



International Conference on
**Mother Tongue Based
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Experiences in implementation of multilingual education in Cambodia

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Overview

Language landscape in Cambodia

MLE implementation timeline

Motivation for MLE

MLE national action 5 year-plans

Choice of MLE model

Evaluation of first 5 year-plan

Findings

Recommendations to focus on:

- Actors
- partnership with non-dominant language groups
- Visible leadership
- Adequate financial & technical resources



Languages in Cambodia

The dominant language is Khmer, spoken by 93% of citizens.

At least 26 non-dominant languages, including French, English, Cham, Vietnamese, Lao, Chinese and several Indigenous languages.

The government's MLE initiative only applies to six Indigenous languages:

- Bunong
- Tampuan
- Kavet
- Brao
- Kreung
- Jarai



Before MLE.....

Children were disadvantaged because the language they speak at home was not used as a language of instruction in school.

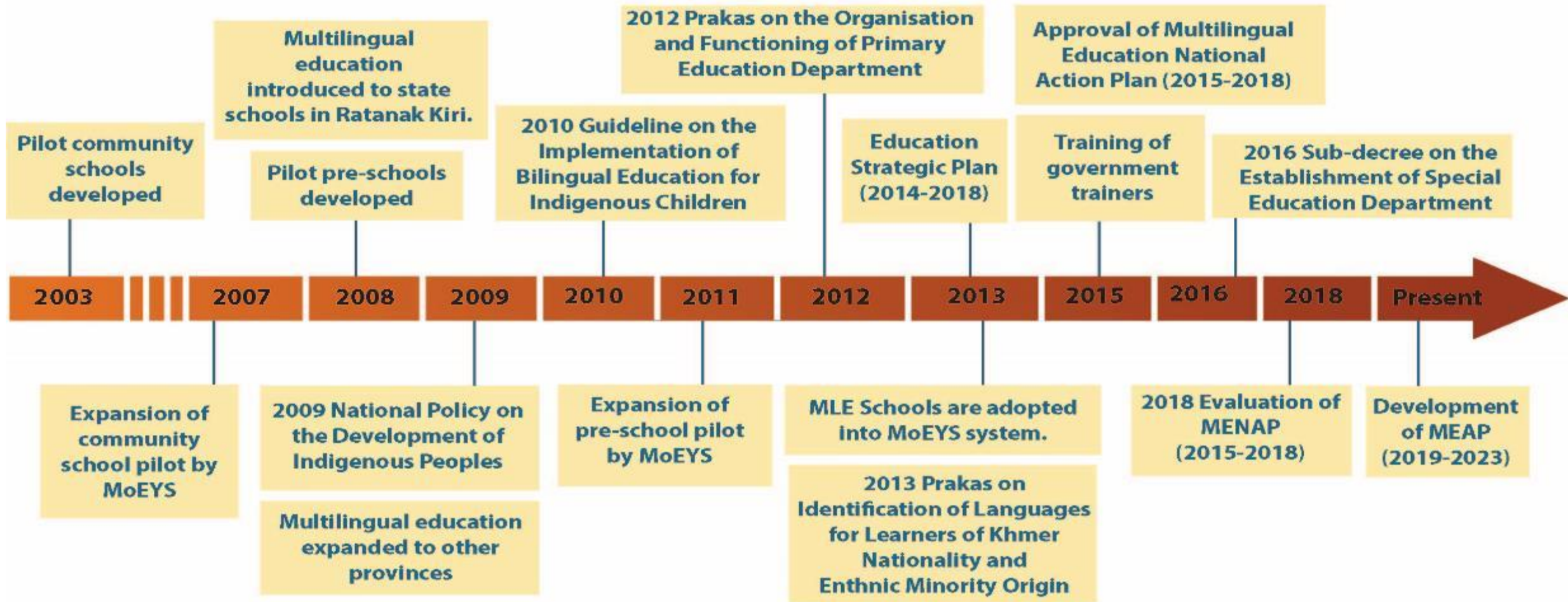
Enrolment, attendance, and progress of Indigenous children was much lower than the national average.

Parents did not understand the value of formal education because they could not understand the teacher's language or the Khmer curriculum.

Milestones in MLE (effectively bilingual education in Cambodia)

- **Mid-1990s:** Use of Indigenous languages started in nonformal education with pilot projects by INGOs and government partners
- Language development: orthographies (approved by the Royal Academy) and literacy materials
- **From 2002:** bilingual education was demonstrated in the formal education system by CARE International and government partners
- **2007:** *Education Law* (Ch.4, Art.24) gave local authorities the right to choose the language(s) of instruction in areas where Khmer-related non-dominant languages are spoken
- **2010:** “*Guidelines on the implementation of bilingual education [MLE] programs for Indigenous children in highland provinces*”
- **2013:** *Bilingual Education Decree – allowing the use of Indigenous languages along with Khmer*
- **2015-2018:** *Multilingual Education National Action Plan*
- **2019-2023:** *Multilingual Education Action Plan (a continuation of the first five-year plan, with two more Indigenous languages added.*

Timeline: Multilingual Education (MLE) in Cambodia



MoEYS: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MENAP: Multilingual Education National Action Plan
MEAP: Multilingual Education Action Plan

Minister of Education, Youth and Sport, 2016, Dr Hang Chuon Naron:

“The Multilingual Education program is essential to reach the Sustainable Development Goals for inclusive and equitable quality education in Cambodia. It serves as a bridge for Cambodian children who do not speak Khmer at home and allows indigenous children to learn in school effectively and understand what their teachers say in the classroom.”

Multilingual Education National Action Plan (2015-2018)

Multilingual Education Action Plan (2019-2023)

Goal: increase access to meaningful education of Indigenous girls and boys by providing them with multilingual education in preschool and in the first three years of primary school.

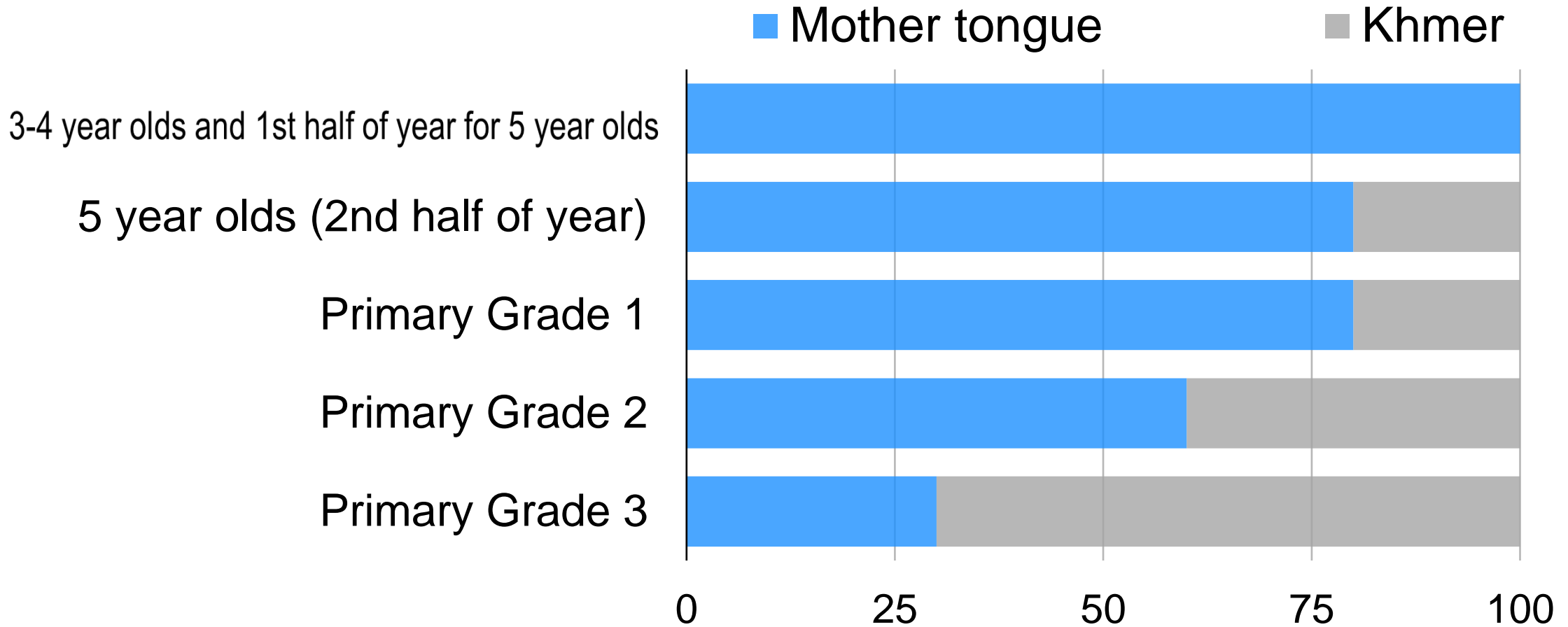
2015-2018 encompassed 5 Indigenous languages

2019-2023 encompassed 6 Indigenous languages

Government built on MLE delivery systems established by CARE.



Cambodia's current MLE model: a 'short-exit' or 'bridge' to education in Khmer



Various models for MLE

Cambodia's model is known as **early-exit or short-term bilingual transitional** model.

Children switch to instruction only in the dominant language by Primary 4.

Research supports a **late-exit or long-term bilingual** (or multilingual) model.

Children switch to instruction in the dominant language after they are able to **read to learn**, usually after Primary 6.

Still, an opportunity to start school in a language spoken at home encourages enrolment and learning engagement. But children are not likely to become literate in their home language in a short-term model.



A culturally rich curriculum specific for MLE

For the first 3 years of primary school, teachers use a customized MLE curriculum, rich with culturally-based content created by CARE in consultation with Indigenous people.

MLE curriculum is the same for all Indigenous language groups, which share a highlands setting and livelihoods involving non-timber forestry and farming.

Supplementary books are specific to each Indigenous language group, illustrating specific cultural knowledge, traditions, and practices.



Evaluation of MENAP in 2019

Commissioned by UNICEF on behalf of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

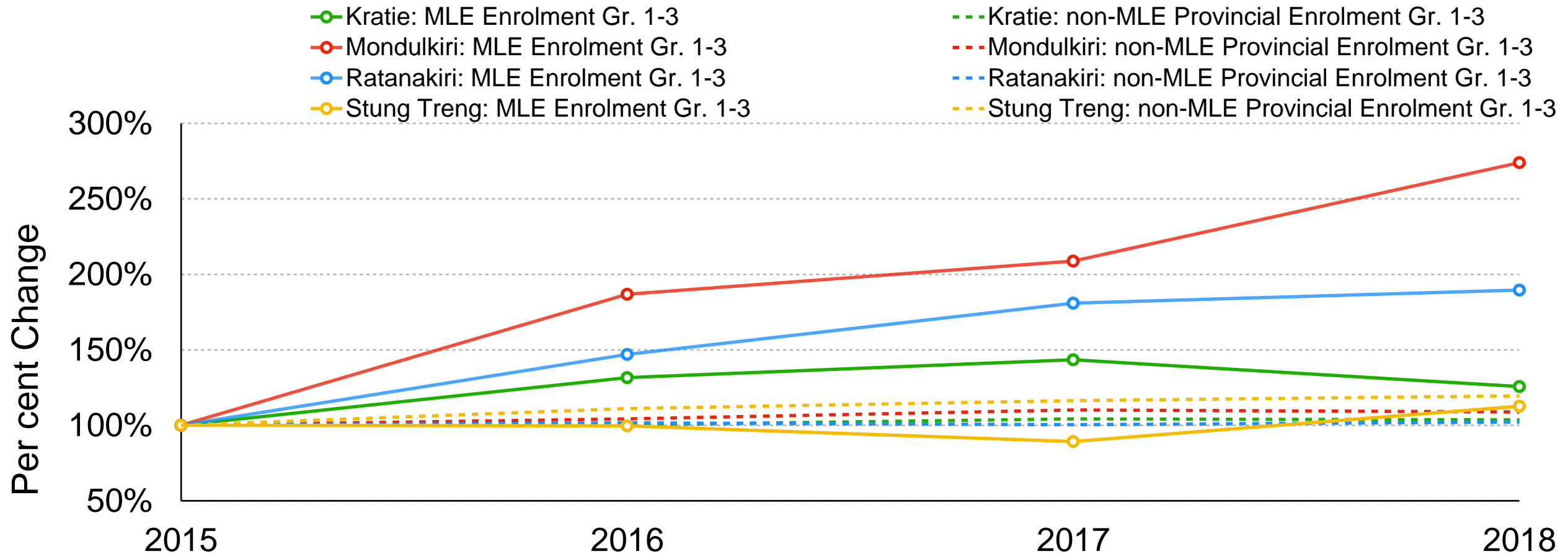
Conducted by Jessica Ball, Mariam Smith and 9 Indigenous team members

- Visits to 24 MLE primary schools, 11 MLE preschools, 4 non-MLE schools in 4 provinces
- 84 focus group discussions & 6 Outcome Harvesting workshops involving 764 people
- 41 interviews with key education officers & development partners
- 122 survey questionnaires



Findings: MLE is effective

MLE produced **significant increases** in school enrolment, attendance, active participation in class, and parents' involvement on school support committees.



MLE preschool *can* be effective....

MLE preschool teachers and facilities need state support (and not only community support).

MLE preschools need to be linked geographically and functionally to primary schools.

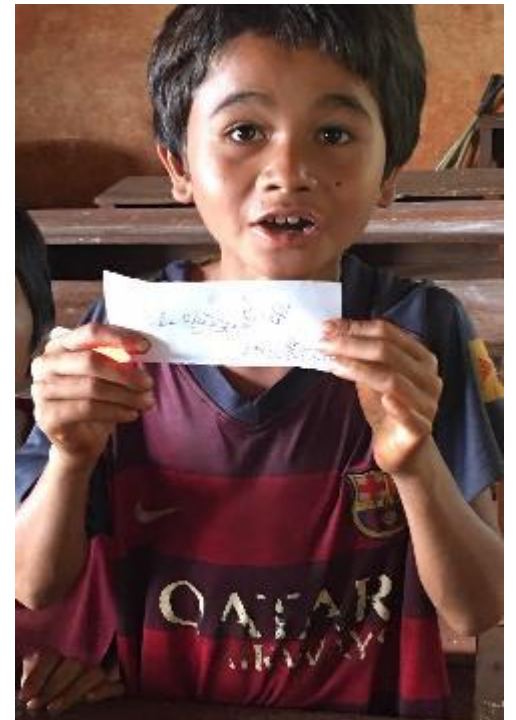
MLE preschool teachers need MLE teacher training and materials.

In Cambodia, a 2019 law (Prakas 245) offered a framework to achieve these aims.



Findings: Increased awareness & demand

- Demand for MLE among parents, school principals and district education officers exceeded the supply of qualified Indigenous teachers.
- Teacher training institutions need to be more involved in MLE training.
- Teachers for MLE need to be proficient speakers of the non-dominant language.



Findings: Language & culture go hand in hand in effective MLE

Indigenous people, especially children, greatly value seeing themselves reflected in the activities, problems and solutions portrayed in curriculum.

In addition to providing a curriculum that represents the livelihoods and relevant local knowledge of non-dominant language groups, MLE teachers can be supported to generate locally relevant teaching and learning materials and activities.

Indigenous people are keen to partner with technical resource people to ensure authentic, relevant cultural content.



Findings: A short-exit model is just a start....

Children, parents, village leaders and education officers at the district and provincial levels saw the positive impact of MLE and advocated for extending MLE at least to Primary 6.

Children wanted to learn how to design and make farming implements and traditional musical instruments, to know more about forest ecologies, sustaining native plants, and raising and caring for animals. Most of all they wanted to learn to write in their language.



Findings: Sub-national education officers play a key role

Provincial education leaders and district officers benefit from ongoing support to understand MLE – goals, how it works, teacher training requirements, unique curriculum and implications for mentoring and monitoring.

Sub-national educators need sufficient technical support arranged at the national level.

In Cambodia, a decade of CARE work with sub-national educators in two provinces was reflected in outstanding achievements in Indigenous children's school enrolment and success in those two provinces.

These successes encouraged sub-national educators to increase awareness of MLE with teachers and parents, and to advocate with government for MLE school expansion.

Findings: Costs

In Cambodia, significant up-front costs were born by INGOs (mainly CARE), mainly to:

Create MLE curriculum in consultation with Indigenous people

Create MLE teacher training pre-service and in-service modules

Train Indigenous language speakers to become 'core teacher trainers'

"After the program has been developed, the cost of training teachers and delivering MLE is not that much more than non-MLE."

Principal of a school with both MLE and non-MLE classrooms

MLE inception and implementation plans should be costed.

Unanticipated findings

Indigenous parents became more engaged in bringing their children to school, taking an interest in homework, and participating in school support committees.

Adults are now seeking help to become literate in their languages.

The national capacity to lead MLE was behind the provincial education authorities, pointing to an ongoing need for adequate technical support to leadership and strategic recruiting, including members of the language groups intended to benefit.



What about Khmer? (the dominant language)

Parents and village leaders said that children are happy to learn Khmer, but they need MLE to become proficient in their Indigenous language, which is important for the survival of their culture and language.

Due to high in-migration of Khmer people into traditionally Indigenous communities, children are exposed to Khmer in their everyday lives.

Parents and teachers pointed out that MLE is producing higher enrolment and more children advancing to higher grades, so they are more likely to attend secondary school where Khmer is the language of instruction. In other words, once they have become literate in their first language, they will be ready to engage fully in learning in the national language.



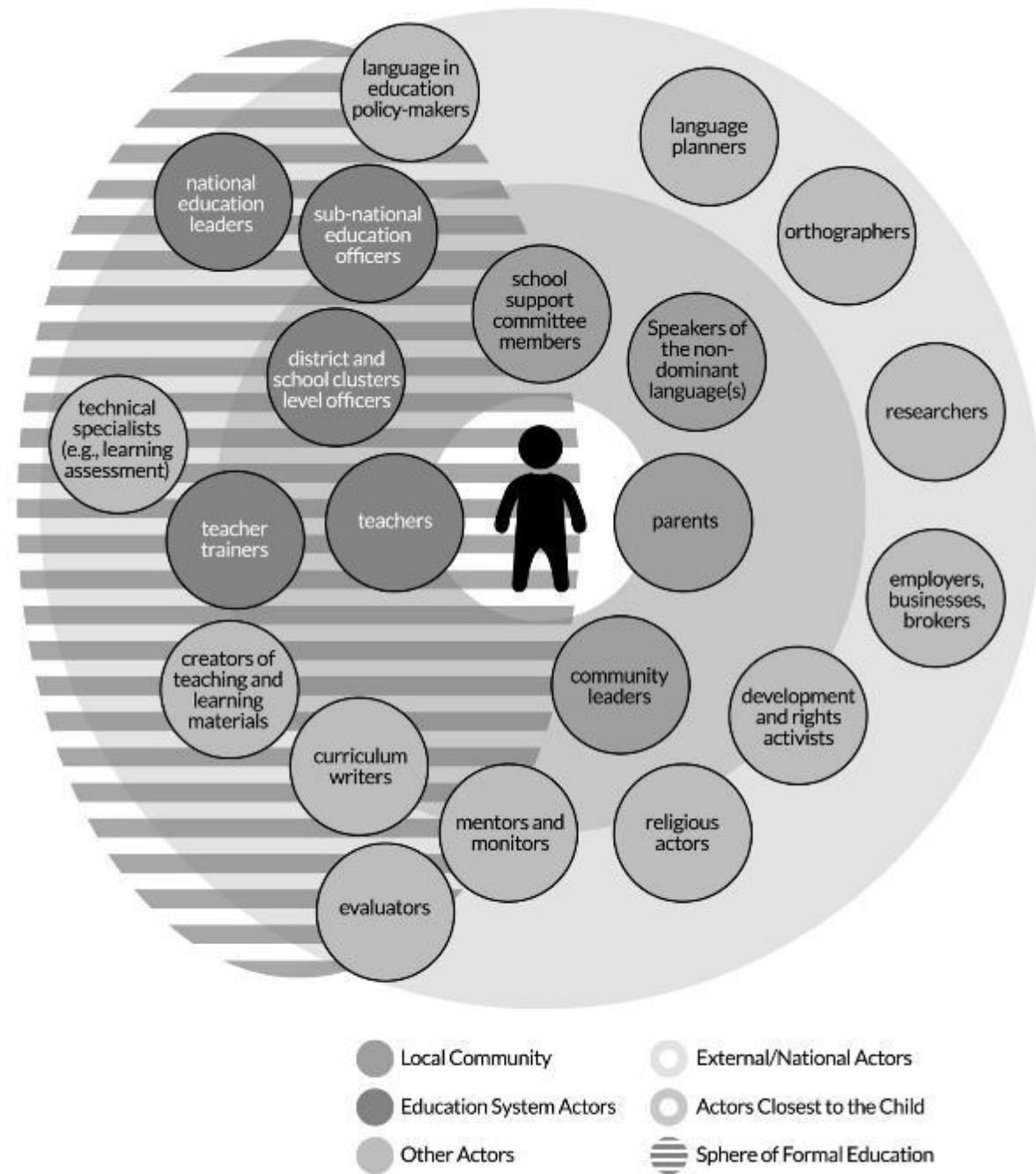
Evaluation conclusion:

Cambodia is showing some of the promise of MLE in achieving local and national goals for education and development²⁴



Evaluation insights:

Include an actor-focus in plans for MLE implementation



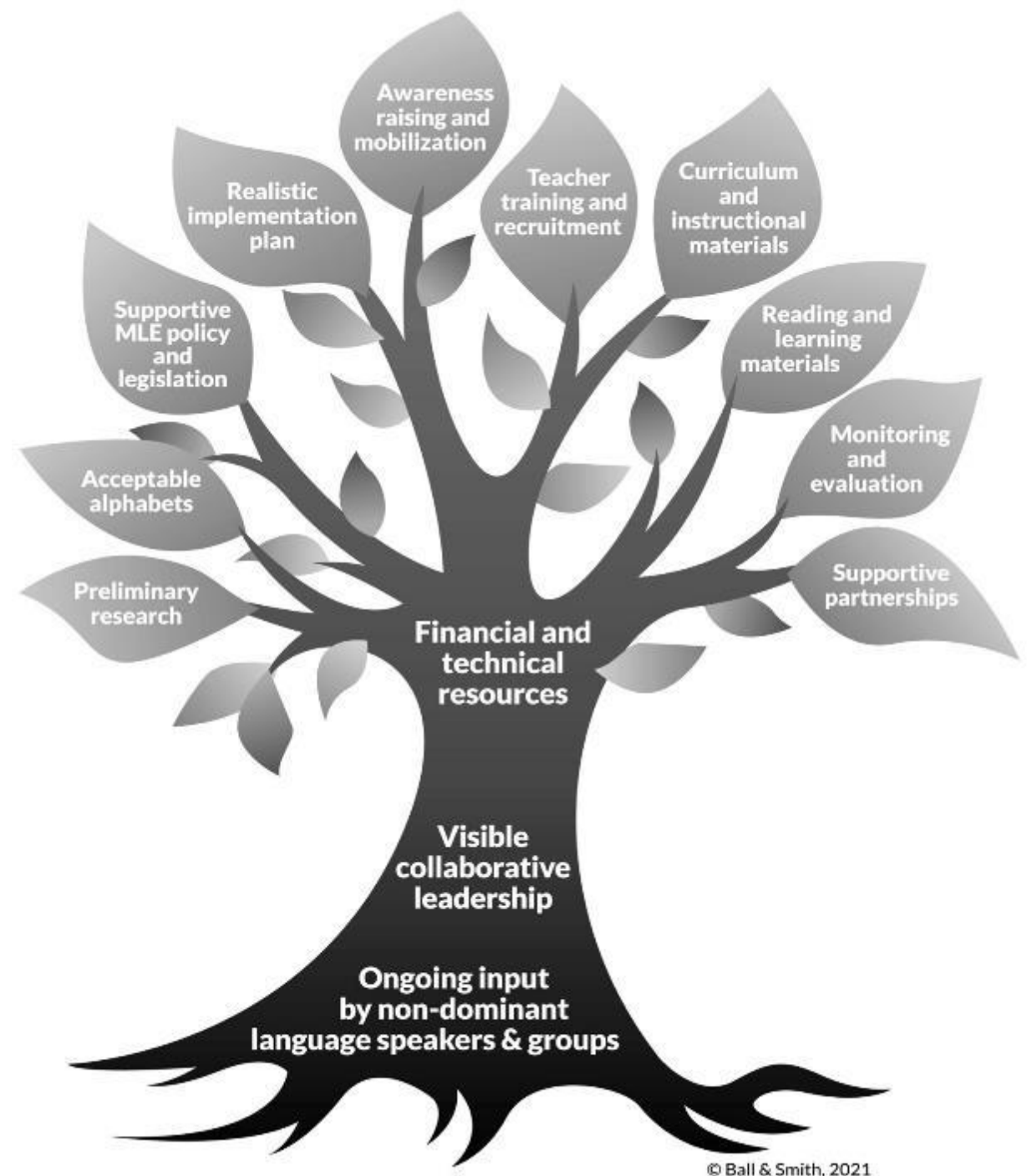
Evaluation insights:

Evaluation of MLE in Cambodia confirmed **UNESCO's 10 essential elements** in MLE implementation, plus three even more foundational elements:

Partnership with non-dominant language speakers & organizations

Visible, collaborative **leadership** especially at the national level

Adequate financial and technical **resources**.





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Terima kasih banyak! Xie Xie! Thank you very much! Merci beaucoup!

For more information: <https://www.unicef.org/cambodia/reports/evaluation-multilingual-education-national-action-plan-cambodia>

Visit: www.ecdip.org