



# Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education

The Key to Unlocking SDG 4 - Quality Education For All

# SDG 4 **QUALITY EDUCATION** – ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

We live in a multilingual world. People use different languages for different things; it's their normal way of life. Yet, most education systems ignore this multilingual reality.



lack access to education in their own languages



Most children grow up in a context where more than one language is spoken

Equitable quality education and lifelong learning for **all** is only possible when education responds to and reflects the multilingual nature of the society. Children, youth and adults require learning opportunities that are relevant to their lives and needs, in and through their own languages.

Since SDG 4 is so foundational to the other Sustainable Development Goals, without mother tongue-based multilingual education the other 16 goals will remain unachievable.



**Mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) = education that begins in the language that the learner speaks most fluently, and then gradually introduces other languages.**

# HOW MTB-MLE CONTRIBUTES TO **SDG4**



## **You have to speak a language before you can learn to read and write that language (Targets 4.1, 4.4, 4.6)**

We are born to speak, but we learn to read. **Oral language** ability is the most reliable predictor for **literacy** in that language. Many **youth and adults** who have missed out on the opportunity to learn to read and write will only be able to succeed if lifelong learning opportunities are provided in the languages they know best.



## **Early childhood education of high quality is only possible in the child's first language (Targets 4.2, 4.5, 4.7)**

**Early childhood** is the most important developmental phase of any human being. Children at this stage learn best in a language they already know. By providing learning opportunities in the languages that children use at home we are also investing in individuals' **future development opportunities**.



## **Well trained and supported multilingual teachers boost learners' performances (Targets 4.1, 4.5, 4.c)**

Inclusive training and management policies that diversify the composition of teachers are an urgent need in most education systems. Teachers who **collaborate** with **local educators** and community elders can better understand the language and **culture of learners**, leading to more relevant and improved learning outcomes. Where teachers are from non-dominant communities, they also serve as strong positive role models for learners. At the same time, using children's home languages enables parents and other community members to better support children's learning.



## **MTB-MLE enables life-long learning (Targets 4.2, 4.4)**

Learning in a learner's home language provides a solid foundation on which other languages and skills can be successfully built. This prepares learners better to access higher education opportunities and the **technical** and **vocational skills** necessary for employment. Using learners' own languages in education provides opportunities for all people to contribute to their full potential and be **active participants** in breaking out of the poverty cycle.



## **MTB-MLE helps to address gender inequality by allowing girls and women to engage fully in their own learning (Targets 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6)**

Globally, a disproportionate number of illiterate people are **girls and women**. In places where the home language is not used in school this is even more acute, with 30-50 percent fewer girls likely to enroll in school than boys. Given an opportunity to learn and develop in a classroom where their languages are used, girls and boys can also begin to redefine their **role and norms** within their own cultures.



## **Respect for cultural and linguistic diversity leads to peace, social cohesion and sustainable development (Targets 4.5, 4.7)**

**Peace, social cohesion** and **global citizenship** are only possible when people are confident in their own identity and have opportunities to participate in finding solutions to their own problems. Policies and practices that embrace cultural and linguistic **diversity** are essential for healthy and sustainable **social systems** and ecosystems, and **incorporating local knowledge systems** with innovative approaches through strong partnerships leads to more effective care for our world.



**MTB-MLE is a realistic and cost-effective way to make significant progress towards SDG 4. Successful pilot projects in Asia-Pacific continue to contribute to change in language policies that respect and encourage the diversity of communities.**

## SDG 4 Targets



**4.1** By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes



**4.2** By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education



**4.3** By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university



**4.4** By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship



**4.5** By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations



**4.6** By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy



**4.7** By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development



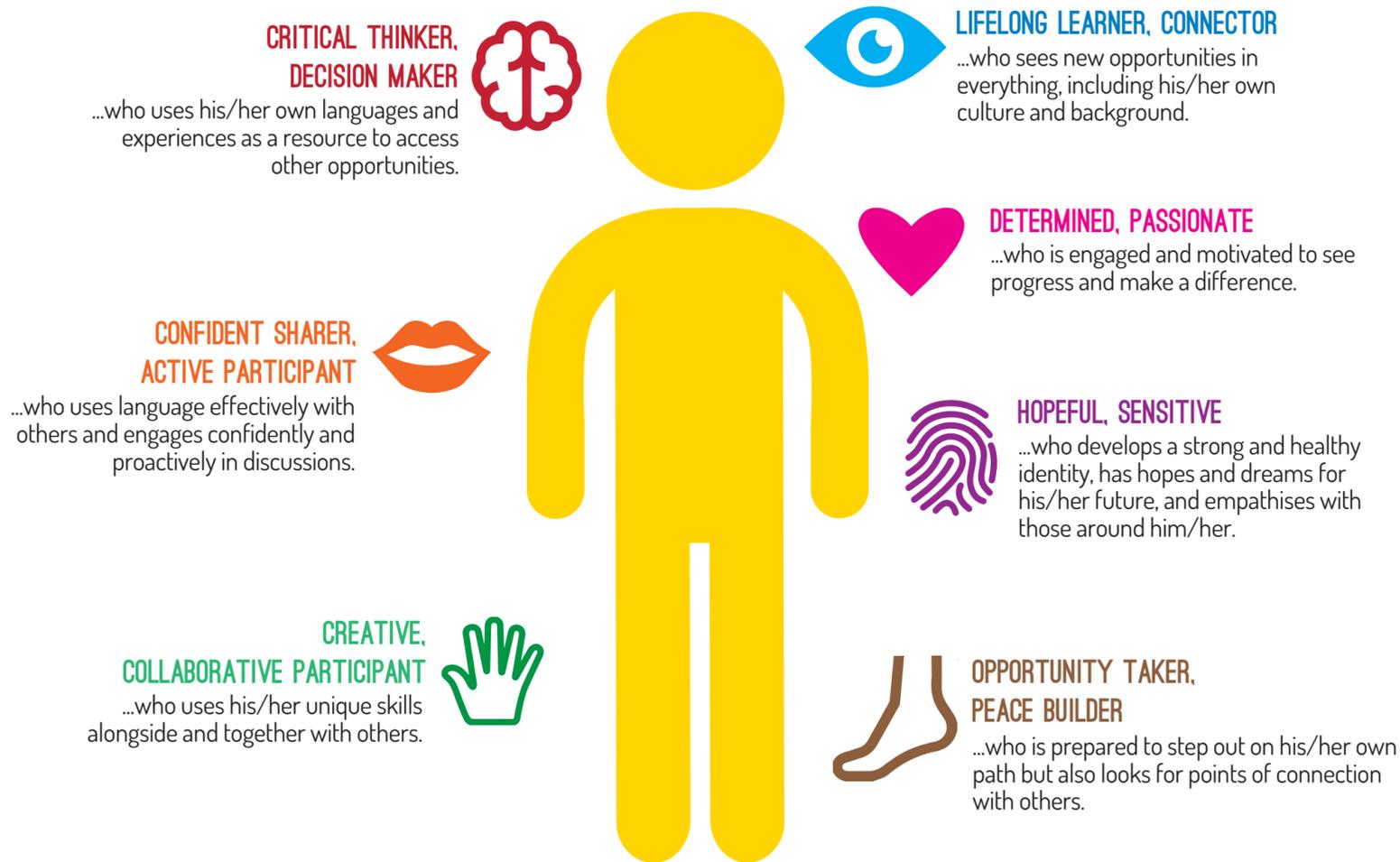
**4.c** By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States



**Thematic Indicator  
4.5.18 - Percentage of  
students in primary  
education whose first or  
home language is the  
language of instruction**

# THE TRANSFORMATIVE AND HOLISTIC BENEFITS OF MTB-MLE

Individually, MTB-MLE helps develop a learner...

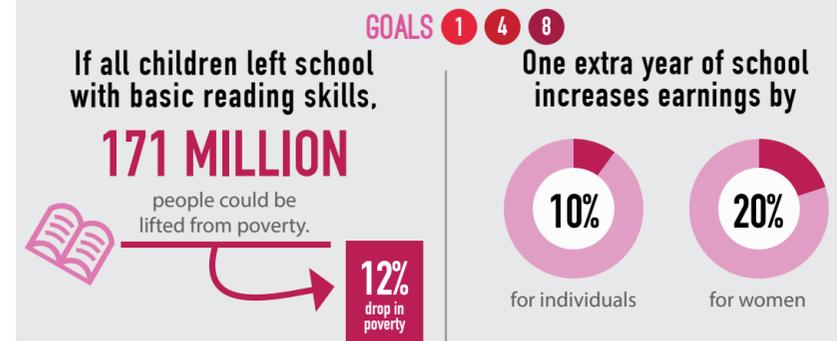


For society as a whole, healthy individuals create strong communities that...

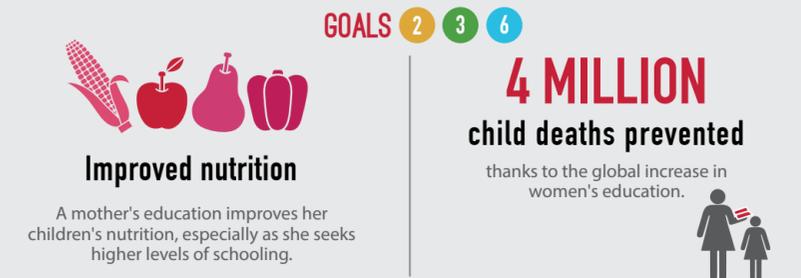


Our unique experiences can build a shared identity!

## EDUCATION REDUCES POVERTY AND INCREASES INCOME



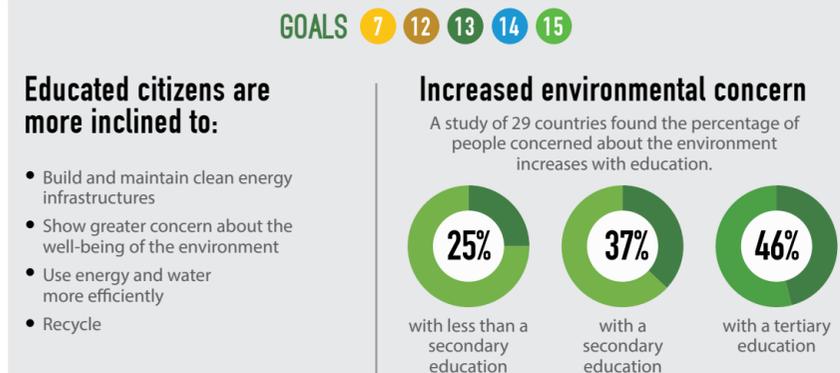
## EDUCATION LEADS TO BETTER HEALTH



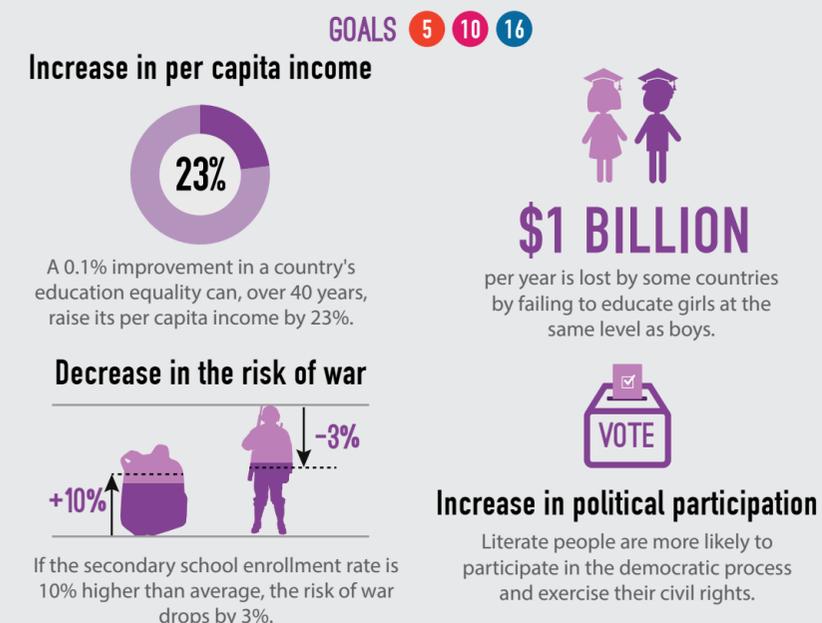
## EDUCATION DRIVES SUSTAINABLE GROWTH



## EDUCATION HELPS US PROTECT THE PLANET



## EDUCATION PREVENTS INEQUALITY & INJUSTICE



The information in this booklet is partly based on presentations and discussions from the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Language and Education: Sustainable Development through Multilingual Education, held in Bangkok, Thailand in October 2016.

For more information about the conference or to view original presentations and key messages please visit:

<http://www.lc.mahidol.ac.th/mleconf/2016/program.htm>

You can find a collection of resources on MTB-MLE here:

<http://www.unescobkk.org/education/multilingual-education/resources/publications>

To find out more about the Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group (MLE WG) visit:

[www.asiapacificmle.net](http://www.asiapacificmle.net)

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