MLE and its symbiotic relationship to the Sustainable Development Goals: a case study in Bangladesh in identity-based community development

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Many times multilingual education (MLE) and development goals, like the sustainable development goals (SDGs), are dichotomous partners in language development. Both are talked about in the community but seldom is there an integration of both into transformational development approaches.

However, in Bangladesh one NGO, SIL Bangladesh, is integrating its methodology to MLE at the early childhood development (ECD) level with a connected approach to the entire community for accomplishing the SDGs at all levels of the community. This unique praxis is focused on an identity-based method that involves all in the community from ECD to the most senior of a community.

- The community learns about its true identity and culture and how they can make sense of the world in light of this unique identity.
- The community uses local and indigenous knowledge in helping unlock learning regarding the SDGs. This is accomplished through a series of learning opportunities called learning circles.
- The community (through the learning circles) discovers how to create resilient communities but also learn to ask the right questions and challenge the status quo.
- Through the learning circles, community members learn how to ask for government-needed services. They are also taught about their rights as citizens within the country and ways they can protect their rights. These rights include laws protecting women and children regarding property their husband/father owns. This integrated approach addresses many of the SDGs and is a good example of how identity-based community development is integrating MLE and transformational development into the SDG dialogue and praxis. Moreover, this integration includes environmentally sustainable solutions to fulfilling the SDGs.

The integration is followed by a theory of change (TOC), which is developed by community stakeholders, looks at indicators in determining whether the desired change is taking place within the community. The TOC incorporates all of the SDGs to make sure full integration of these development goals is met. This paper is of importance because of the need for integrated solutions to the SDGs.