

# MLE Components

Components of Sustainable  
Multilingual Education Programs



Chart concept by Susan E. Malone, Ph.D.

A strong mother-tongue-based multilingual education program includes the components listed above. Successful and sustained programs involve language communities and partners sharing responsibility for the planning and implementation. Various partners work together in support of MLE programs when they recognize the benefits—students achieving their educational goals.



SIL International® is a faith-based nonprofit organization that facilitates language development within minority language communities through research, translation, training and materials development.

SIL recognizes that multilingualism promotes unity in diversity and international understanding. SIL's participation in multilingual education involves serving as an advocate with and for ethnolinguistic communities, linking them to supportive resources, and assisting them in increasing capacity to build sustainable language development programs. As an NGO, SIL has special consultative status with ECOSOC and formal consultative relations with UNESCO.



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# Multilingual Education

Mother-tongue-first Education in a  
Multilingual World



# Multilingual Education

Many local language communities are, in reality, multilingual. In addition, some want to communicate in the national language and possibly also in an international language. Multilingual education (MLE) programs promote first language literacy skills, providing the means to meet broader multilingual goals.

## Capacity Building

*People learn best when they learn in a language they understand well.*

MLE makes quality education possible by adapting conventional instructional methods and materials to fit a local culture. It makes a pathway across the cultural and linguistic barriers that block minority language speakers from learning and living within the wider language and culture. MLE programs require careful development and training. Where local communities lack expertise and experience, outside consultants can assist in building the capacity of local community educators and national program designers to create effective MLE programs.

## Advocacy

*If you don't speak the language, how do you ask for help?*

Members of ethnolinguistic communities work together with outside consultants to raise awareness and mobilize support for programs that will enable them to achieve their education and development goals. On those occasions when they cannot speak for themselves, MLE consultants advocate for language and education policies and programs that ensure that Education for All is for everyone, including speakers of non-dominant languages.

## Resource Linking

*"Many hands make light work."*

This proverb aptly describes the benefits of partners working together with language communities to establish MLE programs. Each partner contributes its own particular resources and expertise. Strong educational programs that help students bridge to national and international languages can be built through the combined efforts of government agencies, NGOs, universities, donors and the language communities themselves. When MLE programs are linked to multiple resources, the likelihood that the program and its benefits will be sustained is increased.

## Life-long Learning

*Building on a firm foundation:*

Young people and adults who gain fluency in reading and writing their mother tongue are better prepared to transfer their literacy skills to other languages—acquiring essential tools for life-long learning. Strong mother-tongue-first education programs enable communities to access the knowledge and information they need to take an active part in local and national development efforts. The results are the growth of self esteem and a community that is better equipped to become literate in languages of wider communication.

