Healthy foundations: how an environment-focus within MLE programs can contribute to progress towards achieving the SDGs

By David Price and Matthew Wisbey

One of the most dramatic and necessary improvements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) over the Millennium Development Goals is the recognition that development must be ecologically sustainable. Human health and well-being is ultimately dependent upon environmental health, based on a multitude of scales, and so it is encouraging to see so many of the 17 SDGs oriented toward addressing environmental concerns. Nevertheless, finding successful ways to reconcile the often competing demands of development within communities remains a significant challenge.

In this paper we demonstrate–using examples from across Asia–how the integration of environmental topics into multilingual education (MLE) programs can enhance progress towards environment-related SDGs, while at the same time strengthening MLE programs themselves. We also explore appropriate indicators for measuring the success of fully integrated MLE programs that incorporate environmentally focused content, providing a framework for existing and future MLE programs.