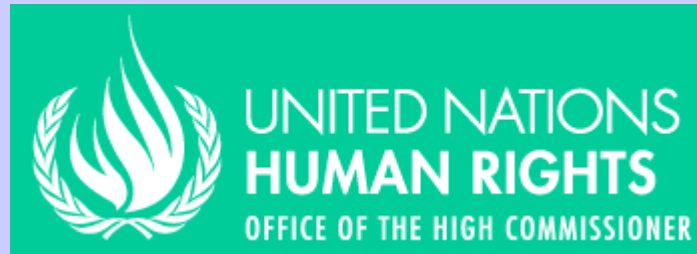


Addressing issues in a children's rights approach to language-in-education policy



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Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (United Nations, 1989)

- Came into effect in 1990;
- Definition: ‘a child means every human being below the age of eighteen’;
- Most Pacific states signed up in the first decade (Farran, 2012);
- Challenges remain (geographical, socio-political factors).

CRC article about children's views

Article 12

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance to the age and maturity of the child

“children's participation”

A research example

Smith & Haslett (2016; in press)

Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) programme evaluation
or baseline:

- Vanuatu (Tanna, Sanma, Penama)
- Solomon Islands (Isabel)
- Kiribati (Abemama, South Tarawa)

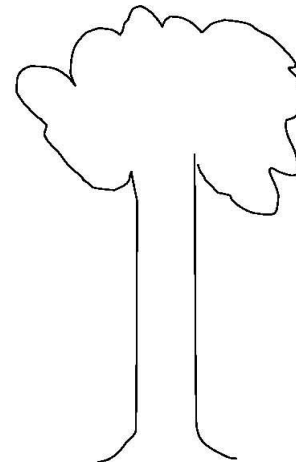
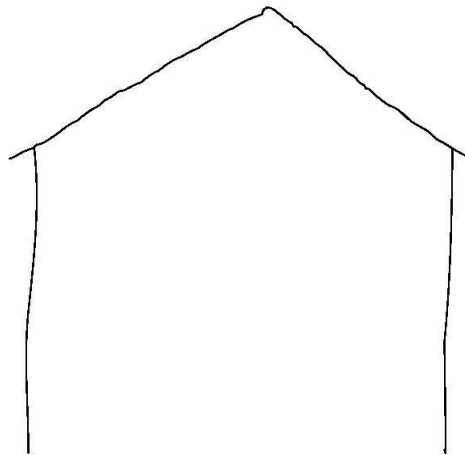
Overall aim to measure quality schooling.



Am reirei: _____ Bongin namwakaina: _____ Aram: _____ Aine: _____ Mwaane: _____
(school) (date) (name) (girl) (boy)
 Am tia reirei: _____ Am ririki: _____ Am koraki: _____ Taetae ake ko kamanenai n te reitaki: _____
(teacher) (age) (class/form) (languages)



Taiaoka koro i tamnein bwaai ake ko TANGIRI ibukin am reirei, ao koro i araia i rarikia.



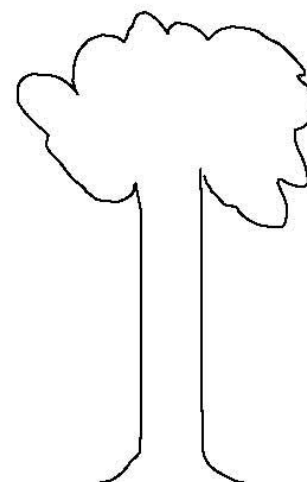
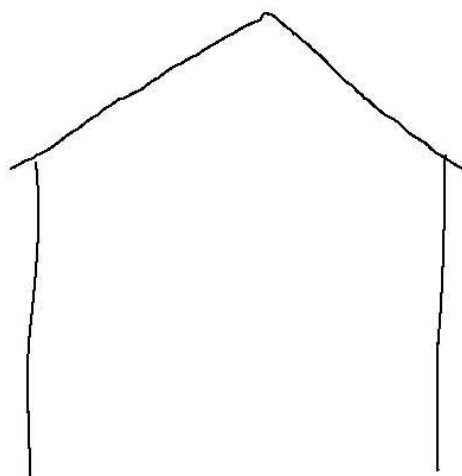
Year 1-3 questionnaire (Kiribati version)



Example: “What I like in my school” (Isabel, Solomon Is)



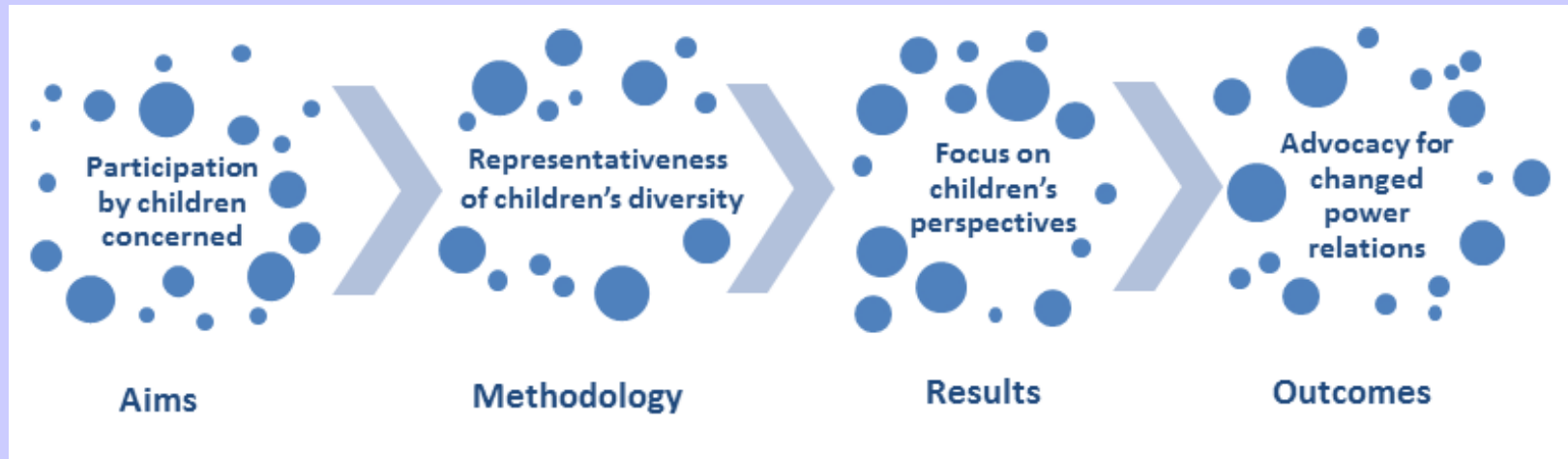
Taiaoka koro i tamnein bwaai ake ko **AKI TANGIRI** ibukin am reirei, ao koro i araia i rarikia.





Example: “What I don’t like in my school” (Isabel, Solomon Is)

Children's rights in education research



Smith & Haslett (in press)

Children's rights in Pacific contexts: Challenges

- Traditional views of the nature of young children – resisting control and lacking socially appropriate conduct (Ochs, 1982; Morton, 1996; Schoeffel & Meleisea, 1994; Pereira, 2010);
- Conservative Christian approach to child rearing introduced by missionaries in the 19th century – may include corporal punishment (Schoeffel & Meleisea, 1994; Pereira, 2010; Farran, 2012).

A more nuanced approach...



(Isabel, Solomon Is)

Watson-Gegeo (2001, p. 142)
in Malaita (Kwara'ae):

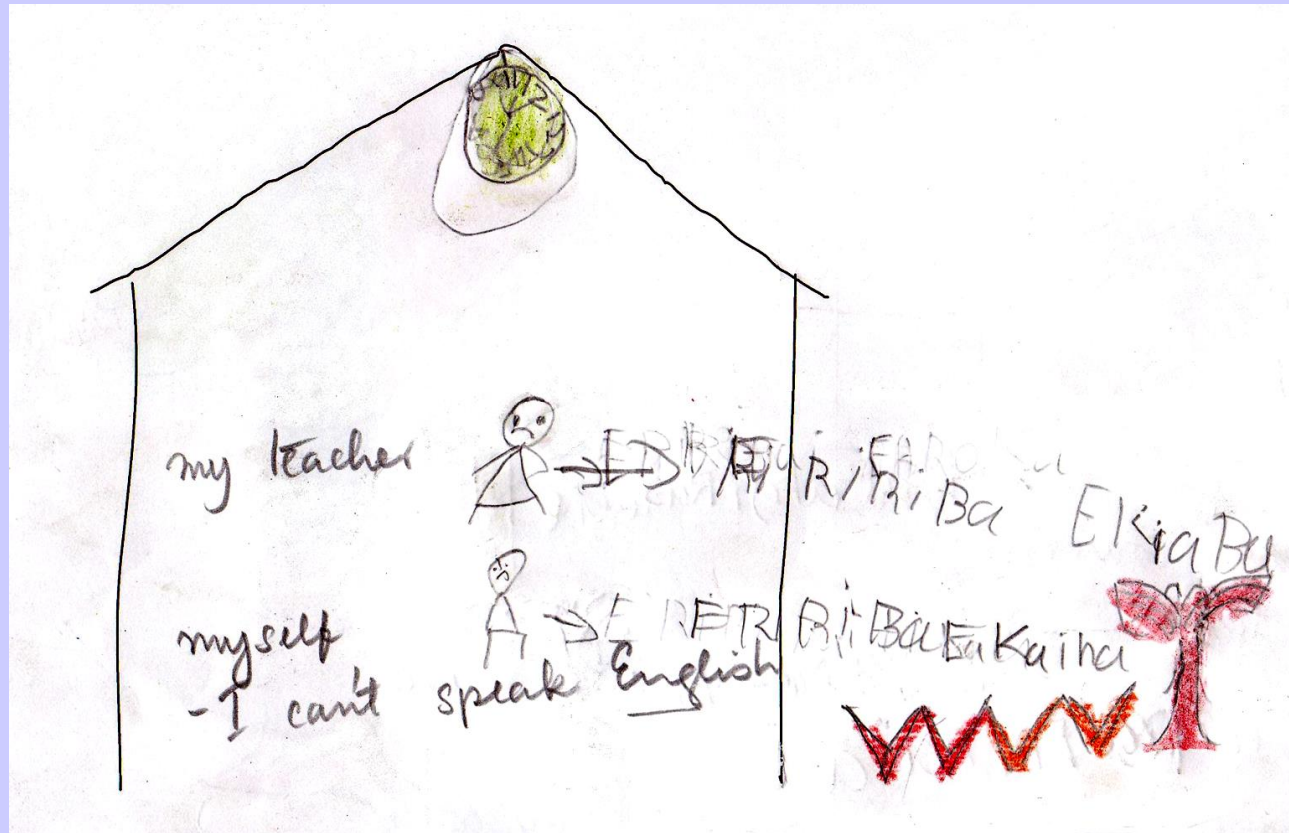
- At age 3, girls given own machetes, care for siblings, carry heavy firewood;
- At age 5, boys and girls make gardens, grow and sell produce;
- At age 5, boys build own small houses.

CRC articles about language (1)

Article 29

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:
 - (c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own.

“respect”



(Abemama, Kiribati)

CRC articles about language (2)

Article 30

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

“right to use”

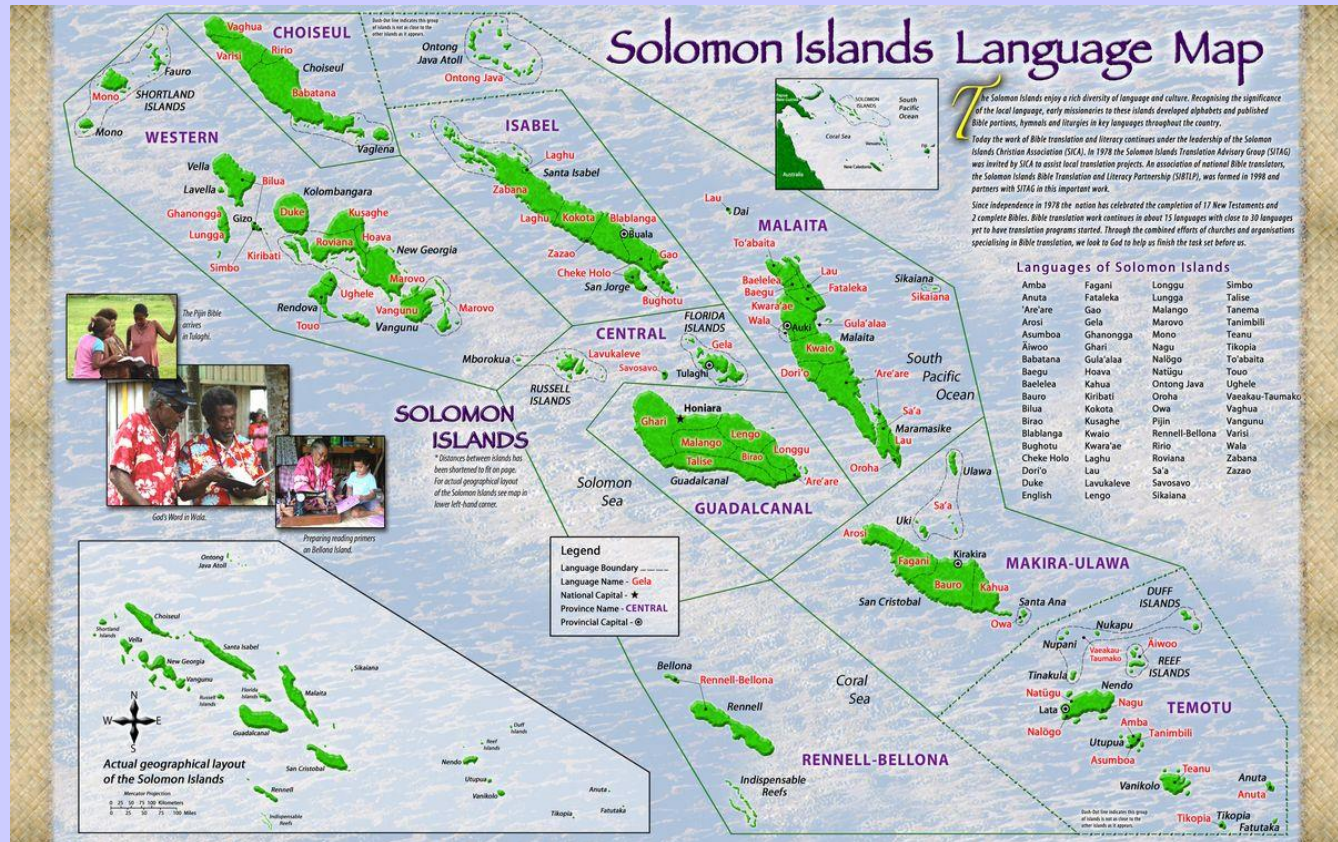


(Tanna, Vanuatu)

<http://silpacific.org/>

- <http://silpacific.org/>

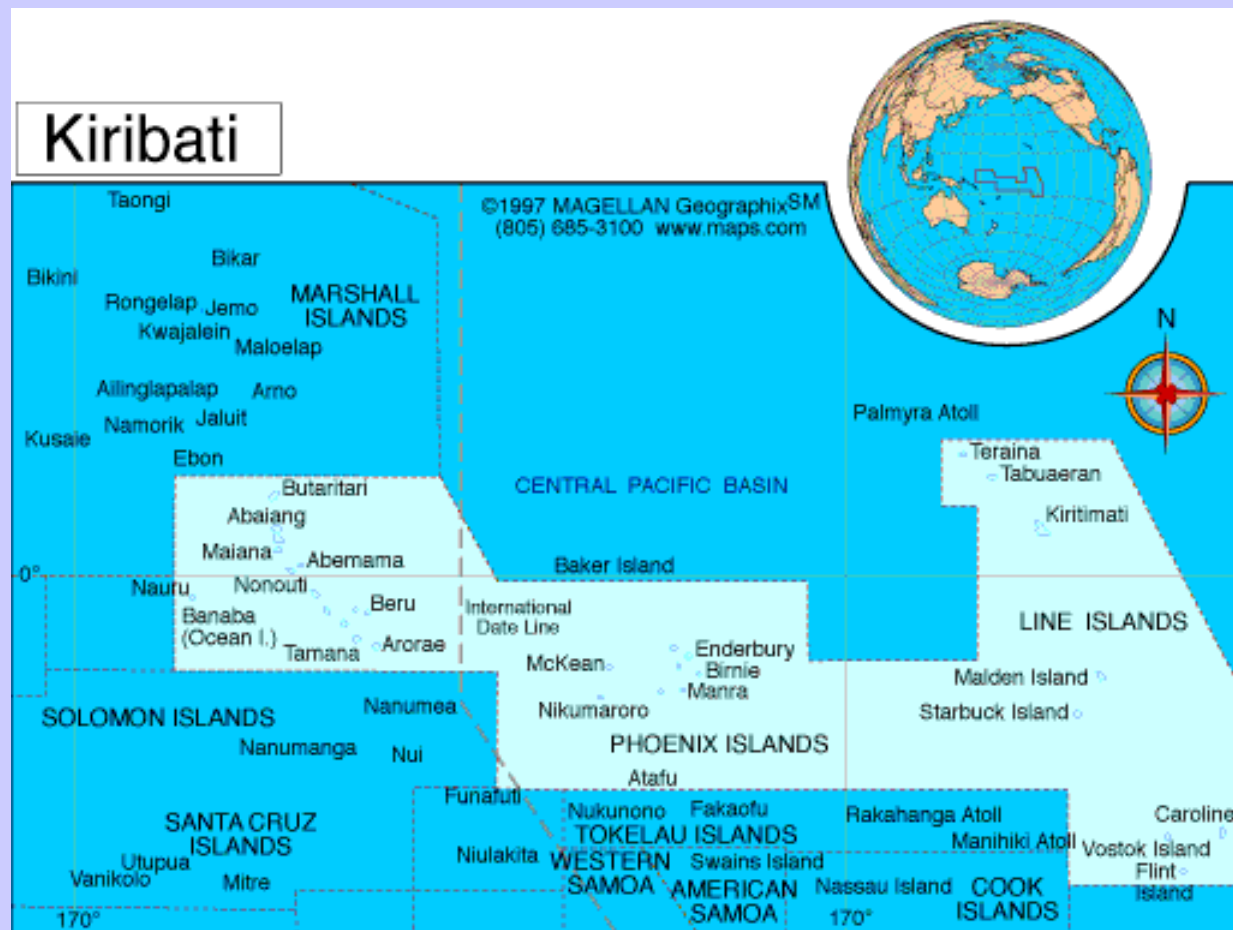
Language in Solomon Is



(SITAG, 2011)

- 515,870 people (2009), 71 languages, + English, + Pijin

Language in Kiribati



- 92,533 people (2005), 1 language, + English

Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education

(UNESCO, 2014)

Key benefits of MTB-MLE:

- **For children:** they engage more in class, respond to teachers' questions, and participate as equals;
- **For parents:** they are able to be involved in their children's learning, support teachers and take part in other school activities;
- **For marginalised communities:** they can retain their own linguistic and cultural identities while proactively engaging with dominant wider cultures;
- **For learning:** better academic results overall, lower dropout rates, and higher fluency levels in both their first language and other official languages;
- **For the system:** better learning means more efficient use of resources, resulting in savings in time (teachers and administrators) and money over the mid/long-term;
- **For livelihoods:** real learning and better language skills means more job opportunities and more peaceful communities.

But...

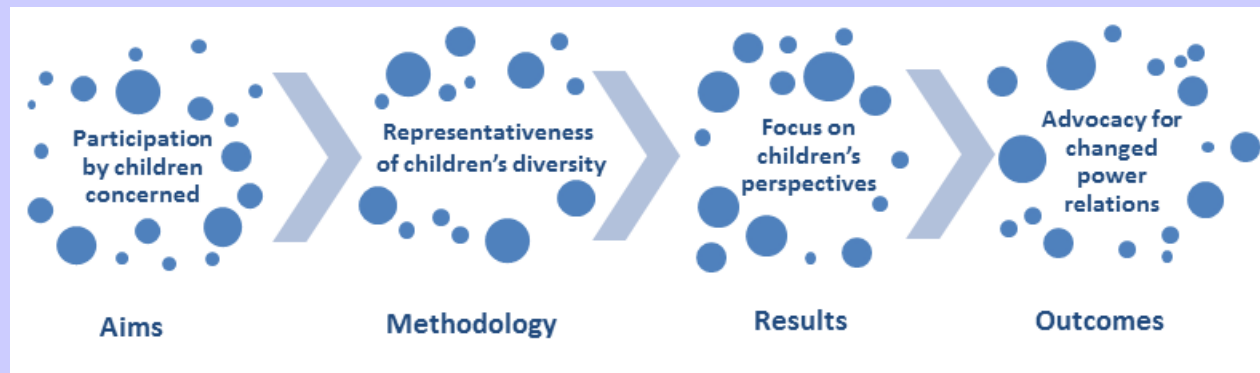
- Policy makers often not aware of this research;
- Donors may wish to promote other languages;
- National languages may be promoted for unity;
- Centralised approaches to teacher education;
- No economies of scale in materials development.

(World Bank, 2005)

A children's rights approach to language policy?

- Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo (2002, p. 323) called for ‘a rethinking of “language” in the concept of “language policy”’
- ‘for the Kwara‘ae and other rural SI-ers, language is inseparable from culture, which is inseparable from indigenous epistemology.’ (p. 323)
- ‘Language is the medium for transformation, and in being so, itself is transformed... it is only when people think in a language—i.e. a symbol system—which they fully understand that this transformation can occur.’ (pp. 312-313)

Children's participation



Tanggio, Ko rabwa, Tangkyu



We acknowledge the generous and thoughtful participation in this study by the children and their school communities from our research locations in Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Kiribati.

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