



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Education
Sector



2021 International Mother Language Day

Fostering multilingualism for inclusion in education and society

International webinar

19 February 2021 / 10:00-12:20 GMT+1

Introduction

[International Mother Language Day](#) is celebrated annually on 21 February to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. The 22nd edition of this Day is celebrated as the world faces unprecedented disruption to education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis has exposed and is expected to add new layers or to deepen inequalities, marginalization and exclusion.

UNESCO Director-General, at the launch of the Global Education Coalition to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, called for the principles of equity and inclusion in education to guide the learning recovery process. The importance of these principles has also been highlighted in the 2020 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report '*Inclusion and education: All means all*'.

The theme of the 2021 International Mother Language Day, “**Fostering multilingualism for inclusion in education and society**,” recognizes that languages and multilingualism can advance inclusion, and the Sustainable Development Goals’ focus on leaving no one behind. UNESCO believes education, based on the first language or mother tongue, must begin from the early years as early childhood care and education is the foundation of learning.

UNESCO’s celebration of International Mother Language Day calls on policy-makers, educators and teachers, parents and families to scale up their commitment to multilingual education, and inclusion in education to advance education recovery in the context of COVID-19. This effort also contributes to the 2019 [Cali commitment to equity and inclusion in education](#) and the United Nations *International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032)*, for which UNESCO is the lead agency, and which places multilingualism at the heart of indigenous peoples’ development.

Objectives

The webinar aims to:

- Enhance inclusion in education through inclusive policy and practice in teaching and learning integrating multilingualism;
- Promote a comprehensive inclusive early childhood education and care with all children living and learning together through multilingualism;
- Contribute to developing and sustaining inclusive society through multilingualism.

Webinar themes

The webinar will address two themes:

- Rethinking inclusive policy and practice in teaching and learning in multilingual contexts
- Enhancing inclusion through multilingualism, including sign language, in early childhood education and care (ECCE), the foundation for learning

Target audiences

The target audiences for this webinar are stakeholders supporting multilingual education and inclusion in education. This includes senior officials and managers of Ministries of Education directly responsible for implementing and managing education programmes, as well as non-governmental organizations, bilateral partners, foundations and others supporting this work. Educators, including early childhood professionals, and those supporting teacher training may also find this of value to their work. It is expected that the webinar will have a broader reach, as participants spread key messages to educators, parents and families, encouraging them to promote mother tongues and/or sign languages through a multilingual approach.

Technical specifications

The webinar will be held in English, French and Spanish with simultaneous interpretation, as well as in French sign language. It will be conducted through the Zoom webinar platform. Participants will receive the link to the event [upon registration](#).

UNESCO's support to multilingualism and inclusion

This webinar also aims to inform UNESCO's work on multilingualism and inclusion across all of UNESCO programme sectors, which includes:

- The promotion of universal access to information and knowledge to contribute to the creation of inclusive, equitable, open and participatory knowledge societies through supporting the development of linguistic diversity and multilingualism in the Internet, media and mass communication channels;
- The awareness raising and advocacy for inclusion of indigenous languages in formal education and at the same time for moving learning back in Indigenous communities, considering the importance of intergenerational transmission of indigenous knowledge and languages through indigenous languages, see more [here](#);
- The safeguarding of cultural heritage, including by ensuring that indigenous languages and the cultural heritage conveyed by these languages be fully part of the global heritage;
- The promotion of more inclusive educational policies and practices that integrate multilingualism in multilingual contexts.

Friday 19 February 2021

10:00 – 10:25

Official opening

Master of Ceremony: Ms Maki Hayashikawa, Director, Division for Education 2030, Education Sector, UNESCO

Welcoming remarks

Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO (TBC)

Opening video

Messages

- H.E. Mr Kazi Imtiaz Hossain, Ambassador of Bangladesh to France and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO
- Ms Nivine Khaled, Director, Language and Cultures, International Organization of la Francophonie
- H. E. Mr Umid R. Shadiev, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Uzbekistan to UNESCO

10:25 – 11:15

Introduction by Gilvan Müller de Oliveira, UNESCO Chair on Language Policies for Multilingualism, Federal University of Santa Catarina in Florianópolis

Linkages between multilingualism and inclusion in education and society

Panel discussion

Theme 1: Rethinking inclusive policy and practice in teaching and learning in multilingual contexts

Moderator: Mr Edouard Matoko, Assistant Director-General for Priority Africa and External Relations (PAX), UNESCO

Introduction by the moderator

Panellists

- Mr Piet Van Avermaet, Professor, University of Ghent
Multilingualism and language of instruction: an interconnected contribution to inclusive education
- Ms Carol Deshano Da Silva, Senior Adviser, Global Book Alliance (GBA)
Children's books in appropriate languages for learning: opportunities and challenges

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr Hamidou Seydou Hanafiou, Programme Specialist, French & Partner Languages, Coordinator ELAN-Africa Initiative, International Organization of la Francophonie Inclusive education through learners' first language: the 'School and national languages'(ELAN) initiative in sub-Saharan Africa <p>Q&A session Concluding remarks Ms Hassana Alidou, Professor, Union Institute and University Cincinnati</p>
<p>11:15 – 12:10</p>	<p>Panel discussion Theme 2: Enhancing inclusion through multilingualism, including sign language, in early childhood education and care (ECCE), the foundation for learning</p> <p>Video</p> <p>Moderator: Mr Manos Antoninis, Director Global Education Monitoring Report Introduction by the moderator</p> <p>Panellists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms Neelam Pirbhai-Jetha, Head of the Centre for Digital Humanities, University of the Mascarene Islands, Mauritius Towards inclusive education in a multilingual Mauritius: teaching-learning French for all outside school contexts Mme Joyce Peel, Responsible officer for development and partnership, DULALA Ms Ivani Fusellier-Souza, Professor University of Paris 8/SFL - Sciences du langage Promote an inclusive learning and living environment for children and families through community sign languages and emerging sign languages in family contexts and indigenous communities Mr David Banes, Director, David Banes Access and Inclusion Services The importance of building access tools and assistive technologies in support of first language <p>Q&A Concluding remarks Mr Ydo Yao, Director a.i. UNESCO International Bureau of Education</p>
<p>12:10-12:20</p>	<p>Closing remarks: Ms Justine Sass, Chief, Section of Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality</p>

*Simultaneous interpretation will be available in English, French, Spanish, and French sign languages

The Permanent Delegation of Bangladesh and other Permanent Delegations to UNESCO will celebrate International Mother Language Day on 21 February

Stay in touch

International Mother Language Day



languages@unesco.org



<https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/motherlanguageday>



@UNESCO



@UNESCO