



MTB-MLE in Pakistan

Current situation, challenges, community initiatives, and
a way forward

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Background: Language situation in Pakistan

- 70 languages are spoken, 30 of them in the north.
- Languages of Education are Urdu, the national language and English, the official/international language.
- Language shift is common in Pakistan. UNESCO states that 26 non-dominant languages are seriously endangered.
- All non-dominant languages are potentially endangered as the younger generation becomes monolingual in Urdu.



Current situation: Pakistan's education crisis

- Pakistan's official literacy rate is 59%.
- The official literacy rate for females is 49%.
- Currently, Pakistan has the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children (OOSC) with an estimated 22.8 million children aged 5-16 not attending school, representing 44% of the total population in this age group.

<https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/education>

- Budget allocations for education are insufficient and 43% of government schools lack adequate facilities.
- According to the World Bank, Pakistan has the second lowest literacy rate in Asia.

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/literacy-rate-by-country>



Language development and MTB MLE in northern Pakistan

- In 2002 FLI was established as a national NGO to serve the many non-dominant language communities of northern Pakistan.
- FLI's language development and community empowerment efforts have brought a positive change to the communities, especially by improving education for children.
- Community members appreciate their programs and advocate with provincial government officials to support them.
- In the last several years, 3 out of 5 provinces in Pakistan have made policies that include the use of students' mother tongue in public schools.



Current situation and future projects

- Currently there are 7 MTB-MLE programs in the language communities of north Pakistan and the same number of programs in the south.
- In the Gawri community, we have 6 MLE schools for children and 2 for adults. More than 500 students have graduated from our programs since 2008.
- Public and private school teachers praise our students, and more communities are demanding their own MLE schools.
- Recently we began finalizing an MoU with the government of Gilgit Baltistan to work with people in five communities on orthographic issues and provide training for them to develop MLE curriculum.



Advice to other MLE activists in Asia-Pacific

- Points 6 and 7 in the Bangkok statement are especially valuable for advocating with governments to provide official support for using children's first (home) language in education.
- Partnerships are also essential. Example: FLI works with the textbook board of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province to develop content for MLE lessons.
- Also (especially) important are partnerships with provincial governments. Example: FLI's agreement with the government of Gilgit Baltistan on the previous slide.



Suggestions for UN agencies and INGOs

- Invite government officials to MLE conferences so they can see and hear good ideas from other parts of the world.
- Continue taking leadership in promoting MTB-MLE throughout the Asia-Pacific region, including with governments who do not yet recognize its value:
- Continue to produce advocacy materials and translate them into national languages;
- Support MTB MLE training workshops (for curriculum and materials development and teacher training) and invite government officials to observe.