



# EVALUATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE INSTITUTE (IMLI)

Final Report

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AD	Assistant Director
AP	Asia-Pacific
APCEIU	Asia-Pacific Center of Education for International Understanding
ASPnet	Associated Schools Network
BCS	Bangladesh Civil Service
BNCU	Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO
BSP	Bureau of Strategic Planning
C/4	UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy
C/5	UNESCO's Approved Programme and Budget
CRM	Constituency Relationship Management System
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DD	Deputy Director
DG	Director-General
DSHE	Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education
HQ	Headquarters
IMLD	International Mother Language Day
IMLI	International Mother Language Institute
INRULED	International Training and Research Center for Rural Education
MLE	Multilingual Education
MLEF	Multilingual Education Forum
MLE-WG	Multilingual Education Working Group
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MTB-MLE	Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations

SACTD	South Asian Center for Teacher Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDG4	Sustainable Development Goal Four
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The International Mother Language Institute (IMLI) was formally established on 27 January 2011 in accordance with a Gazette Notification issued by the Government of Bangladesh (GOB). The Institute became part of the UNESCO family following an agreement signed between UNESCO and the government on 12 January 2016. The main aim of the Institute is to promote mother tongue-based multilingual education through language documentation and development, research, capacity development and policy advice. As per the request of the government to renew the agreement due to expire in 2022, this renewal evaluation was commissioned by UNESCO Dhaka to assess the overall performance and achievements made by the Institute. Findings and recommendations derived from this evaluation will inform the decision-making process of UNESCO to ascertain whether the Category 2 recognition granted to IMLI can be renewed. Its methodology involved an in-depth desk study of relevant documents, electronic survey and virtual interviews with different categories of respondents from IMLI, the government of Bangladesh, UNESCO, national and international partners of IMLI, academia, etc. The entire work was carried out remotely due to the worldwide outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

#### 2.1 Extent of attainment of objectives set out in the agreement

IMLI has executed a number of initiatives towards the fulfilment of its mandates. Among the key initiatives undertaken by the Institute include the ethnolinguistic survey of languages in Bangladesh, the International Mother Language National and International Award and the proposed *Sheikh Hasina Language Research Trust Fund*. Its excellent infrastructure and facilities such as a language archive, language museum, language laboratory and auditorium provide a suitable environment for language research and training. Over the last five years, IMLI has trained nearly 750 government officers, school teachers and instructors to build their capacity in the use of standard form of Bangla language. IMLI advocates and promotes the importance of mother languages through the national celebration of International Mother Language Days (IMLD) every year. IMLI's national and international seminars, which coincide with the national celebration of IMLD, provide important platforms for awareness-raising and knowledge dissemination. During 2016-2021, IMLI organized seven national and seven international seminars that were attended by nearly 1,000 participants. IMLI's website and its publications

consist of annual reports, newsletters, journals, seminar reports, books and booklets providing information about the Institute's work.

By and large, activities performed by IMLI are in alignment with the objectives and functions set out in the agreement. However, not all mandated functions are adequately addressed. While it has attended to its first function that concerns knowledge creation/sharing, capacity development and policy advice, three other functions (e.g., designing new approaches to learning; comparative research on curriculum development, teacher training and educational strategies; and promotion of the dynamic linkages between mother tongue education and artistic expressions) remain largely unattended.

The scope of geographic coverage has mainly been 'national,' except the sporadic participation of a few international experts in IMLI's seminars. Evidently, the representation of policymakers from Ministries of Education of Member States has remained almost non-existent. Further, the broad mandate of capacity building of Member States is narrowed down to teacher training and language proficiency training. No collaborative and/or comparative studies have been planned. While IMLI has undertaken important initiatives that have national impact, its activities as they stand do not address the Institute's main agenda of strengthening education systems of Member States. There is a long way from fulfilling its international mandate. A carefully planned outreach strategy needs to be in place that avoids being too wide and too thinly spread without strategic focus. Moving away from its activity orientation, it needs to be guided by a strategic vision towards fulfilling the objectives.

## **2.2 Relevance to UNESCO's programmes and activities**

IMLI's broad mandate, as reflected in the agreement, is relevant to UNESCO's overall objectives, programmes and priorities. It is the only Category 2 Center in the region that focuses on MLE. There is a reasonable correspondence between IMLI's core documents and UNESCO's Medium Term Strategy (37C/4), strategic programme objectives and the priorities of the Education Sector. Without question IMLI has an important mandate and its relevance is high. However, to be able to institutionalize MTB-MLE in national education systems through proper language policy, teacher training, curriculum development and educational strategies, it needs to be guided by a consistent integrated vision of MTB-MLE.

## **2.3 Relevance to global development agenda**

Language rights, linguistic diversity and multilingualism – which form the main topics of numerous UN instruments and declarations - constitute the core of IMLI's written mandate. The core principles that underpin the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development such as the inclusiveness and leaving no one behind are also IMLI's principles. Mother tongue education can play an important role in accelerating the global vision of a peaceful, inclusive, secure and sustainable world. Multilingualism is imperative for achieving all sustainable development goals. However, a systematic approach to working towards the global agenda is not visible within IMLI. The Institute has yet to become an effective implementation mechanism for translating the SDG4-Education 2030 vision into reality in the region. There are missing links between IMLI's actual activities and the various SDG4 targets. Despite a few references, the big picture of 2030 Education agenda is not articulated in IMLI's short-term and long-term plans. Therefore, IMLI's

main agenda for the next phase of its work should be to ensure a sound linkage between SDG4 and the implementation of relevant components through its strategic plan. It is advisable to revisit the objectives and functions set out in the agreement and make SDG4 more strongly pronounced in the Institute's objectives.

## **2.4 Quality of interaction and collaboration with UNESCO and its constituent bodies**

IMLI's cooperation and interaction with the institutions within the UNESCO network is limited, uneven and ad hoc. The evaluation revealed that often a one-way communication has prevailed between IMLI and core entities of UNESCO. Despite some sporadic efforts to connect to a few entities, IMLI has largely been operating in isolation from the wider network of UNESCO. As a result, there is so far little visibility of the Institute and its achievements at the level of UNESCO and its constituent entities. One encouraging sign is that IMLI has taken steps to build relations with APCEIU, a Category 2 Center based in ROK, through study visits and participation in meetings. The IMLI staff members expressed that there is enough scope for improving their communication with UNESCO and its constituent bodies.

## **2.5 Partnerships with government agencies, public or private partners and donors**

Within the government, IMLI has established cordial relations with the Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) and the Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO (BNCU), including a number of line ministries and national institutions related to education and culture. It has taken a few steps to build its relations with some universities and institutes outside the country. Among them is a language institute situated in Lithuania. However, there is no formal relationship between IMLI and a number of NGOs/INGOs that are active in the promotion of MTB-MLE both within the country and beyond. There are no immediate plans to establish partnerships with the governments, bilateral and multilateral organizations and the private sector. The evaluation underscores the need for a broader vision of partnerships in the context of the SDG4-Education 2030 in general and the mother language agenda in particular, recognizing the importance of collaborating with the government agencies, bilateral and multilateral donors, foundations, private sector, CSOs, academia, etc.

## **2.6 Governance, organizational arrangements and accountability mechanisms**

IMLI has put in place appropriate structures and processes for its governance, organizational management, staffing, accountability and monitoring and evaluation. Its Act defines its legal status, including the roles and responsibilities, operating procedures, reporting relationships and objectives to be fulfilled. However, the evaluation has noted a number of governance and management related challenges. First, IMLI has functioned without a duly constituted Governing Board (GB) creating some kind of governance vacuum. Second, as the institutional complexity of IMLI rises and its roles expand following its Category 2 designation, there is a need to improve its overall governance and institutional performance. Third, gaps are noted between parts of the organizational structure and various areas of its institutional mandates as noted in the agreement. Fourth, a results-based planning and management has yet to evolve that values the results and impact that are strategically linked to the core objectives rather than the routinely



organized activities. Fifth, IMLI's accountability towards its international obligations as a Category 2 Center needs further strengthening.

## **2.7 Financial and human resources**

### **2.7.1 Financial resources**

IMLI is entirely funded by the Government of Bangladesh. It has received over US\$600,000 annually in the past years. It is encouraging to note that the government is fully committed to meeting its obligations by providing both human and financial resources. There is very high level of political commitment from the highest level to continue supporting the Institute. The IMLI project is viewed as a national pride. Economic indicators of Bangladesh are highly promising in recent years. In view of this and based on interview data, there are no external reasons to foresee any financial risks at this moment that may jeopardize the financial sustainability of the Institute. However, in these global economic environments no organization is free from financial risks and the IMLI leadership should be mindful of potential sustainability threats. As IMLI decides to scale up its activities, its resource needs will be enormous and government allocations alone will not be sufficient to meet the increased financial portfolio. Hence, actions are needed to diversify the resource base by utilizing the powers given by the IMLI Act to mobilize resources externally from the governments, bilateral and multilateral donors, private sector, foundations and donors. The evaluation noted that there is scope for increasing the budget utilization rate.

### **2.7.2 Human resources**

Available data on staffing reveal that more than half of the total approved posts of IMLI are vacant or yet to be recruited. There is reliance on contingent staff members who are appointed by the Ministry of Education through methods such as deputation, attachment or transfer. IMLI leadership has little or no role in the selection of staff deployed through such methods. IMLI does not have its own core professionals in permanent positions who match the qualification requirements as per the mandate. As a result, the Institute has to rely on experts recruited from external institutions. Staff development opportunities are not sufficient. As an Institute with international mandate, there is a need to make the staffing environment more diverse, dynamic and competitive through the creation of a number of human resource development opportunities.

## **2.8 Institutional authority for the execution of core activities**

The 2010 IMLI Act defines it as a statutory organization, which implies that IMLI is a functionally autonomous institution and is able to independently decide on its affairs within the framework of the Act. As a public entity, the Institute is authorized to contract, institute legal proceedings and to acquire and dispose of moveable and immovable property as per the defined government procedures. However, there were stakeholder concerns over the weakening of the institutional autonomy of IMLI. IMLI remains under the direct jurisdiction of MOE and at times it is not able to perform independently because most of its decisions are subject to MOE approval. Many stakeholders viewed that as a professional organization, autonomy should be the hallmark of IMLI's governance. Over time, as it gains stability in its staffing, diversifies its resource base, expands its

network and increases in-house expertise and institutional capacity to govern its own affairs, IMLI should be able to exercise its autonomy.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** As a first step towards ensuring the Institute’s ability to attain its objectives to the utmost level, develop a Strategic Plan that articulates the Institute’s vision of how it aims to position itself as an international institute, including its objectives, strategies, working modalities and results it seeks to achieve. Alongside, it is necessary to carefully revisit the objectives and functions set out in the agreement and assess their implementability and achievability within the available institutional resources and delivery capacities. It needs to ensure that there is an appropriate balance among the different objectives and functions.

In order to effectively perform its regional/international role, IMLI needs to develop an expansion strategy that articulates how it will scale up various activities outside the country. Examine the implications of going to scale for financing, staffing, institutional capacity, management, coordination, working modalities, etc. Stay focused in the Asia-Pacific region, in particular in South Asia, before embarking on activities of international scale.

**Recommendation 2:** Ensure the relevance of the proposed Strategic Plan (as indicated above) by ensuring that IMLI’s strategic priorities and programmes contribute to UNESCO’s priorities and expected results in the education sector. It might be desirable to consult with UNESCO Dhaka and UNESCO Bangkok in the course of preparing the Institute’s Strategic Plan. Explore the opportunity for joint planning, implementation and monitoring with UNESCO Dhaka and UNESCO Bangkok. Arrangements can be made for IMLI to receive guidance and technical support from UNESCO Dhaka Office, with technical backstopping from UNESCO Bangkok in substantive matters.

**Recommendation 3:** To align IMLI’s work with the global development agenda, integrate the relevant principles, goals/targets, strategies and results of SDG4-Education 2030 into the Institute’s proposed Strategic Plan. Reorient IMLI’s ongoing work so that SDG4 becomes the focus aiming to ensure inclusive and quality education for language minorities and indigenous groups through capacity building, research, policy dialogue and knowledge dissemination. Set realistic intermediate and long-term targets and performance indicators in explicit alignment with the framework of the SDG4 – Education 2030 Agenda. Most of all, it is important that IMLI staff members have a thorough understanding of SDG4 priorities in the region.

**Recommendation 4:** Improve the communications functions of the Institute for greater visibility, exchange and peer learning, synergy and complementarity with the institutions within the network of UNESCO. Develop a proactive communication and engagement strategy to strengthen the Institute’s linkages across the UNESCO’s larger network of offices and explore the possibilities of joint planning and programming and resource mobilization, where interests and objectives are common. For this purpose, mobilize all possible channels of communication and in particular make optimum use of virtual means of communication, including social media to improve the Institute’s profile and visibility. Consider engaging a communication officer and where that is not possible designate one of the officials to serve as communication officer who

takes the responsibility of regional and international communication, partnerships building and networking.

**Recommendation 5:** Strengthen existing partnerships while exploring partnerships opportunities both within the country and outside, especially in the Asia-Pacific region with governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, universities and research institutions, CSOs, MLE networks, public and private partners and donors. Undertake a mapping exercise to facilitate partnerships at different levels, select partners strategically, and be engaged in relevant local, regional and international networks. Aim to establish a network of MLE stakeholders and partners in South Asia and host meetings of the network.

**Recommendation 6:** As a first step towards strengthening the governance of IMLI, take immediate measures to complete the long awaited process of constituting the Governing Body and hold board meetings to discuss issues of strategic importance. Consider establishing an advisory or a technical team drawing high-level experts of national and international repute from different geographic regions who will advise the board on technical matters. Ensure a reasonable representation of gender on the advisory body.

**Recommendation 7:** In order to ensure that IMLI is able to act as a strong, visible and viable regional player, it needs to secure sustainable external financial support in addition to government funding. Develop a resource mobilization strategy to mobilize resources from governments, bilateral and multilateral organizations, foundations/trust funds, private sector and donors. Install possible mechanisms to secure economic and financial sustainability in the event that there is a decline in government funding. Ensure management efficiency not only to improve the utilization of budget but also to demonstrate the outcomes and impact of the Institute's work within the framework of results-based planning and management.

**Recommendation 8:** To ensure that IMLI is staffed by a group of qualified, competent and motivated professionals, introduce necessary reforms in the human resource practices. Undertake a review/audit of the structures, roles and responsibilities and human resource requirements in view of the IMLI's objectives and expertise required, and prepare a staffing plan for review and action by the government. Create core permanent posts to carry out professional roles to ensure stability, accountability and continuous career growth and to lessen reliance on contingent staff (deputation or attachment). Develop staff expertise through training and staff development opportunities so that it can stay at the cutting edge of policy and practice in relation to mother tongue education and language research. Adopt a variety of capacity building strategies through staff exchange, visiting scholars, short-term training, workshops, secondments, online courses, internships, fellowships, etc. Consider engaging an international expert or a national of Bangladesh with sufficient international experience for the interim period who would be helpful to fulfill IMLI's mandate, maintain international profile and train the local staff.

**Recommendation 9:** Ensure that the institutional autonomy of IMLI is protected and respected by all. IMLI should maintain its character of a professional organization, and autonomy should be the hallmark of IMLI's governance and management. Ensure that the staff is able and empowered to function in the most professional and autonomous manner and the appointed officials of IMLI are able to exercise the authority vested in them.

#### **4. FORMAL RECOMMENDATION**

In view of the continued relevance and significance of IMLI to UNESCO and its Member States, and the unprecedented level of support from the government of Bangladesh and the demonstrated willingness by the government as well as the management of IMLI to take appropriate measures to implement relevant recommendations (3.1 through 3.8) of this evaluation for institutional improvement, the evaluator recommends that the agreement between the government of Bangladesh and UNESCO on the designation of IMLI as UNESCO Category 2 Centre be renewed.

It is further recommended that IMLI develop an action plan indicating the timeframe for implementing each recommendation outlined under Section III (3.1 through 3.8).

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

Language played a critical role in the creation of Bangladesh as a sovereign nation. The language movement led by university students in the early 1950s in the then Eastern Pakistan that demanded the recognition of Bangla as a state language led to the killing of four university students on 21 February 1952. The movement energized the entire Bangla-speaking population spurring further civil unrest, which resulted in Bangla ultimately obtaining the status of official language. The democratic spirit which, in part, was created by the language movement pervaded throughout the 1950s and afterwards contributed to the establishment of an independent nation – the People’s Republic of Bangladesh - in 1971. Nearly three decades later, the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) requested the United Nations’ Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to declare 21 February as the International Mother Language Day (IMLD) in tribute to the language movement made by the Bangladeshi people for the cause of mother tongue. Subsequently, the 38<sup>th</sup> General Conference of UNESCO proclaimed 21 February as the International Mother Language Day in November 1999. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) welcomed the proclamation of the day in its resolution of 2002.

On 7 December 1999, the Government of Bangladesh decided to establish the International Mother Language Institute (IMLI) in Dhaka as a tribute to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the cause of mother tongue as well as an expression of deep commitment of Bangladeshi people and its government to promote and protect mother languages throughout the world. On 21 February 2010, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh inaugurated the newly constructed building on the auspicious occasion of IMLD. The National Parliament of Bangladesh enacted the International Mother Language Institute Act on 12 November 2010 guaranteeing the Institute’s legal status, governance mechanisms and other necessary institutional arrangements. The Institute became officially functional on 27 January 2011 following a Gazette Notification of the government. In August 2013, Bangladesh submitted a proposal to UNESCO with a request to establish IMLI as a Category 2 Institute under the auspices of UNESCO. Following a feasibility study that took place in November 2014 and subsequent reviews by relevant UNESCO bodies, the 38<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Conference granted the establishment of IMLI as a Category 2 Center in 2015. On 12 January 2016, Bangladesh and UNESCO signed an agreement that formalized the establishment of the Category 2 Center and came into effect for a period of six years.

According to the agreement, the main aim of IMLI is to “develop and strengthen education systems by paying special attention to the promotion of mother language education and learning and conduct research for the documentation and development of mother languages of the world to promote multilingual education.” The major functions of IMLI are: (a) engage in activities related to knowledge creation and sharing, capacity development and policy advice which focus on the key role of mother language education and learning; (b) design new approaches of learning and develop body of knowledge on the role and potential contribution of mother language education towards the construction of inclusive learning societies; (c) document and undertake comparative research on relevant teacher training, curriculum development and educational strategies employed to link mother language education with national or majority

language education; and (d) document, research and promote the dynamic linkages between the practices of mother language education and artistic expression.

As the current agreement is due to expire on 12 January 2022, its renewal is subject to an evaluation in accordance with the Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centers under the auspices of UNESCO (2019). Against this background, as per the wish of the government to renew the designation of the Institute, this evaluation was commissioned by UNESCO Dhaka to evaluate the activities of the Institute and assess its contribution to UNESCO's Approved Programme and Budget (C/5), including its global strategies, action plans and sectoral programme priorities. The findings of this evaluation are intended to serve as the basis for the Inter-Sectoral Review Committee's recommendation to the Director-General (DG) so as to ascertain whether or not the agreement between UNESCO and the Government of Bangladesh should be renewed in matters of the IMLI's continuation as a Category 2 Center under the auspices of UNESCO.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Review

As noted in the Terms of Reference (ToR), the purpose of this evaluation is to examine whether the recognition granted to IMLI in 2016 as a Category 2 Center can be renewed (See Annex 1 for ToR). In doing this, the evaluation aimed to assess the Institute's performance in carrying out its functions and as well as contributing to the overarching objective of promoting mother language education and learning and multilingualism. More specifically, the parameters for the evaluation, in line with the 2019 Strategy on Category 2 Centres, were: (a) extent of attainment of Institute's objectives as set out in the Agreement ; (b) relevance of the contribution of IMLI's programmes and activities to the achievement of UNESCO's objectives and sectoral priorities; (c) relevance of the contribution of the activities of the Institute to global development agendas; (d) quality of coordination and interaction with UNESCO and related entities; (e) partnerships with government agencies, public or private partners and donors; (f) nature and efficiency of the Institute's governance, including organizational arrangements, management, human resources and accountability mechanisms; (g) financial and human resources available for ensuring sustainable institutional capacity and viability; and (h) extent to which the Institute enjoys the autonomy for the execution of activities.

## 1.3 Scope of the Review

In terms of scope, the evaluation assessed the institutional performance of IMLI on a wide range of criteria such as alignment, relevance, effectiveness, coherence and efficiency of the programme, partnerships, coordination and cooperation, management and governance, autonomy and legal capacity, availability of human and financial resources, etc. The focus of the evaluation is to assess both the results and the process of IMLI and its programmes. In terms of timeframe, this evaluation examined the Institute's last five to six years of operations beginning 2015-2016 following its designation as a Category 2 center. The agreement signed between Bangladesh and UNESCO sets out the expectations and milestones for the Institute so, where necessary, the evaluation uses the provisions of the agreement as a reference point.

## 1.4 Methodology

This evaluation used a mixed-methods approach combining data collected from primary and secondary sources. It involved a combination of an in-depth desk study of relevant documents, electronic survey of different groups of respondents, and virtual interviews with selected stakeholders. Different sets of instruments, comprising questionnaires and interview guides, were prepared and administered. Each step involved in the methodology is described below.

Desk study: Desk research constitutes an integral part of the evaluation. It involved an in-depth review of a number of documents provided by the Institute, including a number of documents provided by UNESCO Dhaka and the Education Sector of UNESCO Headquarters (HQ). Annex 2 presents the list of documents consulted. A quick online search of news stories and articles published in a few online English newspapers of Bangladesh helped to develop and sharpen survey questions. While noting the limitations of newspapers as a data source for purpose of evaluation, information generated from newspapers has been carefully used.

Online survey: Different sets of questionnaires were prepared to elicit information from different categories of respondents. In order to provide a comprehensive assessment of the Institute, an institutional questionnaire was administered. This self-assessment tool was addressed to the senior leadership of IMLI, which allowed the officials to make observations and assessments about the various aspects of the Institute's work and its achievements. A staff questionnaire was prepared and used to gather information from IMLI officials. A separate questionnaire was used for partner institutions, collaborators, national and international experts and participants of IMLI's programmes/courses. The contacts of potential respondents were provided by IMLI administration. The consultant approached the respondents by email. By and large, the respondents were very cooperative and agreed to participate in the study. Completed questionnaires were received on time. In some cases, several follow-up contacts had to be made to ensure that key institutions and individuals are not excluded. A template of questionnaire/interview guide that served as the basis for data collection is provided in Annex 3.

Interview guides: Virtual interviews were conducted with a number of respondents, and these mainly involved IMLI senior officials, higher officials in the government and UNESCO officials at UNESCO Dhaka, UNESCO Bangkok and UNESCO Headquarters (HQ). These interviews were conducted with the help of an interview guide.

Informal exchanges: Many stakeholders and partners outside the country such as Ministries of Education, UNESCO National Commissions, universities, language institutions, especially in the SAARC region were approached by email or phone. Some of them, who either had limited knowledge of IMLI or did not know anything about its work, opted out of the formal interview/survey process and while others chose to contribute informally via email.

Data Analysis: Data analysis was carried out using the thematic method drawing from the notes from document reviews, completed surveys and interview notes. The themes were based on the evaluation criteria as provided in the ToR.

Review and feedback on the report: The draft report was shared with relevant UNESCO officials for their review. Comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

This evaluation was undertaken by an independent consultant and it was facilitated by IMLI and UNESCO Dhaka, in consultation with the officials responsible for Category 2 Centres and Institutes within the Education Sector at UNESCO HQ. Data collection involved intensive exchange of emails with the Institute's management. IMLI designated one of its senior officials as the focal point to facilitate the data collection work, so did UNESCO Dhaka. IMLI management responded fairly instantly whenever requests were made for data or whenever clarifications were sought on certain points. A complete list of interviewees/respondents is included as Annex 4.

## II. FINDINGS

### 2.1 Extent of attainment of objectives set out in the agreement

This section examines the extent to which IMLI's activities, both mandated and actually performed, are in agreement with the objectives set out in the agreement. Its twin objectives included developing and strengthening education systems to promote mother language education and learning and conducting research to document and develop mother languages. These two objectives are expected to be fulfilled by undertaking the four sets of functions: (i) knowledge creation, sharing, capacity development and policy advice; (ii) designing new approaches of learning; (iii) comparative research on teacher training, curriculum development and educational strategies; and (iv) documentation and promotion of the linkages of mother language and artistic expression. In an attempt to assess the alignment, an overview of IMLI's accomplishments made over the last five years has been made.

#### 2.1.1 Knowledge creation, sharing, capacity development and policy advice

##### a. Knowledge creation

*Ethnolinguistic survey:* As part of its knowledge creation function, IMLI has focused its work on the ethnolinguistic survey of ethnic minority languages in Bangladesh. One of the flagship initiatives of IMLI, the survey aims at revitalizing and preserving the country's ethnic languages through documentation and increased understanding of ethnic languages. Undertaken between 2014/15-2016/17, the survey reported the existence of over 41 ethnic languages, of which 14 languages are on the verge of extinction. This was the first ever extensive study on the languages and language varieties spoken in Bangladesh that used parameters set by linguists and anthropologists. The survey played a key role in the proper recognition and appreciation of linguistic diversity in Bangladesh, a country that is often seen as a monolingual country. The survey methodology developed by IMLI can be considered for its use and applicability to other countries in the region.

IMLI intends to publish the results of the ethnolinguistic survey in 10 volumes. The first volume of the survey was published in 2019. Many stakeholders who responded to the survey expressed



concern over the delay in releasing the reports. Nearly five years after the completion of the survey, IMLI has yet to develop a plan when these reports will be published and their findings brought to use to support the teaching-learning of indigenous children and to preserve the language diversity of the country. IMLI's long-delayed action has resulted in media response. IMLI management mentioned that the remaining volumes will go through a rigorous editorial work prior to their publication. Some respondents noted that IMLI should seriously consider how the results of the survey will be used in the promotion of mother language education and protection of languages.

*Sheikh Hasina Language Research Trust Fund:* IMLI has taken the initiative to set up the Sheikh Hasina Language Research Trust Fund to preserve the endangered languages of the world through research and documentation. IMLI has drafted an Act to regulate the establishment and operation of the Trust Fund. Once approved, the Government of Bangladesh will provide seed money through which resources will be generated to provide financial grants, which will be used to fund scholarships, fellowships and grants for M.Phil., Ph.D. and post-doctoral research on language issues. The grants will be made available to scholars at home and abroad. IMLI has developed the International Mother Language Research Guidelines 2021, which is now awaiting approval from the Ministry of Education. Once operational, this language research will go a long way in generating knowledge about the endangered languages of the world.

*Library development.* IMLI has set up a 'specialized library' that houses a unique collection of resources on languages, language research, multilingual education, etc. It currently has a collection of 12,000 books, journals, dictionaries, encyclopedias and reports related to languages. The library will be equipped with all modern facilities, including automation system and online connection with some famous libraries of the world. IMLI library will play an integral role in supporting its core mission of promoting and preserving mother languages by supporting the academics and researchers through the creation of knowledge about languages.

*Establishment of International Mother Language Award:* In 2019, the Government of Bangladesh established the International Mother Language (National and International) Award to recognize the contributions of individuals and institutions for the protection, promotion and revitalization of mother languages through research, publication and innovation. The awards to be provided biennially were launched in 2021 to recognize the work of language researchers, scholars and activists.

#### b. Knowledge sharing and dissemination

*Celebration of International Mother Language Day:* IMLI undertakes the knowledge sharing and dissemination function through the celebration of the International Mother Language Day on 21 February annually, which is organized in conjunction with the national celebration of the Martyrs Day. The idea to celebrate IMLD was the initiative of Bangladesh and the entire world joins Bangladesh annually to advocate the importance and role of mother languages. The day is observed to promote multilingualism and cultural diversity, and it aims to preserve mother languages as symbols of cultural identity and heritage. The national celebration of IMLD usually comprises a four-day programme, which also includes national and international seminars, Children's Art Competition and folk cultural programmes.

*National seminars and international seminars:* IMLI uses the national and international seminars as the platforms for information dissemination, awareness-raising and advocacy for the protection of languages and promotion of mother tongue education. During 2016-2021, IMLI organized seven national and seven international seminars covering a range of topics related to languages, language documentation and protection, mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE), etc. Nearly 1,000 participants have attended these seminars over the years. International participants were from neighboring countries, Nepal and India. These events are being routinely organized for several years but concerns remain about the extent to which they are making an impact on policy development or pedagogical improvement. The international seminars were almost always attended by a limited number of international experts. As a result, there is a need to reach out to a larger audience outside Bangladesh. Both national and international participants emphasized that these events should be better planned, targeted and organized to make them more effective, relevant and useful.

*Language archive:* The Institute houses a language archive that displays some 149 writing systems of the world. The archive documents samples of languages and writing systems of global languages currently existing in the world, alongside the languages that are on the verge of extinction. The aim is to enhance the awareness of people around the world for preservation and development of their languages and dialects through proper documentation. IMLI plans to make the cultural history of languages and their written scripts accessible to people all over the world through the internet connectivity.

*Language museum:* Language museum also plays a key role in raising public awareness about languages and their importance. The Institute houses a language museum that has a collection of rare photographs of Bangla language movement and speeches by national political leaders. The museum will house documents and displays materials showing the linguistic and cultural diversity of the world. Keeping with the technological advancements, it will be a unique digitized language museum with interactive and internet facilities providing data access to anyone from anywhere in the world. The museum is open to the public.

*Publications:* The Institute brings out a journal called *Mother Language*. Published in English, it is a peer-reviewed academic publication targeting mostly academics and researchers in languages and mother-tongue education. A Bangla version of this journal, *Mattribhasha*, also targets the academics and researchers. The journals are primarily distributed to the readers within the country and their reach to the international readers is through the diplomatic missions. These two journals are not accessible on IMLI website. IMLI should take measures to expand access to these journals to Member States, UNESCO entities, universities and research institutions across the world.

In addition to these two journals, IMLI brings out different types of publications comprising annual reports, newsletters, workshop/seminar reports, books and booklets, etc. These publications, which appear in 61 titles, were published over a period of six years. IMLI has translated some of its historic documents in five ethnic languages, including the sign language, Braille and International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) version. Except a few respondents, many domestic and international respondents were not aware of these publications. In its international

role, it is expected that various target audiences from all over the world have access to the knowledge produced by IMLI. Most of its publications are in Bangla; therefore, accessible mostly to the Bangla readers within the country and abroad, including India that has sizeable Bangla speaking population. Little is known about the use and effects of these publications.

IMLI also uses its Website ([imli.portal.gov.bd](http://imli.portal.gov.bd)) to share and disseminate information related to the Institute's work. The website contains administrative information, legal instruments, publications, events, announcements, photo gallery, etc. It provides important links to a number of national web portals. Most of the contents are in Bangla language so it has little or no use for non-Bangla users. In its current role as an Institute with global mandate, it is imperative to have website materials in English useful to the international users. Some of the materials that the website contains have not been updated. There were isolated cases of respondents confirming that they had actually visited the website while a majority of them did not know of the website's existence.

#### c. Capacity development

*Training programmes:* Capacity development is one of the core functions of IMLI. The Institute has organized training programmes for government officers, primary school teachers, high school teachers, the instructors of teachers training Institutes, and primary school teachers of small ethnic groups. The aim of these training courses is basically to promote the use of standard Bangla language in official work and communication, language teaching and teacher training. The duration of each training is five days. During 2016-2021, IMLI trained a total of 731 individuals, consisting of 198 government officials, 480 teachers and 53 instructors. There was a reasonable representation of female trainees, with 44% of the total trained being females. Through the organization of these training courses, IMLI contributed to the capacity building of teachers and government officials in Bangladesh to enable them to use standard form of Bangla. IMLI reports that training instructors or resource persons were drawn from reputed university professors, government schools and IMLI faculty members. The training graduates who were interviewed as part of the survey gave a positive assessment of the training on parameters of the level of satisfaction, relevance and quality of training.

*Workshops on dialects.* Workshops were organized aiming to understand various dialects spoken in different regions of Bangladesh. These workshops brought together local specialists of dialects, government officers, writers, researchers, activists, teachers, lecturers and journalists.

*Language training:* IMLI houses a fully digitized language lab equipped with modern audio-visual facilities. The Institute plans to provide language training in a number of international languages, including Bangla language for foreigners. It is in the process of formulating a proposal to examine the feasibility of organizing a language training for Bangladeshi overseas workers in different languages. Enhanced language proficiency of overseas workers is believed to improve employability as well as the quality of life abroad.

#### d. Policy advice

IMLI serves as the professional/technical arm of the Ministry of Education of Bangladesh. There is no evidence of engagement with the Ministries of Education outside the country. With its

mandate in mother language promotion and documentation, the Ministry of Education of Bangladesh seeks technical help and policy advice from the Institute in matters related to languages. While no major policy output was produced in terms of policy guidelines or policy briefs in the past years, its policy-related work is manifested through several of its activities. Many of its activities such as language surveys, seminars and publications have the potential to contribute to the development of policy recommendations for the promotion and protection of mother languages. The ethno-linguistic survey undertaken by IMLI has provided the foundation for the government to focus on policy issues for the promotion of mother language education and protection of languages. The academic articles published in IMLI journals have examined language issues that have policy implications. The various seminars and events provide an opportunity for the experts to meet with the policy makers and representatives of universities, national institutes and CSOs creating a platform for policy dialogue.

In line with the spirit of the National Education Policy 2010, Bangladesh is committed to implementing mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) targeting ethnic minority children. IMLI has provided policy advice and technical support to the Ministry of Mass and Primary Education (MOPME) and the National Curriculum and Textbooks Board (NCTB) to implement the MTB-MLE programme through capacity building of teachers, textbooks development and dissemination of international policies and practices on MTB-MLE.

The evaluation noted that while IMLI's work has indirect policy implications, there is a need for better positioning of IMLI as a regional/international institute that is able to provide policy advice to the Member States at the upstream level. It should find appropriate ways of identifying issues related to language learning and language protection, carrying out policy-relevant analysis and target stakeholders at the policy level aiming at improvements in language policy and practice.

Among the four functions stated in the agreement, as of now IMLI has primarily concentrated on the first function which relates to knowledge generation, sharing and dissemination, capacity development and policy advice. The evaluation has noted that IMLI is carrying out its activities generally consistent with the objectives defined in the agreement and its work has mainly benefitted Bangladesh. However, three of its remaining functions, which concern designing new approaches of learning; undertaking comparative research on teacher training, curriculum development and educational strategies; and documenting and promoting the linkages of mother language and artistic expression, remain largely unattended. When inquired to provide specific examples of work undertaken under these functions, no significant activities have been reported by the Institute. The evaluation noted some degree of vagueness in the understanding of these functions. There is a need to carefully examine these functions in light of the resource and capacity requirements required for their implementation.

One important aspect of evaluation is to examine the geographic scope of IMLI's work. It should be acknowledged that IMLI has taken some important steps to achieve global scope in its work, especially through the establishment of the international mother language award as well as the newly proposed fellowships and grants. However, for the most part the geographic scope of IMLI's ongoing activities has primarily remained domestic and these activities do mainly

address national priorities. No deliberate attempts have been made to develop the capacity of Member States in the region with respect to setting up MTB-MLE programmes and documenting and preserving endangered languages as foreseen in the agreement.

Survey data also corroborate the conclusion drawn from the content review. Many national and international respondents who are familiar with IMLI's work have stressed that IMLI should stick to its broad function of promoting multilingual education and learning focusing on indigenous languages and endangered languages. The IMLI administration also believes that the objectives set out in the agreement have been met only moderately. Member States in the SAARC region contacted in the course of this evaluation, including UNESCO entities and partners were largely unaware of what IMLI is currently doing and what it has planned ahead. They pointed to the need for establishing appropriate structures and processes through which Member States could have a role in identifying the regional priorities in areas of mother tongue education and language protection. Some national partners of IMLI suggest that the Institute should avoid being fragmented in its work with too many small activities, with a strong focus on one or two core programmes, building on its comparative advantage as being an international institution under the auspices of UNESCO. It was mentioned that the programmatic focus of national scope should go hand in hand with a more comprehensive regional coverage and visibility of IMLI's activities.

## 2.2 Relevance to UNESCO's programmes and activities

IMLI's broad mandate, as reflected in its objectives and functions, is relevant to UNESCO's overall objectives, programmes and priorities. UNESCO is deeply committed to protecting and promoting linguistic and cultural diversity and has long been advocating the use of mother languages in education. However, various challenges remain in the use of mother tongues in education. In countries where multiple languages and dialects are used, education systems face challenges in educating children, especially children from indigenous communities. These countries should be supported to make their education systems inclusive through language planning, language research, policy support, teacher training, curriculum development and the provision of teaching materials. Against this background, IMLI's work can be relevant for UNESCO to discharge its lead role. It is the only Category 2 Center in the Asia-Pacific region focusing on MLE. Its portfolio fully corresponds to the key functions of UNESCO, with a focus on capacity building, knowledge creation and dissemination and policy support.

Apart from IMLI's relevance to UNESCO's values and principles, there is a high degree of alignment between IMLI's expected functions and UNESCO's strategic documents and sectoral priorities. A content analysis of IMLI's core documents and UNESCO's Medium Term Strategy (37C/4), its strategic programme objectives and the priorities of the Education Sector for 2014-2021 as reflected in the Main Lines of Action (MLA) and expected results illustrated in the biennial programme and budget (37, 38, 39 and 40 C/5) depicts a high degree of congruence. IMLI's work that aims to develop and strengthen education systems through the promotion of learning in mother languages and multilingual education is in alignment with UNESCO's Strategic Objective 1 "Supporting Member States to develop education systems to foster high quality and inclusive lifelong learning for all." Languages and multilingualism play a key role in advancing inclusion and there is no quality learning when children do not have opportunity to

learn in their own language. IMLI's programme focus on cultural and linguistic diversity, language learning, language revitalization and documentation and preservation of ethnic languages are core to UNESCO's work.

Without question, IMLI has an important mandate and its relevance is very high. Many of its ongoing activities such as its work that relates to knowledge dissemination, capacity building of teachers and government officials, survey of ethnic languages, organization of national and international seminars, and publication of research-based journals contribute to UNESCO's objectives. On the whole, it is positioned to play a prominent role in advancing UNESCO principles and objectives at global and country levels. However, to ensure that it is able to contribute to the institutionalization of MTB-MLE in national education systems through proper language policy, teacher training, curriculum development and educational strategies, it needs to be guided by a consistent integrated vision of MTB-MLE with clear strategic prioritization.

### 2.3 Relevance to global development agenda

Language rights, linguistic diversity and multilingualism, which have been the subjects of numerous UN declarations, recommendations and agreements, are at the core of IMLI's formal mandate. As one of the fundamental standard-setting instruments, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed in 1948, lays down the basic principle against discrimination on the grounds of language. The 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities protect the rights of minorities. The educational rights of indigenous peoples are addressed by the 1989 ILO Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries. The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the importance of languages in education. The role of the mother tongue in education is also referred to in the 1978 Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice. The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted in 2001, likewise touches upon the importance of languages for the promotion of cultural diversity. IMLI's mandate is in alignment and in support of these UN standards and instruments.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SGGs adopted by 193 Member States in 2015 reaffirm the global community's commitment to sustainable development. This is a pledge to ensure sustained and inclusive economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection, fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies. The core principles underpinning the Agenda, in particular the inclusiveness and leaving no one behind, are key to IMLI's work. Languages play an important role in accelerating the global vision of a peaceful, inclusive, secure and sustainable world. In an increasingly diverse and multilingual world, languages provide the most important tools of communication. Multilingualism is imperative for achieving all sustainable development goals. Loss of language and culture has high human, social and developmental costs and can lead to poverty, inequality, poor health and lack of peace.

IMLI's work is also relevant to the recent call of the United Nations. The UN General Assembly has proclaimed 2022-2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages calling for strong international commitment to restore, support and strengthen indigenous languages as a means of human identity, wisdom and worldview. The Decade places multilingualism at the

heart of indigenous peoples' development. It is believed that the Decade would contribute to raising global awareness about the importance of indigenous languages for sustainable development, peace building and reconciliation. The fact that UNESCO is the agency for the Decade, IMLI has an opportunity to contribute to this call and it should make conscious efforts to consider these goals of the Decade in its programming.

Mother tongue-based multilingual education, the primary mission of IMLI is a key pillar of equitable, inclusive quality education for all, the main agenda of SDG4 Education 2030, for which UNESCO is the lead agency. UNESCO promotes multilingual education as a means to improve learning outcomes. IMLI has particular relevance to SDG 4.1 (universal primary and secondary education), 4.2 (early childhood development and universal pre-primary education), 4.5 (gender equality and inclusion), 4.6 (youth and adult literacy) and 4.7 (education for sustainable development and global citizenship). Target 4.5 particularly seeks to 'ensure access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situation.' Target 4.7 has reference to human rights, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. In terms of IMLI's involvement in SDG4-related work, except the organization of a few events on the theme of SDG4, IMLI has not taken steps to link the Institute's overall strategy, both short and long-term work plan to various related targets of SDG4.

Upon inquiry, many respondents emphasized the importance of multilingual education in building more peaceful, inclusive and resilient societies. It was emphasized that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has increased the importance of IMLI and its work, especially given the language diversity that exists in the region. Numerous participants from the Asia-Pacific region brought attention to the need of a dedicated regional institute to protect linguistic diversity and indigenous languages and to support countries to build their capacity to strengthen MTB-MLE. IMLI is recognized by Member States, experts, UNESCO officials and others as highly relevant and an effective implementation mechanism for translating the SDG4-Education 2030 vision into reality. Senior officials of IMLI are convinced that IMLI needs to ensure greater alignment of its work with the global development agenda, in particular the global education agenda. IMLI's main agenda for the next phase of its work should be to ensure a sound linkage between SDG4 and the implementation of relevant components through its strategic plan. It is also imperative to review the objectives and functions of IMLI that were set at the time of its establishment. To ensure that IMLI's work is in alignment with and responds to the global education agenda, it might be desirable to revisit the objectives and functions set out in the agreement and make SDG4 more strongly pronounced.

#### 2.4 Quality of interaction and collaboration with UNESCO, both at Headquarters and in the field

UNESCO's global network of institutions houses a wealth of expertise, experiences, resources, ideas and insights. Institutions within the UNESCO network can grow and develop if they utilize the various avenues of interaction, collaboration and peer learning in a proactive manner. It begins with communication and exchange. The quality of interaction and coordination that Category 2 Centers like IMLI can create with this network of institutions can result in stronger

synergies and complementarities, ultimately contributing to the mission and objectives of UNESCO. The purpose of this section is to examine the quality of interaction and collaboration between IMLI and related institutions within UNESCO.

UNESCO Dhaka Office: According to IMLI, its communication with UNESCO Dhaka Office takes place on ‘as and when/where necessary’ basis. As being the first and nearest contact point, IMLI feels comfortable communicating with the Dhaka Office and receives UNESCO updates and follow-ups from them. While there is no collaborative engagement between the two, UNESCO Dhaka regularly participates in IMLI activities, especially the high profile events such as IMLD and national/international seminars.

UNESCO HQ (Education Sector): The strategic value of communication between UNESCO HQ (Education Sector) and IMLI need not be over-emphasized. For IMLI, there are two possible points of contact in the Education Sector at UNESCO HQ: a) Unit for Strategic Planning, Monitoring, Institutes and Field Coordination under Executive Office of the Education Sector, and b) Division of Education 2030, Section for Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality Language. Communication with the former serves the administrative, coordination and facilitation purpose, while the latter exists for substantive and/or content matters related to languages and language education.

Survey data reveals that a one-way communication has prevailed between HQ and IMLI in the past five or six years. Respondents from both the units of UNESCO HQ shared the same view regarding the frequency and quality of communication with IMLI. Both of these offices stated that they only had limited contact with the Institute. While there was appreciation for the mandate of IMLI and its importance to UNESCO’s objectives, both the units reported that they were not fully informed of IMLI’s activities, its achievements and results. IMLI officials maintained that their communication with UNESCO HQ was facilitated by UNESCO Dhaka Office and BNCU.

UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Asia-Pacific (UNESCO Bangkok):

UNESCO Bangkok is heavily involved in the promotion of mother-tongue-based multilingual education through exchange, capacity building, research and policy dialogue. It hosts the secretariat of the Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group (MLE-WG), a coalition established in 2009 comprising UN agencies, INGOs, universities, bilateral organizations involved in implementing MTB-MLE programmes across the region. One of the key features of the MLE-WG’s work is to organize international conferences on various topics of multilingual education. These global events are attended by experts, policymakers and practitioners from the region and beyond. The evaluation noted that IMLI has not been able to utilize this important regional network and platform. These regional events could have provided important learning opportunities for IMLI’s professionals and share its work with the larger multilingual community.

UNESCO Category 2 Centers: UNESCO encourages Category 2 Centers working in the same thematic area to coordinate and promote synergy amongst themselves, avoid regional overlaps and to ensure maximum efficiency at the global level. Category 2 Centers are not at the same



stage of development: some are more stable, developed and institutionally strong than others. There is immense opportunity for learning from each other. Collaboration between and/or among these centers could help build the capacity of relatively new Category 2 Institutes such as IMLI.

IMLI has taken steps to build up relations with APCEIU, one of the 15 Category 2 Centers in Education. In 2019, APCEIU arranged a study visit for IMLI staff at the latter's request to orient them to APCEIU's activities as well as Korean experience in the field of mother tongue education. The two centers discussed possible areas of collaboration. Both recognized the role of mother tongues in promoting global citizenship education and discussed how they could collaborate to support countries realize SDG4. APCEIU is known for being one of the best performing centers and IMLI has taken right steps by trying to learn from its experiences. However, there have been no follow-ups from IMLI. IMLI also reported that it is seeking to collaborate with INRULED, a Category 2 Center, based in Beijing, China.

The meeting of UNESCO education Category 2 Centers that takes place on a biennial basis provides an opportunity to share their programmes and plans, explore areas of possible cooperation, and increase visibility of the centers' contribution to the realization of UNESCO's objectives. Since the establishment of IMLI, there have been at least two such meetings – one in Cairo, Egypt organized by ASFEC in 2018 and one virtually organized by APCEIU in 2021. The organizers reported that IMLI was absent in the 2018 meeting. However, it is encouraging to note that IMLI participated in three meetings of education-related Category 2 Centers of the Asia-Pacific region, all three organized by APCEIU, one of them held in Bangkok in collaboration with UNESCO Bangkok. IMLI's own assessment is that it has communicated with its counterpart institutions only sometimes but it intends to further increase its interaction and collaboration with them.

Apart from the above, there has been no interaction and communication between IMLI and other members of the UNESCO network: UNESCO Field Offices and UNESCO Category 1 Institutes. Overall, IMLI's cooperation and interaction with the institutions within the UNESCO network is limited, uneven and ad hoc. Knowledge management and communication systems that exist within IMLI are not adequate to inform partners and stakeholders of its activities. It implies that IMLI has largely been operating in isolation from the wider network of UNESCO. As a result, there is so far little visibility of the Institute and its achievements at the level of UNESCO and its constituent entities.

## 2.5 Partnerships with government agencies, public or private partners and donors

Through effective partnerships with the government agencies, public and private partners, CSOs and donors, Category 2 Centres can leverage resources, expertise and competencies. Within the government, IMLI has established cordial relations with the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) and Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO (BNCU). Apart from these three, IMLI has identified the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) and Department of Linguistics of the University of Dhaka as its government partners. There is ongoing collaboration with DSHE for the training of secondary teachers, with MOPME for the training of primary teachers, with NCTB for the development of curriculum in ethnic minority languages and with the University of Dhaka for technical support to organize seminars.

In its institutional self-assessment, IMLI has not named any other organization as its partner, whether public or non-public. It was particularly noteworthy that any formal relations did not exist between IMLI and MLE actors in the country. In Bangladesh, NGOs/INGOs and indigenous organizations are actively involved in the promotion of multilingual education in indigenous communities. A Multilingual Education Forum (MLEF) has been established to intensify the advocacy initiatives for MLE, which is overseen by a National Steering Committee on Multilingual Education and supported by a Technical Committee. It is not clear why IMLI is not a formal member of the MLE Forum. Many member agencies associated with the Forum expressed concern over the passive role of IMLI. Many respondents emphasized that IMLI should seize the opportunity of mobilizing these non-governmental efforts through active participation and leadership for greater visibility and impact.

In order to discharge its regional function, it is important that IMLI is known by the Member States in the region. Some Ministries of Education and National Commissions in the region contacted for this evaluation expressed their lack of familiarity with IMLI's work. Those who knew stated that they had never collaborated with IMLI on any matter related to MLE. Most of the stakeholders stressed that IMLI needs to intensify its communication and interaction with relevant agencies in the region.

Despite the challenges highlighted above, there are some examples of fruitful cooperation between IMLI and some institutions outside the country. IMLI has taken steps towards establishing cooperation agreement with the Institute of the Lithuanian Language in Lithuania. The two institutes have agreed to promote and strengthen exchanges and cooperation in the fields of language, education and research, and to further develop intellectual exchange and research cooperation. The intent of cooperation between the two Institutes was signed in 2016 but no concrete steps have been taken to move the cooperation forward. The intent is not translated into any cooperation agreement. IMLI also reported that it has had some communication and exchanges with a number of universities and research institutions in Nepal and India. IMLI officials participated in a number of regional and international events organized by various universities and institutes outside the country. These relationships and interactions are more ad hoc and based on personal relationship rather than strategic and institutional.

The private sector has played an important role in the economic transformation of the Asia-Pacific region. The government recognizes that it can launch joint efforts with the private sector to reach the SDG 2030 targets by 2030 and Vision 2041. Increasingly, the presence of private sector is becoming stronger in many sectors. IMLI has not established any type of partnership with the private sector or private donors. Establishing partnerships with the private sector was reported to be particularly challenging as it requires autonomy from the government, sustained efforts and investment. Education of indigenous/minority and under-served children can be one potential area of interest to the private sector to fulfil its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

In conclusion, the current approach to building partnerships is limited, not systematic, and therefore does not lead to exchange of ideas and experiences and stronger cooperation. Partners within and outside the country have mixed views about the values of IMLI. Some agencies see the value of partnering with IMLI, while many others do not see any such value. IMLI's broad

global mandate for a very important policy agenda – promotion of mother language education and protection of languages – puts IMLI on a comparative advantage. Its world-class physical and institutional infrastructures can be attractive to the potential partners both at home and abroad. This calls for a strategic approach to partnerships and, most importantly, in terms of identifying and selecting partners, developing joint initiatives, and implementing collaborative projects. A number of factors can be attributed to rather weaker state of partnership between IMLI and external partners, notably lack of dedicated structures for promoting partnerships, bureaucratic procedures that discourage non-public partners to be engaged in any form of partnership, and, above all, the lack of the prioritization. The evaluation underscores the need for a broader vision of partnerships in the context of the SDG4-Education 2030 in general and the mother language agenda in particular, recognizing the importance of engaging with the government agencies, bilateral and multilateral donors, private sector, CSOs, academia, etc.

## 2.6 Governance, organizational arrangements and accountability mechanisms

### 2.6.1 Governing Board

The Governing Board (GB) occupies a central role in the oversight, direction and governance of the Institute. A 23-member Board of Management was established in accordance with the IMLI Act of 2010 as soon as the Institute was established. Following IMLI's designation as a Category 2 Institute, a GB had to be constituted to guide and oversee the affairs of the Institute as per the provision of the agreement. In contrast to the 2010 Act of IMLI, the agreement with UNESCO proposes to constitute a six-member board. To make the size and composition of the board consistent with the provision of the agreement, the Parliament of Bangladesh amended the 2010 IMLI Act in September 2019 – three years after IMLI was granted the Category 2 status. It has been more than two years since the revision of the 2010 Act, the process of formalizing the constitution of the GB has not been completed. The official order of the government to establish the board is yet to be released, and the representatives who are to represent UNESCO Member States have not been identified yet. Once these requirements are met, IMLI will have its GB as foreseen in the agreement.

Thus, the evaluation confirms that the absence of a functioning governing board has created some kind of governance vacuum. The situation is such that neither the old governing board has remained active during these years nor a new board has come to exist. Senior officials of IMLI felt that the absence of the board has not made any difference in the functioning of the Institute because it continued to receive the guidance and oversight from the Ministry of Education. However, many stakeholders outside IMLI have the opposite view. According to them, the absence of an independent and dynamic board has resulted in the loss of Institute's functional autonomy, lack of oversight and direction, increased bureaucratic interference and poor accountability. Many respondents were not aware of the board's roles and responsibilities, which is not surprising given that there is no functioning board.

During the interviews some stakeholders raised concerns regarding the composition of the IMLI board. It was pointed out that the IMLI Board mainly draws membership from the government with no representation of academia, universities, communities, NGOs and MLE community.

While acknowledging the importance of support and commitment of the government for IMLI, many noted that the governing board should give space to all categories of stakeholders with a reasonable representation of gender. Some noted that the board should be composed of high-level experts of international repute who can provide substantive guidance on the Institute's areas of work. It is not advisable to enlarge the size of the governing board to accommodate representatives from academia, CSOs and MLE community. However, it will be worthwhile to consider establishing an advisory body/technical committee with experts from the region who bring deep subject specific knowledge, skills and perspectives to augment the work of the governing board and IMLI leadership. The advisory body should have a professional role providing expert advice on languages and language education.

### 2.6.2 Institutional Leadership

The Institute is headed by a Director-General (DG), who is assisted by two Directors. The Director-General is appointed by the government on a contractual basis for a period of two years with the option of reappointment. The position of DG occupies special significance for the reputation, credibility and visible outputs of the Institute. As per the selection process, the Ministry of Education makes the nominations of three experts/linguists and final selection of one of the three nominated candidates is done by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. The job agreement of the DG is decided by the government. As per the Act, the DG is in the role of a chief executive officer of the Institute. The current DG was appointed in 2011 and has served in this role for almost 9 years now. The DG has a Ph.D. in linguistics and was a Professor of Linguistics at a university in Dhaka. He has considerable repute in the country because of expertise in the area of linguistics. The IMLI Act does not set a term limit to the DG position so it is up to the government how long one can remain in the position. Organizations often suffer due to frequent change in leadership. IMLI has experienced constancy and consistency over the years as a result of stability in leadership. The DG is well-respected by his staff members and enjoys the confidence of the government. The relationship and communication DG has maintained with the high officials in the Ministry ensures IMLI's access to the government bureaucracy and political institutions.

### 2.6.3 Organizational arrangements and management

As per the organizational chart of IMLI, the Institute is organized into two main divisions: a) Administration, Finance and Training; and b) Language, Research and Archive. This provides a separation between administrative/financial and professional/technical functions. A good organizational structure facilitates the achievement of objectives of an organization through proper coordination, team work, defined roles and responsibilities of each person/unit, reduced overlapping and duplication of work, improved communication and effective utilization of staff members.

The organogram of IMLI was prepared at a time when it was established as a national institution. That IMLI now functions as an international institute, its organizational structure should respond to its mandates in terms of objectives/functions, area of specialization and its geographic coverage. A cursory at the existing organogram reveals that there are no self-contained structures for the Institute's core functions such as capacity building, policy advice and advocacy, language

research and documentation, pedagogical and curricular research (curriculum development, teacher training and educational strategies). Also, missing from the structures are functions such as monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management and communication, partnerships-building and institutional linkages, etc. There are imbalances between requirements of the position and the qualifications held by incumbents. In view of this, a careful review of the structures, mandates, responsibilities and staff allocations and capacity, including the organizational processes of coordination, communication, decision-making, would help ensure effectiveness and efficiency in the organization and management of the Institute. This review is beyond the scope of this evaluation so it is recommended that steps be taken to carry out an institutional audit of IMLI.

#### 2.6.4 Planning, monitoring and evaluation

The evaluation undertook a rapid review of IMLI's planning and reporting documents to examine if they are strategically linked to the Institute's objectives and the results envisaged. In 2017 after a year of its establishment, IMLI developed a short-term work plan for the year 2017/2018 and a long-term work plan for 3 to 5 years. Activities planned under the short-term work plan comprise activities such as publication of newsletters and journals; organization of seminars, training courses and national events; procurement of books; development of informative albums, calendars, posters, etc. The long-term plan of IMLI consisted of activities such as establishment of a data center, an archive, online TV center, digital museum, digital printing press; development of accommodation/hostel facilities; ethno-linguistic survey of languages and cultures of ethnic; language proficiency training; documentation and preservation of dialects; etc.

The review reveals that IMLI's planning, whether short-term or long-term, is largely activity and output based, while a framework for a more results-based approach to planning has not been systematically developed. Planning is mostly in the form of listing of routine activities. Year in and year out, IMLI's planning is about continuation of the same events and activities. There is an emphasis on the delivery of outputs within the planned timeframes. Larger results that the Institute is expected to produce are not reflected in its planning. There is clear need for repositioning of the Institute from its activity-orientation to a strategic results-orientation. Most senior officials recognize the value of results-based planning. However, there is a need for building a results-based culture within the house through the training of staff on the basics of results-based planning and monitoring.

It is encouraging to note that the Institute produces annual progress reports summarizing the events and activities undertaken within a year. This systematic recording is at the level of activities rather than the outcomes and results. The Institute would benefit from putting in place a system for both results-based planning and monitoring. Such a system would strengthen IMLI's institutional performance. There should be systematic reflection on the outcomes and results of activities keeping in view of the larger objectives of the Institute. The management should also define indicators for measuring its success.

#### 2.6.5 Accountability mechanisms

Accountability lies at the heart of a strong institution. Without good accountability there are risks that powers granted to institutions and officials can be misused, or that resources can be wasted through inefficiency, poor management of resources or poor delivery of results. IMLI has a ‘legal personality’ of a national entity that operates through the public resources to accomplish larger public goals. By virtue of this, it entails a responsibility for its conduct and is answerable to the government and its public. IMLI officials are called to account for their actions according to defined standards. Accountability mechanisms across the IMLI system are part of the larger public accountability mechanisms adopted by the government of Bangladesh.

One aspect of accountability is administrative accountability. The government enforces administrative accountability through a number of mechanisms of control and compliance such as institutional oversights, administrative reviews, staff performance reviews, ethical code of conduct, rewards and punishment, checks and balances and criminal penalties. These accountability mechanisms are internal, formal, top-down and hierarchical. By this principle, the IMLI staff is accountable/responsible towards the Director-General, and IMLI management as a whole is accountable to the governing board and ultimately to the Ministry of Education and the government of Bangladesh. There are independent watchdog institutions for regulating and monitoring the behavior of public officials.

The other dimension of accountability is financial accountability, which implies that anyone who is handling resources for public office is obliged to report on the intended and actual use of resources. Financial accountability is examined through internal and external audits. The production of annual accounting and performance reports is an example of financial accountability. IMLI’s accounts are audited according to the standard auditing rules and procedures of the government. The Audit Department under the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, which is the supreme audit institution of the country, is responsible for auditing IMLI’s expenditure. The Ministry of Education monitors the financial activities of the Institute and performs internal audits. No major irregularities are reported in the Audit Reports shared with the consultant.

The third dimension of accountability, which is bottom-up, relates to accountability towards citizens or the public through the use of social accountability mechanisms such as citizens charter, transparency, citizen or civil society participation in the governance and decision-making process, public expenditure tracking, citizen report card, etc.

A review of accountability processes and mechanisms across IMLI reveals that the management/hierarchical aspect of accountability mechanisms are more prominent than the public or social aspect of accountability, which effectively makes the administration accountable to the higher authorities rather than the public or communities. There is greater focus on accountability for inputs (whether funds have been disbursed or accumulated) rather than accountability for results. There is a lack of clear and coherent results-based framework to consistently guide monitoring and reporting of their activities, outputs and achievement of expected results.

As a member of a global entity, IMLI has chosen to expand its roles and activities beyond the national boundaries. With this there is a corresponding expansion of responsibility for its interactions with a number of entities/partners outside the country, including UNESCO Member States. It includes its commitment and accountability towards international commitments, UN declarations, international targets and benchmarks. Most specifically, IMLI has a reporting relationship with UNESCO in its Category 2 role and must be committed to contribute to and work towards the attainment of SDGs, in particular the global education goal. While the national side of accountability processes and mechanisms are well strengthened at IMLI, the international dimension of accountability processes and mechanisms are in the early stage of making.

## 2.7 Financial and human resources for ensuring sustainable institutional capacity and viability

### 2.7.1 Financial resources

IMLI is entirely funded by the government of Bangladesh. The government provides a lump sum grant from its revenue budget to run the Institute’s activities and staff costs. Table 1 provides budget allocations made by the government in the last three years.

Table 1: Government allocations for years 2017/18-2019/20

Category	2017-2018 (US\$)	2018-2019 (US\$)	2019-2020 (US\$)
Staff salary and benefits	205000	193000	169000
Research	11800	1800	58900
Conferences	17700	10600	12000
Training	35000	35000	35000
Travel	110600	85000	70600
Publications	17700	9400	18000
Utility	54000	65400	64000
Repair and maintenance	14000	47000	7000
Commodities and services (equipment, furniture, celebration, conveyance)	193000	156000	166000
Total	658,800	603,200	600,500

As shown, IMLI received an allocation of US\$ 600,500 for 2019/20 as opposed to \$603,200 for 2018/19 and \$658,800 for 2017/18. As compared to the 2017/18 allocation, there has been a decline in the budget allocation by nearly 9 percent in 2019/20. Between 2018/2019 and 2019/20, there was a minimal decline in the allocation. Analysis of the 2019/2020 budget shows that some 40% of the total budget was set aside for staff salary/benefits and travel, followed by commodities and services (27.6%), programme (20.6%) and utility, repair and maintenance (11.8%). It is noteworthy that there has been manifold increase in the research budget from \$11,800 in 2017/2018 to \$ 58,900 in 2019/2020. The research budget saw a sharp decline in 2018/2019 and then a substantial rise in the following year. Training budget has remained

constant, while the conference budget saw a decline, whereas the budget for publications increased in 2019/2020 from a drop during 2018/2019.

Available data on budget execution shows that it ranged from about 54% in 2017/18 to a high of 76% in 2018/19 and then a drop (70%) in 2019/20. One of the management challenges reported by IMLI was the underutilization of funds. Non-use of staff salary due to unfilled positions, bureaucratic delays in approving relevant policies and guidelines by the government and failure to submit claims by vendors or providers of services were among the reasons cited for underutilization. The reasons provided are more external rather than internal. Any leftover funds go back to the government. However, an article published in the Dhaka Tribune 21 February 2021 reported about IMLI's budget surplus. All 12 staff members who responded to the survey mentioned that one of the administrative problems faced by the Institute was its inability to complete tasks on time. It implies that there is a need to improve its budget utilization through proper budget monitoring and results-based management.

The Act has authorized the Institute to establish IMLI Fund and mobilize funds from multiple sources in addition to the government allocations. This includes grants, donations, aid, loan or income generated from the mobilization of the Institute's own internal resources or property. Contrary to this provision, the Institute has not been engaged in any kind of resource mobilization nor it has developed a resource mobilization strategy. It was reported that IMLI raised a small fraction (\$17150) from its internal resources in 2019/2020. As IMLI goes to scale and begins to implement programmes within its area of mandate, funds from the government alone will not be sufficient. Asked about possible sources of alternative funding, IMLI authorities do not see that happening. Its legal set up as an entity within the government system does not allow sufficient flexibility to generate resources from other sources, especially from the private sector. All 12 senior officials who completed the survey confirmed that the Institute at the moment is not engaged in any kind of fund raising.

The future of IMLI as a strong, visible and viable regional player depends on the extent to which it can secure sustainable external financial support. It will be wise to consider taking organized efforts to generate additional resources to complement existing funding sources. Therefore, it is advisable to develop a resource mobilization strategy to generate resources from governments, bilateral and multilateral organizations, trust funds, businesses and the private sector. In the first place, IMLI will need a dedicated person with fund raising skills who can identify potential donors, build relations with such donors, prepare promising fund-raising proposals and coordinate with the programme personnel. Alternatively, IMLI can seek ways to reinforce fundraising skills at senior management level, and fundraising should become part of the competences required for new recruitment.

### 2.7.2 Human resources

By and large, the staffing pattern of IMLI follows the hierarchical structure of staffing in the government system. It consists of four classes, which are grouped according to the graded salary structure. IMLI has 98 approved staff positions, of which 17 officials fall under Class 1 category, 1 under Class 2 and remaining 80 under Class 3 (40) and Class 4 (40) respectively. Of the 98 approved positions, 48 staff members are currently working. Among these, 13 officials are in



director level positions (Director, Deputy and Assistant), 4 in specialized/technical and secretarial roles such as computer operation, accounts, research and publication and the remaining 31 staff members are in various support roles.

An organization's organizational effectiveness depends on its ability to attract, select, train/develop and retain capable staff members and the recruitment method plays a big part in making it happen. The recruitment to IMLI's staff positions is done in different ways: through deputation, attachment, project transfer, direct appointment and outsourcing. For instance, all 13 in director level roles are appointed through an arrangement called deputation or attachment. These are permanent officials who belong to different cadres in the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS), deployed temporarily to serve at IMLI. Five staff members are filled through project transfer. A large majority of the support functions (25) representing Class 3 and 4 positions are filled through outsourcing arrangement as per the policy of externalizing support functions to a third party. Only five positions are filled up through direct recruitment, a method that uses competitive selection procedure involving both written and oral tests by a recruitment committee of IMLI. Officials recruited through direct recruitment will be IMLI's own staff members. The government plans to fill up all Assistant Director (AD) positions through direct recruitment and this process, planned to be completed by June 2021, has delayed because of the pandemic. When this process is completed, those currently deployed through deputation or attachment will return to their parent organizations in the civil service. The ADs recruited through the direct recruitment method will be promoted to Deputy Director (DD) positions in due course as their service matures. Until that time, DD positions will be filled up through deputation or attachment arrangement.

In terms of academic qualifications, IMLI has a highly qualified staff with almost every official holding a Masters' degree. Two of them hold Ph.D. degree. In terms of the field of specialization, eight of the officials have their degrees in social science, three in Math/science, three in English literature, 2 in Bangla literature and one management/accounting. Ten officials have completed the Foundation Training for BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service) cadre officials. The staff holding the various support roles are also qualified. A large majority of the IMLI staff members is male (81%), indicating under-representation of females in the workforce. Among the senior officials and support staff, male representation stands at 76% and 84% respectively. It is interesting to note that female underrepresentation is visible in both categories of staff. Clearly, IMLI should take measures to increase female representation on the staff.

The length of service of staff members varies from one to more than 10 years. Among the officer level positions, eight (50%) have less than two years of service, three have between two to five years of service and five others have five or more years of service at IMLI. Half of the support staff members have one year of work experience with IMLI, which is expected because most of these functions are outsourced.

The Institute does not pay any extra benefits or incentives to its staff members whether they are deployed through deputation or appointed under recruitment. The salary structure of the staff is equivalent vis-a-vis the salary structure in the government. Under the National Integrity Strategy of Bangladesh, which aims at promoting good governance, preventing corruption and ensuring the highest integrity in all affairs of the state and society, IMLI has taken the initiative to award two of its current employees with a cash prize equivalent to their one month of basic salary. In order to

retain staff or attract them to the IMLI's positions and keep the morale high, the idea of paying extra allowance or benefits is worth considering.

The Institute has multiple human resource challenges. First and foremost, a large number of positions still remain unfulfilled. Of the total 98 approved staff positions, only 48 positions are filled up, implying that the Institute is a long way from operating in its full capacity. Secondly, in the absence of core staff personnel recruited through direct appointment, there is reliance on contingent staff members who are appointed through recruitment methods such as deputation, attachment or project transfer. These recruitment decisions are made by the Ministry of Education not by the Institute's senior management. The institutional survey data confirms that the Director-General – the head of the receiving agency - does not have any say or control over these important staffing decisions. The senior officials who responded to the survey mentioned that it was the government's rather than the staff member's decision to join IMLI and many were not sure how long they will remain at IMLI. In order to ensure staff stability, continuity and continuous professional growth and improvement, the Institute should take steps to limit its reliance on contingent staff.

The third human resource challenge lies in not having professional positions with specialization and expertise in the core areas of the Institute's mandate such as language documentation and research, multilingual education, language policy and planning, teacher training, pedagogy and curriculum development, monitoring and evaluation, etc. No major measures have been taken for strengthening in-house expertise on strategically selected areas of the mandate. From the data provided by IMLI staff, it is clear that specialized expertise in the areas of the Institute's mandate is lacking among the current staff members. Insufficient professionals related to MLE was cited by many respondents as a serious management challenge. Many national and international stakeholders viewed that IMLI's current expertise did not match its regional and/or international functions and emphasized that for IMLI to become a hub in mother tongue/multilingual education and language research it needs to recruit professionally and technically competent academics, trainers and professionals. The Institute also lacked a planned and organized staff development programme to develop its human resources. Overseas visits or participation in meetings, conferences were available to a small minority at the top. All 12 officials reported that they have not had opportunity to participate in any professional development programme. Any knowledge or expertise gained by staff members through experience or training would not remain within the IMLI because of the nature of recruitment of staff members.

Finally, an institute created to undertake international role would benefit from a dynamic staffing environment that has professionals with international work experience, if not internationally recruited professionals. The Institute's current staff brings diverse work experience from different line ministries and national institutions. More organized efforts are needed to make the work environment more diverse through staff exchanges, short-term or limited term secondments to (and from) other international organizations, research institutions and academia, fellowships, internships, etc.

## 2.8 Extent to which the Institute enjoys the authority for the execution of its activities

The 2010 IMLI Act recognizes the Institute as a statutory organization, which implies that it is a functionally autonomous institute able to independently decide on its affairs within the framework of the Act. IMLI possesses its own legal personality and enjoys separate legal status as an entity in its own right. As a public entity, the Institute is authorized to contract, institute legal proceedings and to acquire and dispose of moveable and immovable property as per the defined government procedures. The Institute's funding is assured through annual budget allocation from the government and it ensures predictability to guide its actions. It is particularly noteworthy that the government demonstrated its generous support for the establishment of the Institute, allocated 1.03 acre of land for the construction of a 12-storey building, of which the construction of 7 stories is now complete. The establishment of an institute with world-class facilities and resources is no small contribution.

However, there are some issues that relate to how the Institute makes use of its autonomous status. Institutions do not necessarily operate the way their laws and rules define their being. Discussion with the IMLI administration, staff members and related stakeholders revealed that there is no clarity on the concept of functional autonomy granted to IMLI. While IMLI has control over its day to day affairs, it needs to refer to the Secondary and Higher Education Division of the Ministry of Education for a number of operations that relate to staffing, finance, international matters, property acquisition, etc. For most operations, MOE approval is needed. All 12 senior officials who completed the staff questionnaire were unanimous in their view that "to some extent it requires approval of MOE." Since IMLI does not have duly formed governing board, it was perhaps necessary to consult MOE or seek its approval in the absence of a functioning governing board. The fact that MOE is the source of Institute's budgetary and human resources, it cannot avoid being under its close surveillance. Further, a careful content analysis of the power and responsibilities vested in the Institute by its Act leaves some ambiguity regarding its autonomy. The powers and responsibilities do not necessarily define the power the Institute can exercise. Instead, they represent the duties and functions (tasks) that the Institute is expected to perform.

Some respondents, who represent the academic institutions and CSOs, expressed the view that under the current institutional set up IMLI would not be able to function in an autonomous manner. It merely functions as an extended arm of the Ministry of Education. For an institute with professional and academic functions, autonomy should be at its core and it should be given the same degree of freedom and autonomy that universities normally exercise in Bangladesh. It is particularly important for IMLI because it has to operate internationally which means that it should be able to function independently from the government to respond to the context and demand. Despite some issues, some others noted the value in functioning under MOE supervision, especially in terms of financial assurance and institutional legitimacy within the national boundary.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 3.1 Extent of attainment of objectives set out in the agreement

- Develop a Strategic Plan that articulates the Institute’s vision of how it aims to position itself as an international institute, including its objectives, strategies, working modalities and results it seeks to achieve in relation to its objectives, focusing on its core functions such as policy advice, capacity development, research and knowledge generation and dissemination in relation to mother language education and learning. A distinct shift in the pattern of activities is needed from downstream activities such as teacher training towards more upstream policy work.
- Define IMLI’s expansion strategy that articulates how it will scale up various activities outside the country. Examine the implications of going to scale for financing, staffing, institutional capacity, management, coordination, working modalities, etc. Stay focused in the Asia-Pacific region, in particular in South Asia, before embarking on activities of international scale.
- Revisit the objectives and functions set out in the agreement and assess their implementability and achievability within the available institutional resources and delivery capacities.
- An appropriate balance among the different sets of activities, functions and objectives needs to be maintained as foreseen in the agreement. IMLI’s planning should aim to achieve both of its objectives making sure that all activities and functions are prioritized. There should be a sound understanding of the interdependence and strategic complementarity between the objectives and functions among the staff and external audiences.
- Adopt a consultative and participatory process for the identification of regional priorities, activities and strategic choices through regular engagement with Member States, partner institutions and relevant stakeholders both within the outside.

### 3.2 Relevance to UNESCO’s programmes and activities

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- Build staff understanding of UNESCO’s objectives, priorities, strategies and expected results as reflected in its planning and programming documents and seek required technical support from UNESCO Dhaka Office, with technical backstopping from UNESCO Bangkok in this regard. It is also important that staff members understand, appreciate and internalize IMLI’s roles and responsibilities as a Category 2 Center and engage them in setting Institute’s priorities, programmes and activities as foreseen in the agreement.
- Ensure the relevance of the proposed Strategic Plan (as indicated above) by carefully aligning IMLI’s objectives, programmes and results with UNESCO’s priorities and expected results, and articulate in the Strategic Plan how IMLI contributes to UNESCO’s overarching goal in education.
- Consult with UNESCO Dhaka and UNESCO Bangkok in the course of preparing the Institute’s Strategic Plan and, as appropriate, align IMLI’s programmes and objectives with the national and regional priorities set by UNESCO Dhaka and UNESCO Bangkok in related areas and explore the opportunity for joint planning, implementation and

monitoring. A thorough understanding of national SDG4 roadmaps prepared by Member States can be helpful.

### 3.3 Relevance to global development agenda

- Integrate the relevant principles, goals/targets, strategies and results of the 2030 Agenda for SDG into the Institute's proposed Strategic Plan and its activities, focusing in particular on SDG 4, indigenous languages, language learning, revitalization of languages, etc.
- Reorient IMLI's work so that SDG4 becomes the main focus aiming to ensure inclusive and quality education for language minorities and indigenous groups through capacity building, research, policy dialogue and knowledge dissemination. Set realistic intermediate and long-term objectives/targets in explicit alignment with the framework of the SDG4 – Education 2030 Agenda.
- Enhance staff understanding of SDG4 priorities in the region, especially in relation to mother tongue education through increased exchange and interaction with the Member States.

### 3.4 Quality of interaction and collaboration with UNESCO and its constituent bodies

- Take bold measures to break IMLI's relative isolation from its peers and counterparts through increased communication and interaction, especially with UNESCO Dhaka, which is the primary point of contact. Take active part in regional and international events for peer learning. Improve communication and collaboration with other Category 2 Centers in the region, especially APCEIU.
- Develop a proactive communication and engagement strategy to strengthen the Institute's linkages across the UNESCO's larger network of offices and explore the possibilities of joint planning and programming, resource mobilization, implementation, monitoring and reporting, where interests and objectives are common.
- Mobilize all possible channels of communication and in particular make optimum use of virtual means of communication, including social media to improve the Institute's profile and visibility.
- Consider engaging a communication officer or designating one of the officials to serve as communication officer who takes the responsibility of regional and international communication, partnerships building, networking and informs the IMLI family with the updates.

### 3.5 Partnerships with government agencies, public or private partners and donors

- Undertake a mapping exercise to facilitate partnerships at different levels, identifying the roles of all stakeholders and their interlinkages with respect to the agenda of mother languages, linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingual education.
- Select partners strategically, more particularly those institutions that share the mandate and objectives with IMLI. Deepen partnerships with the existing MLE networks/forums to utilize their expertise and contribute to the cause of MTB-MLE. Building a strong network of partners, especially who work in the field of mother languages, indigenous

languages, language documentation and revitalization should be seen as a high priority task and explore the possibility of setting up a network of MLE stakeholders and partners in South Asia.

- Seize the opportunity of mobilizing non-governmental efforts to promote MLE through active participation in various forums that are available within the region and beyond.
- Explore partnership opportunity with the governments, bilateral and multilateral organizations, foundations/funds, businesses and private sector and the donors, where organizations show interest to collaborate for the cause of education for indigenous/minority and under-served children.

### 3.6 Governance, organizational arrangements and accountability mechanisms

- Take immediate measures to complete the long awaited process of constituting the Governing Body and hold board meetings to discuss issues of strategic importance without further delay.
- Consider establishing an advisory or a technical team drawing high-level experts of national and international repute from different geographic regions with a reasonable representation of gender. These experts will bring deep subject specific knowledge, skills and perspectives to augment the work of the governing board and provide substantive guidance to IMLI leadership. The advisory body only has a professional role providing expert advice on languages and language education.
- Strengthen the Institute's planning and monitoring functions to ensure that IMLI works towards its intended results within the framework of results-based management system.
- Comply with the periodic reporting requirements to UNESCO as a Category 2 Center through quality reporting on activities and results and ensure IMLI's external accountability.

### 3.7 Financial and human resources

#### 3.7.1 Financial resources

- Ensure management efficiency not only to improve the utilization of budget but also to demonstrate the outcomes and impact of the Institute's work within the framework of results-based management. In order to enhance spending efficiency and make best use of available resources, adopt a results-based approach to resource allocation that directly links financing with the Institute's objectives and functions.
- Discuss and, where necessary, install possible mechanisms to secure economic and financial sustainability in the event that there is a decline in government funding.
- Develop a resource mobilization strategy to mobilize resources from the private sector, development banks and organizations, Member States and other potential donors. The diversification of funding will help reduce the Institute's reliance on government assistance alone as is the case now. To this end, consider engaging a dedicated person with fund raising skills who can identify potential donors, build relations with such donors, prepare promising proposals and coordinate with the programme personnel.

#### 3.7.2 Human resources

- Undertake a review/audit of the structures, roles and responsibilities and staff allocations and capacity requirements in view of the IMLI's objectives and expertise required to function as a Category 2 Center, and prepare a staffing plan for review and action by the government. To ensure that IMLI is able to attract the best talents, consideration should be given to improving staff compensation (salary, allowances, incentives, working conditions) commensurate with market trends.
- Create core permanent posts to carry out professional roles to ensure stability, accountability and continuous career/professional growth to avoid reliance on contingent staff (deputation or attachment). For core professional functions, it is advisable to create a core group of competent professionals who have expertise within the areas of Institute's mandate.
- As the Institute decides to go global, Member States expect strong leadership, technical advice and assistance on a number of persistent and growing challenges in MLE. Develop staff expertise through training and staff development opportunities so that it can stay at the cutting edge of policy and practice in relation to mother tongue education and language research. Adopt a variety of capacity building strategies through staff exchange, visiting scholars, short-term training, secondments, workshops, on-the-job training, online courses, internships, fellowships, etc. Ensure that the staff members have a right mix of skills and expertise, including managerial, communication, collaboration, fundraising and partnership competences.
- Consider engaging an international expert or a national of Bangladesh with sufficient experience of work at the international level for the interim period who would be helpful to fulfill IMLI's mandate, maintain international profile and train the local staff. The presence of staff with international experience will provide the diversity of perspectives and raise the Institute's profile.
- Enhance in-house research capacity by collaborating with regional and international research institutions and engaging in collaborative research with Member States.

### 3.8 Institutional authority for the execution of core activities

- Ensure that institutional autonomy of IMLI is protected and respected by public authorities and that there are clear and consistent regulatory frameworks so that they refrain from interference in IMLI's affairs. IMLI should maintain its character of a professional organization, and autonomy should be the hallmark of its governance and management. Underpinning the concept of autonomy is the institutional authority that shields professional organizations from political and bureaucratic interference and ensures the self-governance of professionals.
- Ensure that the staff is able and empowered to function in the most professional and autonomous manner and the appointed officials of IMLI are able to exercise the authority vested in them.

### 3.9 Assessment of the Institute against key requirements set forth in the agreement

As per the agreement signed between UNESCO and the government of Bangladesh (GOB), the Institute is expected to meet a range of requirements. A summary of the key requirements and the assessment of the extent to which each requirement is met is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Compliance of IMLI with the criteria set out in the agreement

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Legal Status	IMLI is a statutory organization with an independent legal status. It operates in accordance with the IMLI Act 2010 which was approved by the Parliament of Bangladesh. It enjoys the autonomy for the execution of its activities and has the authority to contract, institute legal proceedings and acquire and dispose of moveable and immovable property. The government provides sufficient funding and human resources to enable the Institute to conduct its affairs.
Objectives and Functions	The activities undertaken by the Institute are consistent with the objectives and functions set out in the agreement. Among the four functions, the Institute has focused on the first function that relates to knowledge creation, sharing, capacity building and policy advice. No activities have been undertaken pertaining to tThree other functions have remained unattended to. There is a need to carefully examine how the Institute intends to accomplish each of these three functions in view of the available financial resources and staff personnel.
Governing Board	IMLI has been functioning without a governing board since its designation as a Category 2 Center in 2016. However, the government has taken towards formalizing the composition of the board. The governing board set up earlier according to the IMLI Act 2010 ceased to function as IMLI became a Category 2 Center in 2016. In 2019, the Bangladesh Parliament amended the 2010 IMLI Act to modify the composition of the board according to the parameters set in the agreement. The government confirmed that the official order for formalizing the composition of the governing board will soon be released. The composition and the functions of the board are consistent with the agreement.
Contribution by the Government	The government provides all the resources, physical, human and financial, required for the administration and operation of the Institute. The government makes budget allocation on an annual basis for the Institute to meet the staff and programme costs, including the costs related to the maintenance of the premises, equipment, facilities, utilities and communications. As per the IMLI Act, the Institute is authorized to mobilize extra-budgetary resources from multiple sources and it agrees to diversify its funding sources.
Evaluation	This evaluation was carried out as per the request of the government to renew the current agreement. The evaluation confirms that the Institute is making contribution to UNESCO’s strategic programme objectives and expected results. By and large, the activities are consistent with the objectives and functions set out in agreement.



#### 4. FORMAL RECOMMENDATION ON THE CONTINUATION OF THE CATEGORY 2 STATUS

In view of the continued relevance and significance of IMLI to UNESCO and its Member States, and the unprecedented level of support from the government of Bangladesh and the willingness demonstrated by the government as well as the management of IMLI to take appropriate measures to implement relevant recommendations (3.1 through 3.8) of this evaluation for institutional improvement, the evaluator recommends that the agreement between the government of Bangladesh and UNESCO on the designation of IMLI as UNESCO Category 2 Centre be renewed. It is further recommended that IMLI develop an action plan indicating the timeframe for implementing each recommendation outlined under Section III (3.1 through 3.8).

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1. Terms of Reference

#### **Renewal evaluation for International Mother Language Institute (IMLI) as a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO**

##### **1. Background**

Category 2 institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO are a global network of institutions of excellence in the Organization's domains of competence. Given their expertise, they contribute in a meaningful way to the implementation of UNESCO's priorities, programmes and global development agendas during a defined period, through international and regional cooperation, research, knowledge production, policy advice, and capacity enhancement. Although independent of UNESCO, category 2 institutes and centres are a privileged partner of the Organization with access to UNESCO's logo, international and intergovernmental bodies and networks, and may leverage UNESCO's international reach and convening powers.

The International Mother Language Institute (IMLI) was established a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO by the General Conference at its 38th session in 2015 upon proposal from Bangladesh. The agreement on the establishment of the centre was subsequently signed by Bangladesh and UNESCO on 12 January 2016 and expires on 12 January 2022. In order to renew the agreement, an evaluation of the centre must be carried out in conformity with the Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres under the auspices of UNESCO (2019), and presented to UNESCO's Intersectoral Review Committee, followed by the Executive Board for consideration.

IMLI is a unique institute that was established in Dhaka, Bangladesh as an epitome of triumphant struggle for right to mother tongue of all people around the globe. The core objectives of the IMLI are:

- Develop and strengthen education systems by paying special attention to the promotion of mother language education and learning.
- Conduct research for the documentation and development of mother languages of the world to promote multilingual education.

The major functions of IMLI are:

- Engage in activities related to knowledge creation and sharing, capacity development and policy advice which focus on the key role of mother language education and learning
- Design new approaches of learning and develop body of knowledge on the role and potential contribution of mother language education towards the construction of inclusive learning societies

- Document and undertake comparative research on relevant teacher training, curriculum development and educational strategies employed to link mother language education with national or majority language education
- Document, research and promote the dynamic linkages between the practices of mother language education and artistic expression.

## **2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation**

The purpose of the evaluation is to examine whether the status of IMLI as a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO can be renewed. The following parameters shall be considered by the independent expert responsible for conducting the evaluation, in line with Section E.2.i.d of the Strategy: 2

- (i) The extent to which the Centre’s objectives as set out in the agreement signed with UNESCO were achieved
- (ii) The relevance of the contribution of the Centre’s programmes and activities to the achievement of UNESCO’s prevailing Approved Programme and Budget (C/5) at the time in which it was designated, including global strategies and action plans as well as sectoral programme priorities, as defined in the agreement
- (iii) The relevance of the contribution of the activities of the Centre to global development agendas
- (iv) The quality of coordination and interaction with UNESCO, both at Headquarters and in the field, as well as with National Commissions, other thematically related category 1 and 2 institutes or centres with regard to planning and implementation of programmes
- (v) The partnerships developed and maintained with government agencies, public or private partners and donors
- (vi) The nature and efficiency of the Centre’s governance, including organizational arrangements, management, human resources and accountability mechanisms
- (vii) The financial and human resources available for ensuring sustainable institutional capacity and viability
- (viii) The extent to which the Centre enjoys within its territory the autonomy necessary for the execution of its activities and legal capacity to contract, institute legal proceedings, and to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property

The independent expert shall also make recommendations, as appropriate, on how the Centre can reinforce its contribution to UNESCO’s programme. It shall also assess the extent to which the provisions of the current agreement need to be updated in order to conform to SDG 4 – Education 2030, the provisions of the model agreement in the Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres (2019) and take into consideration the recommendations of the evaluation report. UNESCO is responsible for the overall preparation of the agreement.

The conclusions of the evaluation will be shared with International Mother Language Institute (IMLI) and Bangladesh and the report made available on the Education Sector’s website.

## **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

UNESCO's Education Sector, through its Dhaka Office, is responsible for the management of the evaluation and contracting the independent expert in accordance with its rules and regulations. In consultation with the global coordination focal point, it shall draft the terms of reference of the evaluation and select the independent expert who shall be responsible for conducting the evaluation and preparing the report. The category 2 centre or the Member State concerned shall cover all costs related to the evaluation.

The conclusions of the evaluation will be shared with the category 2 centre and Member State concerned and the report made available on the Education Sector's website. The evaluation should be reviewed by UNESCO's Intersectoral Review Committee and serve as the basis for the Director-General's recommendation to the Executive Board as to whether the Agreement between UNESCO and Bangladesh should be renewed for a maximum period of eight years. It should be noted that once the renewal of the designation and the agreement are approved by the Executive Board, the terms of the draft agreement may no longer be modified.

#### **4. Independent Expert – Qualifications**

The evaluation will be conducted by one independent expert whom the Dhaka Office will select based on the following qualifications:

*Mandatory qualifications:*

- At least 10 years of professional experience in the field of education, with a focus on educational policy and planning
- Advanced academic degree (Master's or PhD) in education
- Professional experience in policy and programme evaluation in the context of educational planning
- Fluency in English (written and spoken)
- Knowledge of the role and mandate of UNESCO and its programmes
- No previous affiliation with the Centre or involvement in the activities under review

#### **5. Background Documents**

The Centre will make the following documents available to the independent expert:

- Strategy for Category 2 institutes centres under the auspices of UNESCO (2019), contained in document 40 C/79 and its annexes
- A copy of the existing agreement between the Member State and UNESCO establishing the centre
- Annual progress reports and biennial self-assessment reports on the contribution to UNESCO's programme objectives
- Periodic independent audit reports of the financial statements
- List of staff
- List of key publications
- List of donors and project partners
- Minutes of the meetings of the Governing Body of the Centre
- Support provided to Member States
- Available audit and evaluation reports

- Available information on future activities

## **6. Methodology**

The review of the Centre will include:

- A desk study of relevant documents, provided by the Centre and UNESCO Secretariat
- Interviews with the Centre's management and staff (telephone, online and/or via e-mail)
- Interviews (telephone, online and/or via e-mail) with the Centre's stakeholders, including implementing partners, beneficiaries as well as UNESCO staff at Headquarters, relevant regional offices and elsewhere
- Preparation of the evaluation report

Kindly note that no on-site visits are planned due to the current COVID-19 situation worldwide.

## **7. Deliverables**

The evaluation is estimated to require approximately 15 working days between February and March 2021. The independent evaluator is expected to deliver a draft review report and a final review report.

*(i) Draft executive summary (2-3 pages, due 25 February)*

A draft executive summary of the evaluation is to be submitted in English. The process for preparing the draft executive summary should allow sufficient time for a discussion and validation of the findings and the recommendations with the relevant UNESCO programme sector and pertinent stakeholders, including the government(s) that proposed the designation of the Centre and the Centre itself.

*(ii) Draft final evaluation report (maximum 10 pages, excluding the executive summary and annexes, due 18 March)*

The final report should be structured as follows:

- Executive summary, including recommendations
- Purpose of the review
- Scope of the review
- Methodology
- Findings, recommendations and conclusions (core part of the report), including an assessment of the centre against each criteria of Strategy and a formal recommendation on the continuation of the category 2 status
- Annexes (including interview list, key documents consulted, Terms of Reference)

The language of the report will be English.

## **7. Budget and Logistics**

The category 2 centre or the Member State concerned shall cover all costs related to the evaluation, in line with Article D (Financial Obligations) of the Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres under the auspices of UNESCO (2019).

The expert will be responsible for telecommunications and printing of documentation. UNESCO's Education Sector, notably the Dhaka Office, will facilitate the review process, to the extent possible, by providing any relevant information.

## **8. How to apply**

Interested candidates should provide the following information by 12 February **2021** to [b.kaldun@unesco.org](mailto:b.kaldun@unesco.org) cc [ss.snegdha@unesco.org](mailto:ss.snegdha@unesco.org) and [an.hoque@unesco.org](mailto:an.hoque@unesco.org).

- Full CV of the proposed evaluation consultant
- 1 page outlining how your past experience /credentials are relevant for this assignment
- A previous evaluation report that demonstrates familiarity with the topic for this evaluation
- Fee proposal, with a tentative indication of the level of effort per deliverable (as applicable).

## Annex 2: Documents reviewed

### *Key legal and programmatic documents related to IMLI*

Agreement between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on the Establishment of the International Mother Language Institute under the Auspices of UNESCO (Category 2).

Annual Report of International Mother Language Institute 2017-2018.

A report on the activities conducted by the International Mother Language Institute (2015/16 – 2019/20).

Annual Performance Agreement 2016-2021.

Audit report of International Mother Language Institute.

Brochure of the International Mother Language Institute.

International Mother Language Institute Budget 2016-2021.

International Mother Language Award Guidelines, 24 December 2019.

International Mother Language Institute (power-point presentation).

Mother Language Journal Vol 2, No. 1, 2018. International Mother Language Institute, Dhaka.

Mother Language Journal, Vol 1, No. 1, 2017, International Mother Language Institute, Dhaka.

Protocol of intent for cooperation between the Institute of the Lithuanian Language, Lithuania and the International Mother Language Institute, Bangladesh (n.d.).

Publication list of International Mother Language Institute.

Report on the Feasibility Study for the Establishing of the International Mother Language Institute as a UNESCO Category 2 Institute 2-6 November 2014, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Report on seminars organized by IMLI 2013-2021.

Staff list of International Mother Language Institute. 2021.

Summary of the resolutions of Governing Board meetings of IMLI.

The International Mother Language Institute Act 2010, National Parliament of Bangladesh, 12 October 2019, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The International Mother Language Institute (Amendment) Act, 2019. National Parliament of Bangladesh, 18 September 2019. Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Organogram of the International Mother Language Institute.

Work Plan of International Mother Language Institute, 19 November 2017, IMLI Bangladesh.

### *UNESCO strategy and programme documents*

Audit of the UNESCO's Management Framework for Category 2 Institutes/Centres, Internal Oversight Service, Audit Section, 2017.

Recommendations of UNESCO Category 2 Centres in Education on UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41C/4). Final Draft. March 2021.

UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2021, 37 C/4.

UNESCO Education Strategy 2014-2021.

UNESCO Approved Programme and Budget 2014-2017, 37 C/5.

UNESCO Approved Programme and Budget 2016-2017, 38 C/5 Vol 1 Draft Resolutions.

UNESCO Approved Programme and Budget 2018-2019, 39 C/5.

UNESCO Approved Programme and Budget 2020-2021, 40 C/5 2020-2021.

UNESCO Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres under the Auspices of UNESCO (37 C/Resolution 93 and 37 C/18 Part I and its annex).

UNESCO Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centre under the Auspices of UNESCO (2019).



## Annex 3: Interview questions addressed to different groups of stakeholders

### **Institutional Questionnaire to be completed by the Director-General (or senior leadership)**

#### Attainment of objectives

1. How have the role and functions of IMLI evolved/changed since it became Category 2 Centre?
2. What is the extent to which IMLI has been able to accomplish its objectives?
3. What has IMLI done to develop and strengthen education systems with respect to the promotion of mother language education and learning?
4. What research has IMLI conducted for the documentation and development of mother languages of the world to promote multilingual education?
5. What factors enabled you to achieve IMLI's objectives?
6. What have been the main barriers towards achieving the Institute's objectives?
7. Between the two objectives, which objective has received higher priority than the other one?
8. Would you like to propose any modifications to the objectives and functions of IMLI?

#### Relevance to national and regional development priorities

9. Are the activities of the Institute relevant to the country's national development priorities?
10. Why is the work of IMLI relevant to the needs and realities of the Asia-Pacific region?

#### Relevance to UNESCO's prevailing approved programme and budget

11. In your judgement, which strategic objectives of UNESCO does IMLI contribute to?
12. In your judgment, which priorities of UNESCO education sector does IMLI contribute to?
13. What revisions/modifications do you see it necessary in the current provision of IMLI to align its priorities with those of UNESCO?
14. Overall, what is the main geographic coverage of IMLI's current activities?
15. Which global development agenda(s) do the activities of IMLI contribute to?
16. What adjustments would you like to make in IMLI's priorities and activities so that it can best contribute to the existing global education agenda(s)?

#### Activities undertaken by IMLI

17. Does the Institute have a strategic/long-term plan? Do you prepare annual work plans?
18. Are the activities of the Institute guided by the work plan?
19. Are there initiatives that you would call your Institute's flagship initiatives?
20. What do you consider to be the significant achievements of IMLI over the last 4-5 years?
21. What is the extent of involvement in different functions of IMLI as stated in the agreement?

## Coordination and interaction

22. Please provide a complete list of national and international partners.
23. How do you stay connected with and provide updates to your partners?
24. How often do you communicate/interact with the different entities of UNESCO?
25. How do you assess/describe the quality of your coordination and collaboration with different entities of UNESCO?
26. Does the Institute receive UNESCO Education sector's work plans and other relevant materials such as sector strategies and programmes from UNESCO?
27. Has the Institute ever been invited by UNESCO to attend in any of the events?
28. Has IMLI invited UNESCO officials from Dhaka office, Bangkok and HQs in the Institute's meetings, conferences or any other events?
29. Are the IMLI staff sufficiently familiar with UNESCO's instruments (C/4, C/5)?
30. Have there been any official visits to IMLI by any UNESCO Officials in the last 4-5 years?
31. How do you assess UNESCO's overall role in the governance and functioning of IMLI?
32. What technical support/assistance have you received from UNESCO?
33. Do you believe that UNESCO could make better use of IMLI's expertise and resources? How?

## Partnerships with government agencies, donors and partners

34. Who are the key agencies within the country IMLI has partnership with and what is the nature of partnership/relationship with these agencies?
35. What strategies are you considering to enlarge/widen the scope of partnership? Who are the new potential partners under consideration?

## Governance, organizational arrangement, human resources and accountability mechanisms

36. Is there a formally established governing board?
37. What is the composition of the governing board?
38. How often does the governing board meet in a year? Please share the minutes of meetings.
39. What are the roles and functions of the governing board as stated in the official documents?
40. Are there gaps between the expected and actually performed roles?
41. Are there any particular issues with respect to the composition of the board, its functions and relationships between the board and the management?
42. Does the governing board set performance targets for the Director-General? Please specify if any targets are set by the governing board.
43. Have you established any other committee structures to support the Institute?
44. How many staff members joined or quit IMLI each year in the last three years?
45. Does the Institute staff have expertise in the following areas?
46. Do the staff members have written job descriptions?
47. Have you set performance targets (results to be achieved annually) for each staff member?
48. Are the procedures for selecting/recruiting staff members clearly laid out?
49. Does the DG have any say when staff members are selected for deputation from MOE?

50. Are there staff positions that are selected internationally? Provide details of such positions.
51. How does the salary structure of IMLI staff compare with the salary provided in the government system in equivalent ranks?
52. Does the Institute pay special incentives/benefits to attract and retain the staff members?
53. Did the Institute staff attend in any regional or international conferences?
54. In your judgement, is the Institute autonomous in terms of performing its functions?
55. What are key administrative/management issues often experienced by the IMLI management?
56. How do you describe the coordination among the governing board members, management and staff members? Are there any issues in their relationship?
57. What is the annual budget of the institute in the last three years?
58. Are there un-earmarked/discretionary funds that give flexibility in spending?
59. What is the budget disbursements for the last three years?
60. From what sources does the institute receive funding?
61. Who are the providers of extra-budgetary sources?
62. Is IMLI involved in fundraising activities? How do you mobilize extra-budgetary funds?
63. What are the funding challenges experienced by the Institute?
64. What financial report does the Institute prepare? How often?
65. What is the process of financial auditing of IMLI? Who audits and how?
66. What are other reporting requirements for the government, UNESCO or any other partners?

#### Overall compliance

67. Are you adequately familiar with your obligations as a Category 2 Center under the auspices of UNESCO?
68. In your best assessment, does IMLI meet all the requirements and expectations specified in the 2019 Strategy document?

### **Questionnaire for external partners/stakeholders**

#### Familiarity with the work of IMLI

1. What do you know about IMLI? What does it do?
2. What is the source of your information regarding IMLI's activities?
3. Have you ever been to the Institute? On what occasion did you visit the Institute?
4. How does the Institute connect with its partners and stakeholders?
5. Do you think that the Institute's communication with its partners is sufficient?
6. What do you consider to be IMLI's most significant initiatives?

#### Participation in IMLI's activities

7. Have you or anyone from your organization participated in IMLI's activities?
8. What are the activities of IMLI in which you or your colleague(s) participated?
9. How do you rate the relevance of the training/seminar/workshop contents to your work?

### Collaboration /partnerships

10. Has your organization signed any kind of MOU or partnership agreement with IMLI?
11. What benefits do you see in partnering with IMLI?
12. Has your organization/agency collaborated with IMLI?
13. How do you assess IMLI as a partner?

### Relevance to UNESCO's priorities and objectives

14. Do you consider that IMLI has fulfilled its functions/objectives?
15. Does it respond to the objectives and priorities of UNESCO?
16. What is the added value of IMLI to your country?
17. What is the added value of IMLI to the region?
18. What has been the role of IMLI in national education forums and/or language related forums?
19. How active is IMLI in promoting mother tongue-based multilingual education in the country?
20. What role does IMLI play in regional and global education forums or language related forums?

### Governance, Staffing & Financing

21. What can you say about the role of the IMLI governing board?
22. What can you say about the Institute's leadership/management?
23. Does the Institute have human resources sufficient to achieve its objectives?
24. Do the staff members of IMLI have sufficient professional expertise in their areas of work?
25. In your view, does IMLI have financial resources sufficient to achieve its objectives?

### Overall impression

26. What do you consider to be the strengths of IMLI?
27. What do you consider to be the weaknesses of IMLI? What factors lead to these weaknesses?
28. Are there areas for improvement?
29. Does your agency work with other UNESCO Category 2 Institutes in the region or elsewhere?
30. How do you compare IMLI in relation to the others?
31. Is there anything you would like to add?

### **Interview Guide for High Officials of the Government**

1. How have the roles and functions of IMLI changed since it gained UNESCO Category 2 status in 2015/2016?
2. How do you assess the overall performance of IMLI?
3. What have been its strengths and weaknesses?

4. How do you assess the performance of IMLI's leadership? Has the leadership been able to provide the profile, direction and visibility to the Institute as intended by the Government?
5. How do you assess the professional capacity of staff members in terms of their ability to discharge the various functions required by IMLI's new mandate?
6. Do you consider IMLI has been fulfilling its objectives/functions in accordance with the agreement signed between the Government of Bangladesh and UNESCO?
7. What are IMLI's most significant achievements as a Category 2 Center over the last five years?
8. Are the Institute's objectives and functions as stated in the agreement clear, practicable and feasible in view of the current institutional capacity and available resources?
9. Would you like to propose any revisions in the objectives and functions of IMLI in light of the past five years of experience?
10. In your opinion, has the governing board of IMLI been able to provide adequate support, guidance and oversight to IMLI? Do you see the need for any changes in the composition and role of the governing board?
11. What reforms or changes does the government plan to introduce in the institutional arrangements of IMLI as it seeks a renewal?
12. In your opinion, should IMLI have its own core staff members or should it be run by staff members deputed from the government?
13. What are government's commitments towards IMLI as it seeks its renewal for its next term?
14. What are your expectations concerning the Institute's future role and the functions it should undertake? What role should IMLI play regionally and internationally?
15. Currently, the government has been financing the Institute. Do you foresee any financial risks that may jeopardize the financial sustainability of the Institute?
16. Should IMLI be engaged in fund raising to diversify its resource base?
17. Any other suggestions you may have for IMLI's future institutional development.

### **Questionnaire for UNESCO Dhaka Office Officials**

#### **Familiarity/Interaction**

1. How familiar/informed are you with/about the programme and activities of IMLI?
2. How do you stay informed about IMLI's activities? What is the mode of communication?
3. How many times did you visit IMLI last year?
4. What were the occasions for visiting IMLI?
5. How many officials of IMLI visited your office last year?
6. How do you assess your engagement in IMLI's work?

#### **Role**

7. As a UNESCO Field Office staff what are your responsibilities or obligations towards IMLI?
8. Does IMLI seek any support/guidance from UNESCO Dhaka Office? Please indicate the areas in which IMLI has asked for your guidance/direction?

9. How do you support/facilitate the work of IMLI?

#### Collaboration

10. Are there UNESCO-financed projects/activities in which IMLI is involved?

11. Are there projects/activities financed by IMLI in which UNESCO staff is involved?

12. What type of collaborative work and/or joint programmes do you currently have or plan to develop and implement together with IMLI?

13. What can be done to strengthen collaboration and cooperation between UNESCO and IMLI?

#### Relationships/Visibility

14. Do you think IMLI has been reaching out to/communicating with its stakeholders?

15. What is the extent of visibility of IMLI's work in the country? What profile or visibility does IMLI have within UNESCO member states?

16. What has IMLI done to make it visible or make itself better known to the Member States and stakeholders in the region and beyond?

17. How effective is IMLI at developing and maintaining relationships with different stakeholders?

18. How do you assess the quality of your relationship with IMLI?

#### Achievements

19. What do you consider to be IMLI's main achievements in the areas of its work?

20. Based on your information, can you give some specific examples of achievements in the different areas of its work?

21. Does IMLI have sufficient in-house capacity in each of the above areas? Please indicate the areas in which IMLI lacks expertise.

22. Among the several functions of IMLI, which particular function(s) of IMLI has/have received attention from IMLI management and which ones have not?

#### Relevance

23. Has IMLI prepared its long-term or medium-term strategic document?

24. How relevant is the work of IMLI to UNESCO education sector's overall strategic objectives and priorities?

25. In your opinion, are the IMLI administration and staff members sufficiently familiar with UNESCO's key strategic documents and instruments?

26. Does IMLI contribute to the work of other sectors of UNESCO other than Education?

27. What is the geographic coverage of IMLI's current activities?

28. What is the extent of relevance of IMLI's work to the developmental priorities of the country?

29. What is the relevance of IMLI's work to UNESCO member states?

30. What efforts has IMLI made to make its work relevant to UNESCO Member States and stakeholders in the region and beyond?

31. What can IMLI done to enhance its relevance to all Member States and stakeholders?
32. What revisions/modifications do you see it necessary to align IMLI's objectives and functions with the strategic objectives and priorities of the Education Sector of UNESCO?

#### Governance/Management

33. In your judgement, how well is the Institute functioning?
34. Does the Institute have appropriate leadership?
35. Are there any issues with respect to the composition and functions of the governing board?
36. Does the governing board provide sufficient guidance, leadership and oversight to the IMLI management?
37. In your judgement, is the Institute autonomous to perform its functions?
38. What are the key governance /management issues or challenges faced by IMLI?
39. What is the overall status of staffing? Does the Institute have adequate supply of professional and administrative staff?
40. How do you assess the overall quality of staffing of IMLI? Do the existing staff cover all areas of IMLI's mandates?

#### Reporting

41. How do you ensure that IMLI performs its roles effectively?
42. What are your reporting requirements? Does IMLI fulfill its reporting requirements?

#### Funding

43. How much do you know about the funding situation of IMLI?
44. Are there any funding challenges?
45. Do you foresee any financial risks that may jeopardize the financial sustainability of the Institute?
46. What can IMLI do to improve its funding situation?

#### Challenges and reform areas

47. Overall, what are IMLI's strengths and weaknesses? What are the factors that have led to these weaknesses?
48. In your judgement, is IMLI able to fulfill its mission and objectives?
49. Is the current IMLI leadership/management able to cope with and/or address these challenges?
50. Please indicate areas where improvements are needed in different aspects of IMLI, including its governance, management, funding, leadership, staffing, functions, etc.
51. What are your expectations concerning the Institute's future role and the programmes/activities it should undertake?

### **Questionnaire for IMLI Staff**

#### Personal and professional profile

1. What is your academic background? Please indicate your highest academic qualification.
2. What is/are your area(s) of specialization?

3. How long have you been working with IMLI?
4. What is the nature of appointment? (direct, deputation, staff exchange)
5. How long do you plan to remain with IMLI?
6. How do you compare your salary and benefits with that of those who work in other similar organizational settings in equivalent roles? Does IMLI pay special incentives/benefits?
7. Do you have a written job description?
8. What is your role in the organization? What specific functions/tasks do you perform?
9. Are you adequately trained to perform these functions?
10. Who do you report to? For what specific outputs you are responsible?
11. Who evaluates your performance? And what criteria are used to evaluate your performance?

#### Views about IMLI

12. In your opinion, what are the core functions of IMLI?
13. Does IMLI have a long-term or medium-term strategic plan?
14. Does IMLI have an annual work plan and budget?
15. How was the work plan prepared? What was your role in its preparation?
16. Are the day-to-day activities of your team aligned with the annual work plan and budget?
17. Have you been provided with adequate human resources to accomplish your tasks?
18. Have you been provided with adequate financial resources to accomplish your tasks?
19. Does IMLI have adequate human resources (staffing) that are needed to achieve its objectives?
20. Does the Institute have required expertise to perform the following functions effectively?
21. Does IMLI have adequate financial resources that are needed to achieve its objectives?
22. Over the years, has the government funding remained the same, increased or decreased?
23. Is IMLI engaged in any fundraising activities?
24. In your judgement, is the Institute autonomous in terms of taking decisions relating to its work?

#### Achievements

25. What do you consider to be your significant achievements since you joined this organization?
26. What do you consider to be the main achievements of IMLI?

#### Relevance

27. Are you familiar with UNESCO's strategies and priorities?
28. How is your work related to the work and priorities of UNESCO?
29. In what way does IMLI contribute to the objectives and priorities of UNESCO?
30. How frequently do you visit UNESCO website?
31. How does UNESCO support your work?
32. What is the geographic focus of your work?

#### Partnerships

33. Does IMLI provide you sufficient opportunity to work with external partners?



34. What are the names of your partner agencies/organizations you work with?
35. Please provide the names of professional associations/agencies with which you work.

#### Governance

36. Could you describe the decision-making process of IMLI? Who is involved?
37. How often are staff meetings held?
38. What role does the governing board play in the overall governance of the Institute?
39. Apart from the governing board are there any other committee structures?
40. Are staff members represented in any committees? What are their functions?
41. Is there proper coordination between and/or among the various entities of the Institute (such as governing board, management, staff, committees, etc.)?
42. Does the Institute operate as an autonomous/independent institution?
43. What administrative issues/challenges do you experience on a day to day basis?

#### Training and development

44. What training (any duration) did you receive since you joined IMLI?
45. Have you had any opportunity to attend any conferences/seminars in your area of work/expertise?
46. What professional development opportunity does IMLI provide to its staff members?
47. Are there specific areas which would be helpful to you and your team members to enhance work efficiency/productivity?

#### Challenges and further improvement

48. What do you consider to be the main challenges of IMLI?
49. Is current leadership/management of IMLI prepared to deal with these challenges?
50. What will it take for IMLI to be able to function as an effective Category 2 Center?

## Annex 4: List of Interviewees/Respondents

### *INGOs/NGOs, Members of the MLE Forum in Bangladesh and Asia-Pacific*

Mr. Tapon Kumar Das, Deputy Director, Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), Bangladesh

Mr. Mathura Bikash Tripura, Executive Director, Jabarang Foundation, Khagrachari, Bangladesh

Mr. Badhan Areng, General Secretary, Cultural and Development Society, Sherpur, Bangladesh

Mr. Shuvra Joyti Chakma, Research Officer, Tribal Cultural Institute, Rangamati, Bangladesh

Mr. Meherun Nahar Shapna, Project Director, Save the Children in Bangladesh, Bangladesh

Mr. Kimmo Kosonen, MLE Expert, Asia-Pacific MLE Forum

Mr. Cornelius Tudo, Country Director, SIL Bangladesh

Mr. Manna Mondal, Director, SIL, Asia-Pacific

### *IMLI*

Mr. Abdul Mumin Musabbir, Assistant Director, Seminar, Planning and Archive, IMLI

Mr. Fazlur Rahman Bhuiyan, Director, Administration, Finance and Training, IMLI

Ms. Mahbuba Akter, Deputy Director, Administration, Finance and Training, IMLI

Dr. Iltemas, Deputy Director, Publication, Research and Planning, IMLI

Mr. Mahbubur Rahman Khan, Assistant Director, Administration, IMLI

Mr. Mizanur Rahman, Deputy Director, Publicity, Information and Communication, IMLI

Mr. Abu Sayeed, Deputy Director, Seminar, Planning and Language Museum, IMLI

Ms. Nazmoon Naher, Deputy Director, Library and Archive, IMLI

Ms. Sabia Easmin, Assistant Director, Library and Museum, IMLI

Mr. Safiul Muz Nabeen, Director, Language, Research and Planning, IMLI

Mr. Shaikh Shamim Islam, Assistant Director, Finance and Training, IMLI

Ms. Snigdha Baul, Assistant Director, IMLI

### *Trainees/Participants*

Professor Dr. A K M Reazul Hassan, Member, Primary Curriculum, National Curriculum and Textbook Board, Bangladesh

Prof. Md. Mamun Ul Hoque, Director (Industry & Training Co-Ordination), Bangladesh  
Technical Education Board, Bangladesh

Prof. Dr. Md. Khademul Islam, Principal, Bangladesh Madrasah Teachers' Training Institute,  
Bangladesh

Dr. Shishir Mallik, Assistant Teacher, Government Laboratory School, Dhaka, Bangladesh

### *UNESCO*

Ms. Beatrice Kaldun, Director and Representative, UNESCO Dhaka

Ms. Mahfuza Rahman, National Professional Officer, UNESCO Dhaka

Ms. Sun Lei, Programme Specialist for Education, UNESCO Dhaka

Ms. Anne Coupez, Chief of Unit, Unit for Strategic Planning, Monitoring, Institutes and Field  
Coordination, Executive Office, Education Sector.

Ms. Vanja Gutovic, Programme Specialist, Unit for Strategic Planning, Monitoring, Institutes  
and Field Coordination, Executive Office, Education Sector.

Ms. Jun Morohashi, Programme Specialist, UNESCO Headquarter

Mr. Noro Andriamisezana, Programme Specialist, Division for Education 2030/ Section of  
Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality

Mr. Wang Libing, Executive Officer, OIC, UNESCO Bangkok

Ms. Kristy Bang, Programme Officer, UNESCO Bangkok

Mr. Balram Timalisina, National Professional Officer, UNESCO Kathmandu

Mr. Zafar Malik, National Professional Officer, UNESCO Pakistan

### *Category 2*

Dr. Wang Li, Deputy Director, INRULED

Ms. Ge Yi, Programme Assistant, INRUED

Mr. Lim Hyun Mook, Director, APCEIU

### *External partners*

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