MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION

Multilingual education provides opportunities for children to start their education in their home language, which then acts as a bridge to learning the national language.

Multilingual education in Cambodia sees community primary schools teach two languages at the same time. Children are taught literacy in their own language using letters from the Khmer alphabet, and introduced to the national language so they can be integrated with Khmer students from grade four.

In the north-east of Cambodia, literacy and education was historically difficult to access for ethnic minority children. They were marginalised and not accessing education, or in classes where they did not understand the teacher or were ignored. The multilingual education approach was introduced in primary schools in Cambodia in 2002. Now, more ethnic minority children are attending school every year and are able to perform as equals alongside their Khmer peers.

Early Childhood Development is taught in indigenous languages. In the final year, children are introduced to Khmer words.

Grades 1 to 3 at school sees a transitional phase, when students are slowly introduced to the national language of Khmer, while classes are mostly taught in their own language. By the end of Grade 3, the indigenous language is almost phased out.

Grades 4 to 6 are taught in Khmer, but teachers are equipped to support students who are having difficulties keeping up in their second language.

Students should be confident in Khmer, with lower secondary education taught in the national language and student fully integrated with Khmer students. Teachers are trained to provide extra support to students when needed and in how to work cross-culturally.

Students are using Khmer at a high standard, and finishing school with a range of opportunities, literate in their own language and the national language.

CAMBODIA FACTS

- There are 24 ethnicities in Cambodia.
- 57 per cent of the population in the north-eastern province of Ratanak Kiri are from ethnic minorities.
- Multilingual education is implemented in five provinces in Cambodia for early childhood education and four provinces at primary level.
- More than 4000 children attended multilingual education schools in 2015.
- Five ethnic minority languages were used in schools in 2015: Brov, Tampuen, Kreung, Kavet and Phnong.
- There are 55 Multilingual preschools in Cambodia which reached more than 1500 children in 2015.
THE MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION MODEL:
TEACHERS RECEIVE SUPPORT TO GIVE CHILDREN THE BEST OUTCOMES

To achieve the most effective multilingual education structure, NGOs and government programs equip teachers with the skills to provide a quality education for children.

- Higher literacy rates for ethnic minority communities.
- Ethnic minority communities engaged in education.
- Ethnic minority children able to read, write and speak in the national language of Khmer.
- Ethnic minority students have equal opportunities to learn all subjects taught at school.
- Ethnic minority languages are not lost.
- Teachers from ethnic minority communities, including women, are trained and receive employment as primary and early childhood development teachers.

CARE’s work on multilingual education has been supported by the Australian Government and many other private donors.

www.care-cambodia.org