Mother-Tongue Community
Learning Circles
Laitu Mother-Tongue Learning Environment set-up project in Rakhine State, Myanmar

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5th International Conference on Language and Education: Sustainable Development through Multilingual Education
19-21 October 2016
Bangkok, Thailand
Mother Tongue Learning Circles

- A way of learning for people of the same group by meeting regularly with the guidance of facilitators.

- Provide a relevant & happy learning environment
Laitu Chin People....

- Total population of Laitu Chin People: around 50,000
- Most live in 4 Townships in Rakhine State: Minbya, Myaebon, Myaut Oo, and Ann; as well as in Paletwa Township in Chin State
- Main sources of income: Cutting bamboo, Cultivation, Fishing and Gardening
- Strong mother tongue language vitality in the villages; most villages have only Laitu residents
Educational situation

• Almost no one completes high school
• Laitu people are not very confident in interacting with people from other ethnic groups
• There are only a few Laitu teachers in government schools
• Little or no reading or writing in daily life
• Village leaders and some men read and write in the National Language - Burmese
The project started in June 2014

• Impact we would like to see
  • Laitu children are happy in school and complete basic education through high school

• Project Purpose
  • To create a happy learning environment for Laitu children through:
    1. Mother-tongue Learning Circles that include youth and adults from the wider community
    2. Mother tongue-based ECCD program
Learning Circles aim to create a community that has...

- More opportunities to be exposed to books and literature
- Appreciation for the value of the people’s identity and language
- More adults who can read and write Laitu
- More reading materials in the mother tongue
Laitu Resources

- Existed prior to starting Learning Circles:
  - Orthography
  - Primer
  - Story books
  - Songs and Poems
  - A few teachers who can read and write Laitu
12 villages were selected by community leaders to start Learning Circles and.....

10 villages started, 5 villages continued, 2 new villages started; so now 7 villages continue
Each Learning Circle has...

- Management Committee
- At least two facilitators
- At least 30 participants (more than 100 participants in one village)
Management Committee (village level)

• Encourage people to participate in the learning circle (enrollment is free)

• Meet regularly (monthly)

• Prepare the meeting place for the Learning Circle

• Support Learning Circle facilitators
Facilitators...

• Between the ages of 15 and 35

• Mother tongue speakers from the village, selected by the Committee

• Can read and write in the mother tongue

• Prepare lesson plans ahead of time

• Facilitate circle meetings

• Keep records of learning circles (attendance, lessons taught)
Participants ...

- Between the ages of 6 and 50
- Participate regularly
- Listen, speak, read and write in Mother Tongue
- Share experiences
- Play games
- Sing songs
- Write stories
Learning Circles

• Meet at least once a week
• Two hours at a time
Each lesson consists of three parts...

- Learning – Primer Time & Story Time
- Sharing – experiences, thoughts, feelings
- Creating – writing stories, poems & drawing
Learning Circle teaching materials include...

• Primer

• Story Books

• Songs & Poems

• Alphabet Chart

• Games (Memory cards, Alphabet cards, Board games, etc.)
Trainings and Workshops...

- Learning Circle Facilitator training
- Capacity Development for Village Leaders
- Reflection and Learning Workshop
- Writer’s workshop
Challenges

• Committee members are very busy struggling for their daily lives
• There is high turnover rate among facilitators
• Facilitators and committees are not used to keeping records
• Attendees are mostly children, though we originally planned for adults and youth
• Finding a consistent place for Learning Circle meetings is a constant problem
Positive Result 1

Participants are satisfied that they can read and write in their Mother Tongue
Positive Result 2

Children speak in front of others with confidence
Positive Result 3

The community is proud of their identity and culture
Positive Result 4

Some participants have become writers, facilitators, curriculum developers...
Positive Result 5

Some communities support facilitators financially
In the current situation

School-based MTB-MLE seems impossible

Because of a lack of

• Resources (Teachers; Materials; Technical help)
• Policy and implementation on the ground

But....
MT Community Learning Circles...

- Provide a happy and safe environment for learners, where the whole class
  - Appreciates their culture and language
  - Experiences happy learning with confidence

- Can be source of more resources
  - More literate people who can write and teach
  - More materials drafted
Village Management Committees also...

• Could become a strong body of management for other development processes in the community

Then the whole process of development and its results will be owned by the community, and development will go on as the community desires.
So, **Learning Circles** are an approach that provide a relevant & happy learning environment moving forward to sustainable development and laying a foundation for MTB-MLE in the future.
Thank you!
In **what other language group** situations and for **what other purposes** could learning circles be used?