

MNEC and the importance of MTB-MLE



Figure 1: Naing Hlon Mon National school use mother tongue language in teaching.

For the Mon National Education Committee (MNEC) delivering education entrenched within a Mother- Tongue Based Multi-Lingual Education (MTB-MLE) system is of paramount importance. The Mon people take great pride in maintaining their ethnic identity through the use of Mon language and the observation of Mon culture and traditions. During the period from June to November 2019, MNEC have undertaken concentrated efforts to create MTB-MLE materials to be used within their local curriculum and advocate for an MTB-MLE education system.

Continuing with the development of curriculum materials, this year MNEC have concentrated on creating resources for Grade 3. With data from international research indicating that children from ethnic language backgrounds are more likely to enroll and succeed in schools that offer an MTB-MLE curriculum, MNEC follows the UNESCO MTB-MLE guidelines. The new primary curriculum and textbooks being developed for Grade 3 aim to develop active teaching and learning through the MTB-MLE system. The textbooks are designed to provide inquiry and project-based learning linked with community issues and cultural traditions.

The development of textbooks is also being complemented through the work of the Broad Based Capacity Development (BBCD) MTB-MLE course. After creating a range of reading materials such as reading primers and story books written in the Mon language, the BBCD team piloted the new materials with school teachers, children, parents and school committees of the Mon national schools in Mudon Township. The reading materials were very well received in the schools and the children enjoyed reading the simple stories and pointing out familiar objects in the colourful pictures.

The BBCD MTB-MLE team, together with MNEC's research and advocacy team, also carried out a joint advocacy trip to Ye township, for the purpose of awareness raising on the importance of using an MTB-MLE approach to learning. There was great participation in the community workshop which included learning and singing a song that was so popular it even led to dancing! The community members highly valued the stories, big books and other reading materials that had been produced by the BBCD MTB-MLE team. Community members, who are increasingly considering sending their children to government schools as they perceive that they will have better opportunities if they study in the Myanmar language, felt they had been well-informed of the benefits of using teaching and learning materials delivered through an MTB-MLE education system.

In addition to these joint workshops, from July to November 2019, the community awareness raising team also conducted 31 awareness raising workshops in eight townships in Mon State, Kayin State and in Thanintharyi region. A total of 1,566 (726M, 840F) villagers were reached for MTB-MLE awareness training including 337 (116 M, 221 F) Mon national school teachers. The participants were students, parents, members of school committees and village authorities. The awareness teams noticed that after the trainings, the participants were also better informed about the advantages of children being taught through an MTB-MLE education system.

To complete their success with raising the profile MTB-MLE, in December, the MNEC Senior Management Team will travel to Naypyidaw for a meeting with the Minister from Ethnic Affairs to advocate for the Mon Education system and the importance of Mother-Tongue Based Multi-Lingual Education.



Figure 2: Grade -2 student are studying at Naing Hlon Mon National School.