



ANNOUNCEMENT

Including all languages in learning recovery processes and education systems is a path to transformation and resilient futures for learners across the Asia-Pacific region. Furthermore, inclusion of learners' languages contributes to achieving [Sustainable Development Goal 4](#) and answers the calls to action in the [New Social Contract for Futures of Education](#), the [Transforming Education Summit 2022](#) and the [International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032](#). Inclusive and quality equitable education for all can only be attained when learners' languages are included.

Language, the learning crisis, and uncertain futures

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented widespread disruption to education, exacerbating pre-existing disparities for [vulnerable and marginalised learners](#). Even before school closures, the world was facing a learning crisis despite significant progress in access to, and quality of education. In [the learning crisis](#), the majority of learners are not achieving minimum proficiency levels for foundational learning skills such as literacy and numeracy. Only four out of every ten children can read and understand a simple sentence by the age of ten.

The learning crisis especially impacts learners who speak a language different from those used for teaching and learning in schools. Pre-pandemic data estimate that [around 40 per cent](#) of the global population does not have access to education in a language they speak or understand. Despite governments having mobilised innovative approaches to delivering remote education, [less than 30 per cent](#) of such learning materials in low- and middle-income contexts were designed for speakers of non-dominant languages.

Learners from ethnolinguistic minority communities and indigenous groups face [compounding exclusionary factors](#) to learning such as remoteness, poverty and language. They are especially vulnerable to disasters of all kinds and lack access to digital devices and the Internet. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused such learners to fall even further behind in their knowledge of academic areas such as mathematics and reading. They have missed out on essential multilingual education programmes for developing their skills in their mother tongues, and in national and international languages to improve all learning outcomes. There has been [a worrying decline](#) in such learners' indigenous and non-dominant languages skills, along with indigenous biodiversity knowledge and use of traditional cultural practices.

Learners must not only catch up their learning loss as they (re)enrol in schools, but they must simultaneously do so in a rapidly changing and unpredictable world. [Education in emergency and crisis contexts](#) is expected to become more common due to alarming increases in the number of people affected by armed conflict, forced displacement and climate change- and natural disaster-induced crises. Affected learners will require psychosocial support and may face additional educational barriers if they must

relocate to unfamiliar communities or countries and use new languages and scripts to communicate, foster relationships and learn.

Multilingual education as an intervention

Multilingual education (MLE) programmes have proven successful in improving all learning outcomes for multilingual learners. However, such programmes, especially mother-tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) programmes, have faced resistance and multilateral pressure to introduce international languages such as English earlier in the curriculum. Political pushback against MTB-MLE policies and practices directly counters the large global body of evidence about the need for young learners, especially children, to build strong foundational learning in their home languages.

Thus, there is today an even greater need for robust research, exchange of experience and joint action on the relationship between language and such pressing issues, and their relevance to transforming education and education systems. There must also be a focus on generating evidence on the factors impacting multilingual learners' whole cycle of learning, improving foundational learning for multilingual children, improving learning policies and strategies, boosting access to quality learning and empowering school communities to be more resilient as they face uncertain futures.

Against this background, we are pleased to announce that the 7th International Conference on Language and Education will address multilingual education for transformative education systems and resilient futures to be held in Bangkok over three days in October 2023.

The International Conference on Language and Education

The Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group (MLE WG) has been organising the [International Conference on Language and Education series](#) since 2003, and the high-level policy forum on MLE which immediately follows since 2013. Together, these have provided a unique opportunity for policy-makers, researchers, practitioners and development actors to share views, good practices and experiences. It has allowed them to explore issues related to Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) and broader language issues in sustainable development.

The most recent International Language and Education Conference in 2019 reached more than 450 participants, including high-level government officials from 16 countries in the region. Using over 100 cases presented, the MLE WG was able to publish key advocacy materials and raise awareness in the region to support the implementation of MTB-MLE activities.

During the 3rd high-level policy forum on MLE, the [Bangkok Statement on Language and Inclusion](#) was developed and endorsed by 16 countries in Asia and the Pacific region. The Bangkok Statement on Language and Inclusion recommends specific action items that educational stakeholders may adopt to address inequalities in language(s)-in-education policies and practices in their respective countries.

Conference objectives

The 7th International Conference on Language and Education aims to:

1. Promote dialogue, exchange and sharing on the transformative role of MTB-MLE in improving foundational learning, equity, well-being and resilience for all learners, especially those from ethnolinguistic minority and indigenous communities;
2. Connect representatives of indigenous peoples, youth, policy-makers, practitioners and researchers to create linkages on how multilingual approaches can be used to advance access and learning for children, adolescents and adults from marginalised communities;
3. Identify priority areas in policy, practice and research for multilingual education to advance quality, equitable, inclusive education;
4. Explore new research findings and policy questions on the role of, and balance between, different languages – local, regional, national and international – in multilingual contexts.

In addition, the high-level policy forum aims to review the Bangkok Statement on Language and Inclusion, share language-in-education policy updates and exchange challenges and opportunities in implementing MTB-MLE at the 4th high-level policy forum on MLE.

Conference themes

The conference will be highlighting the following key themes.

- **Foundational learning in first languages**
 - Addressing the learning crisis with positive outcomes of developing early grade literacy and numeracy through learners' first languages in MLE
- **Assessments for MLE learners**
 - Formative and summative assessments capturing the complex learning outcomes of multilingual learners
- **Teachers' recruitment and professional development in MLE environments**
 - Approaches to recruiting, training and deploying teachers to schools with multilingual learners, with emphasis on capacity building such as language skills, multilingual strategies and multigrade pedagogies
- **Additive MLE models**
 - Lifelong-learning approaches to developing and learning in first languages and how to introduce additional languages (community, regional, national and international languages)
- **MLE programme evaluation**
 - Data collection, monitoring and evaluation analysing the conditions and factors which contributed to an MLE programme producing positive results
- **MLE developments**
 - Updates from the field on current MLE practices at any level of education in contexts where learners have different first languages at local, national and/or subregional levels

- **MLE policies**
 - Updates on and comprehensive overview of national, sub-regional or regional policies impacting language-in-education practices in the Asia-Pacific region
- **Digitalisation of MLE**
 - Digital innovations and use of technologies in materials development, teacher training and virtual/hybrid delivery of MLE
- **Inclusion in MLE**
 - MLE practices on including learners who are vulnerable due to exclusionary factors such as gender, poverty, delays and disabilities, location, refugee/migrant status etc.
- **MLE in crises and emergencies**
 - Implementing MLE and mother tongue-based learning in crisis and emergency contexts such as the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, displacement
- **Environment, climate change and MLE**
 - Synergies between MLE and climate education in contributing to sustainable solutions for safeguarding languages and the environment
- **Education and the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032)**
 - Non-dominant and indigenous languages, as well as local cultures and knowledges, in education

Conference Contact details

For abstract inquiries, please contact

7mleconference2023.abstracts@gmail.com.

For general inquiries, please contact the conference secretariat:

7mleconference2023@gmail.com.

Registration and Payment

The registration fee will cover the following: conference kit, access to all sessions, morning and afternoon refreshments and buffet lunches for the three days of the conference. It will also cover a reception dinner on the first day. Please note that accommodation is NOT included in the registration fee.

- **Local participants:** THB 7,000/person
- **International participants:** USD\$ 350/person

Deadline: Parallel session speakers on 21 July, all participants on 19 September.

Local participants include those who live in and/or have a work permit for Thailand, the location of the Conference.

International participants include all of those who live and work outside of Thailand.

Participants can pay by credit/debit card or bank transfer. No cash will be accepted for the secure transaction of your payment.

There may be fees associated with some forms of payment method. In such cases, the payment will be more so that the Conference Secretariat receives the full amount of the registration fee.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

Please note that there will be no refund for cancellation or absence.

Scholarships

A limited number of scholarships are available for participants who demonstrate their financial need as well as their ability to bring relevant expertise and diverse perspectives to the conference. Priority will be given to participants from indigenous and ethnic minority backgrounds.

About the Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group

The [Asia Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group \(MLE WG\)](#) functions under the framework of the Learning and Education 2030+ (LE2030+) Networking Group, in response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As one of the sub-groups of the LE2030+, the MLE WG plays a key role in promoting MTB-MLE throughout Asia and the Pacific and removing language barriers for ethnolinguistic communities, to achieve SDG 4 ensuring “inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

