



# Language, Education and Social Cohesion

**MALAYSIA**

Education Thematic Working Group (ETWG) Meeting  
Yangon, Myanmar

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# Malaysia

- The current population of Malaysia in total is 30,267,367
- The population of Malaysia is made up of many ethnic groups: 50.4% Malays; 23.7% Chinese; 7.1% Indians; 11.0% other bumiputeras; and 10% foreign migrants
- Diversity in Unity  
"Malaysia Truly Asia" reflects precisely who Malaysians are - a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual nation where people of diverse races and religions live in harmony.





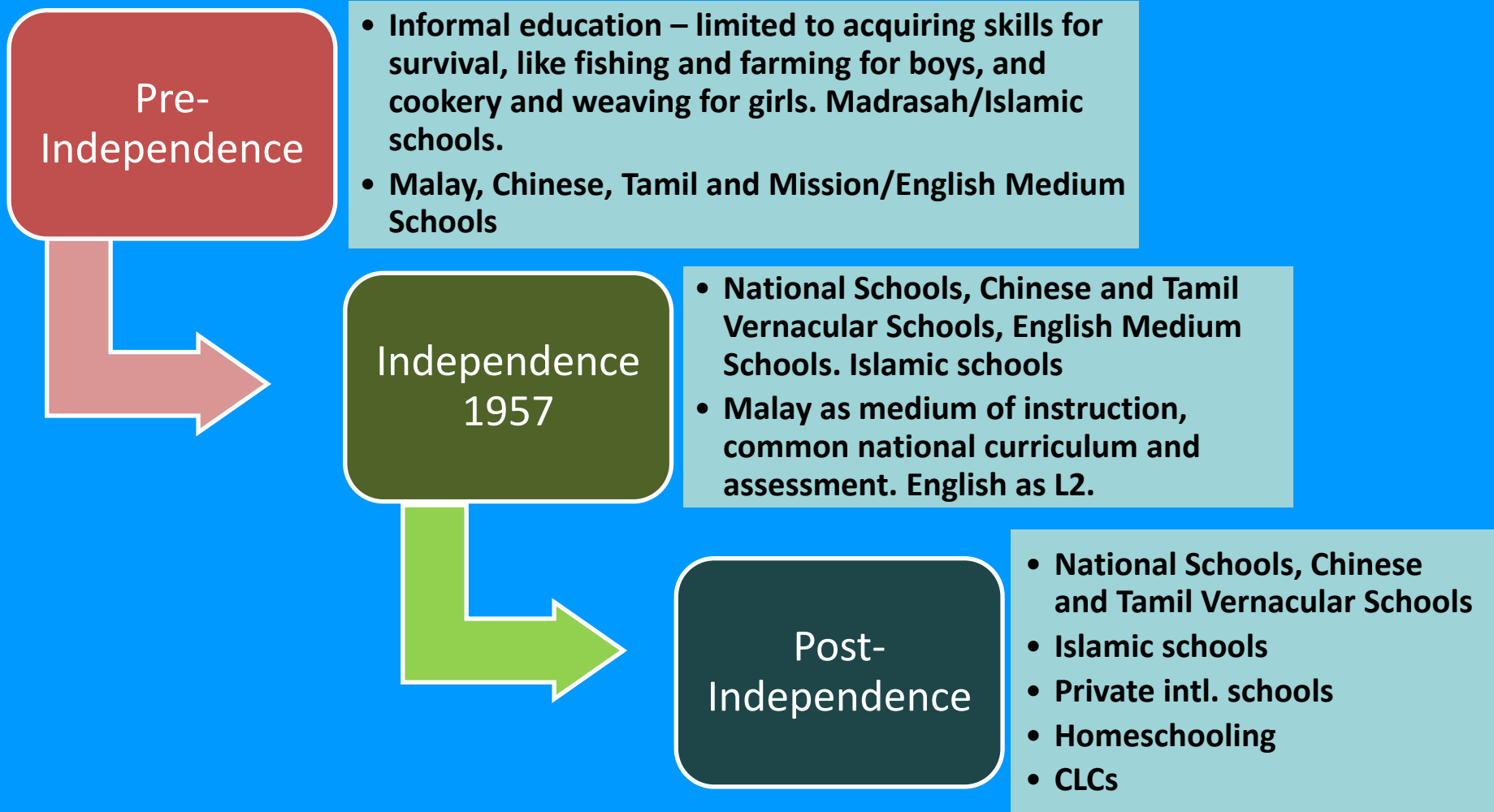
Prior to independence, Malaya's educational system lacked uniformity in curriculum and an articulated rationale for a policy which would be relevant to the political and socio-economic goals of the people. The country's three principal ethnic communities—Malays, Chinese and Indians (mostly Tamils from South India)—ran their own schools, the latter two often importing a syllabus used in the countries of their origin.

(b) The Education policy of the Federation is defined in Section 3 of the Education Ordinance, 1957, as follows:

“The educational policy of the Federation is to establish a national system of education acceptable to the people as a whole which will satisfy their needs and promote their cultural, social, economic and political development as a nation, with the intention of making the Malay language the national language of the country whilst preserving and sustaining the growth of the language and culture of peoples other than Malays living in the country.”

- The report proposed:
  - One common school system for all:
    - Malay language as the medium of instruction for all stages of schooling.
    - Centralized curriculum & school examination.

# Evolution of the Malaysian education policy – towards achieving national unity in a multi-ethnic society



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# Bike convoy spreads Malaysia Day cheer

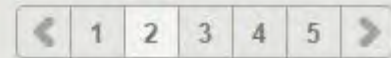
**LET'S MAKE  
MALAYSIA  
A HOME  
FOR ALL**

As a country of diverse races, cultures and religions, Malaysia is indeed unique in proving how its diversity could be united and harnessed for nation building



**Lat: No one told us to,  
we mingled freely**

PETALING JAYA: Music, sports and books are the unifying theme that helped the younger generation of various races form a good f...



## Uphold peace and harmony

"Malaysia is and will always be home,"



**OUR UNITY  
PREVAILS**

**EVEN BEYOND  
BORDERS**



## Malaysia Day: Transcend our differences

James Sivalingam | September 15, 2014

Leaders from various political parties and NGOs are united in their call for moderation and tolerance.

## LESC in Malaysia: Shaped to meet our needs and circumstances

- Kuala Lumpur, 7-11 April 2014
- Kota Kinabalu, 5-9 May 2014
- Kuching, 24-30 August 2014



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## Inclusive Approach : Bilateral Meetings

- Ministry of Education
- State Economic Planning Units Sabah and Sarawak
- State Education Departments Sabah and Sarawak
- Dept. of National Unity and Integration
- Institute of Ethnic Studies, UKM
- National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC)
- Association for the Promotion of Human Rights
- Tan Sri Khoo Kay Khim – Historian
- National Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM)
- The Indigenous Peoples Network of Malaysia (JOAS)
- Parent Action Group for Education Malaysia (PAGE)
- Tun Jugah Foundation - Iban
- Sarawak Native Customs Council
- Dayak Bidayuh National Association (DBNA)
- Sultan Idris Education University
- Universiti Malaysia Sabah
- Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
- Swinburne University



## Facilitated Dialogue and Workshops (+ Bilateral Meetings)

- Prime Minister's Department - Action Plan for future of Tamil Schools
- Inst. for Democracy & Economic Affairs (IDEAS)
- Teacher Foundation
- Coalition of Orang Asli Affairs
- 1 Malaysia Foundation
- National Association of Early Childhood Care & Education (NAECCCEM)
- Centre for Research in International and Comparative Education (CRICE), University Malaya
- United Chinese School Committee Association of Malaysia (Dong Zong)
- Malaysia Relief Agency / Rohingyas Community School
- Malaysian Child Resource Institute
- Tamil Foundation
- Summer Institute of Linguistics Malaysia
- HUMANA Child Aid Society
- Sarawak Dayak Iban Association (SADIA)
- Society for Rights of Indigenous Peoples of Sarawak (SCRIPS)
- The Champions, Sarawak Development Institute
- Sarawak Teachers' Union



## Site Visits

- Sekolah Wawasan – Vision School, Subang Jaya
- Kampung Numbak Learning Center, Sabah
- MLE Preschools, Sarawak



Desk and  
Library  
Research

145 participants  
Facilitated  
Dialogue &  
Workshop

22 Bilateral  
Meetings

3 Site Visits

**NUCC  
THE NATIONAL  
UNITY BLUEPRINT**

**UNICEF MALAYSIA  
RWP 2015  
CPD 2016-2020**

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# National Action Plans for Integration

- Rukun Negara – National Principles (1970)
- National Development Policies (1957-
- National Education Policy (1961)
- New Economic Policy (1970)
- National Cultural Policy (1971)
- Vision 2020 (1991)
- National Service (2004)
- National Unity and Integration Plan (2006)
- 1Malaysia (2009)
- Malaysia 5-year Development Plans



Govt

- 1 Malaysia
- 1 Malaysia Foundation

MOE

- Student Integration Plan for Unity
- Vision Schools
- Community Services in All Schools
- Curriculum Revision for Islamic and Moral subjects

Dept. of  
National  
Unity and  
Integration,  
PM's Dept.

- Unity Child Care Centers
- Neighborhood Watch
- Racial Unity Issues Identification and Indexing
- Multi-racial Festive Celebrations



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# **ISSUES: LESC in Malaysia**

**National and  
Vernacular  
Schools**

**Bahasa  
Malaysia &  
English  
Language**

**Politics and  
Government  
Support**

**Capacity  
Building**

**Student  
Dropouts**

**Language  
Development  
and Policy on  
Indigenous  
Languages**

**Multi-Lingual  
Education/  
MTBBE**



# Issues – Kuala Lumpur

There were 70+ issues raised on language and education. Here are some examples:

- Article 1 on CRC says that a child has the right to a name and nationality. CRC does not talk about language and is only a tool for social interaction. It is not to determine the identity or citizenship. That's where the problem starts. Language needs to be divorced from race, citizenship and religion.
- More research on the mother-tongue issue and whether having a single school system would be as bad for non-Malays as some people seem to claim.
- Singapore schools (1 system) – in Singapore, the Tamil community is losing their identity because of the focus on the English language in schools

# Issues – Kuala Lumpur

- The Tamil and Chinese primary schools have grown in numbers – but the drop-out rates are high after students from vernacular schools make the transition to National schools (secondary level).
- Indigenous students from the rural areas are struggling with the national language and most will drop-out half way through the school semester (secondary) as they cannot cope with the language. *“Most Orang Asli students feel discriminated when they are unable to pick up or cope with the Malay language in school. This would inadvertently cause them to quit school out of frustration”*
- Perception about National schools – the national schools have become Malay schools and this has led to divisiveness in state of unity
- *“I fully support the current policy on language teaching and values. To uphold the teaching and learning of the national language but at the same time, strengthen the teaching of English language”*



# Issues – KK and Kuching

- *I wish people are able to see the importance of ethnic languages, but I feel that nothing can be done to stop the loss of ethnic languages in our younger generation*
- *I wish we have stronger and clearer policies - both at the state and national level to promote implement the teaching of vernacular language / indigenous languages.*
- Government support for indigenous languages is weak. There isn't a federal or state policy on indigenous languages.
- *I wish teachers themselves are competent in the languages they are teaching; and are properly trained to teach the languages. They should be a master of the language themselves –and be able to take constructive criticisms.*
- Politicians should not get involved with the education system.

## Issues – KK and Kuching

- Sense of inferiority of their own language i.e compared to Malay and English
- *“We cannot blame the education system. Family influence is important. ‘My parents ensured that I speak Hokkien at home. Today, many families only use BM or English at home, not their mother tongue’. Family behaviour is leading to the loss of the language”*
- Change in lifestyle, occupation and daily activities among indigenous communities. The language and culture that was tied to the lifestyle is now lost
- Facebook and SMS languages - children have created their own language and spelling systems

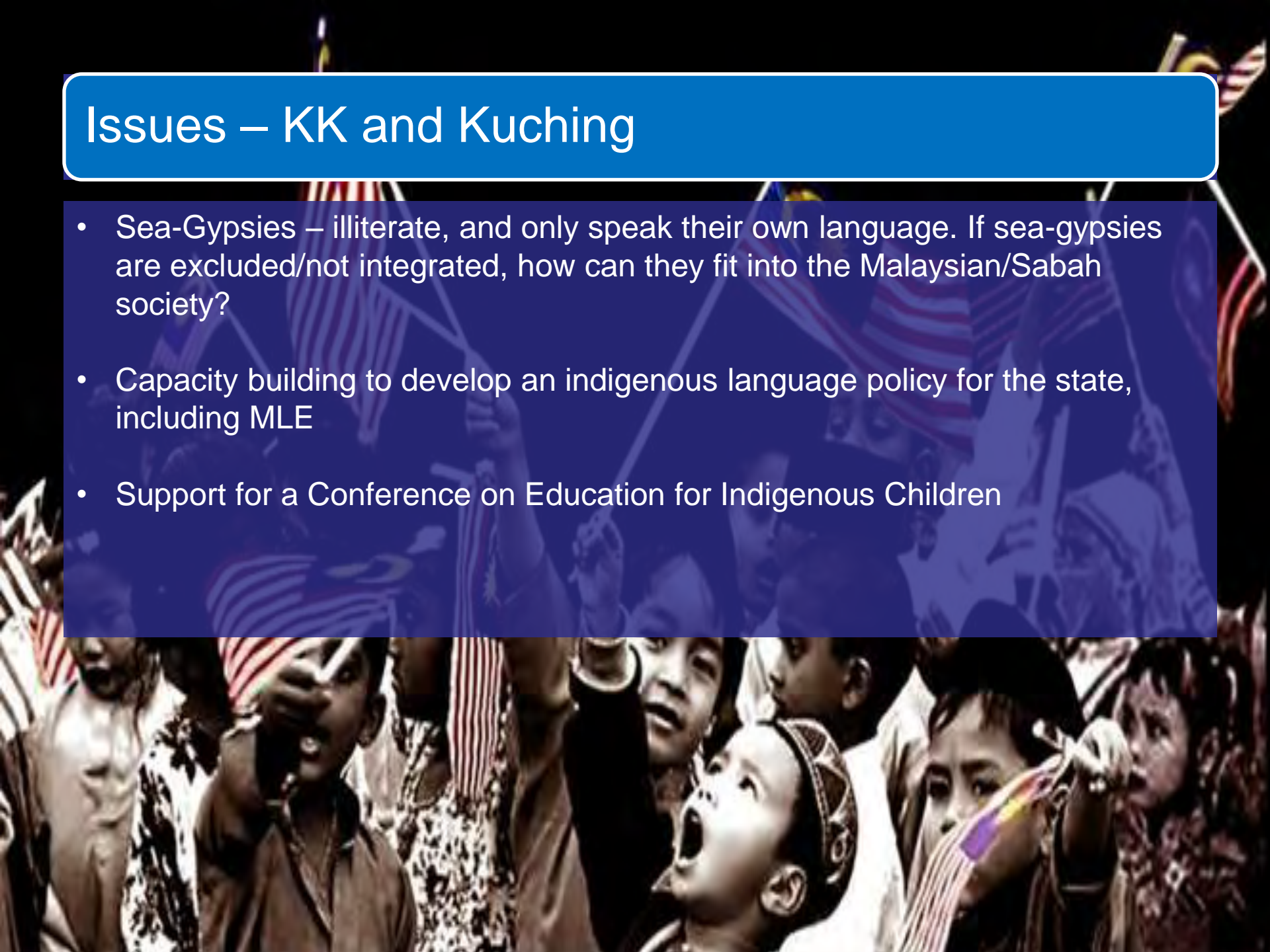


## Issues – KK and Kuching

- *The lack of the written form of indigenous languages will be a challenge in teaching the language – most of the indigenous languages in Sabah are only spoken, we have only just started coding/writing the Kadazan language*
- How do we improve rural students ability to use English? How to change attitude and mindset among school leaders and teachers?
- What can be done to improve all indigenous languages?
  - i. Politics – Who owns the nation? There is always a convention, but the community needs to uphold its language, culture, beliefs.
  - ii. Minority groups have to learn to navigate within the more dominant groups, and to be able to co-exist.
  - iii. Have indigenous language teaching and learning materials in schools

# Issues – KK and Kuching

- Sea-Gypsies – illiterate, and only speak their own language. If sea-gypsies are excluded/not integrated, how can they fit into the Malaysian/Sabah society?
- Capacity building to develop an indigenous language policy for the state, including MLE
- Support for a Conference on Education for Indigenous Children





**POLICY** MEDIA TOLERANCE  
**SOCIAL-COHESION**  
**RESEARCH** **EVIDENCE** Capacity-Building  
Heritage Tradition THEORIES Tamil Capacity  
Education-Blueprint MELBOURNE INCLUSIVE Identities  
Kadazandusun  
**INDIGENOUS** HARMONY Malay Religion-  
**UNITY** Mandarin RIGHTS  
PEACE-BUILDING History MLE-MTBBE  
**EDUCATION** JOSEPH-LO-BIANCO Race  
Orang-Ulu Hokkien CONFLICTS  
ENGLISH Success-Stories MINORITY-LANGUAGES KNOWLEDGE  
Multi-Ethnic Orang-Asli  
POLITICS NUCG PRACTICES DATA  
Iban National-Blueprint-on-UNITY Culture Bidayuh Diversity ICT

Action Plan for  
National-Vernacular  
School Integration

Development of  
Indigenous Language  
Policy

**LESC in Malaysia**  
**Way Forward**

Conference on  
Education for  
Indigenous Peoples

English & Effective  
MLE–MTBBE



# CHALLENGES

## Govt

- Advocacy – Getting Buy-In from Federal and State levels esp. for the National-Vernacular School Integration Action Plan; Indigenous Language Policy; MLE/MTBBE
- Inter agency collaboration - Inclusiveness

## Community/ NGOs

- Capacity Building
- Sustainability of community projects
- Moving from grass root projects to policy
- Changing mindset and attitude towards indigenous languages

## Academics- Experts

- More evidence-based research on the issues of language, education and social cohesion/unity;



october  
LESC  
Report for  
MALAYSIA

november  
NUCC  
National  
Blueprint  
on UNITY

december  
RWP  
2015  
CPD  
2016-20

NEXT  
STEPS



# TERIMA KASIH



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