

**Challenges Around Improving Learning Outcomes through
Mother Tongue Language of Instruction Policy in Anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa**

Prepared for the United States Agency for International Development, Africa Bureau,
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Policy Question

How should the Education Division of the Bureau for Africa Office of Sustainability (AFR/SD/ED) of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) adapt its approach to supporting mother tongue language of instruction policy to improve learning outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa?

Background

The academic literature on language use in education argues that students both learn content and acquire literacy more effectively, especially in early grades, in their mother tongue. In spite of the evidence supporting mother tongue use, many sub-Saharan African countries still use European languages in their education systems. AFR/SD/ED has been supporting many of USAID's sub-Saharan African partner countries in passing and implementing mother tongue language of instruction policies in their primary education systems. However, both USAID and its partner countries have faced a variety of challenges in passing and implementing these policies, including political opposition and lack of teacher preparedness. AFR/SD/ED is interested in adapting its approach to supporting mother tongue use to overcome these challenges and help its partner countries improve learning outcomes.

Methodology and Results

Research aimed at answering the policy question drew on a variety of sources, including national education policy and planning documents, USAID and partner organization policy documents and project reports, and both peer-reviewed and gray literature on mother tongue language of instruction policy and implementation in sub-Saharan Africa. These sources informed both background research and comparative case studies focused on better understanding the challenges faced by USAID and its partner countries in adopting and implementing mother tongue policies.

In the background research phase, this project aimed to map the landscape around mother tongue policy and implementation in Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa, understand USAID's motive and role in language policymaking in its partner countries, and explain some of the reasons for the diversity in experiences of language policymaking and implementation across USAID's Anglophone partner countries. Through case studies comparing the backgrounds, language policies, political contexts, experiences of implementation, and levels of USAID involvement in language policy of Ghana and Ethiopia, this research aimed to explain the differences in mother tongue language of instruction policies and levels of implementation, and differences in challenges around adopting and implementing policies to improve learning outcomes, in these two countries.

Research on both the state of mother tongue policy across sub-Saharan Africa and the specific policy adoption and implementation contexts in Ghana and Ethiopia informed recommendations on how AFR/SD/ED can adapt its approach to supporting mother tongue language of instruction use to improve learning outcomes in its partner countries. Some of these recommendations are specific to countries where political support for mother tongue use is low and English use outside of the education system is high, like Ghana, some are specific to countries where political support for mother tongue use is high and English is rarely used outside

of the education system, like Ethiopia, and some are relevant to USAID's work in all of its Anglophone African partner countries.

Policy Recommendations

1. In countries with low levels of political support for mother tongue language of instruction policies and high levels of English use outside of education systems, such as Ghana:
 - AFR/SD/ED should continue supporting projects aimed at increasing the overall capacity of the education system to teach literacy but should consider advising USAID missions to de-emphasize the mother tongue aspect of these projects.
 - AFR/SD/ED should consider supporting projects aimed at increasing community demand for mother tongue language of instruction use.
2. In countries with high levels of political support for mother tongue language of instruction policies and low levels of English use outside of education systems, such as Ethiopia:
 - AFR/SD/ED should continue supporting the use of mother tongue language of instruction through materials development, teacher training, and capacity building projects.
 - AFR/SD/ED should consider supporting additional projects focused on increasing the capacity of these countries' education systems to build student proficiency in English along with mother tongue, though not to the detriment of content knowledge at the secondary and tertiary level.
3. In countries with a range of political and ethnolinguistic contexts for mother tongue language of instruction policy implementation:
 - AFR/SD/ED should support more projects aimed at addressing the structural causes of poor implementation of mother tongue language of instruction policies, and poor literacy outcomes generally.
 - AFR/SD/ED should ensure a thorough understanding of the political context surrounding mother tongue language of instruction policies in USAID's partner countries is incorporated into both policymaking and project design processes.
 - AFR/SD/ED should consider incorporating activities aimed at changing the incentives around and community perception of learning in mother tongue into its projects.
 - AFR/SD/ED should support not just projects focused on expanding mother tongue language of instruction use in primary school, but also projects focused on smoothing the transition from mother tongue to English language of instruction in later grades.

POLICY QUESTION

How should the Education Division of the Bureau for Africa Office of Sustainability (AFR/SD/ED) of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) adapt its approach to supporting mother tongue language of instruction policy to improve learning outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa?

BACKGROUND

My client for this project was the United States Agency for International Development, or USAID.¹ Specifically, I worked with the Education Division of the Bureau for Africa Office of Sustainability (AFR/SD/ED). This office provides both policy guidance and project management support to education teams located in USAID's 38 partner countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).² Much of USAID's education work in Africa focuses on improving literacy in early grades, often through supporting the use of students' mother tongue as the language of instruction (LoI) in classrooms.³ Research has linked use of mother tongue as the LoI to improved literacy and learning outcomes around the world, but this approach is particularly relevant in Africa.

Although access to education in Africa has skyrocketed over the past decade, the quality of education has stagnated and sometimes even declined; African children are now in school, but not learning.⁴ Evidence suggests that languages used in schools are one of the key determinants of education quality.⁵ Thousands of languages are spoken in Africa, and hundreds of languages may be spoken within a country.⁶ However, only 176 African languages are used in education systems (UNESCO 2010, 8). Depending on a country's ethnolinguistic makeup and language policies, students may be taught in their mother tongue, or L1; in a national language or language of wider communication (LWC) that is spoken as a first language by some, but not all, of a country's citizens (for example, Kiswahili in Kenya) (could be L1, L2, or L3); or in an international or former colonial language, such as English or French (L2 or L3).⁷

There are a variety of models of multilingual education that can be used in these types of settings. Currently, many African countries use "weak" subtractive and transitional models, which require children to learn in a second language either immediately or after only a few years of schooling, with the aim of proficiency only in the second language.⁸ These models often leave children without mastery over either language.⁹ Experts argue that more African countries should adopt "strong" late-exit and additive models, which teach children in their first language for longer (at least six years, or through primary school) and use multiple languages in classrooms throughout the education system, with the aim of proficiency in both first and second

¹ See Appendix B for a list of acronyms relevant to this research prospectus.

² USAID, "Africa: Where We Work," 2017, <https://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work/africa>. See Appendix C for a list of countries hosting USAID missions in sub-Saharan Africa.

³ USAID, "2011-2015 USAID Education Strategy Progress Report" (United States Agency for International Development, 2016).

⁴ Germano Mwabu and Xanthe Ackerman, "Focusing on Quality Education in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Brookings* (blog), 2013, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2013/05/28/focusing-on-quality-education-in-sub-saharan-africa/>.

⁵ Adama Ouane and Christine Glanz, eds., *Optimising Learning, Education and Publishing in Africa: The Language Factor: A Review and Analysis of Theory and Practice in Mother-Tongue and Bilingual Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, vol. 35 (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2013.847628>.

⁶ Ouane and Glanz.

⁷ UNESCO, "Why and How Africa Should Invest in African Languages and Multilingual Education. An Evidence- and Practice-Based Policy Advocacy Brief," 2010, http://www.unesco.org/new/en/testing/africa-relaunch/resources/africa-department/news/why_and_how_africa_should_invest_in_african_languages_and_mu/.

⁸ UNESCO, 31.

⁹ UNESCO, "Why and How Africa Should Invest in African Languages and Multilingual Education. An Evidence- and Practice-Based Policy Advocacy Brief"; IIEP Learning Portal, "Language of Instruction," IIEP Learning Portal, accessed November 17, 2017, <https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/improve-learning/curriculum-materials/language-choice>.

languages.¹⁰ These types of models would allow students to learn content in all subjects more effectively, while still gaining skills in national and international languages.

While AFR/SD/ED and USAID have been supporting African ministries of education in designing and implementing policies promoting use of local languages in primary schools, the nature of USAID's support for this approach going forward is somewhat unclear. As populations of African countries shift to urban areas or are displaced by conflict, the environments in which USAID and country governments are implementing education policies and projects are becoming increasingly complex.¹¹ The complexity of these environments is compounding existing challenges around implementation of language in education policies, ranging from political opposition to community buy-in to teacher preparation, management and support.

The literature around language in education policy acknowledges that while using mother tongue as the LoI is a key factor in improving educational outcomes in the early grades and beyond, significant practical challenges persist around implementation of language policies.¹² Without strong government buy-in, the investment in effort and resources needed to transform education systems to realize improved outcomes through use of mother tongue is unlikely to materialize. Even once that support is in place, better outcomes are not guaranteed. In education, teachers are the vehicle of policy implementation; their capacity to implement education policies ultimately determines whether and how these policies affect student outcomes. For both USAID and its partner countries, the most significant challenges around using language policy to improve learning outcomes lie in aligning policies with political incentives to generate government support and ensuring teachers are prepared to implement policies in the classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Experts support increased use of local languages in African education systems because research has shown that children learn most effectively when they are taught in languages with which they are familiar.¹³ It is easier to learn to read and write, and later to learn more complex cognitive skills and understand subject matter, in one's mother tongue. Many scholars have specifically studied how language of instruction affects literacy acquisition. Kioko et. al., writing in 2014, capture the irrationality of the concept of trying to teach literacy in a foreign language, arguing that "When children are asked to read and write what they do not speak/understand, writing becomes a mysterious magical and artistic way of drawing meaningless symbols on paper: the symbols transfer from the blackboard/textbook to the learners' exercise book without a stop in their minds (2-3)." In addition, many of the skills gained through literacy in a first language transfer to and make easier the process of becoming literate in a second language.¹⁴

The choice of language of instruction affects not only student literacy, but a wide range of learning outcomes. Students in Botswana who were taught science in their mother tongue demonstrated a much better understanding of scientific concepts than those who were taught in English, while students in Ethiopia who were taught in their mother tongue scored much better

¹⁰ UNESCO, "Why and How Africa Should Invest in African Languages and Multilingual Education. An Evidence- and Practice-Based Policy Advocacy Brief"; IIEP Learning Portal, "Language of Instruction."

¹¹ Mariama Sow, "Foresight Africa 2016: Urbanization in the African Context," *Brookings* (blog), November 30, 2001, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2015/12/30/foresight-africa-2016-urbanization-in-the-african-context/>.

¹² Global Campaign for Education, "Mother-Tongue Education: Policy Lessons for Quality and Inclusion," 2013, http://www.campaignforeducation.org/docs/reports/GCE%20Mother%20Tongue_EN.pdf.

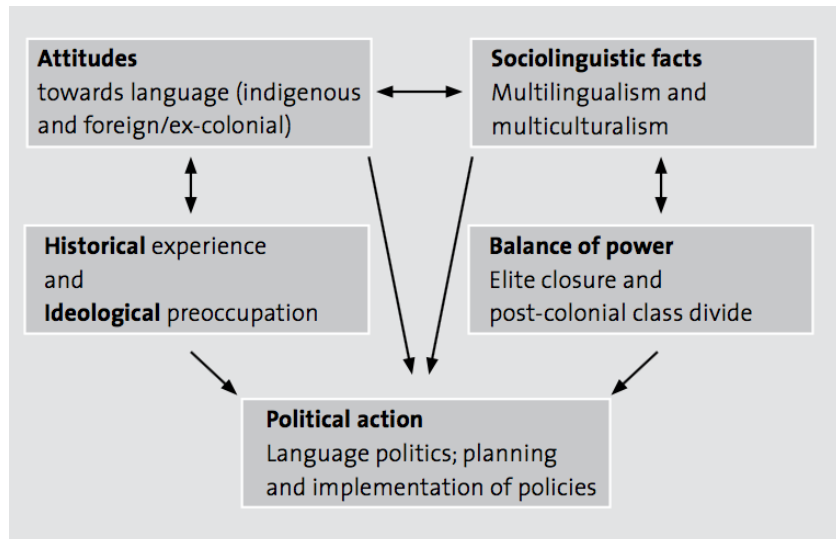
¹³ Nadine Dutcher et al., "In Their Own Language : Education for All" (The World Bank, June 1, 2005), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/374241468763515925/In-their-own-language-education-for-all>.

¹⁴ Benjamin Piper, Leila Schroeder, and Barbara Trudell, "Oral Reading Fluency and Comprehension in Kenya: Reading Acquisition in a Multilingual Environment," *Journal of Research in Reading* 39, no. 2 (May 1, 2016): 133–52, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9817.12052>.

on science and math exams, and only slightly worse on English exams, than those taught in English.¹⁵ When children are not only taught but assessed in a foreign language, they have difficulty passing exams, contributing to the high rates of drop-out and repetition in the African education system.¹⁶ Outcomes may be even worse among certain student demographics: social norms around gender mean that female students in particular may be less likely to participate, and succeed, in classes taught in an unfamiliar language.¹⁷

In spite of the clear support for mother tongue LoI use in the academic literature, many African education systems continue to use international or European languages. In some countries, mother tongue language policies have yet to be adopted, while in others official policy requires use of mother tongue, but it is not used in practice. Failure to adopt mother tongue policies may seem surprising, given the clear evidence around the relationship between mother tongue LoI use and learning outcomes. However, politics and policy around language are much more complicated in many African countries than in other parts of the world. As seen in Figure 1, a variety of factors contribute to the maintenance of the status quo in official language policy (which, in many postcolonial contexts, is to use international or European languages in the education system). Considerable multilingualism in many African countries, combined with attitudes towards the appropriateness or lack thereof of indigenous languages for education, strong ideological associations of international languages with development and progress, and use of language to perpetuate power imbalances set up under colonialism have all contributed to a lack of political motivation around passing or implementing mother tongue language policies in some countries.¹⁸

Figure 1: Contributors to Status Quo Maintenance in Language Policy¹⁹



¹⁵ Bob Prophet and Peter Dow, "Mother Tongue Language and Concept Development in Science: A Botswana Case Study," *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 7, no. 3 (January 1, 1994): 205–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908319409525178>; Kathleen Heugh et al., "Final Report Study on Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Ethiopia" (Commissioned by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, 2007), 81, <http://mlenetwork.org/content/final-report-study-medium-instruction-primary-schools-ethiopia-heugh-et-al-2007>.

¹⁶ Dutcher et al., "In Their Own Language."

¹⁷ UNESCO, "Why and How Africa Should Invest in African Languages and Multilingual Education. An Evidence- and Practice-Based Policy Advocacy Brief," 28.

¹⁸ Ouane and Glanz, *Optimising Learning, Education and Publishing in Africa: The Language Factor: A Review and Analysis of Theory and Practice in Mother-Tongue and Bilingual Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

¹⁹ Ouane and Glanz, 35:55.

While some African countries have not yet passed policies requiring the use of mother tongue in education, others have instituted mother tongue language of instruction policies but have struggled to implement them successfully to realize hoped-for improvements in educational outcomes.²⁰ Countries along this spectrum face different barriers to improving learning outcomes through language policy. After mother tongue language in education policies are established, many of these barriers are related to lack of capacity for policy implementation within both national and local education systems, although political opposition to mother tongue language use, or to choosing particular mother tongues for use in education systems, can still play a role. In countries where lack of capacity for policy implementation is the primary barrier to mother tongue use in classrooms, teachers are a natural target for interventions aimed at more fully implementing language in education policies to improve student outcomes.

Teachers may be constrained in their ability to implement language in education policies in a variety of ways. However, one of the most significant constraints to implementation occurs when teachers do not have the preparation and support they need from governments and their partner organizations to do the often-difficult job of putting policy into practice. Teachers in multilingual educational environments, regardless of policy, are expected to be able to teach both formal and informal language skills, literacy, and subject content in several languages, in which they themselves may not be fluent or literate.²¹ Policy may require teachers to instruct in a language they do not know well, in which case they will often revert back to a more comfortable language, which may not be the language most familiar to students.²² Even if teachers are being asked to instruct in their mother tongue, they may not be able to read and write in that language well if they have not used it in a formal educational context.²³ Teachers may also feel that mother tongues do not contain the terminology necessary to teach technical subjects, and revert back to an international language in these circumstances.²⁴ Low management capacity within the education systems of many countries may result in problems in assigning teachers to schools where local mother tongue and LoI match the language of teacher proficiency.²⁵ In addition, all of these problems are compounded when students in the same classroom speak multiple mother tongues – a common circumstance in many African countries.²⁶

Aligning languages used in teacher training systems with those being used in schools presents an additional challenge to implementing mother tongue LoI policies, as does availability of teaching and learning materials in local languages.²⁷ Even if all of these challenges are overcome, learning outcomes may fail to improve if teachers are not competent in the methodologies needed to effectively teach and assess reading, writing, and literacy, and to teach

²⁰ Heugh et al., “Final Report Study on Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Ethiopia,” 20.

²¹ Carol Benson, “Do We Expect Too Much of Bilingual Teachers? Bilingual Teaching in Developing Countries,” *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 7, no. 2–3 (April 1, 2004): 204, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050408667809>.

²² Jennifer M. Jones, “The ‘Ideal’ vs. the ‘Reality’: Medium of Instruction Policy and Implementation in Different Class Levels in a Western Kenyan School,” *Current Issues in Language Planning* 15, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 22–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2014.857565>.

²³ Ouane and Glanz, *Optimising Learning, Education and Publishing in Africa: The Language Factor: A Review and Analysis of Theory and Practice in Mother-Tongue and Bilingual Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

²⁴ Heugh et al., “Final Report Study on Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Ethiopia.”

²⁵ Ouane and Glanz, *Optimising Learning, Education and Publishing in Africa: The Language Factor: A Review and Analysis of Theory and Practice in Mother-Tongue and Bilingual Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

²⁶ Hülya Kosar Altinyelken, Sarah Moorcroft, and Hilde van der Draai, “The Dilemmas and Complexities of Implementing Language-in-Education Policies: Perspectives from Urban and Rural Contexts in Uganda,” *International Journal of Educational Development* 36, no. Supplement C (May 1, 2014): 90–99, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2013.11.001>.

²⁷ Heugh et al., “Final Report Study on Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Ethiopia”; Ouane and Glanz, *Optimising Learning, Education and Publishing in Africa: The Language Factor: A Review and Analysis of Theory and Practice in Mother-Tongue and Bilingual Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

these concepts in mother tongue instead of an international language.²⁸ Finally, in situations where everything is in place for students to learn in mother tongue, if teachers are not competent in teaching the international language at the same time, student achievement may still suffer when students transition to grades that use an international language as the LoI.²⁹

METHODOLOGY

Data Sources

To answer my policy question – namely, how USAID should adapt its approach to promoting and supporting the use of mother tongues as languages of instruction in sub-Saharan Africa – I used a variety of data sources to conduct background research on current language policies across USAID’s partner countries and complete comparative case studies of Ghana and Ethiopia.

To conduct background research focused on mapping the landscape of current language in education policies in USAID’s partner countries, I relied heavily on UNESCO and the International Institute for Education Planning’s Planipolis Portal of Education Plans and Policies and the national education plans and policies I located through this portal.³⁰ To judge levels of implementation of these policies, I used secondary research including a composite measure of local language use in education developed by Albaugh (2014). I used USAID policy documents, particularly its 2011 Education Strategy (which outlines the objectives and policies guiding USAID’s education work around the world), to understand the nature of USAID’s support for the mother tongue LoI approach. Finally, I conducted secondary research using sources that provide an overview of language policy throughout sub-Saharan Africa.³¹

To complete case studies on Ghana and Ethiopia, I used all of these sources, as well as project documents specific to USAID projects being implemented in each country. I accessed these documents through USAID’s Development Experience Clearinghouse and the websites of USAID’s implementing partners (FHI360 and Social Impact in Ghana and Save the Children and the American Institutes for Research in Ethiopia). I also consulted peer-reviewed and gray literature on language and education in both countries.

Mapping the Landscape

I began my research by mapping the landscape around the current state of language policy and implementation in USAID partner countries in Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa. A crucial aspect of USAID’s policymaking around the mother tongue issue is necessarily country context. The different partner countries with which USAID works in Africa have a wide range of ethnolinguistic makeups, political systems, histories of language use, and education and teacher training systems, so of course USAID’s approach to improving learning outcomes, both through LoI policy and through other strategies, will be different in each country. However, before undertaking more specific case study research to understand which strategies USAID should consider pursuing in certain countries with certain sets of characteristics, I wanted to understand the scope of policies and implementation experiences around LoI in USAID’s partner countries.

²⁸ Ouane and Glanz, *Optimising Learning, Education and Publishing in Africa: The Language Factor: A Review and Analysis of Theory and Practice in Mother-Tongue and Bilingual Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*; Barbara Trudell, “The Impact of Language Policy and Practice on Children’s Learning: Evidence from Eastern and Southern Africa” (Unicef, 2016), [https://www.unicef.org/esaro/UNICEF\(2016\)LanguageandLearning-FullReport\(SingleView\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/esaro/UNICEF(2016)LanguageandLearning-FullReport(SingleView).pdf).

²⁹ Heugh et al., “Final Report Study on Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Ethiopia.”

³⁰ See Appendix A for excerpts from national plans and policies specific to mother tongue and language of instruction.

³¹ USAID, “Opportunity Through Learning: USAID Education Strategy,” February 2011, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/USAID_Education_Strategy.pdf.

For this initial landscape research, I focused on the current status of language policy and implementation in USAID's Anglophone partner countries.³² In many ways, the postcolonial experiences of Anglophone and Francophone countries in Africa, especially around language, have been substantively different, so I chose to focus on just one of these groups to yield more targeted and useful policy recommendations. In addition, because of these differing postcolonial experiences, USAID plays a more significant role in policymaking in many Anglophone countries.³³ I used both literature on language policy in sub-Saharan Africa and national language policies and plans to compile information on various aspects and measures of language policy and implementation across Anglophone Africa, including languages of instruction dictated by policy and used in practice in education. This research provided insight into the range of policies and implementation histories AFR/SD/ED must consider in making both general and country-specific policy and project decisions, as well as illustrating patterns AFR/SD/ED can leverage in working to overcome challenges faced by multiple partner countries.

In addition to understanding the variation in language policies across Anglophone Africa, I also wanted to understand the nature and stated aims of USAID's support for the mother tongue language of instruction approach. I reviewed USAID's published policy documents to understand how USAID frames its support for mother tongue LoI use and how it directs its employees and missions to carry out its strategy. In addition, I conducted secondary research on the origins of USAID's support for mother tongue LoI. Finally, I researched possible explanations for the diversity of language in education policies and levels of implementation among USAID's Anglophone African partner countries. While differing country contexts often explain these differences, I used literature on the political economy of language and the role of bilateral and donor relationships in development policymaking to understand factors that have affected language policy across countries, albeit in different ways.

Comparative Case Studies

Considering the substantial variation in language policies and levels of implementation among USAID's Anglophone partner countries, research focused on policy landscape and background can only inform general recommendations. To formulate more specific recommendations, I conducted in-depth research into two of USAID's Anglophone partner countries: Ghana and Ethiopia. These countries are both longstanding and important partners of the US government where USAID has been working to support the adoption or implementation of mother tongue LoI policies. However, Ghana's and Ethiopia's experiences with mother tongue policy have also differed in almost every way, from ethnolinguistic and historical context to political support to degree of policy implementation. Ghana has a volatile history around language policy and is still in the early stages of mother tongue LoI implementation. Ethiopia has one of the most comprehensive mother tongue LoI policies on the continent, and is at an advanced stage of implementation, yet is still struggling to realize improvements in learning outcomes from the use of mother tongue.

To better understand the different experiences and outcomes of these two countries, and the role USAID has played and should play in their language policymaking and implementation, I first conducted secondary research on the political and educational histories of each country.

³² For the purpose of this research, I defined Anglophone countries as those where the primary international or colonial language spoken in the country is English (as opposed to French or Portuguese). These countries are Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

³³ Ericka A. Albaugh, *State-Building and Multilingual Education in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 11, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107323735>.

Then, I reviewed USAID and implementing partner policies and documents related to current USAID projects being implemented to promote mother tongue LoI use in each country. I used the results of this research and document review to write comparative case studies on the mother tongue language policy experiences of Ghana and Ethiopia, covering the language background, current language in education policy and policy history, political context, experience of and challenges around policy implementation, and role of USAID in language policymaking in each country. I focused specifically on a USAID project currently being implemented in each country. For the Ethiopia case study, I also included information on the outcomes of mother tongue use in education, as this approach has been in use in Ethiopia for a significant time.

After completing these case studies, I summarized the similarities and differences in the experiences of adoption and implementation of mother tongue language policies in Ghana and Ethiopia. I identified the significant challenges faced by each country in the realization of improved learning outcomes through mother tongue LoI policy and the focus of USAID intervention in each country and considered how these challenges and interventions align or fail to align. I identified the primary factors affecting use of mother tongue in education in each country to be political support and ethnolinguistic context. Then, I made policy recommendations specific to AFR/SD/ED's support for partner countries with levels of political support and English use similar to Ghana's or Ethiopia's. Finally, I considered the characteristics of each case study country with relevance to other USAID partner countries in Anglophone Africa. I used this analysis to make more generalized recommendations to AFR/SD/ED around its approach to mother tongue LoI policy in all of USAID's partner countries in Anglophone Africa.

MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE: CURRENT LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION POLICY IN USAID PARTNER COUNTRIES IN ANGLOPHONE AFRICA

Understanding the current landscape around mother tongue language policy in Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa includes understanding the diversity of language in education policies in place and the degree to which they have been implemented in various countries, as well as understanding how this diversity has come about and USAID's role in shaping policy on this issue in its partner countries.

Current Policies and Levels of Implementation

To understand and summarize both language in education policies in place in USAID's Anglophone African partner countries and the level of implementation of these policies in schools, I used both national education policy and planning documents and a composite measure of language use in education developed by Albaugh (2014). This measure, called Intensity of Local Language Use in Education, or ILLED, allows for the comparison of both *de jure* and *de facto* use of African languages in primary education across time and countries. Each country's score between 0 and 10 indicates both how many of a country's languages are used and how much they are used in education, with a country scoring 0 using exclusively non-local languages in primary education and a country scoring 10 using exclusively African languages, and a high proportion of the African languages spoken within that country.³⁴ This measure thus allows for comparison among countries, some of which are small and ethnically homogenous, with few local languages spoken, and some of which are large and ethnically heterogeneous, with many

³⁴ Albaugh, 6.

local languages spoken.³⁵ As is illustrated by Figure 2 below, the proportion and extent of local language use in primary education in the countries in question (as reflected by ILLED scores) varies widely. In addition, having an established mother tongue language of instruction policy does not seem to guarantee a high degree of local language use in primary education, at least as reflected by ILLED score; countries with mother tongue policies, indicated with all capital letters in Figure 2, are distributed throughout the range of scores.

Figure 2: 2010 ILLED Scores in USAID's Anglophone African Partner Countries

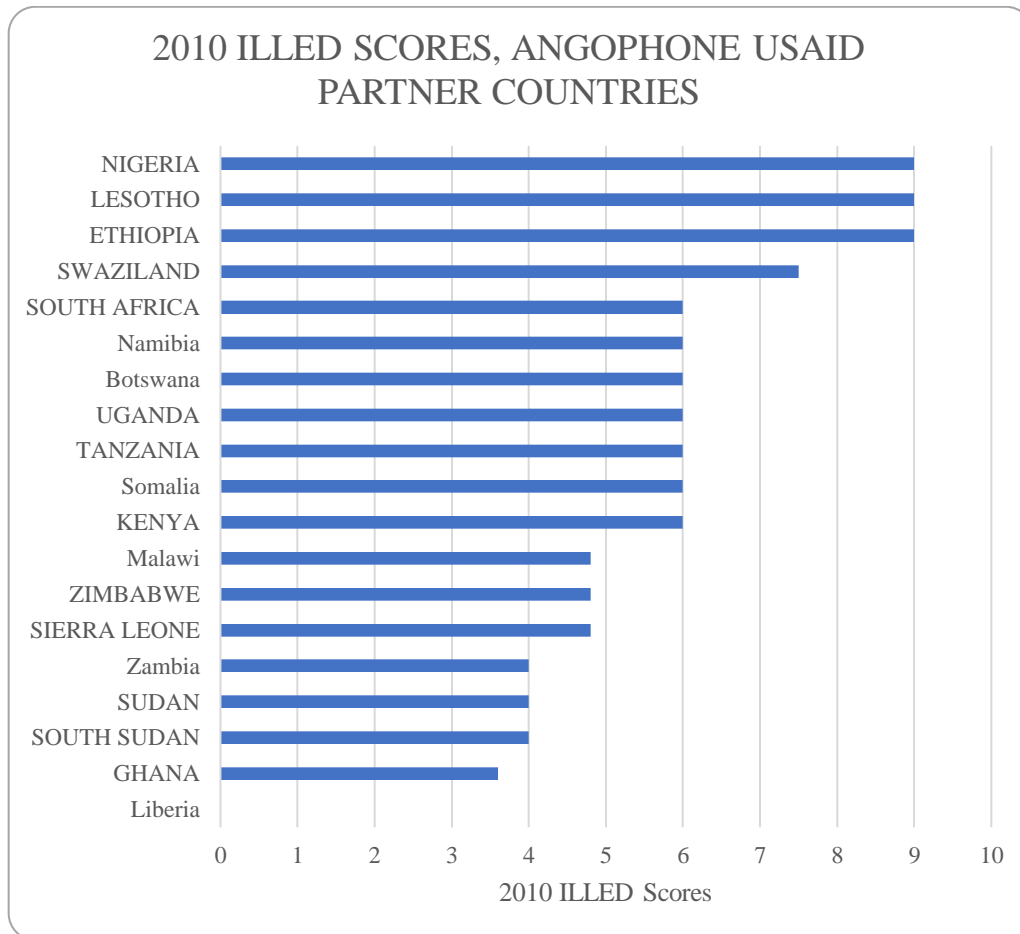


Figure 3 illustrates the diversity of levels of language policy adoption and implementation among USAID’s Anglophone African partner countries using several additional metrics, including designated LoI for primary education, existence of mother tongue LoI policy and use of mother tongue in practice (based on Albaugh’s research to inform the ILLED scores), and the policy or planning document and publication date that designates primary language of instruction.³⁶

³⁵ Albaugh, 6.

³⁶ Policy sources are hyperlinked in Figure 3; See Appendix A for excerpts of national education policies/plans designating languages of instruction for primary education.

Figure 3: Policy Metrics – USAID Partner Countries, Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa

<i>Country</i>	<i>Language of Instruction, Primary Education</i>	<i>ILLED Score, 2010</i>	<i>Mother Tongue Language of Instruction Policy?</i>	<i>Mother Tongue Language of Instruction in Practice?</i>	<i>Most Recent Relevant Policy/Date</i>
Botswana	English, Setswana	6	No	No	Inclusive Education Policy, 2011
Ethiopia	“Nationality” (i.e., regional/zonal) language	9	Yes	Yes	Education and Training Policy, 1994
Ghana	English and Ghanaian Languages	3.6	Yes	No	2007 Education Reform, 2007
Kenya	“Language of the catchment area” or Kiswahili	6	Yes	Sometimes	Policy Framework for Education, 2012
Lesotho	Mother tongue (Sesotho or other local language)	9	Yes	Sometimes	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Framework, 2008
Liberia	Unspecified/English ³⁷	0	No	No	Education Sector Plan, 2010
Malawi	Unspecified/Chichewa ³⁸	4.8	No	Sometimes	Education Sector Plan 2008-2017, 2008
Namibia	Policy is unclear (loopholes to allow exceptions to policy) – in practice, mostly English ³⁹	6	No	Sometimes	Namibia Education Act, 2001
Nigeria	Local language (may be language of the community or mother tongue) ⁴⁰	9	Yes	Most of the time	National Policy on Education, 1998

³⁷ Albaugh, *State-Building and Multilingual Education in Africa*, 259.

³⁸ Albaugh, 260.

³⁹ Albaugh, 265.

⁴⁰ Albaugh, 267.

Sierra Leone	Community language	4.8	Yes	Sometimes ⁴¹	Education Policy, 1995
Somalia	Somali	6	Yes	Sometimes ⁴²	National Education Plan, 2011
South Africa	Official language of the student's/school's choice	6	Yes	Sometimes ⁴³	Constitution of South Africa, 1997
South Sudan	Indigenous language of the area	4	Yes	Unknown	General Education Act, 2012
Sudan	Unspecified – no language will be discriminated against	4	Yes	No ⁴⁴	Comprehensive Peace Agreement, 2005
Swaziland	siSwati	7.5	Yes	No ⁴⁵	The Swaziland Education and Training Sector Policy, 2011
Tanzania	English/Swahili	6	Yes	Sometimes ⁴⁶	Education Sector Development Programme, 2001
Uganda	Local language	6	Yes	Sometimes ⁴⁷	Education Sector Strategic Plan 2004-2015, 2004
Zambia	English, but local language used for literacy acquisition	4	No	Sometimes	Educating Our Future, 1996
Zimbabwe	Shona, Ndebele, or minority language, and English	4.8	Yes	Sometimes ⁴⁸	Education Act, 1987, revised 2001

As is evident from comparing the ILLED scores and policy metrics of USAID's Anglophone African partner countries, AFR/SD/ED is working to support missions in countries that fall across a wide spectrum of levels of adoption and implementation of mother tongue LoI policies, from those with strong, close to fully implemented multilingual policies, like Ethiopia, to those with unspecified or European-language policies, like Liberia, to those at various in-

⁴¹ Albaugh, 270–71.

⁴² Albaugh, 272.

⁴³ Albaugh, 272–73.

⁴⁴ Albaugh, 274.

⁴⁵ Albaugh, 274.

⁴⁶ Albaugh, 275.

⁴⁷ Albaugh, 277.

⁴⁸ Albaugh, 279.

between stages of the policymaking or implementation processes. Even among those countries that have adopted mother tongue LoI policies, there is significant diversity in the number of non-European languages designated to be used in the education system, with some countries using a high proportion of their populations' mother tongues in education and some using only a few languages not spoken as mother tongues by most of their populations. USAID works with countries that have not specified a mother tongue LoI in policy, but actually use it in practice, countries with policies explicitly requiring use of mother tongue that are poorly implemented, and everything in between. The differences in policies and implementation levels across countries are factors of different levels of language politicization, different political systems, different ethnolinguistic makeups, and different histories of language use in education. As a result, it is essentially impossible for an organization like USAID to take the same approach to supporting mother tongue LoI policy and implementation in any of these countries. Improved learning outcomes as a result of mother tongue LoI use may not even be a given in every country context. USAID projects promoting adoption and implementation of mother tongue LoI policies, and AFR/SD/ED's support for these projects, must therefore be highly specific to country context. However, before examining specific country contexts for mother tongue LoI policy formation and implementation, it is also important to understand the history and nature of USAID's support for mother tongue LoI policy, as well as how such diversity in country experiences with LoI policies came about.

USAID's Role in Language Policymaking

The policy positions of USAID, as both the international development arm of the US government and one of the largest sources of education funding to the African continent, are highly influential in shaping domestic education policies in sub-Saharan Africa. This is particularly true in countries for which the United States is a key strategic partner. Therefore, USAID's support for the adoption and implementation of mother tongue LoI policies as a method of improving learning outcomes has likely played a large role in the passage of these policies in its African partner countries. USAID has explicitly supported the use of mother tongue LoI for teaching literacy in the early grades at least since the passage of its current (though due to be updated) Education Strategy in 2011. The Education Strategy is the key policy document guiding the design and implementation of projects with an education component both at USAID headquarters and in USAID country missions. Use of mother tongue is a key aspect of the first of the three goals of this strategy, which focuses on improving reading skills for primary school children.⁴⁹

In the 2011 Education Strategy USAID reveals the foundation of its policies around LoI to be in the academic literature in support of mother tongue, arguing for the importance of educating children in their first languages in early grades to improve literacy acquisition and content comprehension and smooth the transition to literacy in other languages in later grades.⁵⁰ To achieve USAID's goal of improving reading skills among primary school children, the Education Strategy calls for headquarters bureaus and missions to support projects aimed at developing and providing language-appropriate reading materials and implementing programs to foster institutional and policy change, including around language policy.⁵¹ In order to implement the Education Strategy, accompanying documents call for establishing a baseline understanding

⁴⁹ USAID, "Opportunity Through Learning: USAID Education Strategy," 1.

⁵⁰ USAID, 9–10.

⁵¹ USAID, 10, 14.

of existing language policy in partner countries, then either designing projects in accordance with mother tongue policies where they already exist or engaging in policy dialogue with partner governments to improve policies to reflect the mother tongue approach.⁵² In addition, this guidance calls on USAID bureaus and missions to specifically support policies and projects aimed at creating transitional bilingual or multilingual education systems.⁵³

USAID’s support for mother tongue LoI, and the trend towards adoption of policies that call for this approach in sub-Saharan Africa, are in line with a long tradition of donor influence over education policymaking on the continent. Policies favored by donors, and Western paradigms of education in general, have played a substantial role in the formation of education policy in developing countries since colonial times.⁵⁴ Ideas about policies or approaches that will improve education quality, such as mother tongue LoI, are often generated within the academy of Western countries and transmitted to developing country education systems via multilateral and bilateral relationships, especially through the design and funding of education projects.⁵⁵ Donors, including USAID, have even at times made funding contingent upon adoption of favored policies.⁵⁶ However, donor support in the late 20th and early 21st century provides only part of the explanation for why language in education policies have developed so differently in various countries across the African continent.

Explaining the Diversity of Language in Education Policies in sub-Saharan Africa

Albaugh (2014), whose work aims to explain the wide variation in language in education policies across the continent, also argues that donor relationships play a substantial role in African countries’ policy choices around language. However, understanding why donor relationships are able to be so influential requires insights from the field of political economy into the differences in the process of state-building, and the role of language in that process, between European countries and postcolonial African countries, as illustrated in Figure 4:

Figure 4: Albaugh's Characterization of Changing Incentives Around African Language Policy⁵⁷

TABLE I. I. *Language Policy in Three Periods*

Ruler Environment	External Context	Political Context	Language Policy
18th/19th-century European	Threat of war	Restrained autocracy	<i>Proactive monolingual</i>
Cold War African	No threat of war	Patronage autocracy	<i>Language ambivalence</i>
Post-Cold War African	No threat of war	Electoral autocracy	<i>Proactive multilingual</i>

⁵² USAID, “2011 USAID Education Strategy: Technical Notes,” 2012, 4–5, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACT681.pdf; USAID, “2011 USAID Education Strategy: Implementation Guidance,” 2012, 14, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACT461.pdf.

⁵³ USAID, “2011 USAID Education Strategy: Technical Notes,” 4–5.

⁵⁴ Carolyn Brown, *Globalization, International Education Policy and Local Policy Formation: Voices from the Developing World* (Dordrecht: Netherlands: Springer, 2015).

⁵⁵ Brown.

⁵⁶ Brown.

⁵⁷ Albaugh, *State-Building and Multilingual Education in Africa*, 6.

Because many African states were created arbitrarily by European colonizers, rather than built through strong national identities to withstand external conflict and land and resource scarcity as European states were, postcolonial African rulers did not face the same incentives as Europeans in regard to national identity, unity, and language.⁵⁸ Immediately after independence, African leaders mostly did not face the threat of external war, and maintained control over their populations through patronage relationships, leading to ambivalence around language use in education.⁵⁹ Many of the leaders of new African countries adopted a Pan-African approach that theoretically supported local language use, but most continued to use the education systems already in place which relied primarily on colonial languages.⁶⁰ With low levels of external conflict in most parts of the continent and little reliance on direct taxation, leaders had little motivation to either institute a common language or elevate local languages, so through a process of “inertia and neglect” the status quo of using a variety of languages in politics and business and primarily European languages in elite education was maintained.⁶¹

In the post-Cold War era, marked by a lack of external conflict and electoral autocratic governments in many countries, multilingual policies may actually be the smartest political strategy for African governments facing resource scarcity, growing populations, and democratic pressure.⁶² However, as political and socioeconomic forces often incentivize maintenance of the status quo around language policy, some African governments may not have turned towards multilingual education policies without pressure from either internal or external actors. Albaugh argued that governments have been brought around to adopting these policies through both “push” factors from indigenous linguists allied with foreign NGOs and “pull” factors from donors.⁶³ USAID’s increasingly strong support for the mother tongue approach in the last few years may have contributed to both of these factors, through funding projects centered around mother tongue LoI use and supporting local and international NGOs in advocating for adoption and implementation of mother tongue LoI policies.

As is made clear in Figure 5, significant variation in the degree of local language use in education existed among USAID’s partner countries immediately after independence and in the post-Cold War era and persists today. This variation can be understood through the lens of Albaugh’s arguments as the result of different colonial language policies, different incentives created by local ethnolinguistic and political contexts that influenced whether or not the status quo of colonial language policy was maintained, and different results of the interaction of increasing donor support and local advocacy for mother tongue use in education with these pre-existing factors.

⁵⁸ Albaugh, 3, 5.

⁵⁹ Albaugh, 3, 5.

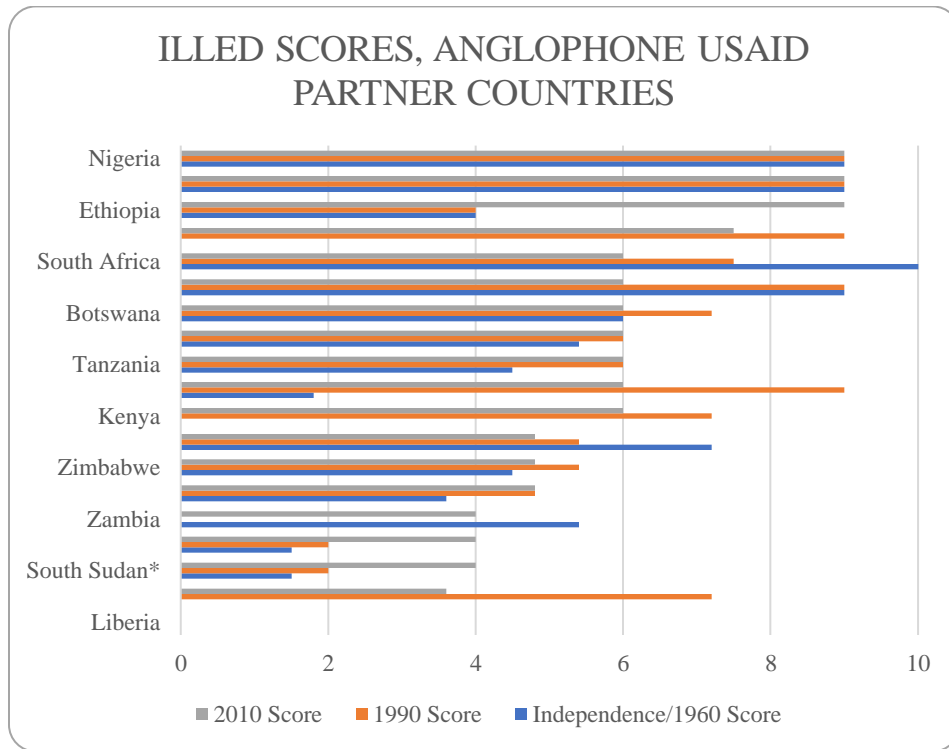
⁶⁰ Albaugh, 57–58.

⁶¹ Albaugh, 53–54.

⁶² Albaugh, 3, 5.

⁶³ Albaugh, 3, 5.

Figure 5: Variation in ILLED Scores Over Time



Understanding the current and historical variation in levels of mother tongue use in education among the countries where USAID works in Anglophone Africa, as well as some of the factors that have contributed to this variation, how these factors may continue to affect government decision-making around language policy, and the form and stated aims of USAID’s support for use of mother tongue in primary education, are all crucial to informing AFR/SD/ED’s decisions about what types of LoI policies and implementation strategies will be most effective both across Anglophone Africa and within specific countries going forward. However, in-depth country-specific knowledge of all of these factors will ultimately be the most important contributor to designing policies and projects that are successful in using mother tongue LoI to improve student learning outcomes.

COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES

To illustrate how country-specific understanding of history, ethnolinguistic and political context, policy, and USAID’s support for mother tongue LoI use are all necessary to inform future USAID policies and projects supporting the mother tongue approach, I prepared case studies comparing how two important USAID partner countries in Anglophone Africa, Ghana and Ethiopia, have differed on each of these factors.

CASE STUDY ONE: GHANA

Ghana, as a stable democracy and middle-income country, has long been an important partner of the US government in West Africa. As such, USAID has a significant presence in Ghana, including in the education sector, and has been supporting use of mother tongue LoI

there through The Partnership for Education: Learning project. Ghana represents a context in which official policy calls for the use of mother tongue as LoI, but implementation has been hindered by political resistance to designating mother tongues and challenges around preparing teachers and schools across the country to use mother tongue LoI. Through the Learning project, USAID is supporting the implementation of Ghana’s mother tongue LoI policy through developing educational materials in multiple languages and developing and implementing teacher training and coaching programs.⁶⁴ The Ghana case and the Partnership for Education: Learning project provide insight into the challenges USAID and its partner countries face early in the process of implementing mother tongue LoI policy, and in countries where political opposition to the use of mother tongue in education exists.

Background

Mother tongue education policy has a complex history in Ghana. Local languages were used in Ghana in the missionary education system, and the practice of multilingual education was never totally eradicated during British rule.⁶⁵ Throughout the postcolonial era in Ghana, though language in education policy has been volatile, English has continued to be widely used throughout the country, especially in business and politics. In the decades since Ghana became independent, local languages have often been used to some extent in early primary education, but the Ghanaian government has adopted and reversed official mother tongue language of instruction policies multiple times, as illustrated in Figure 6.⁶⁶ During this time period English has continued to be widely used throughout the country, including in business, politics, and higher education.

Figure 6: History of Ghanaian Language Use in Primary Education⁶⁷

Table 1: A diagrammatic representation of the policy from the pre-colonial era to the present (1529-2002).

PERIOD	1 st YEAR	2 nd YEAR	3 rd YEAR	4 th YEAR +
1529-1925				
a. Castle Schools Era	-	-	-	-
b. Missionary Era	+	+	+	-
1925-1951	+	+	+	-
1951- 1955	+	-	-	-
1956- 1966	-	-	-	-
1967- 1969	+	-	-	-
1970- 1973	+	+	+	+
1974-2002 (Sept)	+	+	+	-
Present	-	-	-	-

Key: + = A Ghanaian language was used as the medium of instruction.
 - = Ghanaian not used

⁶⁴ USAID Ghana, “Partnership for Education: Learning, Quarterly Performance Report, January-March 2017,” April 30, 2017, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pa00mvj3.pdf.

⁶⁵ Charles Owu-Ewie, *The Language Policy of Education in Ghana: A Critical Look at the English-Only Language Policy of Education*, 2006, 76–77.

⁶⁶ Owu-Ewie, 76–77.

⁶⁷ Owu-Ewie, 76–77.

Ghana's inconsistency on mother tongue language of instruction policy is somewhat strange, as its leaders have been strong advocates for African identities and culture since the days of President Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first postcolonial leader.⁶⁸ In addition, it has both pre-colonial and colonial history of local language use in its education system, unlike many of its neighboring countries colonized by the French.⁶⁹ However, Ghana's language policy choices can be somewhat explained by the political context around language policymaking in ways that will be covered in greater detail below.

Ghana was in fact one of the first independent African countries to use local languages in education, designating 11 Ghanaian Languages of Instruction (GLOI) for use in the education system.⁷⁰ However, Ghana has struggled to fully implement this policy, partially due to issues of preparedness but also because of political opposition.⁷¹ As a result, Ghana has yet to realize improvements in primary achievement that proponents of the mother tongue LoI approach hope will come along with full implementation of its language policy. In 2011, the Ghana National Educational Assessment (NEA) found only 35% of primary school students left sixth grade able to read English proficiently, while almost half of third grade students had little to no reading comprehension ability.⁷² Interestingly, in schools being tracked as part of USAID's Partnership for Education: Learning project, first grade students had much higher listening comprehension in Ghanaian languages than English, but higher reading fluency and comprehension in English than in Ghanaian languages (though reading was very poor in both languages), suggesting they began school with high listening comprehension of the GLOI but then gained literacy skills in English.⁷³ According to baseline assessments done for the USAID projects taking place in Ghana, poor student outcomes can be partially attributed to these types of LoI-related issues, but non-language issues like time on-task, length of lessons, failure to use proven methods for literacy instruction, and lack of reading culture also play a role.⁷⁴

Policy

Ghana's current language in education policy puts in place an early exit mother tongue LoI model, aimed at achieving proficiency in both a Ghanaian language and English. It calls for one of 11 Ghanaian Languages of Instruction (GLOI) to be used as the LoI, and oral English to be taught as a subject, through primary grade two (P2), with English literacy introduced as a subject in grade 3 (P3), and requires the transition from the GLOI to English LoI to take place before the end of primary education (usually in grade four/P4).⁷⁵ Official language in education policy has changed often throughout Ghana's recent history. After previous recognition of 11 GLOI, English was reinstated as the primary LoI in 2002.⁷⁶ The new government that came to power in 2008 showed renewed support for mother tongue LoI policy, and in 2009 introduced a National Literacy Acceleration Program (NALAP) that established P4 as the year for transition from the GLOI to English LoI.⁷⁷ However, a recent political transition has again called national

⁶⁸ Owu-Ewie, 77.

⁶⁹ Owu-Ewie, 77.

⁷⁰ FHI360, "USAID/Ghana Partnership for Education Learning Activity: Language Mapping Activity: Draft Analysis Report" (USAID, August 2017).

⁷¹ FHI360.

⁷² USAID: Ghana Mission, "USAID/Ghana Country Development Cooperation Strategy, 2013-2017" (US Agency for International Development, 2012), 51.

⁷³ Social Impact, Inc., "Ghana Early Grade Reading Program Impact Evaluation: 2017 Baseline Report" (USAID, January 2018), 44, 68.

⁷⁴ Social Impact, Inc., 68-69.

⁷⁵ FHI360, "USAID/Ghana Partnership for Education Learning Activity: Language Mapping Activity: Draft Analysis Report."

⁷⁶ Social Impact, Inc., "Ghana Early Grade Reading Program Impact Evaluation: 2017 Baseline Report," 14.

⁷⁷ Social Impact, Inc., 14.

government support for the implementation of mother tongue LoI policy into question, as the new government is particularly hesitant to designate particular Ghanaian languages for use in schools to the exclusion of other languages, fearing political backlash.

Political Context

Ghana's reluctance to fully embrace and implement mother tongue language policy, in spite of its support for minority cultural identities in other arenas, can be partially explained by several aspects of the Ghanaian political context.⁷⁸ Albaugh argues that Ghana's position on mother tongue can be explained by the presence of three factors: the lack of a single national ideological stance on the issue that made donor opinions on the issue easier to disregard, insignificant pressure from regional language elites to use local languages in education, and a widening of the tax base that made the pursuit of a unifying national language more important.⁷⁹ The Ghanaian government has not taken a consistent position on the mother tongue issue that has persisted throughout changes in administration, perhaps partially because no outside actors have been influential enough to push Ghana to stick to either policy.⁸⁰ Because the British were not significantly involved in Ghana post-independence to present a strong position on language policy, Ghanaian governments could – and did – make major changes in LoI policy when they wanted to, even when donors such as USAID advised against it.⁸¹

Ghanaian governments were also not pushed to adopt mother tongue policies by their population. After students who had been educated in Ghanaian languages performed poorly in exams after educational reforms in the 1980s, public opinion turned against mother tongue, and language group elites did not confer enough value to the use of their languages in education systems to exert pressure to keep them in place.⁸² One explanation for this result is that, unlike countries like Nigeria and Ethiopia, Ghana's political system is not built on ethnic federalism – it does not structure government or confer resources or power based on ethnicity, so changes in language policy have less significant consequences.⁸³ Finally, as an emerging lower-middle income country, Ghana has been collecting much more revenue through domestic taxes than many of its neighbors, potentially incentivizing the Ghanaian government to pursue more unifying language policies to build the national identification and buy-in needed to facilitate the tax collection process.⁸⁴

Ghana may also have resisted full adoption of mother tongue LoI policy in the past, and continue to resist it today, for reasons more specific to implementation and educational effectiveness that have influenced political positions. During past iterations of the mother tongue policy teachers often failed to follow the policy to its logical conclusion, never using English even in grades that called for it, resulting in a lack of student competency in English (the national working language) upon graduation.⁸⁵ Lack of clear proof of the positive impact of mother tongue LoI use on English outcomes may have undermined political support for mother tongue. In addition, Ghana's linguistic environment, which is highly multilingual, also presents implementation difficulties – including high percentages of classrooms with multiple mother tongues spoken, lack of teaching and learning materials in local languages, inadequate teacher

⁷⁸ Albaugh, *State-Building and Multilingual Education in Africa*, 142.

⁷⁹ Albaugh, 142–43.

⁸⁰ Albaugh, 143.

⁸¹ Albaugh, 145.

⁸² Albaugh, 143–44.

⁸³ Albaugh, 143.

⁸⁴ Albaugh, 145.

⁸⁵ Owu-Ewie, *The Language Policy of Education in Ghana: A Critical Look at the English-Only Language Policy of Education*, 78.

training in GLOIs, and lack of orthographies in some languages – that may have seemed insurmountable to past administrations and may still seem daunting even now that progress has been made to address them.⁸⁶

Implementation

Data around implementation of existing language policies can often be the most difficult to collect. In the Ghanaian case, USAID recently funded a language mapping project to assess and summarize the degree of alignment among the officially designated GLOI of schools, the languages teachers use formally and informally, the languages pupils use and understand, and the languages of teaching and learning materials.⁸⁷ The results of this research provide some insight into the degree of implementation of Ghanaian mother tongue language policy by revealing the extent to which languages designated by policy are actually being used in schools, as well as helping to identify where challenges in implementation may lie.

The study found that 17% of schools had a low match among designated language, teachers, and students, 44% had a medium match, and 39% had a high match, and that low match schools were concentrated among specific regions and languages.⁸⁸ Low match schools where current language policy is not well-implemented were often in regions with higher degrees of multilingualism or populated by ethnolinguistic groups that have been traditionally less dominant in Ghanaian society, suggesting consideration of socioeconomic status may play an important role in achieving improved learning outcomes through language policy for all of a country's students.⁸⁹ Overall, the research revealed that teacher and student languages were better aligned than either were aligned with the language of teaching and learning materials.⁹⁰ Multilingual classrooms were common, as were scenarios in which either the teacher or student language was aligned with the school's designated LoI, though all three were aligned in fewer cases.⁹¹

In low language match schools, many teachers lacked proficiency in either the official GLOI or the mother tongue of their students, though there was a correlation between the percentage of teachers comfortable with the designated GLOI and those who learned it formally.⁹² Many of these teachers were aware of the mother tongue policy they were supposed to be following but were unable to implement it even after being trained to do so. Conversely, the baseline evaluation for the Learning project found that 44% of teachers sampled agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “Children in Ghana would benefit more if they were taught how to initially read using English,” although 60% of teachers reported they face no challenges teaching in the official GLOI, suggesting teacher buy-in may also present a barrier to policy implementation.⁹³ The findings of this research indicated the need for long-term policy change to improve alignment among the official LoI designated for use in a school, teacher language, and student language, in addition to project-based interventions, flexible school and teacher support options that can be tailored to diverse language contexts, updated teaching and learning materials in GLOIs, and changes to both pre-service and in-service teacher training. In its current work in Ghana, USAID has chosen to focus on the last two implementation challenges: lack of teaching and learning materials and insufficient teacher training.

⁸⁶ Owu-Ewie, 78.

⁸⁷ FHI360, “USAID/Ghana Partnership for Education Learning Activity: Language Mapping Activity: Draft Analysis Report.”

⁸⁸ FHI360.

⁸⁹ Owu-Ewie, *The Language Policy of Education in Ghana: A Critical Look at the English-Only Language Policy of Education*, 83.

⁹⁰ FHI360, “USAID/Ghana Partnership for Education Learning Activity: Language Mapping Activity: Draft Analysis Report.”

⁹¹ FHI360.

⁹² FHI360.

⁹³ Social Impact, Inc., “Ghana Early Grade Reading Program Impact Evaluation: 2017 Baseline Report,” 57.

USAID's Involvement in Language Policymaking in Ghana

USAID's involvement in the mother tongue LoI policy issue in Ghana has taken place within the context of its Ghana Country Development Cooperation Strategy, or CDCS, a document outlining how the local USAID mission and Ghanaian government have agreed to work together to achieve development outcomes. One of the primary objectives of this strategy is improved reading performance in primary schools through enhanced instruction in reading and mathematics.⁹⁴ USAID and the Ghanaian government have outlined a variety of results that must be achieved to accomplish this goal, including improving instruction through provision of materials and teacher training and professional development, strengthening management systems, and increasing government accountability, and plan to assess the impacts of these interventions through measuring improvements in reading in both English and Ghanaian languages but anticipate that low or uneven levels of community support for mother tongue instruction may impede their ability to achieve these improvements.⁹⁵

The USAID/Ghana mission began its support for adoption and implementation of the current iteration of mother tongue LoI policy in Ghana by working with the Ministry of Education through the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment to draft a Language Policy in Education (LPIE).⁹⁶ USAID/Ghana is currently supporting the implementation of this policy through the Partnership for Education – Learning Activity, a five-year project working to address challenges in implementing the LPIE. Learning is focusing on addressing implementation challenges such as lack of GLOI instructional materials and insufficient teacher preparation by developing teaching and learning materials in GLOI and designing and implementing professional development programs preparing teachers to use these materials.⁹⁷ In addition, USAID/Ghana is working through Learning to take these types of interventions, piloted in 20 schools in one district, to scale in 7,404 schools in 100 districts.⁹⁸

Interestingly, Learning is attempting to avoid implementing these interventions in districts with low levels of language match among the designated GLOI, teachers, and students (as identified by USAID's language mapping study).⁹⁹ Few rigorous assessments exist of the impact of mother tongue LoI on learning outcomes, and USAID/Ghana hopes to use the scale-up of early grade reading interventions being implemented through Learning to generate evidence that mother tongue can improve reading.¹⁰⁰ However, the evaluation being carried out will assess the impact of a whole package of interventions, including mother tongue and phonics-based literacy instruction, which may make the causal impact of the use of mother tongue LoI difficult to isolate.¹⁰¹ It is also worth noting that the focus on improving mother tongue policy implementation through direct provision of materials and teacher training is a departure from past USAID/Ghana programming, which had a stronger focus on local systems strengthening to prepare Ghanaian educational institutions to implement and support mother tongue use.¹⁰²

⁹⁴ USAID: Ghana Mission, "USAID/Ghana Country Development Cooperation Strategy, 2013-2017."

⁹⁵ USAID: Ghana Mission.

⁹⁶ FHI360, "USAID/Ghana Partnership for Education Learning Activity: Language Mapping Activity: Draft Analysis Report."

⁹⁷ FHI360.

⁹⁸ "USAID Partnership for Education: Learning," FHI 360, accessed March 2, 2018, <https://www.fhi360.org/resource/usa-id-partnership-education-learning>.

⁹⁹ Social Impact, Inc., "Ghana Early Grade Reading Program Impact Evaluation: 2017 Baseline Report."

¹⁰⁰ Social Impact, Inc.

¹⁰¹ Social Impact, Inc., 15, 19.

¹⁰² FHI 360, "USAID/Ghana Partnership for Education: Learning Grant and Cooperative Agreement Modification No. 05," 2017.

CASE STUDY TWO: ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia is another extremely important partner country for the US government, and one of the highest recipients of US foreign assistance in both its region and income group.¹⁰³ Ethiopia represents a context in which mother tongue LoI policy has been in place for some time, and implementation has been comparatively successful. However, the Ethiopian education system is still failing to teach children to read. A 2010 USAID-funded Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) found a third of second grade students were unable to read at all, and almost half of second grade students had no reading comprehension ability.¹⁰⁴ Research conducted at the commencement of the USAID-funded Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed (READ) project suggested that poor reading outcomes were tied to issues with teacher training and incentives around using mother tongue to effectively teach reading.¹⁰⁵ As a result of this research, USAID is currently supporting the Ethiopian government in attempting to more fully and effectively implement its mother tongue policy, largely through teacher training and materials development. Because Ethiopia's mother tongue policy is at a much later stage of implementation than policies in most African countries, this country case can provide insight into the challenges around improving literacy outcomes that remain even when teachers are using mother tongue, as well as lessons learned for countries at earlier stages of policy implementation.

Background

Ethiopia's early adoption and implementation of mother tongue LoI policies can be partially explained by looking at the country's history. Ethiopia is one of the only African countries that was never colonized, so it is lacking the entire history of colonial language infiltration into the education system experienced by many other countries. However, much of its early formal education was conducted in English, with some missionary schools teaching instead in local languages.¹⁰⁶ When Haile Selassie, Ethiopia's ruler for much of the 20th century, came to power, language was one method by which he attempted to build a unified national identity throughout his empire, decreeing the use of Amharic as LoI for primary grades one through six (P1-P6) in 1958.¹⁰⁷ Amharic, while widely spoken in Ethiopia, is the mother tongue of less than a third of the population – though this ethnic group (the Amhara) and language have traditionally dominated Ethiopian culture and politics. Selassie's successor, Hailemariam Mengistu, who was the ruler throughout the authoritarian Derg regime, supported recognition of other ethnolinguistic groups and began the work of producing educational materials in non-Amharic languages, but Amharic remained the LoI in primary education until the downfall of the Derg in 1991.¹⁰⁸ The first leader of the current Ethiopian government and father of the modern Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, introduced a new political system of ethnic regionalism or federalism that expanded the role of non-Amhara ethnic groups. Under the new Ethiopian constitution, federal states (which are broadly equivalent to ethnic groups) are allowed to choose their own primary LoI, which is used through either grade six or grade eight, after which English LoI is used.¹⁰⁹ This policy has

¹⁰³ "U.S. Foreign Aid by Country," accessed March 2, 2018, <https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd>.

¹⁰⁴ Save the Children, "READ TA Baseline Assessment Report: Teacher Professional Development and Support Systems: An Analysis of Seven Language Areas in Ethiopia," April 2014, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pa00mhtc.pdf.

¹⁰⁵ Save the Children.

¹⁰⁶ Albaugh, *State-Building and Multilingual Education in Africa*, 252.

¹⁰⁷ Albaugh, 252.

¹⁰⁸ Albaugh, 252.

¹⁰⁹ Albaugh, 252.

been implemented, for the most part – in 1990, Amharic was the only LoI used in primary education, while in 2007 25 languages were being used.¹¹⁰

Clearly, Ethiopia's experience around this policy issue has been significantly different than that of most African countries, primarily due to the different cultural, linguistic, and political context in Ethiopia. Ethiopia was never colonized, defined its borders in an experience of nation-building more similar to that of European than African states, had an existing indigenous writing system (called fidel) before European languages were introduced, and had a tradition of teaching literacy (in the liturgical language, Gi'iz) within religious education.¹¹¹ In addition, English is, and has been, used significantly less inside and outside of the education system in Ethiopia than in many other Anglophone countries.¹¹² As a result, there has traditionally been less public demand for the use of English as LoI, and greater acceptance of the fact that due to lack of fluency in English, English LoI actually inhibited teaching and learning and was in some cases a “medium of obstruction” rather than a “medium of instruction.”¹¹³

Policy

Ethiopia's language in education policy, one of the most multilingual (and one of the first to adopt mother tongue LoI) on the continent, was instituted as part of the 1994 Education and Training policy.¹¹⁴ It sets up a late exit bilingual or trilingual education system, aimed at achieving proficiency in a regional language, Amharic (in addition to the regional language, in regions outside of Amhara) as a language of national communication, and English as a language of international communication. This policy recognizes both the pedagogical and human rights-based arguments for use of mother tongue in education, requires “national languages” (which can be interpreted to mean languages spoken by Ethiopia's different ethnic groups, or “nations”) to be used as the LoI in primary school, and allows ethnic groups to choose which language to use in their own education systems.¹¹⁵ The policy calls for both English and Amharic, Ethiopia's national language, to be taught as subjects in primary school, and for the transition to use of English LoI to take place in either 7th (upper primary) or 9th (lower secondary) grade, depending on the region. In addition, the Education and Training Policy calls for English to be used as the LoI in secondary and higher education, with the exception of teacher education for those teaching kindergarten and primary school, who should learn in the language in which they will be required to teach.¹¹⁶ Figure 7 summarizes the requirements of Ethiopia's language of instruction policy as defined in its 1994 Education and Training Policy:

¹¹⁰ Yared Seid, “Does Learning in Mother Tongue Matter? Evidence from a Natural Experiment in Ethiopia,” *Economics of Education Review* 55, no. C (2016): 22.

¹¹¹ Thomas Bloor and Wondwosen Tamrat, “Issues in Ethiopian Language Policy and Education,” *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 17, no. 5 (October 1, 1996): 325, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434639608666286>.

¹¹² Bloor and Tamrat, 325.

¹¹³ Mekonnen Alemu Gebre Yohannes, “Implications of the Use of Mother Tongues versus English as Languages of Instruction for Academic Achievement in Ethiopia,” in *Languages and Education in Africa: A Comparative and Transdisciplinary Analysis*, ed. Birgit Brock-Utne and Inge Skattum (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2009), 191.

¹¹⁴ Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, “Education and Training Policy,” 1994, 23–24, http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/ethiopia_education_and_training_policy.pdf.

¹¹⁵ Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 23–24.

¹¹⁶ Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 23–24; Alemu Gebre Yohannes, “Implications of the Use of Mother Tongues versus English as Languages of Instruction for Academic Achievement in Ethiopia,” 193.

Figure 7: Ethiopian Language of Instruction Policy¹¹⁷

Figure 4.2: Language use and function as stipulated in the 1994 Education and Training Policy

Languages		Level of Education	Function
1	Mother tongues/ Nationality languages	Primary (Grades 1-8)	Medium of instruction (MOI)
2	Amharic	---	As a subject and language of countrywide communication
3	English	From Grade 1	As a subject
4	English	Secondary and higher education (from Grade 9)	Medium of instruction (MOI)
5	One more nationality and foreign language	---	As subjects, for cultural and international communication

Political Context

Understanding the political context of Ethiopia's language in education policies is particularly important to understanding both how Ethiopia's current language policy came about and how language policy may be affected in the future. Ties between language and ethnicity, and between ethnicity and political power, expressed today through the system of ethnic federalism, are an integral part of both historic and modern Ethiopia. Amharic, which is used as a national language but intimately linked to the Amhara ethnicity, has dominated Ethiopian politics and religion since medieval times, and remains somewhat dominant in the education system (though its role has decreased). Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, different Ethiopian leaders have pursued language use policies with a variety of political aims. Haile Selassie tried to use language to unify his empire and assimilate non-Amhara ethnic groups into an Ethiopian identity based around Amharic, hence his designation of Amharic as the only LoI in the education system.¹¹⁸ Backlash against this policy made rhetoric about promoting other ethnic groups an important part of political strategy under the Derg, but monolingual policy with the aim of assimilation still dominated the education system in spite of this rhetorical shift.¹¹⁹ Language and ethnicity were integral to the revolutionary movement that overthrew the Derg, and ongoing suppression of non-Amhara ethnic groups was a key source of discontent when the current government (led by the EPRDF party, which united the Amhara and Tigrayan ethnic groups, but is still viewed as under the control of the Tigrayans) came to power in 1991. As a result, the new government passed a variety of policies aimed at recognizing and empowering Ethiopia's many ethnic groups, including incorporation of their languages into the education system.¹²⁰

Pre-EPRDF governments used the traditional nation-building strategy of instituting a common language to unify a diverse population, but this backfired and the privileges granted to the Amhara ethnolinguistic group over all others became a focus of the revolution that brought the EPRDF to power. This history meant that the EPRDF had to try to use language and ethnicity to build a different kind of nation, one that purportedly shared power and resources among all ethnic groups. This meant beginning to use non-Amharic languages in official capacities,

¹¹⁷ Heugh et al., "Final Report Study on Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Ethiopia," 51.

¹¹⁸ Heugh et al., 48.

¹¹⁹ Heugh et al., 49.

¹²⁰ Seid, "Does Learning in Mother Tongue Matter? Evidence from a Natural Experiment in Ethiopia," 24; Bloor and Tamrat, "Issues in Ethiopian Language Policy and Education," 328.

including within the education system.¹²¹ Multilingual policy was a way for the current government to avoid privileging one of Ethiopia's ethnolinguistic groups over all the others and thus avoid the conflict that this practice had engendered in the past.¹²² For a time, this strategy seemed successful, and remains so in the sense that a strong Ethiopian national identity exists that transcends ethnic identity.

However, the ethnic federalist system is beginning to crumble – largely because the government has not truly implemented it. In spite of the greater use of non-Amharic languages in official capacities in regions outside of Amhara, Amharic remains the national language, including the language of national government. In regions outside of Amhara and Tigray (the two regions primarily represented in government), many Ethiopians feel that resources and power are still primarily concentrated in the hands of these two groups. While mother tongue LoI policy may have improved learning outcomes in Ethiopia, it may also have had the unintended consequence of compounding the disadvantages faced by students educated in minority languages when majority or international language fluency is still necessary to gain access to political and economic power.¹²³

The current Ethiopian political system is in crisis due to discontent that is in many ways connected to language policies. Ethiopians, especially in the Oromo and more recently Amhara regions, have been protesting for years against government repression, lack of democratic representation, and the systematically unequal allocation of resources among Ethiopia's ethnic groups.¹²⁴ In the clearest sign yet of the EPRDF's weakening hold on power, the government recently released large numbers of political prisoners, the prime minister submitted his resignation (and a new prime minister from the Oromo ethnic group was named), and the second state of emergency in the last two years was declared.¹²⁵ Multilingual policies aimed at minimizing political discontent, when not paired with truly democratic division of political and economic power among ethnolinguistic groups, ended up heightening ethnic identification to enable political organization against the current government. If the EPRDF manages to retain its hold on power, it is possible it could roll back multilingualism to try to decrease the opposition's ability to grow its support. However, it seems more likely that either the EPRDF will be overthrown and replaced with a more representative government, or that it will introduce democratic reforms to share power more equally, and multilingualism will remain central to Ethiopia's identity. With the recent designation of a prominent Oromo politician as the new prime minister, it looks like the Ethiopian government may be headed down the latter path of conceding to protesters and sharing power more equally among ethnolinguistic groups.¹²⁶ Whatever the outcome of Ethiopia's current political crisis, it will be important for USAID to carefully watch these developments and consider the role of mother tongue language policy and projects within Ethiopia's likely political transition. In addition, political upheaval represents a significant source of risk to USAID projects in Ethiopia going forward that should be considered in all policy and planning decisions, especially on issues like language that are often perceived as political.

¹²¹ Bloor and Tamrat, "Issues in Ethiopian Language Policy and Education," 330.

¹²² Heugh et al., "Final Report Study on Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Ethiopia," 50.

¹²³ Heugh et al., 51.

¹²⁴ Jillian Kestler-D-Amours, "Ethiopia: Mass Protests 'Rooted in Country's History,'" accessed April 7, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/02/ethiopia-mass-protests-rooted-country-history-180219130441837.html>.

¹²⁵ Kestler-D-Amours.

¹²⁶ Alemayehu Mariam, "With New Prime Minister, Ethiopia Takes a Step Back from the Precipice," Text, TheHill, April 6, 2018, <http://thehill.com/opinion/international/382024-with-new-prime-minister-ethiopia-takes-a-baby-step-back-from-the->

Implementation

Implementation of Ethiopia's mother tongue LoI policy, which was adopted in 1994, also looked markedly different than policy implementation in other USAID partner countries has since. Most of the work of early-stage implementation that has been done by USAID in countries like Ghana – including tasks like translating educational materials into local languages, training current teachers to use mother tongue LoI, and recruiting new teachers with skills in mother tongue – was carried out by the federal Ministry of Education in Ethiopia.¹²⁷ The government faced many of the challenges in policy implementation currently seen in countries that have more recently adopted mother tongue policies, including settling on orthographies for non-written languages, developing and distributing educational materials in new languages, and meeting the demand for qualified teachers, though over time many of these issues have been resolved.¹²⁸ However, resource shortages exist in regions outside of Amhara and Tigray, and highly multilingual regions like SNNPR (Southern Nations and Nationalities Region) still face challenges around teacher and student language match and material availability like those faced in multilingual classrooms across Africa.

A comprehensive assessment of initial mother tongue policy implementation commissioned by the Ethiopian government and published by Heugh et. al. in 2007 found significant variation in compliance with written language of instruction policies across regions.¹²⁹ Most regions were using mother tongue LoI to teach most subjects in primary school, though some were switching to English in upper primary school, teaching some subjects in English, or educating teachers who would be required to teach in a mother tongue in English. However, all regions were in compliance with the requirement to teach both English and Amharic as subjects in primary school. Though community acceptance of mother tongue LoI is higher in Ethiopia than in many African countries, public pressure to use English as the LoI in primary school persisted because of the belief that this English exposure was necessary for students to succeed in secondary school, pass 10th and 12th grade national exams conducted in English, and understand multimedia lessons broadcasted by the government. The 1997 assessment identified an “exceptionally high aspiration towards English as a language of higher education (including teacher training) and as an international language that is associated with modernity and future success.”¹³⁰

As in many other African countries, these beliefs around the importance of English and the ability of English LoI to impart English fluency have not been confirmed in practice. Classroom observations and assessment results have not shown better outcomes in English in the Ethiopian regions that use English as the LoI more frequently or earlier.¹³¹ In spite of a focus within the education system on improving English proficiency, most Ethiopian teachers and students have limited competence in English and very limited exposure to English outside of the classroom environment, resulting in a significant gap between aspirations and realities around English competency. Low levels of capacity for teaching English as a subject in the primary grades, combined with lack of exposure to English outside of the education system, often make it difficult for both teachers and students to transition to English LoI, as required by the national policy, in secondary school. As a result, many teachers either fail to follow the policy as written and continue using an Ethiopian language as LoI, which may be detrimental to students'

¹²⁷ Seid, “Does Learning in Mother Tongue Matter? Evidence from a Natural Experiment in Ethiopia,” 24.

¹²⁸ Seid, 24; Bloor and Tamrat, “Issues in Ethiopian Language Policy and Education,” 329.

¹²⁹ Heugh et al., “Final Report Study on Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Ethiopia,” 5–8.

¹³⁰ Heugh et al., 5–8.

¹³¹ Heugh et al., 5–8.

acquisition of English, or use English LoI knowing many students will fail to acquire subject matter knowledge as a result.

Heugh et. al. partially explain this situation as a “washback effect,” which occurs when a policy decision generates a set of beliefs and realities that influence future actions.¹³² In the Ethiopian case, promotion of English learning at the secondary level without the capacity to prepare students to learn in English has prevented schools from focusing on strategies that will actually work to improve teaching and learning in Ethiopian languages, subject content, and English.¹³³ Because English is a foreign rather than second language in Ethiopia, achieving widespread English proficiency will require far more resources than are currently invested in this effort and diluted across the entire education system. This focus on English achievement without the resources to enable it has often resulted in failure to achieve either English proficiency or competency in other subjects. In addition, this problem is being perpetuated as students graduate from secondary school without English proficiency and return to primary and secondary schools to work as teachers without the skills to prepare the next generation of students to make the transition to English LoI more successfully.

Policy Outcomes

Because Ethiopia is further in the process of implementing mother tongue LoI policy than many other African countries, assessing the outcomes of this policy is possible in Ethiopia in a way it has rarely been elsewhere on the continent. As discussed above, measuring the impact of and attributing causal effect to mother tongue LoI use is quite difficult as implementation of mother tongue policy often goes hand-in-hand with other interventions to improve the quality of education. However, there have been a few attempts made to evaluate the impact of transitioning to mother tongue LoI on educational outcomes in Ethiopia. Seid (2016) recently published the results of a difference in difference analysis exploiting the natural experiment of the 1994 education reform (which included the adoption of mother tongue LoI policy) to measure the effect of switching from being educated in a second language to mother tongue on primary school enrollment and being in the correct grade for age.¹³⁴ This evaluation found positive effects of the LoI change on the measured outcomes.¹³⁵ However, an Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) conducted in Ethiopia in 2010 found that, even years after mother tongue LoI policies were implemented, a large proportion of second grade students were unable to perform literacy-related tasks in their mother tongue that would be expected at their grade level.¹³⁶ These results suggest that mother tongue LoI use alone is insufficient to guarantee successful early grade literacy acquisition in Ethiopia. In addition, in evaluating the outcomes of mother tongue LoI policy in Ethiopia thus far, it is also important to consider not just learning outcomes in primary and secondary school, but later effects on labor market outcomes and the possible negative impact of the switch to mother tongue LoI on proficiency in national and international languages needed for labor market access.¹³⁷

The baseline assessment conducted by USAID/Ethiopia and Save the Children in preparation for the Reading for Ethiopia’s Achievement Developed-Technical Assistance (READ-TA) project provides some potential explanations for the failure of Ethiopia’s mother

¹³² Heugh et al., 5–8.

¹³³ Heugh et al., 5–8.

¹³⁴ Seid, “Does Learning in Mother Tongue Matter? Evidence from a Natural Experiment in Ethiopia.”

¹³⁵ Seid.

¹³⁶ Benjamin Piper, “Ethiopia Early Grade Reading Assessment: Data Analytic Report: Language and Early Learning” (RTI International, 2010), <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/Ethiopia%20Early%20Grade%20Reading%20Assessment.pdf>.

¹³⁷ Seid, “Does Learning in Mother Tongue Matter? Evidence from a Natural Experiment in Ethiopia,” 35–36.

tongue LoI policy to deliver expected improvements in literacy outcomes.¹³⁸ This assessment revealed that the 1994 education policies have not resulted in the outcomes around teacher preparation and practice that were intended, or that are needed to improve literacy. It found that teachers do not have the preparation needed to teach literacy, either in mother tongue or another LoI, and that while educators, students, and communities all seem to hold their mother tongue in high regard, there is a lack of understanding around the importance of achieving literacy in mother tongue.¹³⁹ Furthermore, this assessment provided some insight into the outcomes of previous attempts to fully implement the mother tongue policy through trainings. The results highlighted how in-service teacher trainings, which are implemented throughout the Ethiopian education system as part of the continuous professional development (CPD) program, tend to focus on general pedagogy (such as student-centered learning or continuous assessment) over the content necessary to teach literacy.¹⁴⁰ In addition, these trainings lack checks on effectiveness, with many schools assuming attendance at a training is sufficient and failing to otherwise support teachers in implementing new practices – which means that many teachers continue using the methods they are used to.¹⁴¹

USAID's Involvement in Language Policymaking in Ethiopia

USAID has shaped its education programming in Ethiopia to try to address some of the challenges the country has faced in improving learning outcomes through mother tongue LoI policy. Most of USAID/Ethiopia's education work is part of the Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed (READ) program, which is comprised of three projects targeted at different aspects of improving reading outcomes in early grades in Ethiopia, including through supporting mother tongue LoI use.¹⁴² The largest project in this program, READ-Technical Assistance (TA), was a 5-year, \$59 million project (it ended in 2017) focused on addressing the deficiencies in early grade reading comprehension in Ethiopian schools.¹⁴³ READ-TA's objectives included creating an early grade reading curriculum in Ethiopian languages, supporting the production of the textbooks, other learning materials, teacher trainings, and teacher college curriculums necessary to implement the new reading curriculum, and providing technical assistance to regional education bureaus.¹⁴⁴

The second project within the READ program, READ-CO (Community Outreach), is a three-year project ending this year with a \$16 million budget and goal of building a culture of reading in Ethiopian schools, homes, and communities to improve reading skills throughout primary school.¹⁴⁵ To achieve this goal, READ-CO has the objectives of building capacity within the federal and regional education bureaus to develop supplementary reading materials aligned with the mother tongue reading curriculum, directly supporting the development of these materials, developing market capacity to produce books aligned with the curriculum, and developing and implementing literacy-focused activities for use in the school, home, and

¹³⁸ Save the Children, "READ TA Baseline Assessment Report: Teacher Professional Development and Support Systems: An Analysis of Seven Language Areas in Ethiopia."

¹³⁹ Save the Children.

¹⁴⁰ Save the Children.

¹⁴¹ Save the Children.

¹⁴² "Project Detail | Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed - Technical Assistance (READ-TA)," accessed February 24, 2018, <https://usaid-gov.secure.force.com/PublicProjectDetail?id=a0cd0000005XT0AAAW&cid=Ethiopia>.

¹⁴³ "Project Detail | Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed - Technical Assistance (READ-TA)."

¹⁴⁴ "Project Detail | Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed - Technical Assistance (READ-TA)."

¹⁴⁵ "Project Detail | Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed - Community Outreach (READ-CO)," accessed February 24, 2018, <https://usaid-gov.secure.force.com/PublicProjectDetail?id=a0ct00000008P1tAAE&cid=Ethiopia>.

community.¹⁴⁶ Finally, READ-Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), a five-year project ending in 2019 with a \$7 million budget, is focused on monitoring the implementation of the other READ projects, administering early grade reading assessments and other assessments of student outcomes, and building the capacity of the Ministry of Education to administer and analyze national learning assessments.¹⁴⁷

While READ-CO and READ-M&E are obviously related to the successful implementation of mother tongue LoI to improve literacy outcomes, READ-TA is the most directly relevant to the focus of this research. The intermediate results of this project, which are sub-objectives meant to inform the planning and implementation of project activities, include developing reading and writing materials appropriate for primary classrooms and pre-service and in-service teacher training, applying mother tongue-specific teaching and learning methodologies to help students learn to read and write effectively, supporting mother tongue teaching and learning with technology and teacher aids, and supporting regional education bureaus and the federal Ministry of Education to improve their ability to carry out these tasks in the future.¹⁴⁸

At the time of the mid-term evaluation of the READ-TA project, USAID/Ethiopia and its implementing partners had accomplished several of the project's goals. READ-TA developed textbooks and teacher guides in all seven local LoIs in use for primary grades one through eight, which were well reviewed by teachers with the exception of concerns about the length of lessons.¹⁴⁹ The project also provided support to Ethiopian colleges of teacher education (CTEs) in developing mother tongue training curriculums and training instructors to implement the curriculum, as well as building capacity for curriculum review and materials development within the Ministry of Education, regional education bureaus, zonal education offices, and CTEs.¹⁵⁰ For the remainder of the READ-TA project, the mid-line evaluation recommended aligning the mother tongue syllabus and materials with the nationally required curriculum, called minimum learning competencies (MLCs), revising lessons to match time allotted in schools, and meeting demand for multimedia teaching aids.¹⁵¹

SYNTHESIS

The Ghana and Ethiopia cases illustrate two of the very different contexts in which AFR/SD/ED has to recommend policies and support projects around mother tongue LoI, providing further insight into the range of challenges to adoption and implementation of mother tongue policies faced by USAID and its partner countries. However, these two countries are also different in many ways from USAID's other partner countries in Anglophone Africa, clarifying the extent to which projects to support mother tongue policy adoption and implementation need to be designed differently for each context.

There are some similarities between the two case study countries. While the colonial and postcolonial histories, political characteristics, and political economies of Ghana and Ethiopia are extremely different, it is clear that each of these factors has significantly impacted decisions around mother tongue use in education in both countries. There are also many parallels in the support for mother tongue use provided by USAID through Partnership for Education: Learning

¹⁴⁶ "Project Detail | Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed - Community Outreach (READ-CO)."

¹⁴⁷ "Project Detail | Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed - Monitoring and Evaluation (READ - M&E)," accessed February 24, 2018, <https://usaid.gov.secure.force.com/PublicProjectDetail?id=a0ct00000008P1yAAE&cid=Ethiopia>.

¹⁴⁸ American Institute for Research, "Mid-Term Evaluation Report: Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed Technical Assistance (READ TA)" (United States Agency for International Development, May 2016), iv, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pa00mf65.pdf.

¹⁴⁹ American Institute for Research, v-vi.

¹⁵⁰ American Institute for Research, v-vi.

¹⁵¹ American Institute for Research, v-vi.

in Ghana and READ-TA in Ethiopia. Both projects have invested significantly in mother tongue materials creation and production for primary school students and teachers, design and implementation of pre-service and in-service teacher training around mother tongue use and literacy instruction, and (to a lesser degree) systems strengthening to prepare the Ghanaian and Ethiopian governments to take on these functions.

However, on the whole the case studies are much more different than similar. While history, politics, and the role of ethnolinguistic groups have played a significant role in policymaking in both Ghana and Ethiopia, the outcomes that have resulted from the influence of these factors are quite different. Ghana's current LoI policy is the result of a volatile history of using both mother tongues and English in schools, a context of relatively low political mobilization around ethnolinguistic groups, the Ghanaian government's attempts to maintain a strong social contract with its citizens and broaden its tax base, and internal and external pressure to adopt mother tongue policies. Ethiopia's policies, on the other hand, arose from a history of local language use (though only Amharic, not all mother tongues, was consistently used historically), a context of high levels of political motivation around ethnolinguistic groups, and a situation in which a poor social contract exists between government and citizens and the government has attempted to use multilingual policy to reduce conflict. Pressure from external groups like USAID played a less significant role in adoption of mother tongue policies in Ethiopia than in many other African countries. Partially because it has switched back and forth between policies so many times, mother tongue LoI implementation has been incomplete in Ghana, while mother tongue policy has been close to fully implemented in Ethiopia. USAID and other outside actors have been the primary implementers of these policies in Ghana, while Ethiopian language policy was primarily implemented by the federal government.

The policies themselves are different, with Ghana using an early exit bilingual model and Ethiopia using a later exit bilingual/trilingual model. While attitudes towards use of mother tongue in education are largely negative in Ghana, much more community support for mother tongue use exists in Ethiopia, though English is still idealized. English plays a different role within society in each country – in Ghana, English is a second language that is commonly spoken outside of the education system, while in Ethiopia English is a foreign language that is spoken almost exclusively in schools throughout much of the country. Finally, the challenges to achieving improved learning outcomes through mother tongue LoI policy adoption and implementation in each country are different. In Ghana, implementation is hindered by lack of political commitment to mother tongue use, issues matching teachers, students, and languages designated for use at schools, and lack of materials and training at the primary level, leading to poor literacy outcomes. In Ethiopia, where there is strong political commitment to and substantial implementation of mother tongue LoI policy, poor literacy outcomes are also associated with a lack of quality mother tongue materials and pedagogical training at the primary level, as well as a focus on English achievement without sufficient resources to support it.

Comparing the experiences of Ghana and Ethiopia around mother tongue LoI policies provides further illustration of the diversity of country contexts, in terms of history, politics, ethnolinguistic makeup, and other factors, AFR/SD/ED must consider when making policy for and supporting projects in USAID's partner countries in Anglophone Africa.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the amount of variation among USAID's Anglophone African partner countries in terms of the challenges to improving learning outcomes through mother tongue LoI policy, making generalized recommendations for AFR/SD/ED, which supports projects in all of these countries, is somewhat difficult. However, this research leads to several recommendations which may be applicable to countries with characteristics similar to either Ghana or Ethiopia, or applicable to most of USAID's Anglophone partner countries.

Recommendations for Group 1: Low Levels of Political Support, High Levels of English Use

Some of the recommendations resulting from this research are most applicable to countries like Ghana, in which there are low levels of political support or uncertain political support for use of mother tongue LoI within the government, and high levels of English use outside of the education system. In these countries, AFR/SD/ED should:

1. ***Continue supporting projects aimed at increasing the overall capacity of the education system to teach literacy, including projects focused on mother tongue materials development and teacher training.*** However, if tying these projects to the use of mother tongue LoI undermines government support for them, or their effectiveness, AFR/SD/ED should consider advising USAID missions to de-emphasize the language aspect of these projects. While gaining literacy in mother tongue can certainly help students in these contexts, as they have more opportunities to learn and practice English outside of the education system it may not be as crucial for literacy and content acquisition for them to learn solely in their first language in primary school. Especially if partner governments are opposed to mother tongue use, expending large amounts of resources and political capital on support for projects that center around full implementation of mother tongue LoI may not be the most effective or efficient way for USAID to support improved learning outcomes. In countries in this category, USAID could support projects that aim to introduce use of mother tongue LoI for just some subjects in primary school curriculums or introduce mother tongue LoI as a secondary aspect of training around teaching literacy.
2. ***Consider supporting projects aimed at increasing community demand for mother tongue LoI use, such as educating communities about the benefits of learning in mother tongue.*** In countries where communities are opposed to the switch to mother tongue LoI or just fail to exert strong pressure on government to promote the use of specific languages in schools, governments will be less incentivized to adopt or implement mother tongue policies, especially if doing so carries political risk. Generating community demand for use of mother tongue in schools would put more organic pressure on governments to adopt these policies.

Recommendations for Group 2: High Levels of Political Support, Low Levels of English Use

Other recommendations resulting from this research are most applicable to countries like Ethiopia, in which there are high levels of political support for use of mother tongue LoI and low levels of English use outside of the education system. In these countries, AFR/SD/ED should:

1. ***Continue supporting improved literacy outcomes through the use of mother tongue LoI, including supporting projects focused on developing and providing educational materials, training teachers to more effectively teach literacy both in mother tongue and in general, and building capacity within national education systems to take on this type of work in the future.***
2. ***Consider supporting projects focused on increasing the capacity of these countries' education systems to build student proficiency in English, as well as mother tongue, and on decreasing the aspiration to English to the detriment of content knowledge in these countries' secondary and tertiary education systems.***¹⁵² Because students in countries like Ethiopia have little opportunity to learn English outside of the classroom, if they are not taught English as a subject well – even if mother tongue LoI policies are fully implemented at the primary level – many of them will fail when required to transition from mother tongue to English LoI in secondary school. Conversely, emphasizing the importance of skills and content knowledge, not just English proficiency, at the secondary level will also help more students succeed. However, this shift in emphasis must be aligned with changes in national assessment content and access to post-graduation economic opportunities in order to be effective.

Recommendations for AFR/SD/ED's Work Across Anglophone Africa

Finally, some aspects of the recommendations applicable to countries like Ghana or Ethiopia can be generalized to apply to AFR/SD/ED's support for mother tongue LoI policies in all of its Anglophone African countries, including those that do not fall into either group above. In its work across Anglophone Africa, AFR/SD/ED should:

1. ***Support more projects aimed at addressing the structural causes of poor implementation of mother tongue LoI policies, and poor literacy outcomes generally.*** In many countries that are struggling to improve learning outcomes through use of mother tongue LoI, the barriers on which most USAID projects have been focusing, such as lack of educational materials in appropriate languages, are significant but are not the only challenges that need to be overcome. Ensuring implementation of mother tongue policies results in improved student outcomes throughout education systems will eventually require deeper changes to these systems – for example, new approaches to teacher education and assignment, or new approaches to the measurement of student performance. While USAID is probably correct to focus on helping partner countries to meet immediate needs, such as for educational materials, before taking on more substantial reforms, USAID projects should also begin considering how to support these more fundamental changes.
2. ***Ensure a thorough understanding of the political context surrounding mother tongue LoI policies in USAID's partner countries is incorporated into both policymaking and project design processes.*** In countries where there is strong political support for the use of mother tongue, USAID needs to understand why this support exists – whether it is a function of colonial legacies, politicization of ethnolinguistic groups, government attempts to unite or divide its population to reduce conflict or collect resources, or some

¹⁵² Heugh et al., “Final Report Study on Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Ethiopia,” 124–25.

other reason – and to take the reasons for this support into account when it is designing programs. By incorporating greater understanding of political context into education program design, AFR/SD/ED can avoid wasting time and energy doubling down on support for projects that may not result in improved learning because they are at odds with government priorities or political incentives for policy implementation. For example, in countries where the political context is averse to mother tongue policy adoption or implementation, projects that may have a mother tongue component, but have a greater focus on other strategies for improving education quality, may be more impactful than projects primarily focused on mother tongue use. Furthermore, it is crucial for AFR/SD/ED to continue understanding these political contexts as they change, and to understand how changes in leadership, like in Ghana, or changes in the role of ethnolinguistic identity in politics, like in Ethiopia, can impact the potential for success of current or future USAID projects with mother tongue components.

3. ***Consider incorporating activities aimed at changing the incentives around and community perception of learning in mother tongue into its projects.*** Obviously, due to the relationship between USAID country missions and national governments, USAID projects are already aligned with national politics much of the time. However, even if governments are on board with mother tongue LoI use, implementation will ultimately still be difficult if teachers, students, and communities resist using mother tongue. Particularly if English or other national or international languages continue to be seen as key to accessing political and economic power and opportunity at the national and international levels, and schools and communities continue to believe using these languages in education is the best and fastest way to learn them, mother tongue LoI policies will probably not be implemented as intended. Overcoming community- and school-level resistance to mother tongue LoI, where it exists, will be necessary in order to implement mother tongue policies as written – and thus, to improving learning outcomes through this approach. To overcome this resistance, USAID could investigate how to apply the behavior change techniques used in its health projects to this context. In addition, USAID projects aimed expanding the economic opportunities available for those who are proficient in local languages could increase incentives to learn in these languages, rather than in English.
4. ***Support not just projects focused on expanding mother tongue LoI use in primary school, but also projects focused on smoothing the transition from mother tongue to English LoI in later grades.*** Support for primary education, while crucial for building a foundation of student knowledge, must go hand in hand with support for student success at the upper levels, which is crucial for realizing improved livelihoods from education. If students are unable to transfer learning in mother tongue in primary schools to learning in an international or national language in secondary school, they may fail to acquire content knowledge or gain access to opportunities after graduating. In this scenario, if students view mother tongue policies as leaving them unprepared for secondary school or post-graduation employment, community and political support for mother tongue LoI may further deteriorate.

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APPENDIX A: LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION POLICY EXCERPTS

Botswana

“Inclusive Education Policy,” 2011, http://www.gov.bw/globalassets/moe/acts/moesd_inclusive-education-policy-a4.pdf

1.5 Children, young people and adults are defined as having special educational needs if they need services which are over and above what is generally provided as standard in the education system. Most learners have special educational needs because they are members of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in society. Special educational needs may result from, for example...not being fluent in the language of instruction in school.

(vii) There are many reasons why individuals fail to benefit from educational provision. These include...inadequate fluency in the language of instruction.

Commitment Statement 3: Changes will be made regarding the education of children of school age who are attending school but not benefitting from what is currently provided, including children of school age who are at significant risk of failing to complete their basic education or of failing to succeed in maximising their potential.

Commitment Statement 5 Action will be taken to ensure that teachers will be more effective in enabling children to learn.

- i) Consideration will be given to increasing the number of teachers who speak ethnic minority languages who can provide effective teaching to learners who are not yet fluent in the language of instruction.

Ethiopia

“Education and Training Policy,” 1994, http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/ethiopia_education_and_training_policy.pdf

3.5 Languages and Education 3.5.1 Cognizant of the pedagogical advantage of the child in learning in mother tongue and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages, primary education will be given in nationality languages. 3.5.2 Making the necessary preparation, nations and nationalities can either learn in their own language or can choose from among those selected on the basis of national and countrywide distribution. 3.5.3 The language of teacher training for kindergarten and primary education will be the nationality language used in the area. 24 3.5.4 Amharic shall be taught as a language of countrywide communication. 3.5.5 English will be the medium of instruction for secondary and higher education. 3.5.6 Students can choose and learn at least one nationality language and one foreign language for cultural and international relations. 3.5.7 English will be taught as a subject starting from grade one. 3.5.8 The necessary steps will be taken to strengthen language teaching at all levels.

Ghana

“2007 Education Reform at a Glance,”

http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/ghana_education_reform_2007.pdf

2. The medium of instruction in Kindergarten and Lower Primary will be a Ghanaian language and English, where necessary

2. At lower Primary English, Basic Mathematical Skills, Natural Science and dominant Ghanaian language of the area shall be taught.

3. At lower Primary the teaching of English and Ghanaian languages shall incorporate concepts of Religious and Moral Education, Science and Hygiene, Life Skills, Integrated Science and Citizenship Education.

4. At Upper Primary, subjects shall be the dominant Ghanaian language, English, Basic Mathematical Skills, Integrated Science and citizenship Education.

Kenya

“A Policy Framework for Education,” 2012,

http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/kenya_policy_framework_for_education_and_training_sessional_paper_july_5_2012.pdf

"National and County Education Boards shall encourage the use of the two official languages Kiswahili and English both in- and out-of-school as provided for in the Constitution of Kenya (2010). The language of the catchment area (Mother Tongue) shall be used for child care, pre-primary education and in the education of Lower Primary children (0-8 years). Sign language, Braille or other appropriate means of communication shall also be used in the delivery of education to learners with special needs. It is important that whenever possible learners are not confined in their local areas for the purpose of national integration. For schools located in metropolitan areas such, Kiswahili shall be adopted as a language of the catchment area." (24)

Lesotho

“Curriculum and Assessment Policy Framework,” 2008,

http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/lesotho_curriculum_and_assessment_policy_framework.pdf

"While acknowledging, as the Lesotho Constitution states, that Sesotho and English are the two official languages, and in recognition of the fact that there are other languages besides Sesotho and English, mother tongue will be used as a medium of instruction up to class 3 while English will be taught as a subject at this and other levels. From grade 4 English shall begin to be used as a medium of instruction and to be taught as a subject as well. English shall cease to be an impediment to further learning and success. Sign language and its use in the teaching and learning processes shall form an integral part of the new Language policy in order to ensure access to information and effective communication." (7)

Liberia

“Education Sector Plan,” 2011, <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/liberia-education-sector-plan>

Sector plan identifies language as an aspect of the primary curriculum that needs to be reviewed, revised, and supported; lists "Curriculum, teaching and learning materials that enable children in KG1 and KG2 to begin their education in their home language" as a policy goal (44), as well as use of local and community language in pre-primary institutions and with parents; "In the planned change to the curriculum serious consideration needs to be given to the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction in primary schooling. In this regard there is a need to officially develop and endorse a Language and Education Policy for Liberia. Indigenous languages as subjects for study should be treated as indicated in the language policy document." (65); "Develop a bilingual education curriculum that uses the children's first language (11) as a language of instruction in K1, K2 and Grade 1 and uses English with 11 as languages of instruction from Grades 2-5, following an "L1-L2-L1" methodology." (74)

Malawi

“Education Sector Plan 2008-2017,”

http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/malawi_nesp.pdf

"Promote mother tongue instruction" listed as a priority for improving non-formal education and adult literacy (8); inclusive education report permits local language education without supporting it - right of minorities to maintain schools that use/teach in their own language is respected as long as these schools meet educational standards
(http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/malawi_NR08.pdf, pg. 32).

Namibia

“Education Act,” 2001,

http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/namibia_education_act_2001.pdf

Medium of instruction in state school

35. (1) Subject to subsections (3) and (4), the English language is the medium of instruction in every state school.

(2) Every state school must teach the English language as a subject from the level of the first grade.

(3) The Minister must determine the grade level for all state schools from which English must be used as medium of instruction, and may determine different grade levels for different categories of schools.

(4) The Minister, after consultation with the school board concerned and by notice in the *Gazette*, may declare a language other than English to be used as medium of instruction in any state school as the Minister may consider necessary.

(24)

Nigeria

“National Policy on Education,” 2004,

http://wbgfiles.worldbank.org/documents/hdn/ed/saber/supporting_doc/AFR/Nigeria/TCH/National%20Policy%20on%20Education.pdf

(e) **The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject.**

(f) **From the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction and the language of immediate environment and French shall be taught as subjects.**

(16)

Sierra Leone

“New Education Policy for Sierra Leone,” 1995,

http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/sierra_leone_edu_policy.pdf

3.3 National Languages

3.3.1 At present, the official community languages in Sierra Leone are Mende, Temne, Limba and Krio. English is the official language of the country and an excellent communication medium with the wide work of diplomacy, business and commerce, science and technology. Another European language that is worth studying in school is French as this would open up important contacts with neighbouring countries and with other French-speaking countries in the sub-region and the world at large. Also worth learning is Arabic. This is the language of the Koran and the religion of a sizeable number of Sierra Leoneans. Knowledge of it further gives access to North Africa and much of the Middle East.

3.3.2 English shall be the medium of instruction at almost all stages of the educational system. French will also be studied as a core subject in the Junior Secondary schools, and as optional subject thereafter, and Arabic as an optional subject starting at the Junior Secondary school level.

3.3.3 The high rate of illiteracy is a setback to national development in Sierra Leone. Therefore, strategies must be developed to eradicate illiteracy. One of the quickest and best ways of doing so is to give citizens the opportunity to be literate in their mother-tongues and/or one of the community languages in the country. Also, there are other

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social, psychological and pedagogical benefits that could be derived through literacy in the mother-tongues and community languages.

3.3.4.1 **At Primary Level** — the prevailing language of the district (as far as possible) shall be the language of instruction in Classes 1, 2 and 3. Class 3 shall be the transition class from this language to English as the language of instruction. In Classes 4 to 6, English shall be a medium of instruction and taught as a subject while French shall be taught as a subject;

(33-34)

Somalia

“National Education Plan,” 2011,

http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/somalia_national_education_plan_2011.pdf

“Education Language. Somali language is the national education language. The ministry of education, culture and higher education will enhance the Somali language and is planning to

make it the official language that is taught in all schools and will developing curriculum review for Somali language and finally printing enough books to cover huge need of it now. Before the implementation of this program the following options will be available:

1. Lower primary schools will be taught Somali language in all subject and English and Arabic will be taught as language subjects.

2. In the upper primary we will choice the following three option.

a) The first option: In the upper primary all subjects will be given in Somali and Arabic language, while English language will be enhanced as language subject.

b) The second option: In the upper primary all subjects will be taught in Arabic and Somali and English will be a subject.

c) The third and final option: In the upper primary all subjects will be taught in English and Somali and Arabic will be a subject.” (4)

South Africa

“South African Constitution,” 1996,

<http://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/SACConstitution-web-eng.pdf>

“(2) Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account— (a) equity; (b) practicability; and (c) the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices.” (12)

South Sudan

“General Education Act,” 2012,

http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/general_education_act_2012.pdf

“13.National Languages in Education. (a) All indigenous languages are national languages and the English languages shall be treated in accordance with the Constitution. (b) The Ministry shall develop the national standards for indigenous languages; train teachers of national languages and develop learning materials for national languages. (c) In early childhood development and primary 1 through 3, the medium of instruction shall be the indigenous language of the area. In urban settings, the school may choose to use more relevant or widely used national languages. (d) In primary 4 through 8, the medium of instruction shall be English. In primary 4 through 8, the indigenous language shall continue to be taught as a subject to ensure that all school children are able to communicate in national languages of the Republic of South Sudan fluently, accurately and effectively in a variety of situations (e) In accordance with the Constitution, the medium of instruction in secondary schools and adult education institutions shall be English. (f) Universal Sign Language has the status of an official language for purposes of learning at a public school. (g) The study of the Braille system shall be made available to blind learners.” (12)

Sudan

“Comprehensive Peace Agreement,” 2005,
<https://peaceaccords.nd.edu/sites/default/files/accords/SudanCPA.pdf>

2.8 Language

- 2.8.1 All the indigenous languages are national languages which shall be respected, developed and promoted.
- 2.8.2 Arabic language is the widely spoken national language in the Sudan.
- 2.8.3 Arabic, as a major language at the national level, and English shall be the official working languages of the National Government business and languages of instruction for higher education.
- 2.8.4 In addition to Arabic and English, the legislature of any sub-national level of government may adopt any other national language(s) as additional official working language(s) at its level.
- 2.8.5 The use of either language at any level of government or education shall not be discriminated against.

(26-27)

Swaziland

“The Swaziland Education and Training Sector Policy,” 2011,
<http://www.snat.org.sz/New%20Page/The%20Education%20Sector%20Policy.pdf>

“SiSwati and English are both regarded as official languages in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland, which provides the necessary guidance for EDSEC Policy. While this implies that either language may be used as a medium of instruction, the Policy directive is that the mother tongue SiSwati shall be used officially as a medium of instruction for the first four Grades of school, after which English shall be the medium of instruction. This does not mean that teaching and learning materials that are in English shall be translated into siSwati; however, what it means is that teachers in the first four grades of school have the liberty and freedom to use siSwati as a medium of instruction where learners have difficulties in understanding what is taught. Teachers of these first four grades in schools where most of the pupils have not attended English Medium pre-schools should not feel guilty that they are explaining concepts to their pupils in siSwati; and Headteachers should not reprimand those teachers for explaining concepts in siSwati. Teachers of these first four grades in schools where most of the pupils have attended English Medium pre-schools and learners have no difficulties in understanding concepts in English; teachers will continue to use English as a medium of instruction. While this liberty and freedom is granted to teachers at the first four grades to explain and/or teach in siSwati where there is a need, English as a subject shall continue to be taught in English at all grade levels. All children going through the school system in Swaziland are expected to learn siSwati. Therefore, siSwati will continue to be taught as a subject at all grade levels in the school system. SiSwati as a subject remains a core subject in all schools and at all grade levels. As a way to promote the learning of siSwati in all

schools, children shall not be punished for speaking siSwati within and outside school premises.” (27)

Tanzania

“Tanzania Education and Training Policy,” 2014,
<http://www.tzonline.org/pdf/Educationandtrainingpolicy03.pdf>

5.2.3 The medium of instruction in pre-primary schools shall be Kiswahili, and English shall be a compulsory subject.

Medium of Instruction

At primary school level, full development of language skills is vital for a fuller understanding and mastery of knowledge and skills implied in the primary school curriculum. Children at this level of education will continue to be taught in a language which is commonly used in Tanzania . Therefore:

5.3.7 The medium of instruction in primary schools shall be Kiswahili, and English shall be a compulsory subject.

(39)

Uganda

“Education Sector Strategic Plan 2004-2015,” 2004,
http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/uganda_essp_2004_2015.pdf

“The Ministry’s policy and actual practice are to use local languages as the medium of instruction in P1-P4. This practice is highly recommended, as it is now incontrovertible that learners can master literacy in a second language (English) more readily if they learn first to read and write in their mother tongue. Though the barriers to teaching literacy in local languages in Uganda are considerable (producing written materials, persuading parents, and resolving political problems surrounding languages of instruction), the Ministry will aim to provide sufficient quantities of reading materials in local languages and English, both by procuring and distributing them and by helping teachers develop their own reading materials.” (17)

Zambia

“Educating Our Future,” 1996,
<http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/zambiaeducatingourfuture.pdf>

“Language of Instruction: Zambia has had almost thirty years experience of using English as the medium of instruction from Grade 1 onwards. Children, who have very little contact with English outside the school, have been required to learn how to read and write through and in this language which is quite alien to them. They have also been required to learn content subjects

through this medium. The experience has not been altogether satisfactory. The fact that initial reading skills are taught in and through a language that is unfamiliar to the majority of children is believed to be a major contributory factor to the backwardness in reading shown by many Zambian children. It is also a major factor in fostering rote learning, since from the outset the child has difficulties in associating the printed forms of words with their real, underlying meaning. On the other hand, there is strong evidence that children learn literacy skills more easily and successfully through their mother-tongue, and subsequently they are able to transfer these skills quickly and with ease to English or another language. Successful first language learning is, in fact, believed to be essential for successful literacy in a second language and for learning content-subjects through the second language. These considerations do not obscure the fact that the use of English in primary education has played a significant role in promoting a sense of national unity. Neither do they overlook the fact that English is the official language of public life and the sine qua non for all further education in Zambia. It must also be borne in mind that the introduction of a language other than English as the official medium of instruction would encounter insoluble implementation problems and would entail enormous costs both in developing and producing materials and in training teachers to use them. In the light of these considerations, all pupils will be given an opportunity to learn initial basic skills of reading and writing in a local language; whereas English will remain as the official medium of instruction. By providing for the use of a local language for initial literacy acquisition, children's learning of essential reading and writing skills should be better assured. By providing for the use of English as the official language of instruction for other content areas, children's preparation for the use of this language in school and subsequent life will be facilitated, while the implementation problems of changing over to other languages will be avoided. Moreover, in order to foster better initial pupil learning, to enhance the status of Zambian languages, and to integrate the school more meaningfully into the life of local communities, each child will be required to take a local language from Grade 1 onwards.” (39)

Zimbabwe

“Amendment to Education Act,” 2001,

<http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/d0945389cdf8992e8cb5f3a4b05ef3b3aa0e6512.pdf>

“62. Languages to be taught in schools (1) Subject to this section, the three main languages of Zimbabwe, namely, Shona, Ndebele and English, shall be taught in all primary schools from the first grade as follows— (a) Shona and English in all areas where the mother tongue of the majority of the residents is Shona; or (b) Ndebele and English in all areas where the mother tongue of the majority of the residents is Ndebele. (2) Prior to the fourth grade, either of the languages referred to in paragraph (a) or (b) of subsection (1) may be used as the medium of instruction, depending upon which language is more commonly spoken and better understood by the pupils. (3) From the fourth grade, English shall be the medium of instruction: Provided that Shona or Ndebele shall be taught as subjects on an equal-time allocation basis as the English language. (4) In areas where minority languages exist, the Minister may authorize the teaching of such languages in primary schools in addition to those specified in subsections (1), (2) and (3).” (

APPENDIX B: ACRONYMS

AFR/SD/ED – Bureau for Africa, Office of Sustainability, Education Division
CPD – Continuous Professional Development program, Ethiopia
CTEs – Ethiopian Colleges of Teacher Education
DEC – USAID’s Development Experience Clearinghouse
EPRDF – Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (current ruling coalition in Ethiopia)
GLOI – Ghanaian Languages of Instruction
L1 – a person’s mother tongue, or first language
L2/L3 – the second or third language a person learns to speak
LoI – language of instruction
LPIE – Ghanaian Language Policy in Education
LWC – language of wider communication
MT – mother tongue
NALAP – Ghanaian National Literacy Acceleration Program
NEA – Ghana National Education Assessment
P1, P2, P3, etc. – primary school grade 1, grade 2, grade 3, etc.
READ – Reading for Ethiopia’s Achievement Developed
READ-CO – Reading for Ethiopia’s Achievement Developed – Community Outreach
READ-M&E – Reading for Ethiopia’s Achievement Developed – Monitoring and Evaluation
READ-TA – Reading for Ethiopia’s Achievement Developed – Technical Assistance
SNNPR – Southern Nations and Nationalities Region, Ethiopia
SSA – sub-Saharan Africa
TA – technical assistance
USAID – US Agency for International Development

APPENDIX C: USAID PARTNER COUNTRIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Angola

Benin

Botswana

Burkina Faso

Burundi

Cameroon

Central African Republic

Chad

Côte d'Ivoire

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Djibouti

Ethiopia

Ghana

Guinea

Kenya

Lesotho

Liberia

Madagascar

Malawi

Mali

Mauritania

Mozambique

Namibia

Niger

Nigeria

Republic of the Congo

Rwanda

Senegal

Sierra Leone

Somalia

South Africa

South Sudan

Sudan

Swaziland

Tanzania

Uganda

Zambia

Zimbabwe

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¹⁵³ USAID, "Africa: Where We Work."

APPENDIX D: ETHIOPIAN LANGUAGE POLICY DETAILS

Figure 4.1: The 1994 language policy in relation to the Constitution

<p>Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1994)</p> <p>Article 5: All Ethiopian languages shall enjoy equal state recognition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Amharic shall be the working language in the federal government. ▪ Members of the federation may by law determine their respective work languages. <p>Article 39: Rights of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession. ▪ Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture and to preserve its history. 	<p>Education and Training Policy (1994)</p> <p>3.5 LANGUAGES AND EDUCATION</p> <p>3.5.1 Cognizant of the pedagogical advantage of the child in learning in mother tongue and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages, primary education will be given in nationality languages.</p> <p>3.5.2 Making the necessary preparation, nations and nationalities can either learn in their own language or can choose from among those selected on the basis of national and countrywide distribution.</p> <p>3.5.3. The language of teacher training for kindergarten and primary education will be the nationality language used in the area.</p> <p>3.5.4 Amharic shall be taught as a language of countrywide communication.</p> <p>3.5.5 English will be the medium of instruction for secondary and higher education.</p> <p>3.5.6 Students can choose and learn at least one nationality language and one foreign language for cultural and international relations.</p> <p>3.5.7 English will be taught as a subject starting from Grade one.</p> <p>3.5.8 The necessary steps will be taken to strengthen language teaching at all levels.</p>
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¹⁵⁴ Heugh et al., “Final Report Study on Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Ethiopia,” 50.

Table 5.1: Languages of instruction used in primary schooling and primary teacher training, by city administration or regional state

Key: MOI = medium of instruction, TT = teacher training, ABE = alternative basic education

Regional state	MOI at Primary I	MOI at Primary II			MOI TT for Primary I	MOI TT for Primary II
		(Grades 5-6)	(Grades 7-8)			
MOE POLICY	MOTHER TONGUE	MOTHER TONGUE	MOTHER TONGUE		MOTHER TONGUE	MOTHER TONGUE
Addis Ababa (City admin)	Amharic	Amharic	English	All content subjects	English	English
Dire Dawa (City admin)	Amharic Af.Oromo Somali	Amharic Af.Oromo Somali	English	All subjects except Civics	Amharic	English
			Amharic Af.Oromo Somali	Civics		
AFAR	Amharic Afar (ABE)	Amharic	English	All content subjects	---	---
AMHARA	Amharic Awingi Hamittena	Amharic Awingi Hamittena	English	Sciences & Maths	Amharic	English
			Amharic Awingi Hamittena	All subjects except Sci/ Maths		
	Af.Oromo	Af.Oromo	Af.Oromo	All content subjects		

BENISHANGUL GUMUZ	Amharic	Amharic	English	All content subjects	Amharic	English
GAMBELLA	Nuer Anguak Meshenger	English	English	All content subjects	Nuer Anguak Mesenger	English
HARARI	Harari Af.Oromo Amharic	Harari Af.Oromo Amharic	English	Sciences & Maths	Harari Af.Oromo Amharic	English
			Harari Af.Oromo Amharic	All subjects except Sci/ Maths		
OROMIYA	Af.Oromo Amharic	Af.Oromo Amharic	Af.Oromo Amharic	All content subjects	Af.Oromo Amharic	Af.Oromo Amharic
SNNPR	Amharic Dawro Gamo Gedeo Gofa Hadiya Kembata Kafinono Kontigna Korete Sidama Silti Wolaita	English	English	All content subjects	Amharic Dawro Gamo Gedeo Gofa Hadiya Kembata Kafinono Kontigna Korete Sidama Silti Wolaita	English
SOMALI	Somali	Somali	Somali	All content subjects	Somali Amharic	English
	Amharic	Amharic	English Amharic	Sciences & Maths All subjects except Sci/ Maths		
TIGRAY	Tigrinya	Tigrinya	Tigrinya	All content subjects	Tigrinya	English

(Updated from table in Mekonnen, 2005)

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