Language matters in aid effectiveness: Overview

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Language and development

(Casey & Owen, 2014)

High ethnolinguistic diversity tends to co-occur with:
• Topographic heterogeneity
• Rapidly growing populations
• Low economic growth

… Australasian region?
Territory size shows the proportion of the world's Indigenous living languages that are spoken there.

(Worldmapper.org, 2016)
Linguistic dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Language and the UN, 2016):

1. Language as a **goal**
   ‘a substantive element of the goal itself’
2. Language as a **tool**
   ‘a means of communication, dialogue, response and implementation’
Language dimensions of the SDGs (examples)

• Illiteracy/pre-literacy highly correlates with poverty
Language dimensions of the SDGs (examples)

- Marginalised/remote communities are more likely to speak minority languages → need to communicate effectively
Language dimensions of the SDGs (examples)

- Everyone needs to be able to understand health promotion materials
Language dimensions of the SDGs (examples)

- Mother-Tongue based Multi-Lingual Education (MTB-MLE) most cost-effective: cognitive, social, cultural benefits – and faster to other languages
Language dimensions of the SDGs (examples)

• Girls’ education in Mother Tongue has even more benefits
Language dimensions of the SDGs (examples)

• Everyone needs a ‘voice’ in decision-making, e.g. for privatisation of water
Language dimensions of the SDGs (examples)

- Dialogue with stakeholders will ensure sustainability of innovations
Language dimensions of the SDGs (examples)

- Access to official and 'international' languages = opportunity for work
Language dimensions of the SDGs (examples)

- Linguistic issues underpin sustainable growth
Language dimensions of the SDGs (examples)

- Increasing power of a global Anglophone élite
Language dimensions of the SDGs (examples)

- Disaster preparedness plans need to reach all language groups
Language dimensions of the SDGs (examples)

- Traditional knowledge systems encoded in language
Language dimensions of the SDGs (examples)

- Climate change mitigation efforts more sustainable if linked in to traditional concepts
Language dimensions of the SDGs (examples)

- Local languages carry traditional knowledge about the sustainable use of marine resources
Language dimensions of the SDGs (examples)

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- Ethnobotany links to linguistic knowledge of terrestrial ecosystems
Language dimensions of the SDGs (examples)

- Languages are central to cultural identity (→ justice, peace, inclusiveness)
Language dimensions of the SDGs (examples)

- Translation and interpretation will enable everyone to be included in the partnerships
Conclusion

Language and the UN (2016, p. 2):

‘[T]here is an urgent need to include language at the planning, implementation and assessment stages of each of the SDGs.’

→ aid projects and programmes
References


www.languageandtheun.org


UN Sustainable Development Knowledge platform.
https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org