only way to meet the needs of these students is to bring them to more central locations in specialized institutions (usually in urban centers) where school facilities are adequate and there are qualified teachers.

Occasionally there is an unnecessary duplication of efforts from other NGOs. This competition between NGOs is an issue AP deals with from time-to-time. Other competing NGOs may have more funds to pay higher salaries for teachers than AP is able to offer, and they may also be able to offer more perceived benefits to students than what AP is able to offer. AP increased its monthly salary from 2,700 BDT per month to 4,000 BDT per month in 2015.

Opportunities for Sustainable MTB-MLE Initiatives

AP teachers are willing to cooperate to deliver the methodology in schools. AP focuses on hiring female teachers at the village level. It is a gender-focused project, as the majority of AP teachers are female.

AP offers schooling to those students with disabilities, including a joyful environment for all students. This is particularly important for students with special needs and disabilities. It is also reciprocal for other students, who are able to understand that we live in a world where disabilities exist and it is the responsibility of all of us to help others, especially those who may have special needs and disabilities. This is a model that should be carried over by other NGOs involved with MTB-MLE and one that should be mainstreamed by the GoB as much as possible.

Life skills education for students is an important part of the AP curriculum. This provides a unique opportunity to share this learning with the students' families and their local communities when they return home each day.

AP provides health care and hygiene training and WASH facilities to students at all 998 AP schools. In addition, AP also provides sanitation training to families of participating students.

SHIKHON II Project (Save the Children)

The SHIKHON II Project began in 2012, and continued the groundwork established in the SHIKHON Project (2007-2011).¹⁶ Operating in four divisions of Bangladesh—Chittagong, Rajshahi, Rangpur, and Sylhet¹⁷—the SHIKHON II Project is comprised of three implementing partner teams: Community Development Centre (CODEC), RDRS Bangladesh, and Village Education Resource Centre (VERC). Children attending SHIKHON II schools reside in remote villages, river islands (Char), seasonally inundated low-lying areas, coastal areas, the hills in the CHT Region, and from urban slums (MOPME 2015).

The GoB has been consulted from the beginning of the SHIKHON Projects, especially to help Save the Children administrators better understand the MTB-MLE needs of the people. Because SHIKHON II follows the national approved curriculum for pre-primary and primary education, the GoB also offers textbooks in Bangla to each of the participating children. The mother tongue language focus of the project is Marma, and Save the Children provides all of the curricular materials in this language. The GoB also provides support for some of the project's in-service teacher trainings and on-site school visits. They work closely with the respective division, district, and sub-district education officers where the SHIKHON II Project is being implemented. The 25 teacher's guidebooks that have been produced using the NCTB to ensure that they are in alignment with the national curriculum and children's textbooks.

There are 4,290 non-formal primary schools participating in SHIKHON II, with 48,000 pre-primary (Early-Primary Education [EPE] Model) students in 2012 and 2013 and 80,400 primary level children since 2012. The project has also trained 5,882 teachers and

supervises activities with 10 fulltime staff members at the central level and 600 implementing staff members at regional and field levels from the three implementing partners. Overall the project has received 16.8 million Euro from SHARE Education Program.

SHIKHON II is a cohort-based approach that is implemented with three delivery models. First, the **Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) Model** includes students from readiness to Grade 5. All of the participating cohort of children who began attending NFPE schools in 2012 are now in Grade 5¹⁸ and will sit for the Primary Education Completion Exam this year. It is expected that these students will then carry on into Grade 6 in high schools in January 2016.

The **Early-Primary Education (EPE) Model** begins in pre-primary and continues through Grade 2. This second model helps prepare children who attend a SHIKHON school into one of the GoB mainstream public schools. Generally, the children who attend SHIKHON schools do so because they live quite a distance from the closest GoB primary school. It is virtually impossible for such young children to be expected to commute long distances to attend pre-primary and the early grades of primary school. SHIKHON II also established its EPE model in select GoB primary schools that are deemed overcrowded due to large numbers of children, which are viewed as generally unmanageable by a single teacher. In these situations, SHIKHON II helps GoB schools establish an EPE Center inside the school.

Third, SHIKHON II also offers an afterschool children support program called **SHIKHON Clubs** to provide additional support for children to help them to achieve Grade 3 competencies and also prepare them for continuing their schooling in Grade 4. These clubs are community based and provide after-school and extracurricular guidance to participating students on school premises. SHIKHON Clubs offer peer support and often help supplement the instruction that was learned during day classes. This program reinforces and supports children by involving them in “competency-based games and practice worksheets” rather than the predominant lecture method that exists in most classroom settings (MOPME 2015, p. 101).

The average SHIKHON II class size is comprised of between 30-35 children with one teacher and one support teacher. SHIKHON support teachers are often involved in one or more in-service training initiatives and then they bring these back to the classroom to help offer suggestions for improving the teaching.

For each geographic division, SHIKHON II has fulltime expert staff members, including a project coordinator and technical officers on primary education, community mobilization, and monitoring and evaluation. At the field office level, there is a field coordinator, teacher trainer, and supervisor, and 12 or more learning facilitators who provide direct support to the teachers on the ground.

Teacher selection begins when a school is identified and teachers are recruited from within the same school community. Anyone from the community who is interested in teaching is welcomed to apply. The SHIKHON II teacher recruitment process follows Save the Children guidelines that include requiring applicants to hold at least a Secondary School Certificate and to demonstrate a “passion to serve their community from a

volunteer's zeal" (MOPME 2015, p. 102). The application process also requires an interview, and following the interview teachers are selected based on individual competencies and perceived fit for the position as a teacher. The vast majority of SHIKHON II teachers are women. Depending on the grade levels that they will be required to teach, beginning teachers will receive anywhere from 8-12 days of basic training. This training is comprised of appropriate age-level teaching methods, language training, classroom management, evaluation, and subject-based instruction. Before teaching at any grade level (e.g., from readiness to Grade 5), all teachers receive 8-12 days of basic and subject-based training. GoB primary teachers, Upazila Education Officers, and Assistant Upazila Education Officers, sometimes help train SHIKHON II teachers in subject-based topics.¹⁹

All teachers participate in regular in-service trainings for one day each month. Save the Children uses a train-the-trainer approach, where experienced and qualified teachers help train other SHIKHON II teachers. To date, eight technical officers and 56 teacher trainers and supervisors have been trained and they are responsible for going to the field and training the rest of the teachers in the field. Save the Children prefers to use the term facilitator rather than trainer, because it helps prevent hierarchical barriers that exist otherwise. Save the Children rents buildings to conduct its in-service teacher training sessions of between 25-30 teachers at one time.

Strengths of the SHIKHON II Project

Save the Children draws from its vast experience in implementing similar MTB-MLE projects from many countries where it operates. This includes many teaching and learning materials that can be translated into Bangla and Marma for SHIKHON II. This is one of the strengths of the SHIKHON II Project.

Community engagement and organization are additional strengths. This is a participatory approach that includes all relevant stakeholders in the education process. Parents are encouraged to attend monthly meetings that provide various levels of life skills, public and family health, and the physical and mental development needs of children.

Save the Children has also developed a strong working relationship with the GoB and in networking with other partners.

The diversity of the SHIKHON II Project is another strength, including an ability to implement the project in different geographic locations. SHIKHON II is also able to manage a large number of human resources during project implementation.

Weaknesses

Supply versus demand is a weakness. In local communities there is a high demand for education. But, due to limited funds they are only able to reach 4,290 schools. If they had additional funds, they could work with more than the one or two cohorts of the SHIKHON II Project. For instance, they are in a strong position to implement their education delivery model to the younger siblings of their existing students, but due to a lack of funding, they are simply unable to do this. Even with a quality delivery model established, there are challenges that remain, especially when it comes to sustainability due to a lack of sustained funding.

Teacher quality in remote areas is a major issue SHIKHON II deals with on a recurring basis.

Implementation Challenges

The quality of its teacher workforce is the biggest challenge that Save the Children faces in implementing the SHIKHON II Project. Natural disasters in different parts of the country are also periodic and recurring matters that must be dealt with from time to time.

“Because we are working in the hardest-to-reach areas of the country, geography is a challenge we deal with,” said Md. Musle Uddin Bhuiya (2015). “When we go to the CHT Region, many of our schools are located far from the mainland. So when you need to go, you need to hire a boat, but sometimes a boat is not available. And it is a long way to walk in other remote locations in the Hill Tracts area. So this is a challenge that our staff face on a regular basis,” he continued.

Opportunities and Recommendations

According to Md. Abdur Raquib (2015b), “We have the best [MTB-MLE] model. The government likes our mother tongue-based and multilingual education model.” Many leaders of the GoB have expressed satisfaction with the SHIKHON II EPE and NFE models. Compared with the average student-to-teacher ratio in government schools, SHIKHON II schools maintain a classroom size for optimal learning. Save the Children administrators will often have teachers and administrators from government primary schools request to use curriculum materials (especially the teacher’s guide books) to help teach their children.

The SHIKHON II Project can also offer teaching and learning materials that can help other programs, including the GoB when it is ready to implement MTB-MLE nationwide. This model is a terrific opportunity for all students who are able to participate in it

Currently the GoB has only selected six languages that it plans to implement MTB-MLE in the near future. The most recent plan was to begin this implementation in 2016, however, it is not likely to happen until later.

UNIQUE II Project (Dhaka Ahsania Mission)

Established in 1988, the Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) has been working in various areas of non-formal education for many years, and covers 47 out of 64 Districts. UNIQUE I began in 2007, and UNIQUE II began in November 2011 and will continue through December 2017. There are 14 components in the UNIQUE II Project. SHARE Education Program provides 16 million Euro over a five-year period; DAM contributes a 5 percent cost-sharing contribution to the project as well. There are 1,850 primary children’s learning centres (CLCs or schools) and 739 pre-primary CLCs in the UNIQUE II Project.

Geographically UNIQUE II is in 52 sub-districts nationwide administered by 244 area offices. Most of the project is in Bangla and follows the government-approved curriculum. The MTB-MLE focus of the UNIQUE II Project began in early 2015 and is

centered on the CHT Region; DAM teachers provide MTB-MLE in three languages: Chakma, Marma, and Tippera.

Other NGOs which work as implementing partners on the UNIQUE II Project include Assistance for Social Organization and Development (ASOD), Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB), Development Organisation of the Rural Poor (DORP), Padakhep Manabik Unnayan Kendra (PMUK), SUROVI, Voluntary Association for Rural Development (VARD), and Young Power in Social Action (YPSA). Plan Bangladesh also provides technical assistance from time-to-time. There are 495 total fulltime staff, 310 of which are from DAM, and the remaining are from the implementing partners. Total participants include 30,000 students at the pre-primary level, 205,000 primary level students, 1,600 pre-primary teachers, and 1,850 primary teachers. UNIQUE II also has 1,200 Campe Centers, with a teacher overseeing each center.

DAM is the pioneer of the multi-grade education model. Now other NGOs are following the multi-grade model. For example, there may be four or five grade levels within one class. Students from different grade levels share the same classroom and the same teacher. This model is ideal for smaller schools, where there may only be a few students in each grade level. The DAM multi-grade model is adaptable to meet the varying skill levels of students in each class. Teachers are trained to help students advance as soon as they are ready, regardless of their age and grade level.

The current government approach to providing primary education to children in Bangladesh generally requires that there be enough students to justify a school. In 2011, the average class size in GoB-operated primary schools was 40.2 students per teacher; the average class size for NGO-operated primary schools in 2012 was less than 30 (see Tables 1 and Table 3). In many rural and remote settings, there aren't enough students to justify enrollments for a normal government school. In these contexts, there may only be a few students per grade level and a total of 20-30 students in all primary grade levels. Even within the same grade levels many children in rural and remote locations also have different literacy skill levels and are at different ages. Like other SHARE MTB-MLE Projects, UNIQUE II is working in the hardest-to-reach remote areas of Bangladesh. DAM provides training to other NGOs, including BRAC, on how to implement the DAM multi-grade model in their schools.

Selection of teachers is made while DAM establishes a CLC within a local community. The community provides an establishment for the CLC. DAM does not provide any funding for CLCs; they are entirely community owned and provided. There is a valid effort to include full community participation in the planning and development of the CLCs. Individuals who are interested in applying can do so. DAM has certain preferred requirements, including minimum education standards, however, it is not always possible to meet these standards as is portrayed in Table 3. When a short-list of applicants for a CLC teacher position is made, the community is involved with DAM in the final selection process. This is important because it helps build local support and ownership in the decision making process.

The DAM pre-service teacher training consists of a 10-day immersion of multi-grade learning approaches, classroom management, curriculum planning and development, discipline, child psychology and learning. DAM rents a building in a central location at

the district level for the 10-day pre-service teacher training period. MTB-MLE teacher training is based on the UNIQUE II model that focuses on multi-grade level instruction within a single classroom. It is a Paolo Freire-based instruction model that employs a student-centered, participatory approach. Later on, DAM works with the GoB PTI instructors in providing four-days of in-service subject-based training to their teachers.²⁰ The general teacher training follows the government curriculum (e.g., teaching Bangla, math, and English, etc.), so teachers are prepared to help students learn from textbooks produced and approved by the NCTB. DAM also offers monthly one-day in-service training on various related topics. Training materials are community-based and DAM includes local teachers and other language experts as resource persons in the development of teacher's guidebooks, textbooks, and other supplemental language materials.

Strengths of the UNIQUE II Project

Unlike other MTB-MLE models, the AP MTB-MLE delivery model is unique in that it is able to provide training to small, one-room, multi-grade level schools. The UNIQUE II approach is adaptable to where it can include students from all primary education grade levels and age groups²¹ in a single classroom. In addition, UNIQUE II teachers can work with students with varying competency levels at any time. In this context, students are able to move through their education experience at their own pace—fast or slow. It is an optimal and flexible model that adapts to individual as well as collective needs.

DAM has dedicated staff members and teachers. UNIQUE II also has strong community participation and local support. Another strength is DAM's long-established experience in curriculum development, training, and supplemental materials.

Weaknesses

In the many remote areas of Bangladesh, it is impossible to be able to offer UNIQUE II education to all the children who need it. There are many people who are not able to participate in the formal education system for one reason or another. The primary reason for this weakness is a lack of sufficient funding to reach all areas where there is a demand and need for quality education.

Implementation Challenges

The biggest recurring challenge DAM has is identifying, training, and retaining qualified teachers. "It is difficult for us to be able to find local teachers with all of the necessary qualifications to teach in a multi-grade-level environment," noted Md. Shahidul Hasan (2015). "We have to compromise with what we have," he continued. Teacher dropout is also another challenge. Reasons why teachers dropout vary, but include low salaries, especially in comparison with what other NGOs are able to offer. Competing NGOs are sometimes in a position to offer higher salaries than what DAM is able to offer.

Communications are difficult in many remote regions and adds to the challenges DAM administrators face in implementing UNIQUE II. For instance, during the wet season, some schools (CLCs) are only accessible via boat (for nearly a six-month period). Another example is in the CHT Region, because there are often no roads and it can take a long time to walk to the many spread out UNIQUE II CLCs.²² According to Hasan, "There are approximately 3,000 villages nationwide that are isolated from access roads."

Opportunities and Recommendations

The UNIQUE II multi-grade delivery model is one that was developed by DAM. This model can handle any of the many challenges that are facing the hardest-to-reach children in Bangladesh, including meeting the MTB-MLE needs of pre- and primary education-aged children.

The UNIQUE II multi-grade level model can easily be shared with and implemented by others. Other NGOs and even the government are coming to the Dhaka Ahsania Mission on a regular basis to learn from the UNIQUE II approach. Accomplishing EFA in Bangladesh will only be possible by implementing this type of a delivery model. When it comes to the remote and small villages in Bangladesh, this is the approach that is needed. The education system needs to be changed to accommodate such a delivery model.

The GoB needs to do more in taking the lead in MTB-MLE, especially in the most remote and rural locations of the country. In the meantime, many NGOs, like DAM through the UNIQUE II Project, are helping as much as they are able to fill in the education gap. But the NGO role should be a short-term strategy and on a small scale compared to what the government could offer if they took MTB-MLE on as a national initiative.

The Bangla language barrier is a huge issue in Bangladesh. Many community members in remote locations do not speak the national language. So it is difficult, if not impossible, to provide sufficient teacher training to teachers in these contexts. Something has to change to reach the people's needs of Bangladesh. Even with the most perfect teaching materials, students cannot understand and even the teachers in remote locations do not always know how to read and understand the textbooks they are using. Without the government's involvement and ownership and support, it will be virtually impossible to sustain MTB-MLE on a long-term basis. The optimal way is to have the GoB get involved.

Many NGOs are able to offer MTB-MLE education up to G2 or G3, but more is needed.

Other challenges include having a single class where two or more mother tongues are spoken by different students, and the teacher knows only one mother-tongue language. So, teachers needed to learn and be fluent in mother tongue instruction. Solving a multi-mother tongue classroom need is a MTB-MLE implementation challenge UNIQUE II sometime faces.

BRAC Education for Indigenous Children Initiatives

BRAC plays a very influential role in providing education to many within Bangladesh (Jacob and Xiong 2016; Nasreen and Tate 2007). Beginning in the 1970s, BRAC began its non-formal education initiatives in Bangladesh. As early as 1988, BRAC administrators were aware of ethnic minority children enrolled in some of their schools. But these children often struggled because they didn't understand Bangla, the only language of instruction at that time. After further examination and recognizing the unique needs of the many different ethnic minority peoples in Bangladesh, BRAC leaders decided that they should begin offering education opportunities for indigenous children

in their mother tongue. They then reached out to leaders of several ethnic minority groups in order to better understand their needs and challenges. Following these consultations, BRAC began its ethnic minority education program in 1999. Their initial MTB education programs were organized based on the consultations and feedback they received from international scholars and practitioners like Malone of SIL International. Since this time, the innovative BRAC education for indigenous children (EIC) model has evolved to encompass the unique challenges that exist within the Bangladeshi context (see Figure 5). As part of its Education Programme, BRAC has two projects that deliver MTB-MLE to ethnic minority children in Bangladesh. The first is called the EIC Oral-Based Project, and the second the MTB-MLE Project among the Chakma.

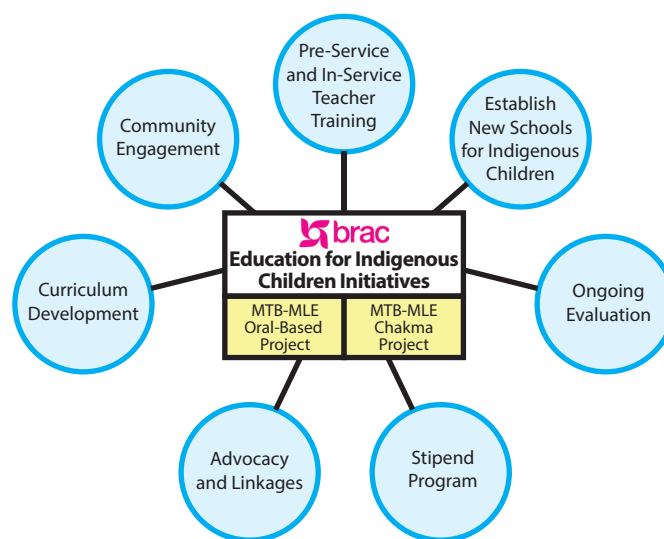


Figure 5. BRAC Education for Indigenous Children Model

Source: Adapted and updated by the author from Sagar and Poulson (2003, p. 2).

EIC Oral-Based Project

The EIC Oral-Based Project began in 1999; it has since grown to include 2,836 schools and an enrollment of 73,058 ethnic minority students by 2015.²³ Generally the Oral-Based Project includes fewer students per primary and pre-primary school than what exists in most of BRAC’s other schools where Bangla is the language of instruction. All EIC Oral-Based Project schools are comprised of ethnic minority children only.

According to Trishna Sagar and Natalie Poulson (2003, p. 2), this project was established for three primary reasons: (1) to increase the enrollment of ethnic minority children in mainstream education, (2) boost the self-esteem of indigenous people, and (3) create a positive attitude among the mainstream Bengali population towards indigenous peoples.

Teachers are recruited and hired from local communities. They are identified through meeting basic education requirements, including ensuring they have completed at least nine years of education (compared to the 10 required to teach in BRAC schools). After being identified as meeting this requirement, BRAC then administers a competency-based

exam to determine what individual strengths and weaknesses are in terms of their education understanding. Often two or more potential teachers are identified within Oral-Based Project school communities in the recruitment process, in case the first-selected teacher drops out for any given reason.²⁴ This makes it much easier for BRAC administrators to be able to quickly replace teachers should a necessary turnover occur.

Once identified as a teacher for the Oral-Based Project, BRAC then requires teachers to participate in a 15-day training seminar at one of the 28 BRAC Learning Centers (BLCs). This training includes immersion in appropriate MTB-MLE teaching methods, subject matter refresher courses, evaluation methods of student learning, and classroom management. Once the 15-day BLC training is complete, teachers are then required to participate in an on-site, four-day orientation training that is facilitated by BRAC Sector Specialists for the Oral-Based Project. The orientation takes place at the location where the teacher will be assigned. Recurring in-service teacher training is also required for two days each month, which is conducted at the local office closest to each Oral-Based Project teacher. BRAC facilitators provide weekly (or every-other week in remote locations) visits to Oral-Based Project schools to offer support where needed to the local teachers.

In most cases only one teacher oversees and instructs in BRAC's EIC Oral-Based Project schools. However, in some EIC schools, there are students from two different ethnic minority groups, where they have their own respective languages. In these cases, BRAC hires and trains two teachers who are able to offer instruction in both mother tongues.

Some indigenous languages in Bangladesh have their own scripts (e.g., Chakma). However, most indigenous languages of the Oral-Based Project don't have an indigenous script. In these cases, teachers explain (MOI) lessons orally in indigenous mother tongues alongside Bangla using instructional materials based on local culture and heritage. An English book for Grade 2 and some supplementary materials produced for the oral-based indigenous languages include teacher's guide books, story books, folklore books, and poems. An Environmental Studies curriculum has been developed for Grade 1 students in the CHT Region because this geographical context is significantly different from the other parts of the country.

MTB-MLE Chakma Project

This project began in 2008 and focused exclusively among the Chakma in two districts within the CHT Region—Khagrachari and Rangamati. To date, there have been 30 primary schools and 10 pre-primary schools established with approximately 20-23 students attending each school. Each school has one fulltime teacher. The recruitment and training of teachers for the MTB-MLE Chakma Project is identical to the EIC Oral-Based Project (except providing 15-day language training), plus an additional 10-day participant observation of instruction in one of BRAC's Bangla primary schools. This observational period allows MTB-MLE Chakma Project pre-service teachers to learn optimal teaching styles and methods from some of the best teachers BRAC has in its Education Programme. Instructional methods, styles, and evaluation and classroom management techniques often transfer across languages, which is the primary rationale behind this additional observation training period for all MTB-MLE teachers.

The first cohort of students completed Grade 5 in 2013 and successfully passed their Primary Education Completion Exam. They are now all continuing with their education at the secondary level.

Initial funding for BRAC's EIC initiatives came from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and has afterwards been supported by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). Currently funding is secured for BRAC's ethnic minority education programs through the end of 2016.²⁵

Strengths of BRAC's Ethnic Minority Education Projects

BRAC does not build and own schools in its ethnic minority education projects. Instead, BRAC rents a building or structure from within local ethnic minority communities.²⁶ The ownership of the schools is retained by the local communities. This ownership strategy is intentional to help build a stronger connection between BRAC schools and local communities. "We focus on quality instruction and not infrastructure" in our national education program said Tapan Kumar Acharjee (2015b). It is especially important to establish long-term sustainability of the school, with the locus of ownership shifted from BRAC to the community. It also is a means of instilling greater appreciation for their school when they have the primary control and ownership over the facility.

Other strengths include the use of indigenous languages in their instructional materials, textbooks, activities, and examinations. BRAC has experienced widespread parental and community support for their MTB-MLE Oral-Based and Chakma Projects. Parents are particularly happy to learn that their children are able to learn to read, write, and speak in their mother tongue. In many cases, parents are unable to read and write in their native language, so having their children reach this education milestone is a source of shared familial pride and happiness. It is often perceived by parents as a means to help preserve their local languages, cultures, and identities.

Weaknesses and Challenges

Perhaps the biggest weakness is the lack of qualified teachers to help teach the millions of ethnic minority children in Bangladesh. Retention of staff and teachers is a continual challenge for BRAC administrators. The primary reason for this teacher and staff drop-out is a result of low salaries. Competition from other NGOs is occasionally a reason that leads to teacher and staff turnover.

Where some parents can see the value of the ethnic minority education programs BRAC is engaged in, not all do. So, the lack of parental and community support is also viewed as a weakness. Many parents still do not understand or perceive the value of education.

Like each of the SHARE MTB-MLE Projects, geography is also a challenge for the successful implementation of BRAC's ethnic minority education projects. Many schools are in rural and remote locations that are difficult to get to because of limited transportation access. The most remote locations suffer from quality supervision by qualified BRAC facilitators and administrators, who are limited from their ability to travel to these locations due to distance and, in some cases, mode of transportation.

Unfortunately, there are very few resource people who reside in local communities. This is especially the case among the many small ethnic minority groups in Bangladesh. This limitation often hinders the ability for learners to gain further skills regarding language acquisition and to share what they are learning at school with their families and local communities.

The scarcity of printed materials in many ethnic minority languages is a current weakness that is difficult to overcome. The lack of sufficient funding and other resources often limit us from being able to produce a sufficient quantity and quality of printed materials in many of the ethnic minority languages.

A final major weakness is the lack of sustained funding for the two projects. Currently the funding is secured, however, without continued commitment from either overseas or local donor agencies. The ideal financial situation would be to have the GoB take over BRAC’s ethnic minority education initiatives for long-term sustainability and wider reach.

Opportunities and Suggestions to Reach Sustainable MTB-MLE Outcomes

Along with other NGOs, BRAC has laid a strong MTB-MLE foundation whereby the GoB can build upon. “Providing ethnic minority education is the responsibility of the government,” Acharjee expressed. The GoB is in an ideal situation to learn from what BRAC does well, especially in its ability to train ethnic minority teachers nationwide through its BLCs. This teacher training model is based on decades of experience that is now adapted to the local Bangladesh context.

Acharjee wanted to highlight that “the majority of the children participating in BRAC’s two EIC MTB-MLE Projects are first-generation students. They are not dropouts,” and are they are only attending school because they are able to begin learning in their mother tongue.

Much more needs to be done in terms of textbook development and information sharing. Acharjee would like to see more collaboration between the GoB and MTB-MLE implementing partners. This will help ensure a solid transition to best support the GoB when it is ready to implement MTB-MLE at the national level.

Table 3. Number of Trained Teachers, Teacher-Children Ratio, and Average Classroom Size

Nongovernmental Organization	Number of Trained Teachers (with Education)					Primary Teacher to Student Ratio	Supervisor to School Ratio	Classroom Size	
	Total Teachers	Teacher Qualifications						Length	Width
		<SSC	SSC	HSC	>HSC				
BRAC	13,800 [†]	1,271 [†]	10,694 [†]	1,725 [†]	110 [†]	1:28.60*	1:14*	24.00*	12.75*
Caritas Bangladesh	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1:09.09*	NA	18.00*	18.00*
Dhaka Ahsania Mission	488*	116*	234*	57*	81*	1:25.94*	1:50*	24.00*	16.00*
Save the Children	4,240 [†]	146 [†]	2,359 [†]	1,461 [†]	274 [†]	1:30.00 [†]	1:12 [†]	360 square feet [†]	

Notes: *2012 and [†]2015.

Source: Author’s calculations based on correspondences with Kumar Acharjee Tapan (2015a), Md. Abdur Raquib (2015a), and Early Learning Child Development Project and Selected NGO Survey (2012) and MOPME (2013).

V. Best Practices and Recommendations

MTB-MLE Teaching Strategies Must Be Based on Needs and Contexts. Bangladesh enjoys great diversity in terms of languages, cultures, and identities. Within this diversity, there are many differing contexts and needs of ethnic minority children. The 75 ethnic minority groups are spread across the country. In some rural and remote villages, there are only a small number of school-aged children who could attend pre-primary and primary school. In other areas, especially in the CHT Region during the Jhum cultivation season, many children travel with their families for months at a time. In the more densely populated plains region throughout much of the rest of the country, ethnic minority children are often intermingled with Bangla children in schools. Because of this rich diversity of both people and geographic context, it is recommended that three MTB-MLE strategies and policies be established to best meet the needs of all the ethnic minority children.

The primary MTB-MLE strategy should include teachers trained to teach in single grade levels, beginning at pre-primary through Grade 5. A second MTB-MLE strategy should be adopted for smaller schools, where teachers have to meet the needs of multi-grade level students in one-classroom school settings. Often this second strategy includes training teacher(s) who can facilitate the simultaneous teaching of children from Grades 1-5. A third MTB-MLE delivery model strategy is also needed that enables teachers to travel with the community children during the annual Jhum cultivation period. This third strategy includes a traveling model, where the school is literally relocated during the Jhum cultivation period and then can revert back to a more central location once the harvest is complete.

Recruitment and Retention Strategies for Qualified MTB-MLE Teachers. In order to attract the most qualified MTB-MLE teachers, there is a need to establish competitive recruitment and retention strategies. Each of the NGOs examined in this study noted how difficult it was to retain teachers because of relatively low salaries.

It is often difficult to recruit the most highly qualified teachers to teach in the rural and remote locations of the country. Additional incentives should be given to teachers willing to work in these geographic contexts. In addition to higher salaries, examples of what other countries provide to teachers assigned to similar rural and hinterland locations include housing, transportation, and cost-of-living allowances.²⁷

Identifying the right teachers is essential to the successful implementation of MTB-MLE programs. The local communities should help to identify and recruit some of the most talented individuals to be trained for these teacher positions. Community involvement is important because it helps provide local buy-in and ownership for the MTB-MLE initiatives and greater support for their children to attend school when they were involved in the decision-making process of recommending individuals to teach in their schools.

Indigenous Knowledge and Practices. There is sometimes a tendency to adopt majority and/or foreign teaching methods rather than those that include local cultural practices. This tendency can overshadow sometimes superior indigenous learning methods. By focusing on positive indigenous knowledge, cultures, and teaching methods, teachers are able to capitalize on approaches that are already commonplace among indigenous learners. This indigenous approach can also help build education bridges between students and their parents and other community members where they live.

VI. MTB-MLE in National Policy

The *National Education Policy 2010* was a landmark MOE (2010) document in support of MTB-MLE. It provides the overall vision that all Bangladeshi children be taught in their mother tongue during the pre-primary and early primary grade levels. However, this policy has not yet been fully implemented. In order to realize long-term and sustainable success in MTB-MLE, the GoB policy on MTB-MLE should be implemented nationwide, as was outlined in the *National Education Policy 2010*. While it is not feasible for the authorities to implement a national MTB-MLE initiative in all local languages from the onset, it can be accomplished in phases. Perhaps the best implementation strategy would be to focus on five languages during an initial three-year period, and another five languages during a second three-year period, and so forth. Specific action plans will need to be developed to ensure that curriculum materials are available in the targeted languages and that teachers are properly trained and placed in appropriate locations where the MTB-MLE programs will take place. In this contexts experience from other countries in the South and Southeast Asian Regions may be instructive.

Ensure Equity for All in Primary Education Opportunities. Great strides have been made since 1947 to increase literacy among children in Bangladesh. Much more needs to be done to ensure that all children are able to access a quality primary education “irrespective of ethnicity, socio-economic conditions, physical or mental challenges and geographical differences” as advocated in the *National Education Policy 2010* (MOE 2010, p. 5). Schools need to be built within walking distance of children (preferably within a maximum of 2 km or less). It is difficult for children ages 5-8 to be expected to walk for long distances to school each day. Most of the disparity that exists within Bangladesh is in the rural and remote locations, including the CHT Region. Without access to schools, and thus education, it will be impossible for children to attend.

Once schools are in place, quality teachers who are certified in optimal MTB-MLE instruction techniques should be placed in schools where ethnic minority languages exist as the mother tongue of the children. Ideally, teachers should be native speakers of the ethnic minority languages they teach. This will require working closely with local communities to ensure that quality teachers can be recruited and retained, especially in rural and remote locations.

Amongst the most disadvantaged of all children in Bangladesh are girls, disabled children, and those from low socioeconomic status families in ethnic minority regions. This group of the most-disadvantaged is similar to what we see in neighboring countries, including in Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam (Jacob, et al. 2015; UNICEF 2012).

Institutionalizing MTB-MLE. In order to best implement MTB-MLE on a national level, an institution to oversee the training of teachers, curriculum development, and implementation of all national MTB-MLE initiatives may be needed. The institution should be able to provide leadership and co-ordination for all initiatives in indigenous education and training, including MTB-MLE. A similar organizational structure has been working successfully in many countries, including Canada, China, Vietnam, and the United States.²⁸

Indigenous Education Teacher Training. Teacher training is a particularly crucial area of focus for the long-term success of any MTB-MLE initiative. An Indigenous Education Teacher Training Institute could take the primary responsibility of training teachers to implement the MTB-MLE initiative. The institute would ideally offer both pre-service and in-service training of all teachers involved with MTB-MLE in pre-primary and primary schools. The institute could pattern its training programs after the successful models already practiced by several NGOs that have been implementing MTB-MLE programs for years in Bangladesh. Successful institutions working in other countries can also be readily adopted in Bangladesh. In this way, there is no need to reinvent a model that has already been pioneered and is working in the greater South Asia Region.

MTB-MLE teachers should be trained by highly qualified personnel. Several of the leading MTB-MLE NGOs (e.g., BRAC, Save the Children, Caritas Bangladesh, and Dhaka Ahsania Mission) should be involved in the teacher training process, as well as qualified university faculty members.

Recognize Indigenous Peoples and Languages in the Constitution. Despite the progress that has been made by the GoB in policy making within the line ministries (e.g., the *National Education Policy 2010*), there is still no constitutional recognition of indigenous peoples or indigenous languages (GoB 1972). The only recognized people in the constitution are Bangladeshis and the only national language is Bangla. Formal recognition by the GoB of the 40-plus languages spoken in Bangladesh is a starting point that will help with a successful MTB-MLE implementation.

Extra Score on National Education Exams. Education policies have the potential to both support and discourage indigenous children's participation in education. For instance, indigenous peoples could be given an extra score on their national exams²⁹ if they choose to take them in their indigenous language. This extra score policy should help in promoting indigenous language, culture, and identity preservation. This policy has existed for many years in other countries, including in China and Taiwan.

Notes

- 1 Based on the literature and experiences of many countries, once countries are able to reach high net enrollment ratios of 90 percent or higher, it becomes increasingly expensive and difficult to reach the final 10 percent of the eligible-age children. Many of the reasons why this last remaining group of children is so difficult to reach include indigenous and ethnic minority children who struggle with the national language(s), rural and remote geography, poverty, migrant children, special needs and disabilities, HIV and AIDS, armed conflict, and refugees (Ahmad and Haque 2011; Jacob et al. 2015; Liu and Jacob 2013; Jacob and Ouattara 2009; UNESCO Bangkok 2015a).
- 2 Mother tongue refers to an individual's first language (L1), generally the language spoken in their home, among family members, and their local community.
- 3 While basic education in many countries comprises Grades 1 to 5 or 6, I am cautious to note that in some countries basic education continues from Grades 1 to 9.
- 4 Optimal strategic plans should include a plan-to-plan, which serves as a precursor to the primary strategic plan and that includes widespread consultation and input from all relevant stakeholders. They should also be accompanied by annual action plans with specific goals, objectives, and assignments for all stakeholders. Finally, successful strategic plans should be costed to ensure that budgetary goals are understood from the onset and sufficient financing is provided to support the realization of annual action plan activities.
- 5 Optimal MTB-MLE programs ensure that schools are safe places for children to learn, and especially in times of conflict, post-conflict, and emergency contexts. This includes ensuring that governments adhere to the UNESCO (2015) Safe Schools Declaration and the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools advocated by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015).
- 6 Eliminating stigma includes *nonaggression* and preventing both *microaggressions* (subtle, sometimes unintentional stigmatization acts that may include verbal innuendos or negative body language, gestures, and/or thoughts expressed toward indigenous peoples and their languages, cultures, and identities) and *macroaggressions*, or intentional, overt acts of stigmatization (Jacob 2015, pp. 130-131).
- 7 As of July 2015, the population of Bangladesh was estimated at 160,996,000 according to the United Nations Population Division (2015, p. 13).
- 8 Mesbah Kamal (2007, p. xi) calls the indigenous peoples of Bangladesh Adivasis (a word derived from the Sanskrit word *adi*, which means "original" and *basi* or "inhabitant").
- 9 Other groups include disabled children and refugees (World Bank 2013).
- 10 When the division of India was finalized at the conclusion of the British Raj in 1947, the primary rationale for the partitioning of land between India and Pakistan was based on religion. Pakistan was to form an independent nation from the former South Asian colony for Muslims. It was therefore quite surprising to most residents within

the Chittagong Hill Tracts that they were assigned to Pakistan, when the vast majority of its citizens were non-Muslim.

- 11 The original number of schools in the AP was 1,005. By November 2015, seven of these schools had been taken over by the government.
- 12 The AP is located in 27 districts in six divisions.
- 13 The special needs children of the AP includes those with learning and physical handicaps, even those with extreme disabilities (e.g., blind, deaf, and lame). These students are eligible to receive room, boarding, and health care benefits while participating in the AP.
- 14 The eight languages of the AP as of November 2015 were Chakma, Garo, Khasi, Kurux, Marma, Mru, Sadri, and Santali.
- 15 The Ministry of Planning (2015) has indicated that the MOPME is meeting the needs of those with mild physical disabilities, but “meeting the needs of those with severe disabilities remains outside the scope of the primary education system” (p. 569).
- 16 The term *shikhon* is a Bangla word that means “learning.”
- 17 SHIKHON II is being implemented in 65 sub-districts in the four noted divisions.
- 18 Students attending the SHIKHON II NFE program complete the equivalent of a five-year primary education over a four-year period and are expected to sit for the Primary Education Completion Exam. According to the MOPME (2015, p. 99), “The curriculum is condensed to 4 years to complete five year’s primary cycle to compensate for the children’s loss of academic years due to dropout, repetition and overage enrolment, without compromising the competencies to be achieved.”
- 19 An upazila is a sub-district in Bangladesh.
- 20 Depending on the teacher and the location, subject-based training can occur anytime following their start date with the UNIQUE II Project. It can even occur after one or two years from the time they first began with UNIQUE II. PTI instructors provide two-day training on mathematics and another two days training on teaching English.
- 21 One UNIQUE II classroom may have students ranging in age from 6-14 years old.
- 22 Some UNIQUE II schools are so remote that they require teachers and DAM monitoring and monitoring/support staff to walk 10 km one way from the nearest road.
- 23 As of September 2015, the total EIC Oral-Based Project enrollments include 58,716 students attending 2,295 BRAC primary schools, 11,536 students in ESP schools, and 2,806 children in BRAC pre-primary schools (BRAC 2015).
- 24 Teacher attrition occurs for many reasons, including because of low salaries, they are recruited by another NGO to work for them, and mortality.
- 25 Even though BRAC contributes some financial assistance, the vast majority of funding for BRAC’s ethnic minority education programs comes from overseas assistance.

- 26 When buildings are first identified for a new school, BRAC administrators ensure that they perform due diligence in such areas where the new school does not appear to or actually compete with other schools that may be nearby. They will also ensure that the building meets BRAC's quality standard for teaching children. Where needed, BRAC will renovate the structure so that it can meet its national standard for pre-primary and/or primary schools.
- 27 Many governments offer similar recruitment and retention packages to teachers willing to teach in rural, remote, and hinterland locations of their respective countries. Some examples include China, Indonesia, Taiwan, Uganda, the United States, and Zambia.
- 28 The names of these equivalent agencies differ by country, including the Aboriginal Education Directorate in Canada; Department of Ethnic Minority Education in China; Ethnic Minority Education Department; and Bureau of Indian Education in the United States. Most are based within the respective ministries of education (or equivalent government agency) of each country.
- 29 This extra score policy could be implemented with the following exams in Bangladesh: Primary Education Completion Exam, Junior Secondary Certificate Exam, Higher Secondary Certificate Examination, and the Secondary School Certificate Exam.

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