

“Indigenous languages matter for peace building, sustainable development and reconciliation”

High-level event for the closing of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages, December 17, 2019.

Thank you, Madame/Mr. Chair,

I am Oranee Jariyapotngam, representing Indigenous Education Networks in Thailand including my organization - Foundation for Applied Linguistics. There are more than 70 languages spoken in Thailand¹ within 4 main languages families.

We are grateful to be a part of commemoration with sharing of our voices and concerns towards the International Year of Indigenous Languages. We have implemented a range of projects and activities to promote, revitalize and apply indigenous languages and cultures in formal, non-formal and informal education settings since the adoption of UNDRIP in 2007. From our experiences, Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education or MTBMLE approach has proven to be one of the successful models for indigenous children in improving their learning outcomes and lifelong capacities. The over 10 year-experience and lessons learned from MTBMLE implementation can be found, within the latest update of our publication “New Dawn over the Mountains: MTBMLE in Thailand”, launched in October 2019.

You can find e-publication at Pestalozzi Children’s Foundation’s website

www.pestalozzi.ch/sites/pestalozzi.ch/files/documents/downloads/new_dawn_over_the_mountains_mtbmle_in_thailand_-_pestalozzi_childrens_foundation.pdf

This was possible by the long-term commitment and cooperation among the multi-stakeholders². There have been 11 languages used in 36 MTBMLE pilot schools but only 27 schools continue implementing MTBMLE, whereas the other discontinued due to the lack of funding for local indigenous mother tongue teachers. A number of community learning centres and schools also teach indigenous languages as a subject. Indigenous children and youth graduated from MTBMLE programs are also members of Ton-Kla or young sprout indigenous youth network. They are catalyst in promoting indigenous languages and cultures through various platforms including the International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples, International Mother Language Day and other community events using community theatre, social media and information technology.

In conclusion, MTBMLE is an evidence-based method/approach that helps indigenous children learn better with joy in classrooms and schools. It is an equity access that breaks language barriers and help to bridge local and national languages and cultures. It is proven to be an effective channel for indigenous communities and leaders’ participation to contribute their knowledge, languages and cultures in the education of their children and strengthen partnership between indigenous communities and schools which somehow would expand to the society in general. This certainly contributes to intercultural understanding, peace, and social cohesion.

In order to sustain and expand the good practices, we humbly propose the following recommendations:

For the relevant UN agencies, INGOs, Donor Communities:

- 1) To provide technical support and policy-dialogue platforms for States and indigenous peoples, including representatives of women, children, youth, persons with disabilities and elders to develop plan and operationalize the national language policy timely in alignment with UNDRIP, Articles 14, 15;
- 2) For the relevant UN agencies including UNICEF, UNDP, INGOs – Donor Communities, to make available funds for indigenous peoples including indigenous children and youth- led initiative to

¹ Dr. Suwilai Premsrirat B.E. 2547.

² including (but not limited to) Foundation for Applied Linguistics, Pestalozzi Children’s Foundation, SIL International, the Child’s Dream Foundation, the Philanthropy Connections Foundation, Thailand Office of Basic Education, Chiangmai MTBMLE schools Club/Working Group, the Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group (Hosted by UNESCO Bangkok), the Indigenous Education Network, the Ton-Kla Indigenous Children and Youth Network (TKN), the associated indigenous communities, and others.

enable and support them in the teaching, learning, promoting and sustaining indigenous languages and cultures;

For the States/Governments:

- 3) They shall make mother tongue-based multilingual education accessible for indigenous children in schools and community learning centres by making necessary legal and administrative reforms to ensure equality, equity, and promote indigenous languages in public usage, including through higher resource allocation for mother tongue-based multilingual education and teaching of indigenous languages, curricular reforms in mainstream education and recognition of indigenous languages in official use.

And to the Indigenous Peoples Organizations/Communities and networks:

- 4) The indigenous peoples organizations, communities, youth leaders to develop common understanding, advocate and promote MTB-MLE in conjunction with intercultural education as one of their teaching and learning methods in formal, non-formal and informal education settings in support of the vitalization, maintenance of the indigenous language, cultures, knowledge, intercultural understandings, peace and social cohesion.

Thank you for attention.