

Blueprint for the Use of Evidence in Language of Instruction (LoI) Decisions (BUILD) Mozambique Report

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Acronym List

AIR	American Institutes for Research
ANA	Avaliação Nacional da Aprendizagem (National Assessment of Learning Achievement)
APaL	Aprender a Ler
BE	Bilingual Education
BLTM	Bilingual Learning Trajectory Model
BUILD	Blueprint for the Use of Evidence in Language of Instruction Decisions
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
EEEB	Estratégia de Expansão do Ensino Bilingue
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
FASE	Fundo de Apoio ao Sector da Educação
FLN	Foundational Literacy and Numeracy
GCC	Joint Coordination Group (Grupo de Coordenação Conjunta)
IFP	Instituto de Formação de Professores (Teacher Training Institute)
INDE	Instituto Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação
INE	Instituto Nacional de Estatística
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LITES	Language of Instruction Transition in Education Systems
LoI	Language of Instruction
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MIS	Management Information System
MT	Mother Tongue
NELIMO	Núcleo de Estudo de Línguas Moçambicanas

NLA	National Learning Assessment
PD	Professional Development
PEE	Plano Estratégico da Educação
PCEP	Plano Curricular do Ensino Primário
RAR	Reunião Anual de Revisão (Annual Review Meeting)
SABER	Improving Learning Outcomes in Primary Education
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (Assessment Program)
SEACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (Consortium)
SDI	Service Delivery Indicators
SIGE	Sistema de Informação para Gestão da Educação
SIMEC	Sistema de Monitoria e Estatística da Educação e Cultura
SoBR	Science of Bilingual Reading
TLM	Teaching and Learning Materials
UEM	Universidade Eduardo Mondlane
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ZIP	Zona de Influência Pedagógica

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Executive Summary

The American Institutes for Research® (AIR), in collaboration with the Gates Foundation and national stakeholders, developed a language of instruction (LoI) framework for Mozambique as part of the Blueprint for the Use of Evidence in Language of Instruction Decisions (BUILD) project. This report offers a comprehensive analysis of the evidence and a suggested roadmap for improving foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) outcomes through bilingual education (BE) in Mozambique based on the BUILD framework.

Mozambique stands out as one of the few African nations actively pursuing a scalable bilingual education strategy. The current policy promotes a gradual transition in which Portuguese (L2) progressively becomes the LoI, culminating by Grade 6 when all subjects are taught in Portuguese except for the local language (L1), which is maintained as a subject. This approach is well-aligned with global research on the cognitive science of bilingual reading and evidence-based practice.

Over the past three decades, Mozambique has made notable progress in advancing BE, demonstrating strong policy commitment and innovative programming. However, opportunities remain to strengthen implementation systems. Currently, the education sector does not yet have comprehensive national data on teacher and student language proficiency, and standardized benchmarks for FLN outcomes in both L1 and L2 languages are underdeveloped. Much of the existing evidence base stems from successful donor-supported initiatives such as *Vamos Ler!* (Let's Read!), Improving Learning Outcomes in Primary Education (SABER), and Language of Instruction Transition in Education Systems (LITES), which offer valuable insights but are not fully institutionalized within national systems.

Teacher professional development and deployment is another critical issue. Many educators are assigned to classrooms without adequate proficiency in the local language or training in bilingual pedagogy. While the new 12+3 training model introduces bilingual components, most teachers were trained under older frameworks that did not prepare them for multilingual instruction. In-service training remains short, inconsistent, underfunded, and not always in line with the most recent theories and science of bilingual reading.

Instructional materials, particularly national teaching and learning materials, reflect a structured analytic–synthetic approach in L1, with oral Portuguese introduced gradually, particularly in BE classrooms. However, shortages and inconsistencies in pedagogical approaches, especially in upper primary grades, continue to hinder effective implementation. Community engagement, though promising in some areas, is uneven and heavily reliant on external funding. It is also not systematically tailored to bilingualism and non-literate

caregivers. School councils and local organizations have played vital roles, but their sustainability is uncertain.

Mozambique’s monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are robust in design but limited in execution. The Education Strategic Plan (PEE 2020–2029) outlines mechanisms for data collection and review, yet national assessments lack linguistic granularity, and EMIS systems do not track key variables like teacher language proficiency or classroom-level LoI fidelity.

The BUILD framework assesses Mozambique’s progress across six key components. The country is rated as “Developing” in FLN goals and LoI policy, curriculum and materials, and M&E. It is “Emerging” in evidence and data use, teacher recruitment and placement, professional development, and community engagement.

To address these gaps, the report recommends several strategic actions:

- Convene a workshop with key stakeholders to define “transition” in bilingual terms and in line with the science of bilingual reading.
- Build a national bilingual data spine by integrating teacher language proficiency, student home language, and LoI fidelity into EMIS and supervision platforms.
- Increase teacher professional development trainings and modules aligned with the science of bilingual reading.
- Implement language proficiency screening for teachers and align deployment with linguistic needs.
- Shift toward explicit and systematic phonics-based instruction and revise teaching and learning materials using a science of bilingual model as scientific framework.
- Strengthen school councils and develop mother tongue literacy events and oral language support tools for caregivers.
- Institutionalize LoI fidelity audits, publish bilingual FLN dashboards, and embed rapid evaluations into the annual review cycle.

With these reforms, Mozambique is positioned to become a continental leader in bilingual education, leveraging scientific evidence, stakeholder engagement, and system-level innovation to address the global foundational learning crisis.

Introduction

Foundational learning—the ability to read and do basic arithmetic—has a profound influence on lifelong learning and earning potential.¹ However, millions of children across low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are nowhere near acquiring foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) skills.² While this problem includes many facets, language plays a central role. At least half—and in some countries over 90%—of all children in LMICs are being taught in languages they do not use and understand.^{3,4} Most children will have to learn to read at least two languages in their schooling years, making **bilingual and multilingual foundational learning** the norm across LMICs.

The fact that students need to learn in their own language to acquire foundational skills is not only intuitive but backed by evidence from across the world and from across disciplines.^{5,6,7} The benefits include better cognitive and learning outcomes in *both* the first language (L1) and in the second (or later acquired) language (L2);^{8,9} prolonged school attendance, more engagement from parents and communities;¹⁰ and some evidence of cost efficiency.^{11,12}

At the same time, education stakeholders increasingly demand access to education in a child's L2—most often a post-colonial language—earlier in their educational trajectory, given the strong relationship between skills in these languages and socioeconomic mobility.^{13,14} Governments often opt to educate children *only* in the post-colonial language. In addition, varying political agendas cause the sociopolitical milieu affecting LoI choices to constantly shift.¹⁵ Therefore, decisions related to which language(s) to teach in, for how long, and to what end must be both politically palatable and empirically effective to improve FLN outcomes.

To support these decisions, there is an urgent need to treat FLN goals through the lens of bilingualism and multilingualism—not by framing the question of the acquisition of one language against another but by promoting learning outcomes in bilingual and multilingual education contexts. Decision makers need a systematic framework that politically and empirically reconcile this tension between the need to teach children in a familiar language for as long as possible and the need to teach children in an unfamiliar language as early as possible.

To meet this need, American Institutes for Research® (AIR), in collaboration with the Gates Foundation, has developed the **Blueprint for the Use of evidence In Language of instruction (LoI) Decisions (BUILD)** to provide an *empirically grounded and politically workable* framework to guide decision makers to improve bilingual and multilingual foundational literacy outcomes across LMICs. We are working closely with education decision makers and stakeholders across four countries in sub-Saharan Africa—Cote d'Ivoire, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Senegal—to

apply the BUILD project framework and create actionable blueprints in each country to help leaders improve foundational learning outcomes.

Objectives

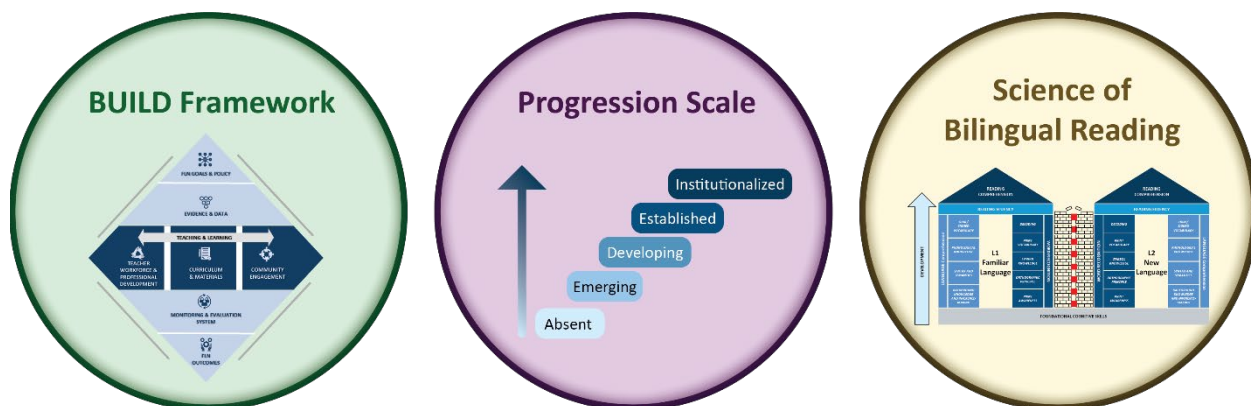
The main objective of the BUILD project is to support governments and education stakeholders to make effective LoI decisions to improve foundational literacy outcomes in their countries. BUILD aims to bring holistic understanding about how language is at the heart of improving foundational learning outcomes, including empirical, practical, and political considerations at key levels of the education system. The BUILD project specifically focuses on the question: ***What language(s) are educators going to use to overcome the foundational learning crisis in a specific country, and—once that is decided—how?***

This perspective allows us to overcome the consistent and prevalent issue of either advocating for instruction solely in children’s familiar languages without much foresight into the transition process or focusing solely on the post-colonial language without much planning for the integration of the familiar languages to better support foundational learning outcomes. The BUILD project also aims to support decision makers to get a better sense of how different bilingual education models¹⁶ may be effective given all aspects of a country’s education system.

Overarching BUILD Approach

Our approach to this work includes the development of three components (see Figure 1) – the BUILD framework, the BUILD progression scale, and the theoretical model for the Science of Bilingual Reading (SoBR), also known as AIR’s Biliteracy House Model. The **BUILD framework** (Figure 2) encompasses the components of the educational system that will influence the relationship between language and learning. The **progression scale** (Table 1) helps track a country’s progress on the path toward effective integration of language considerations into solving learning poverty. The **theoretical model** (Biliteracy House; Figure 3) outlines the scientific underpinning of reading acquisition in bilingual contexts, which is central to all other decisions. Bringing these together, the BUILD project provides stakeholders with a blueprint for achieving the desired foundational literacy outcomes in bilingual and multilingual contexts.

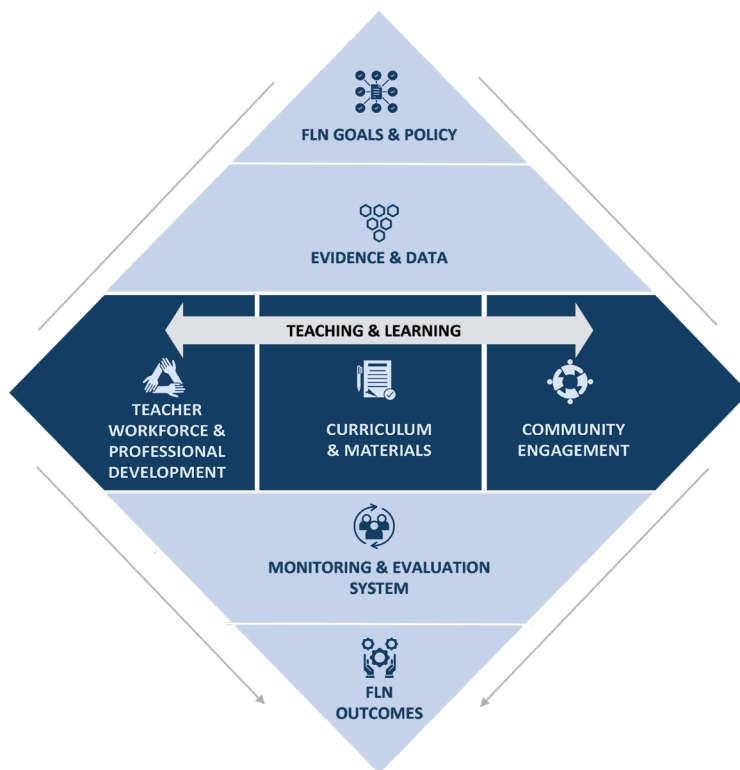
Figure 1. BUILD approach



The BUILD Framework

The BUILD framework (see Figure 2) is designed as a series of tiers, representing the core components of the education system that are likely to influence the relationship between language and learning. The tiers are arranged in a diamond shape from top to bottom, with arrows indicating improvement of FLN outcomes as the overall goal. The top tier and the bottom tier are narrower than the center as they represent more focused topics: the FLN goals (topmost tier) and FLN outcomes (bottommost tier). These are presumably the most important components but the least “expansive” in terms of the components and concepts they cover—and thus are represented as taking up less space. As we work down the model toward the middle, the conceptual coverage increases, with the center of the model being the widest, as it represents the largest sections of the system together. These pieces work in tandem conceptually and temporally and are therefore represented next to each other as

Figure 2. BUILD framework



opposed to above or below each other. In other words, curriculum and materials, teacher professional development (PD), and community components are all pieces of the education system that must be effective and functional at the same time. Each represents a large swathe of ideas, people, and materials involved, justifying its central and wide space in the model. In the following sections, we discuss each tier and present a set of questions that guide us in unpacking and understanding that tier in each country.

FLN Goals and Policy

The top tier, FLN goals and policy, represents the key objectives and policies that guide national education decision making at the primary-school level in terms of foundational learning. While foundational learning itself may or may not be part of the policy, there is an increasing presence of the term (or similar terms such as “early reading,” “early math,” or “basic education outcomes”) in policy documents and policy dialog, propelled in large part by evidence for its centrality in lifelong outcomes.¹⁷



The reason the BUILD framework uses “FLN goals” rather than “LoI goals” or another term that focuses solely on language is that the separation of language policies and FLN policies is part of the problem with identifying how to improve FLN outcomes (the top of the diamond) across the remaining systemic components of an education system. Decision makers need effective tools and guidance to articulate and define a country’s FLN goals *through language*. In other words, national FLN goals (e.g., “the objective of all children reading”) should clearly state the language(s) in which students should achieve learning goals (e.g., “all children will be reading in X language[s]”). At a minimum, policymakers must understand and articulate the language(s) in which students should achieve their goals.

In addition, each BUILD country report will provide a brief historical analysis of the LoI policies, stakeholder analyses, and key roadblocks in its implementation. FLN goals and policies are not static concepts. They are rooted in deep historical, cultural, and sociopolitical realities that constantly shift and influence each other over time.¹⁸ The key questions that we aim to answer under this tier are:

What are the country’s language-specific FLN goals?

What is the LoI policy (if there is one)?

What are the pertinent political realities that might affect the LoI policy’s implementation and future sustainability?

Evidence and Data

The second tier of the BUILD framework represents evidence and data on the status of learning and language use in the country. It represents a compilation of and secondary analysis of the extant data that our team could access at the time of publication of this report. It incorporates, for example, results on students' early grade reading or math scores, language abilities of students and teachers, empirical information on when children are best able to transfer from learning in one language to learning in another (if available), and the orthographic and linguistic properties of the languages students are expected to learn. This information helps us understand various aspects of the transfer of language and reading skills and timings of learning trajectories.



Too often, the generation, analysis, and application of evidence occurs in a vacuum, wherein the linkage to actual implementation and practice remains untapped. Filling this gap between the production of rigorous evidence and policymakers' use and demand of evidence is one of the bedrocks of the BUILD approach. By incorporating this step within the framework, stakeholders can see multidisciplinary results (or gaps in the evidence) for the most pertinent questions to developing and successfully implementing an Lol policy that is likely to improve FLN scores.

The following questions guide this section:

What are learners' current FLN levels across different languages, and how are these assessed?

What languages do teachers and learners understand best, and how do these align with the current languages of instruction (Lol)?

What factors influence first language (L1)–second language (L2) transfer and transition processes?

Data on the first question will allow stakeholders to assess whether and to what extent they are on track to achieving their FLN goals, get a better sense of indicators they need to measure for bilingual students, and help determine in what language(s) they should test students' FLN skills.

The second question helps us understand the *degree of proficiency* both students and teachers have in various languages. Most reports and available information tend to focus on children's FLN skills in a single language (most often the Lol). This makes it impossible to determine whether they have better skills in another language, whether they have skills in two or more

languages, whether the level of their skill is strongest in the measured language, etc. Measuring skills in only one language also makes it difficult to judge the extent of linguistic heterogeneity across students in a class. Furthermore, the lack of rigorous evidence on teacher skills—in terms of their own linguistic proficiency levels in the language they are teaching, as well as their pedagogical competence in teaching that language—is a serious impediment to effective teacher placement and training processes. Ultimately, classrooms should have as close a match as possible between the LoI, the proficiency levels of the teachers in both speaking/using that language and teaching that language, and the language proficiency of the majority of students (ideally *all*).

The third question focuses on the evidence that exists on L1–L2 transfer in the languages of the focus country and the impact of this evidence on the development of curricula, teacher training materials, and teaching and learning materials (TLMs). Most early learning programs treat L1 and L2 as separate entities, with many focused on improving national language education and others focused on supporting governments to implement a program in the post-colonial language. In the evidence and data tier, we aim to draw on the evidence of transfer between languages, orthographic and phonological processes that may affect such transfer, and other cognitive and linguistic processes (such as thresholds for transfer, thresholds for vocabulary, etc.) that may be necessary to plan and implement a program that accounts for bilingualism and multilingualism from the beginning.

Teaching and Learning

The central tier focuses on the heart of the education system in many ways—the teachers, curriculum and materials, and parents and communities—all of which support foundational learning outcomes in tandem.



In terms of teacher workforce, it is vital that teachers are placed in schools where they have high levels of proficiency in the language(s) they are expected to teach, as well as high levels of pedagogical skills to teach the language(s) they are expected to teach. In addition, teachers need training to teach bilingual children, in line with the science of bilingual reading (SoBR). This requires a deep analysis of existing pre-service and in-service professional development (PD) opportunities regarding multilingual teaching.

At the classroom level, learning outcomes are only as good as the teachers and the teaching and learning materials (TLMs) they use. Growing evidence specifies some of the key elements that support good teaching and learning in LMICs. For example, education systems need a strong link between policy expectations and classroom realities.¹⁹ To be effective, systems also need a combination of teacher trainings, high-quality student learning materials, and clear teacher support for teaching and learning.²⁰ What is less clear, however, is how educators should design and implement these materials in bilingual or multilingual programming. In the BUILD framework, we closely examine the TLMs considering the SoBR and ensure that the curriculum, scope and sequence of skills, pacing guides, and all materials in the classroom align with this theoretical foundation.

The role of communities in supporting literacy is well established, especially the role of parents and caregivers and the home language and literacy environment.^{21,22,23} However, the conceptualization of the home literacy environment and parental involvement (especially in cases of nonliterate parents and mismatches between home and school language) needs careful consideration.^{24,25} As such, for any policy framework to connect with student-level outcomes, it is important to consider community-level engagements and perceptions toward bilingual education. The BUILD framework considers issues such as parental perceptions, especially in terms of demand for language education vis a vis post-colonial language education, the language mismatch between schools and homes, and the degree of parental literacy skills. Together, these dimensions can help leverage resources for nonliterate community members (e.g., by using transferable skills from oral language storytelling) and for places of language mismatch (e.g., by supporting the transfer of home language skills to school language skills).

The following questions guide this tier:

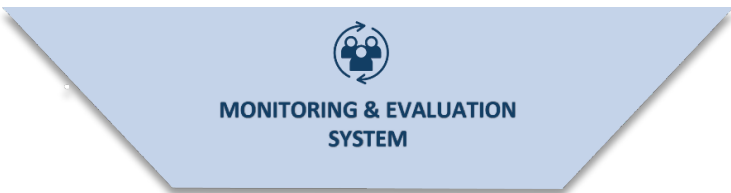
How are language considerations integrated into teacher recruitment, placement, and training (both pre-service and in-service)?

To what extent are the curriculum and TLMs designed to support bilingual and multilingual learners?

How are parents and community members involved in decisions about the LoI?

Monitoring and Evaluation System

In a previous tier of the BUILD framework, we covered evidence and data – which represented an analysis and understanding of the evidence at any given moment in time. In addition, an education system must be able to track, understand, improve, and sustain FLN outcomes over time. A functioning measurement and evaluation (M&E) system ensures that each tier of the education system functions as intended and progresses toward the overarching FLN outcomes.



We conceptualize the M&E tier as a continuous process of data collection, analysis, and data use by system actors to inform programs and interventions to improve learning outcomes. This tier explores whether the country’s M&E mechanisms effectively assess the clarity, dissemination, and implementation of FLN goals and policies. It also examines if the M&E systems evaluate the effectiveness of teacher PD, the appropriateness and use of curriculum and materials, and the extent of community engagement. These assessments help identify areas for improvement and inform iterative adjustments to program implementation. Importantly, M&E also supports accountability by providing stakeholders with timely, actionable insights that can guide decision making and resource allocation.

This tier will be guided by the following questions:

- Does the country have a regularly updated M&E plan, and are there national or subnational mechanisms to use these data for continuous improvement in FLN outcomes?*
- To what extent does M&E incorporate linguistic considerations, including data on teachers’ and learners’ Lol?*
- How are M&E findings used to inform and revise curriculum, teacher training, and Lol policies?*

By embedding M&E within the BUILD framework, the model promotes a culture of evidence-based practice and continuous improvement, ensuring that all components respond to the dynamic needs of learners and the education system.

The BUILD Progression Scale

Within each tier, BUILD will support countries to determine their level of development and lead that into an action plan through the BUILD Progression Scale, as shown in Table 1. The purpose

of this scale is to consider each BUILD tier within the country context and—based on the analysis of the available evidence—decide the level at which countries are prepared to institutionalize their FLN goals.

The **BUILD Progression Scale** serves as a diagnostic and planning tool that enables countries to assess their readiness to improve FLN goals through their Lol policies and systems. Organized into five developmental stages—Absent, Emerging, Developing, Established, and Institutionalized—the scale reflects a country’s journey from fragmented or nonexistent efforts to full integration of Lol within national education systems. Each stage highlights progress across key system components: policy, teacher workforce, professional development, curriculum and materials, community engagement, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Countries may be at different stages for different criteria; for example, a country may be at the “Institutionalized” stage for its FLN goals and Lol policy but at the “Absent” stage for its teacher recruitment and placement practices.

At the **Absent** stage, countries lack an official Lol policy to support FLN goals. Teacher recruitment and placement practices do not consider language skills, and educators receive no training to accommodate Lol to understand and improve FLN goals. Instructional materials in relevant languages do not exist, and the curriculum fails to reflect linguistic realities. No systems exist for monitoring learning or evaluating language-related teaching practices. Communities do not engage in conversations about language in education, and parents do not know which languages schools use or why they matter for learning.

The **Emerging** stage marks the beginning of awareness and early action related to language. An Lol policy may exist, but it is often fragmented or poorly aligned with FLN goals. Teacher recruitment practices may acknowledge, but not yet operationalize, language dynamics. Training on multilingual instruction is minimal and insufficient for teacher preparedness. Some instructional materials begin to reflect language considerations, but they are inconsistent and limited in scope. Community engagement is largely one-way, consisting of awareness campaigns or information sharing, with minimal opportunities for parent or community input. Monitoring systems, where they exist, focus on outputs rather than learning outcomes.

At the **Developing** stage, countries demonstrate increased commitment to incorporating evidence related to language needs. Countries have more clearly defined Lol policies, which they back by government action. Teacher recruitment and placement practices begin to consider language backgrounds more systematically, though gaps remain. Pre-service and in-service training become more robust, incorporating both theoretical and practical strategies for teaching in multilingual classrooms. Instructional materials and curricula begin to reflect the SoBR and students’ language contexts. Education systems consult communities through

activities such as language mapping or early reading initiatives but do not fully consider their input for decision making. Policymakers monitor student learning outcomes, although they do not consistently use data to refine strategies.

The **Established** stage is characterized by coherent and systematic implementation of evidence-based practices related to bilingual and multilingual learning. Clear operational guidelines and implementation structures accompany the Lol policy. The linguistic context informs teacher placement practices, and training systems integrate comprehensive professional development related to L1 teaching and transition. Instructional materials and curricula align with multilingual pedagogy and the SoBR. M&E systems produce data on learning outcomes, which decision makers use to adapt and improve policies and practices. Education systems engage communities strategically by empowering families to support learning in home languages. Local leaders may contribute to school governance or teacher support, thus reinforcing Lol implementation.

At the **Institutionalized** stage, national systems deeply embed evidence-based Lol considerations. Education leaders routinely review and adapt all components of the education system, from policy to practice, in alignment with FLN goals. Teacher training is dynamic and responsive to shifting linguistic and demographic realities. Educators regularly update high-quality, evidence-based instructional materials. M&E systems track both immediate outcomes and long-term impacts of Lol policies, thus supporting data-driven decision making. Community engagement is no longer a peripherality, a formalized and valued part of the education ecosystem. Parents and community members actively shape curriculum, materials, and school governance, ensuring that language choices reflect and support learners' needs.

Ultimately, the BUILD Progression Scale underscores that effective implementation of Lol policies requires comprehensive system-level reform. It depends on sustained political commitment, investment in teachers, high-quality resources, strong accountability systems, and genuine partnerships with the communities that schools serve.

Table 1. BUILD progression scale

Component	Absent	Emerging	Developing	Established	Institutionalized
FLN goal(s) and Lol policy	No official Lol policy is in place to reach the FLN goal(s).	An Lol policy exists, but it is vague, fragmented, or not aligned with the FLN goal(s).	An Lol policy is defined, with growing government commitment and early implementation to achieve the FLN goal(s).	An Lol policy is applied in practice and supported by implementation structures in support of the FLN goal(s).	An Lol policy is embedded in national education systems and reviewed regularly in alignment with the FLN goal(s).
Evidence and data	Education stakeholders do not use or have access to evidence related to student language skills to inform and adapt policies and practices.	Education stakeholders have access to some data related to student language skills, but the data are only available on a limited scale or have suboptimal quality.	Education stakeholders have access to student language mapping on a large scale, some evidence on language transfer between some L1s and the desired L2, and some other Lol indicators.	Education stakeholders have access to student and teacher language mapping data on a national scale, language transfer data between the most prominent L1s and the desired L2, and data on additional Lol indicators.	Education stakeholders not only have access to language mapping, language threshold data, and other Lol indicators aligned with all BUILD tiers but also regularly use and update those data to inform policies and practices.
Teacher recruitment and placement	No official teacher recruitment or placement plan is in place that accounts for teachers' language skills.	A teacher recruitment and placement plan that accounts for teacher language skills exists, but it is vague, fragmented, and not operationalized.	A teacher recruitment and placement plan exists with a focus on Lol, though it is in early implementation and not fully operationalized.	A strong teacher recruitment and placement plan exists with a focus on Lol and is supported by implementation structures.	A strong teacher recruitment and placement plan that focuses on Lol exists, is embedded in national education systems, and is reviewed regularly in alignment with FLN goal(s).
Teacher PD	Teachers receive no pre-service or in-service training on teaching in multilingual contexts or using national languages for instruction.	Teachers receive limited training on teaching in multilingual contexts or using local Lols, but that training is not sufficient for teachers to feel prepared to teach in local languages.	Teachers receive more notable trainings on teaching in multilingual contexts and using Lols, yet these trainings are not yet comprehensive and system-wide. Some gaps exist in teacher preparedness.	Trainings on teaching in multilingual contexts and using national Lols are integrated extensively into in-service and pre-service teacher training.	Ongoing, adaptive training responds to demographic and linguistic shifts among teachers and learners.
Curriculum and materials	The curriculum does not address multilingual teaching. Instructional materials in local languages are unavailable.	The curriculum addresses multilingual teaching to a minimal extent. Some instructional materials integrate language considerations.	The curriculum and materials incorporate the science of reading for multilingual learners, reflecting students' linguistic contexts. Instructional materials increasingly integrate language considerations.	The curriculum and materials are fully aligned with the science of reading for multilingual learners, reflecting students' linguistic contexts.	A high-quality, regularly updated curriculum and corresponding materials support evolving FLN and Lol goals.
Community engagement	Communities are largely unaware of the benefits of multilingual education. Little or no sensitization efforts are in place. Communities have no tools to support children to read in school languages. Communities are not engaged in supporting education in school languages.	Information-sharing efforts such as awareness campaigns may be in place, but they are not yet at scale with proven effectiveness. Families and communities have limited involvement in supporting multilingual education.	Families and communities are generally aware of the benefits of multilingual education. Communities are somewhat engaged in decisions and/or implementation of multilingual education through, for example, language mapping, focus groups, materials development, or supporting student language and literacy development at home.	Families and communities are largely aware of the benefits of multilingual education. Parents and communities actively support learning in the home language and/or the transition to the L2.	Community engagement and commitment to multilingual education is deep and sustained. Families and community members are continually involved in governance, curriculum feedback, material development, and home language and literacy support.
Monitoring and evaluation	No systems are in place to monitor student learning or assess Lol-related practices.	Some basic monitoring of outputs occurs (e.g., enrollment, textbook distribution) but not of student learning outcomes.	Student learning outcomes are tracked but not yet used to refine or inform Lol strategies.	Outcomes are continuously monitored; early evidence of what works is used to adjust approaches.	Robust systems track learning outcomes, assess the impact of Lol policies, and inform iterative policy adaptation.

The Science of Bilingual Reading

As mentioned above, the BUILD framework is grounded in the science of learning to read. Decades of research have led to several influential theoretical frameworks on learning to read (and reading to learn). Given that our current focus is foundational literacy, we rely on the theories of early reading development. We incorporate well-established theoretical models as well as emerging empirical trends from learning to read across languages and scripts and from across monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual models of learning.

First, in terms of the earliest stages of learning to read, the Universal Grammar of Reading^{xxvi} posits that all writing systems, regardless of language, fundamentally map orthographic (written) to phonological (auditory) information. However, the nature of this mapping varies across languages, influencing how children learn to read. Key dimensions that affect the reading process include:

- orthographic depth (how consistently letters map to sounds),
- symbol set size (the number of unique symbols or graphemes a learner needs to recognize and identify in order to decode words),
- phonological unit size (e.g., syllables vs. phonemes),
- visual complexity of the script, and
- tonality in tonal languages.

These factors are critical in shaping the scope, sequence, and timing of reading instruction.

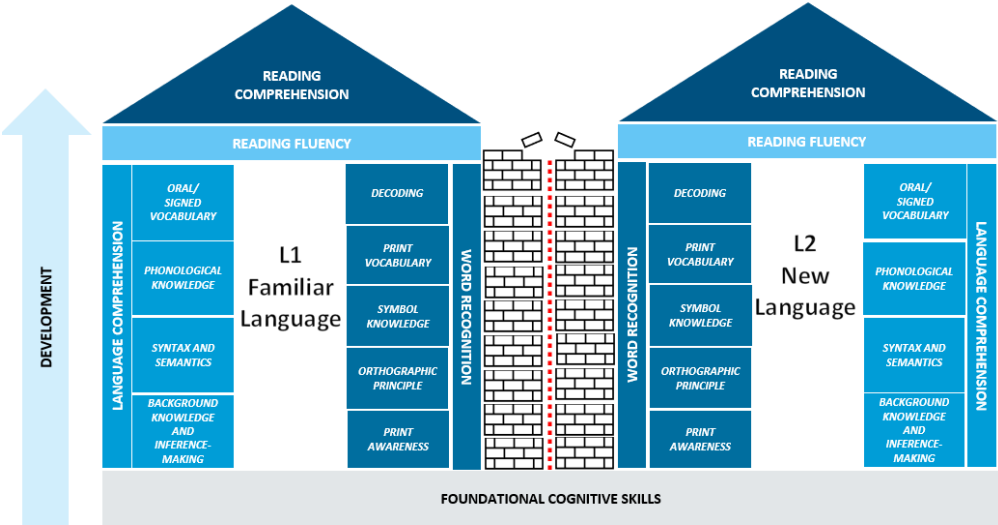
As students' ability develops beyond initial mapping of sounds and symbols toward basic reading comprehension abilities, the Cognitive Foundations of Reading Acquisition Model, articulated by Hoover and Tunmer, provides one of the most influential models of reading comprehension development.^{xxvii} This model, previously articulated by the authors as the Simple View of Reading, emphasizes that reading comprehension in any language depends on the integration of two core skill sets: language proficiency and decoding (or word recognition). Through a review of multiple studies across language types, it is clear that language proficiency includes a series of subskills such as background knowledge and inference making, knowledge of syntax and semantics (including morphological and other skills), phonological knowledge (i.e., understanding of sounds and sound patterns), and oral or signed vocabulary.^{xxviii} Word recognition also includes a series of subskills, including print awareness (i.e., understanding of

the basic principles of text), knowledge of orthographic principles (i.e., understanding of *how* sounds and symbols correspond with each other), symbol knowledge (i.e., understanding exactly *what* sounds correspond with specific symbols), and decoding (i.e., the ability to sound out words and symbols).^{xxix,xxx,xxxi} Language proficiency and decoding then support the acquisition of reading fluency, which is the automatic (quick and accurate) sounding out of words and passages. Altogether, these abilities support reading comprehension—the overall goal of reading comprehension (or foundational literacy).

In bilingual settings, the Transfer Facilitation Model^{xxxii} offers a framework for understanding how L1 and L2 abilities influence reading skills in L2. According to this model, predictable and significant patterns of transfer, cross-linguistic cognitive resource sharing, and transfer facilitation affect literacy acquisition. This means that skills acquired in one language can support and enhance reading development in another, highlighting the interconnected nature of bilingual literacy acquisition. Children who learn to read two or more languages develop a metaphorical “house” for each language, as illustrated in AIR’s Biliteracy House Model (see Figure 3). The model provides an intuitive and metaphorical representation of the skills and subskills (pillars and bricks) and transferable skills (shared walls) needed to support the development of biliteracy acquisition. In these cases, the child’s L1 impacts the development of reading in second or later-acquired languages in significant and predictable ways, namely the transfer of decoding skills from an L1 to an L2 when an empirically defined threshold level is reached.^{xxxiii,xxxiv,xxxv}

The BUILD framework will apply the biliteracy house as its theoretical underpinning for the SoBR, and as such, the model will guide all aspects of our analyses and the development of the country LoI blueprints.

Figure 3. AIR biliteracy house



These theoretical models provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding how children learn to read in bilingual and multilingual contexts. By integrating insights from the Universal Grammar of Reading, the Cognitive Foundations of Reading Acquisition, and the Transfer Facilitation Model, the BUILD framework offers a robust, evidence-based approach to biliteracy development. The Biliteracy House model operationalizes these theories into a practical structure that highlights both language-specific and transferable skills. As the guiding framework for BUILD, it will inform all aspects of our analysis and the design of country-specific LoI blueprints, ensuring that our work is grounded in the science of how children learn to read and read to learn across languages.

Mozambique Country Report

Mozambique, a focus country for the Blueprint for the Use of Evidence in Language-of-Instruction Decisions (BUILD) project, has integrated Mozambican national languages into primary education for more than three decades. After an extended period of experimentation with bilingual education beginning in the early 1990s, the Government of Mozambique has progressively formalized bilingual education as part of the national education system. In 2018, bilingual education was officially recognized under the National Education Law, and in 2019 the Ministry of Education and Culture (Ministério da Educação e Cultura, MEC) adopted the *Estratégia de Expansão do Ensino Bilingue 2020–2029*. This national reform establishes a gradual transition model in which children begin learning in a Mozambican language (L1), while Portuguese (L2) is introduced orally and progressively becomes the primary LoI by the end of primary school. The reform currently covers nineteen Mozambican languages and has expanded to more than two thousand schools nationwide.



AIR, with support from the Gates Foundation through the BUILD project, aims to support education stakeholders in Mozambique to use evidence effectively to guide language-of-instruction decisions as bilingual education expands. There is strong policy-level commitment to improving FLN outcomes through bilingual education, particularly within the MEC and its technical institutions. Mozambique has developed a clear grade-by-grade transition model, a growing body of teaching and learning materials in national languages, and structured approaches to early literacy instruction that leverage children’s home languages while building Portuguese proficiency. Donor-supported initiatives, including *Vamos Ler!*, SABER, and the LITES study, have generated valuable evidence on learning outcomes, instructional practices, and student language profiles.

While bilingual education policy is well articulated and broadly aligned with the science of bilingual reading, challenges remain in teacher deployment, professional development,

instructional coherence, and the availability and use of language-disaggregated data. Given this pivotal moment in Mozambique’s education reform trajectory, this report provides national leaders with an evidence-based and politically sensitive framework to strengthen bilingual education implementation.

The main objective of this country report is to conduct a comprehensive review of the available evidence on the role of LoI in supporting bilingual foundational literacy outcomes in Mozambique. Guided by the BUILD framework, the report seeks to answer the core question of how language decisions can be used most effectively to address the foundational learning crisis, while identifying areas where evidence remains limited or absent. The report synthesizes findings from document reviews, stakeholder consultations, and secondary data analyses, and uses these findings to design a practical blueprint to support national leaders in strengthening bilingual education implementation and improving FLN outcomes. The sections that follow describe the methods used, present key results across each BUILD tier, and outline priority actions to guide Mozambique’s bilingual education roadmap over the coming decade.

Methods

To address the key questions guiding the BUILD framework, we conducted an in-depth desk review of pertinent documents related to basic education and LoI policies and programming, consulted with key stakeholders, and conducted secondary quantitative data analysis on aspects of the BUILD framework related to LoI and foundational learning outcomes.

Document review

Our evidence collection process began with the aggregation of documents and datasets available to the research team from previous and ongoing work related LoI and bilingual education (BE) in Mozambique. This included materials from donor-supported programs and research initiatives focused on foundational learning, BE, and early grade literacy. We worked closely with our national consultant, Professor Feliciano Chimbutane of *Universidade Eduardo Mondlane* (UEM), a leading Mozambican linguist and expert in bilingual education policy and practice, to identify and curate key national documents for desk review. Professor Armindo Ngunga and Mr. David Noyes also served as key contributors to this work. The resulting list spanned all tiers of the BUILD framework and included national education laws, policies, and strategies; academic literature on language use and multilingual education in Mozambique; reports from government agencies, development partners, and nongovernmental organizations; and curricula and teaching and learning materials for both monolingual and bilingual primary education programs.

In total, more than 100 documents were compiled and screened for inclusion in the review (see Annex A). Each document was assessed by a member of the review team—comprising AIR researchers and research assistants with fluency in Portuguese and English—to determine its relevance to the BUILD guiding questions and its timeliness. The screening process involved an initial review of titles and executive summaries or introductions (where available), followed by targeted scanning of document content until sufficient information was obtained to judge relevance. Each document was reviewed independently by at least two team members. In cases of uncertainty, documents were retained for further analysis to avoid prematurely excluding potentially relevant evidence. The document review was further informed by AIR’s institutional knowledge of the Mozambican education system, developed through prior research and technical assistance activities, including work related to Vamos Ler! and LITES study.

Following screening, documents were categorized by tier and sub-tier within the BUILD framework. For example, documents addressing teacher recruitment, deployment, or training were tagged under “Teacher Workforce and Professional Development,” while reports on bilingual program implementation and learning outcomes were tagged across multiple sub-tiers, including “Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) Assessment Data,” “Teaching and Learning Materials,” and “Community Engagement.” For each included document, the review team produced standardized analytical summaries using OpenAI GPT-4.0 to support consistency and efficiency across a large multilingual corpus. These summaries included extracted and, where necessary, translated key findings. All AI-generated summaries were independently reviewed by two team members to verify accuracy against the original source. In cases where inaccuracies or hallucinations were identified, the AI summaries were discarded and replaced with human-generated analyses.

The research team then conducted a manual synthesis of the evidence, drawing on both the standardized summaries and in-depth human review of the most policy-relevant documents. Priority for deeper analysis was given to documents that provided critical information related to the guiding questions, such as national bilingual education policies, teacher training frameworks, curriculum reforms, and large-scale assessments. Documents deemed peripheral to the scope of the study—for example, those focused exclusively on adult literacy or nonformal education—were excluded from detailed synthesis. Where gaps in the evidence base were identified, additional documents were sourced through targeted online searches and follow-up requests to national experts and stakeholders.

This approach enabled the team to process a broad and diverse body of literature while maintaining analytical rigor and transparency. By combining systematic screening, structured AI-assisted summarization, and careful human review, the methodology balanced efficiency

with depth, ensuring that the resulting evidence synthesis is both comprehensive and grounded in the Mozambican education context.

Stakeholder Consultations

The AIR research team, in collaboration with national experts, including Feliciano Chimbutane, Armindo Ngunga, and David Noyes drew on their deep expertise in Mozambique’s bilingual education policy and practice to identify and engage key stakeholders through individual interviews, consultations, and workshops. Stakeholders were selected to ensure representation across technical, policy, academic, and implementation perspectives, and to provide coverage of all tiers of the BUILD framework. The consultation list included senior officials from MEC, curriculum and assessment specialists, teacher training officials, and university-based researchers with long-standing involvement in bilingual education reform.

Using the BUILD consultation guide (see Annex B), the project director, national consultant, and AIR staff conducted a series of in-person and virtual consultations with education stakeholders to gather insights on language-of-instruction policy, implementation challenges, evidence use, and system capacity. These consultations were informed by AIR’s prior and ongoing work in Mozambique, including collaboration with MEC on bilingual education workshops, analysis conducted under the LITES study, and evidence generated through donor-supported literacy initiatives such as *Vamos Ler!* and SABER.

Stakeholders consulted included:

- **Graça Cumbe Mangole**, Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), Deputy National Director
- **Plaquicédia Chafota**, MEC, Head of the Bilingual Education Sector
- **Patrício Jonasse**, Instituto Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação (INDE), Head of the Evaluation Department
- **Egídio Monjane**, INDE, Head of the Bilingual Education Sector
- **Mário Armando**, MEC, National Deputy Director for Teacher Training
- **Renato Mufemane**, MEC, Teacher Training Technician
- **Carlos Manuel**, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (UEM), Lecturer and Researcher; consultant for *Vamos Ler!* and SABER programs
- **David Langa**, UEM, Lecturer and Researcher; bilingual education consultant

Secondary Quantitative Data

In addition to the desk review and primary data collected through stakeholder consultations and in-person meetings, we conducted secondary quantitative analyses of multiple datasets to examine issues relevant to all BUILD tiers and components. These analyses focused on levels of foundational literacy in first and second languages (L1 and L2), biliteracy indicators, language mapping and transfer patterns, and teacher and classroom practices, to the extent permitted by data availability. The datasets used for this analysis are described below.

Service Delivery Indicators (SDI). The SDI surveys are nationally representative assessments designed to measure the quality of service delivery in the education and health sectors across Sub-Saharan Africa and other regions. Initiated by the World Bank in collaboration with partner institutions, SDI surveys focus on what frontline providers know, what they do, and the resources available to them. In Mozambique, SDI education surveys were implemented in 2014 and 2018. The education module assesses teacher subject knowledge and pedagogical skills using tests aligned with the Grade 4 curriculum, measures instructional time through unannounced school visits that capture teacher absenteeism and time-on-task, and documents the availability of key inputs such as textbooks and basic infrastructure. The surveys also collect information on school management and accountability mechanisms, including inspections and record-keeping practices. In some contexts, SDI includes direct student assessments in literacy and numeracy, allowing links between service delivery and learning outcomes. Together, these indicators provide a comprehensive picture of key system-level drivers of learning in primary education.

Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ). SACMEQ surveys are large-scale, cross-national assessments that measure the quality of education in primary schools across Southern and Eastern Africa. Conducted by Ministries of Education with technical support from SACMEQ and UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), these surveys assess learning outcomes and contextual factors for Grade 6 students and their teachers. SACMEQ evaluates pupil performance in reading and mathematics using standardized tests aligned with national curricula and assesses teacher knowledge in the same subjects, enabling comparisons between student achievement and teacher capacity. Mozambique has participated in multiple SACMEQ rounds—SACMEQ I (2000), SACMEQ II (2007), SACMEQ III (2013), and SACMEQ IV (2023)—though the most recent round experienced delays and more limited coverage.

National Assessment of Learning Achievement (ANA). Mozambique's National Assessment of Learning Achievement (Avaliação Nacional da Aprendizagem, ANA) is a nationally administered assessment conducted by the MEC to monitor learning outcomes in the early grades of primary

education. The ANA focuses on foundational literacy and numeracy skills among Grade 3 students, assessing competencies such as alphabetic knowledge, word and sentence reading, reading comprehension, and basic mathematical operations. In addition to student achievement, the ANA collects contextual information on teachers, classroom practices, learning materials, language of instruction, and student background characteristics, enabling disaggregated analyses by region, gender, and other equity dimensions. Mozambique has conducted several ANA rounds since the early 2000s, with major assessments in 2013, 2016, and 2024. The most recent publicly available results are from 2016 and assessed students only in Portuguese. The 2024 ANA included assessments in Mozambican languages, though results had not yet been released at the time of this report.

USAID LITES study. We also analyzed data from the USAID-funded LITES study to examine student language profiles, language use in classrooms, and student and teacher attitudes toward L1 and L2 instruction. The study sampled 1,178 students and 129 teachers in Grades 3 and 4 across 60 schools in Maputo and Nampula provinces. Data collection, conducted in June 2023, included Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) based student assessments, teacher surveys, and classroom observations. Assessments were administered in Emakhuwa, Xichangana, or Xizronga as L1 and in Portuguese as L2. While the data are not nationally representative, they provide valuable insights into the relationship between school conditions, language use, and literacy outcomes across languages.

USAID *Vamos Ler!* results. Finally, we analyzed data from the USAID-funded *Vamos Ler!* (Let's Read!), a five-year USAID-funded program designed to strengthen early grade literacy in Mozambique. The program focused on improving reading fluency and comprehension among Grades 1–3 students in Nampula and Zambézia provinces through instruction in Mozambican languages, specifically Emakhuwa, Elomwe, and Echuwabo. For this report, we used data from the program's language mapping studies to analyze how well students in Grades 1 and 3 speak and understand the languages they report knowing, and how these language profiles align with the languages used for instruction in their schools.

EVIDENCE REVIEW RESULTS BY TIER

Using the data sources and methods described above, we present the findings to our key guiding questions, by tier in the BUILD framework.

FLN Goals and Language Policy

In this section, we provide evidence from stakeholder insights and the available literature on the historical, political, and sociocultural factors that influence the current FLN goals and policies in Mozambique and facilitators and barriers to future implementation and scalability of the bilingual education goals and policies.

Country FLN Goals & Language Policy

We address each question in the FLN goals and policy tier of the BUILD framework in turn, beginning with the first two questions:



What are the country's language-specific FLN goals?

What is the Lol policy, if there is one?

Mozambique is a multilingual country with as many as 40 languages, depending on how they are counted.^{xxxvi} While estimates vary, 19 of these languages are currently recognized within the education system. The country has a long history of implementing policies that prioritize Portuguese in education, equating it with being 'civilized' and mandating its use as the compulsory Lol through the Native Assistance Code of 1921, a policy reaffirmed in 1975.^{xxxvii,xxxviii} Historically, therefore Portuguese has been the official Lol nationwide, despite being a home language for a very small minority of children.^{xxxix}

Since 1990, however, and then revised again in 2004, the Constitution recognized the need to preserve, develop, and use Mozambican languages in the educational system, even though it continued to recognize Portuguese as the official language. These provisions created spaces for bilingual education (BE) pilot projects and for the development of legislative and normative documents that include the use of Mozambican languages as languages of instruction, alongside Portuguese. Bilingual education has been piloted since the early 1990's and then expanded;¹ in 1993, Mozambique piloted its first BE project in Gaza and Tete provinces using Xichangana and Cinyanja languages, respectively, replacing Portuguese as the sole Lol.^{xl}

Early policy texts recognized national languages and encouraged their educational use, culminating in plans to “nationalize” multilingual education by 2017, based on positive pilot

¹ The history of Lol policy in Mozambique reflects an evolution from centralized, monolingual education toward a bilingual approach aimed at improving access and learning outcomes. In the years following independence in 1975, the government prioritized national unity and ideological cohesion in the national education strategy. The *Lei do Sistema Nacional de Educação*, enacted in 1983, institutionalized a centralized, socialist education system with Portuguese as the sole Lol. While the law recognized the cultural significance of Mozambique's indigenous

evidence on learning and retention. After years of a long experimental phase (2003-2018), in 2018 the government formally recognized BE as a legitimate program under the National Education Law,^{xli} alongside the mainstream monolingual program in Portuguese. In alignment with this timeline, MEC approved the country's BE expansion strategy (2020-2029) in 2019.^{xlii} The policy aims to make the education system more equitable and inclusive by ensuring that most children, particularly those in rural areas, who begin school without prior exposure to Portuguese can access foundational education in a language they understand best.

As Mozambique's Lol policy has evolved toward a transitional bilingual model, the current official documents indicate that local languages (L1) are used in the early grades while building Portuguese (L2) proficiency gradually, with Portuguese becoming the only Lol by the end of primary school.^{xliii,xliv} Policy documents and syntheses describe a gradual, grade-by-grade rollout that started with the 2017 curriculum reform and was embedded in the updated Plano Curricular do Ensino Primário.^{xlv}

Unlike the old early-exit transition model (2003-2018), in which transition from L1 to Portuguese/L2 as the Lol was in grade 4,^{xlvi} a gradual transitional model by subject has been in place in terms of policy since 2019 (see Figure 4). L1 is used both as a subject and as the Lol during the first three years of schooling. Beginning in Grade 4, instruction gradually shifts to Portuguese by subject, culminating in full Portuguese instruction by Grade 6, with L1 retained as a subject.^{xlvii}

In BE schools, Portuguese is introduced orally in Grades 1 and 2, with six periods per week, while students receive instruction in core subjects—such as mathematics and physical education—entirely in their L1. This ensures foundational learning without the added complexity of a second language. In Grade 3, Portuguese instruction expands to include reading and writing, and the share of instruction in L2 increases to about 30%, initiating a gradual subject-by-subject transition. By Grade 4, Portuguese becomes the Lol for reading, writing, and several core subjects including mathematics, social sciences, and natural sciences, while L1 is retained for select subjects. The proportion of L1 instruction continues to decline; approximately 43% in Grade 4, 17% in Grade 5, and just 7% in Grade 6. By Grade 6, Portuguese is the Lol for nearly all subjects, with the Mozambican language taught only as a subject. This

languages, it framed education as a tool to forge a new national identity under socialism, positioning Portuguese as the unifying linguistic vehicle. See: República de Moçambique, *Lei n.º 18/2018, de Sistema Nacional de Educação na República de Moçambique*, *Boletim da República*, I Série, núm. 254 (2.º Suplemento), 2018.; República de Moçambique, *Sistema Nacional de Educação*, *Boletim da República*, I Série, núm. 19, 1983.

phased approach is designed to support students' readiness for national assessments and secondary education, both of which are conducted in Portuguese.

Figure 4. L1 to L2 transition in bilingual education, grades 1 to 6

L1 to L2 transition in bilingual education, grades 1 to 6

Discipline	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Portuguese language	L2 oral	L2 oral	L2 oral + L2 reading, writing	L2 reading, writing	L2 reading, writing*	L2 reading, writing*
Mozambican language	L1	L1	L1	L1	L1	L1
Mathematics	L1	L1	L1	L2*	L2*	L2*
Social sciences	-	-	-	L1	L2*	L2*
Natural sciences	-	-	-	L1	L2*	L2*
Visual education and arts & crafts	-	-	-	-	L1	L2*
Physical education	L1	L1	L2	L2	L2	L2
% L1	80%	80%	67.7%	43.3%	16.7%	6.7%
% L2	20%	20%	30.3%	56.7%	83.3%	93.3%

By 2020, this gradual L1-L2 transitional program reached more than 2,000 schools across the country and incorporated 19 local languages selected based on orthographic standardization and political feasibility.^{xlviii}

Despite this progress, persistent challenges, including a shortage of teachers trained in bilingual methodology, limited instructional materials, and mismatches between teacher and learner language backgrounds, continue to hinder implementation. The 2020–2029 Education Sector Strategic Plan underscores the MEC's renewed commitment to strengthening the program's quality and reach, particularly by investing in teacher training, material development, and improved alignment between LoI and local linguistic contexts.^{xlix}

From a policy-roadmap perspective, the 2017–2022 grade-by-grade curriculum rollout created a window to normalize bilingual practice but the next phase should be consolidated by: (a) aligning pre-service curricula with PCEP bilingual expectations; (b) deploying teachers based on language proficiency; (c) ensuring each grade has coherent L1 and Portuguese materials sequenced to the transition plan; and (d) funding coaching and school-based professional

learning communities in high-need districts. These steps would make this kind of mid-exit model real in classrooms, not just on paper.^{i,ii}

What are the country's language-specific FLN goals?

Mozambique does not publish quantitative, language-specific FLN targets (e.g., “% of Grade 2 fluent in Emakhuwa vs. Portuguese by X date”). What we can point to officially are (a) the grade-by-grade language model and (b) system-level commitments around bilingual expansion, assessment points, and reading promotion. Program evaluations sometimes report targets or achievements, but those are project, not national goals.

While there are no specific quantitative targets mapped to FLN goals, there are binding policy parameters for grade-by-grade language allocation, assessment at defined milestones, and the education system's commitment to bilingual expansion. The primary curriculum (PCEP) and the Bilingual Education Expansion Strategy (EEEB 2020–2029) set the transition path for primary school - L1 is the medium in grades 1 and 2; Portuguese (L2) is oral in G1–2 and adds reading/writing in G3. L2 progressively becomes the LoI from grade 4 onwards while L1 remains as a subject.ⁱⁱⁱ MEC's proposed distribution for usage of L1 decreases progressively through the grades: 80% L1 in grades 1 and 2, 68% L1 in grade 3; 43% in grade 4, 17% in grade 5 and 7% in grade 6.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ This indicates the government's goal that all students should be able to use Portuguese as the full medium of academic achievement and knowledge acquisition by Grade 6—especially important given that students are assessed in Portuguese at in this grade.

The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESP 2020-2029) foresees testing at the ends of cycles (G3, G6, G9, G12) and calls for regular national learning assessments. This frames *where* FLN will be tracked, even though the ESP appraisal notes the need to clarify exact assessment purposes/benchmarks.^{liv} The EEEB 2020–2029 sets rules for scale-up, including language mapping, staffing by L1 proficiency, materials, community engagement.^{lv} As of 2021, about a quarter of primary schools were bilingual.^{lvi} This makes it clear that the government anticipates gradual expansion under these criteria, and as such is very clear on their language goals for academic achievement for their students.

Policy Context

Bilingual education in Mozambique has emerged through a series of donor-supported pilots and incremental policy reforms shaped by the country's colonial legacy, linguistic diversity, and persistent implementation constraints. While Portuguese has remained the sole official language and dominant medium of instruction since independence, national strategies led by MEC have increasingly endorsed the use of national languages in the early grades to improve foundational learning. These efforts, however, have been unevenly implemented and remain

heavily dependent on external financing, local leadership, and community buy-in amid enduring social and political preferences for Portuguese-only instruction. Here, we trace Mozambique’s history related to bilingual education and outline its present political reality in fulfillment of the final question in the FLN Goals and Policy tier:

What are the pertinent political realities that might affect the LoI policy’s implementation and future sustainability?

Nation-building imperatives pull the policy in opposite directions. Since independence, FRELIMO leaders have promoted Portuguese as a symbol of a unified, “post-tribal” republic; many urban lawmakers still fear that extending classroom use of 19 local languages could fragment national identity and limit graduates’ mobility.^{lvii} Yet prominent linguists such as Professor Armindo Ngunga counter that the current Portuguese-only bias constitutes a “social injustice” for the 90 per cent of Grade-1 entrants who arrive without the language, and they openly lobby for equal legal status for Mozambican languages in schools.^{lviii}

The 2018 constitutional amendments introduced direct elections for governors, provincial assemblies and district assemblies.^{lix} These bodies now approve education budgets, hire teachers and manage textbook distribution. Two parallel and contrasting risks are embedded in this approach: 1) administrative units at lower levels may not have the institutional capabilities to budget for and execute their stated policies, and 2) the decentralization of powers is not allowed by central authorities, curtailing the abilities of local governments to respond to their constituents’ needs.

Fiscal austerity and heavy international aid dependence make the reform financially fragile. Rising debt service and a wage bill absorbing 90% of tax revenues are squeezing the education share of spending, already below peer benchmarks and falling in real per-pupil terms.^{lx} At the same time, the early-grade pilot programs of *Vamos Ler!* and SABER activities, financed by USAID, underscore how any downturn in donor priorities could halt textbook printing and teacher training in all 19 recognized languages.^{lxi} For instance, the group of donors contributing through *Fundo de Apoio ao Sector da Educação* (FASE), an education-focused fund, has shrunk from nine partners in 2024 to seven in 2025 due to the decrease in international aid and funding constraints.

Teacher-union grievances over workload and pay could erode classroom compliance. The National Teachers’ Organisation (ONP) and the newer ANAPRO have staged repeated strikes and threatened exam boycotts, demanding settlement of 20 months of overtime debt. They have warned that overcrowded classes “of over 100 pupils” make additional bilingual lesson preparation untenable without allowances, further risking a smooth rollout of BE.^{lxii, lxiii}

Parents' evolving expectations for their children's education could determine the level of support for the current LoI policy. While most rural parents value mother-tongue teaching for comprehension, many urban households endorse it only if it demonstrably accelerates Portuguese mastery, the perceived gateway to secondary schooling and white-collar jobs.^{lxiv, lxxv} If national exam scores in Portuguese do not rise quickly, middle-class opinion leaders may lobby politicians to revert to early Portuguese-only models.

Mozambique is one of the few countries on the African continent proactively developing a concrete action plan to implement and scale its BE policy. Its commitment to early-grade instruction in learners' first languages, coupled with a gradual, subject-by-subject transition of the LoI between Grades 4 and 6, represents one of the most scientifically grounded and politically feasible approaches to improving bilingual learning outcomes. While Mozambique's BE policy is well articulated on paper and closely aligned with the SoBR, substantial implementation challenges persist, and student learning outcomes remain critically low. Accordingly, the next step is to examine the remaining components of the BUILD framework to identify the most significant barriers to effective implementation and to develop targeted strategies to support the government in overcoming these constraints, which we describe in the sections that follow.

Evidence and Data

To answer the questions in the next tier of the BUILD Framework, we conducted an analysis of as comprehensive a set of secondary data and existing evidence of students' FLN and language abilities in Senegal that was available to us at the time of this publication. We also reviewed the linguistic properties of the languages that students are expected to learn to better inform the programmatic design of the curriculum mirroring the science of reading.



Foundational Learning Skills

In this section, we address the first question in the Evidence and Data tier:

What are learners' current FLN levels across different languages, and how are these assessed?

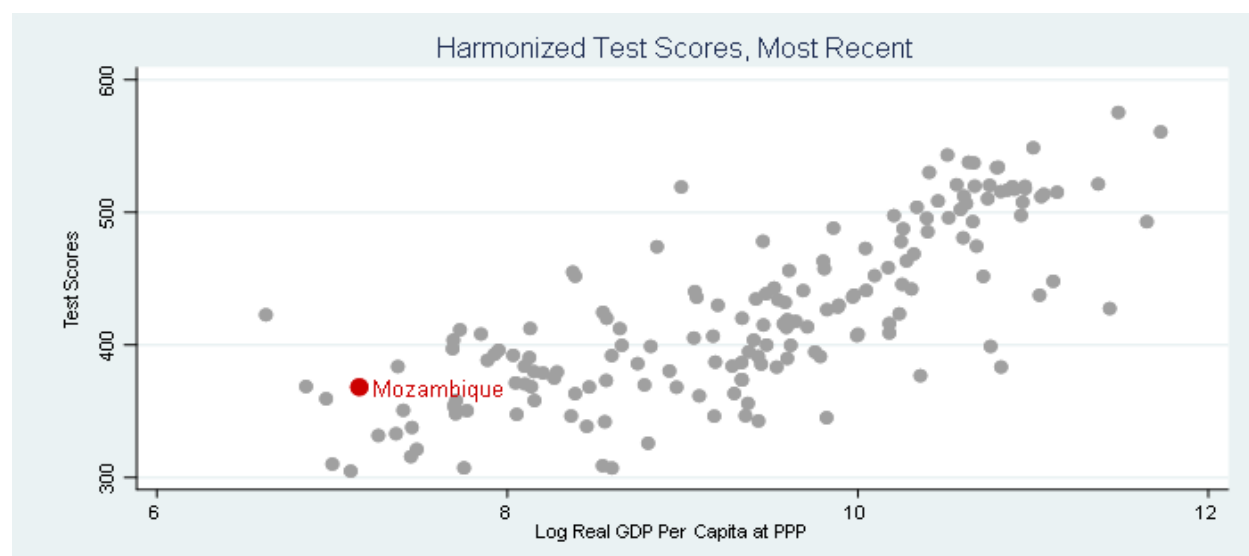
Educational assessment data collected over several decades in Mozambique reveals persistent challenges in foundational learning outcomes despite various policy reforms and interventions aimed at improving educational quality.

The SDI surveys provide concerning evidence about the state of foundational learning in Mozambique. SDI data from 2018 showed that less than 20% of students in the sample were able to read a paragraph in Portuguese, and only a third of the students can do a single-digit subtraction.^{lxvi} These results indicate severe deficiencies in early grade literacy and numeracy skills acquisition. More troublingly, the same survey found significant regional disparities, with rural students performing substantially worse than their urban counterparts. Teacher content knowledge and pedagogical skills were also found wanting, with many teachers struggling with subject content they were responsible for teaching.

SACMEQ assessments have tracked Mozambican students' performance over multiple survey rounds, allowing for temporal analysis of learning trends. In SACMEQ II (2000), Mozambique ranked near the bottom among participating countries, with mean reading scores of 516.7 and mathematics scores of 530.0 on the SACMEQ scale.^{lxvii} The subsequent SACMEQ III (2007) showed minimal improvement in reading (517.8) and mathematics (483.8), with Mozambique continuing to perform below the SACMEQ average.^{lxviii} SACMEQ IV (2013) data indicated that while there had been some improvement, Mozambican students still performed significantly below regional averages, with nearly 60% of students failing to achieve basic competency levels in reading and mathematics.^{lxix, lxx}

While learning outcomes in Mozambique are in the lowest quartile in the world, they are higher than expected given their per capita GDP (see Figure 5). In the graph, each country is represented by a dot. The x-axis represents real GDP per capita, and the y-axis represents test scores which measure performance—SACMEQ in the case of Mozambique—on international testing programs that have been converted into common units with a mean of 500 and a standard deviation of 100 across students.

Figure 5. Learning Data in Mozambique^{lxxi}



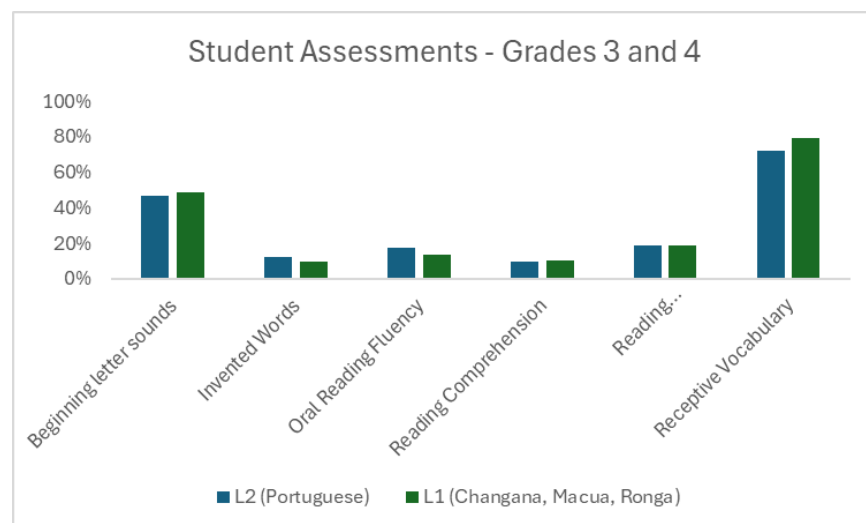
EGRA conducted in Mozambique provide more granular insights into fundamental literacy challenges. EGRA results from 2016 indicated that approximately 40% of students in grades 2 and 3 could not read a single word in Portuguese, despite the L1 being Portuguese, demonstrating critical gaps in basic literacy acquisition.^{lxxii} Even more concerning, oral reading fluency rates averaged only 7-8 words per minute among third graders, far below the benchmark of 45-60 words per minute considered necessary for comprehension. These results highlight the substantial challenges in early literacy development that undermine subsequent educational progress, especially when children are being taught in Portuguese.

National assessment data collected by MEC reveals similar patterns of low achievement. The nationally representative 2016 grade 3 National Assessment data indicates that 4.9% of grade 3 students achieve the minimum reading competencies in Portuguese, and 7.7% in mathematics achieve the minimum standards as defined by the national curriculum.^{lxxiii} These national assessments confirm the findings from international studies, pointing to systemic failures in establishing foundational skills in Portuguese during the critical early years of education.

Even in BE classrooms, children lag in reading comprehension in both L1 and L2, though they have excellent receptive vocabulary skills (see Figure 6). AIR, in collaboration with the University of Notre Dame and Eduardo Mondlane University, conducted reading assessments in L1 and L2 languages in Maputo and Nampula provinces of Mozambique as part of the LITES study. The L2 tests were administered in Portuguese whereas the L1 tests were administered in Emakhuwa, Xichangana and Xizonga, as appropriate. While there isn't any meaningful difference between students' ability to identify beginning letter sounds in L1 and L2, students'

ability to read invented words is remarkably low (9% in L1 and 12% in L2). Reading comprehension levels are very low in both L1 and L2 languages. When students were tested on comprehension by having to answer questions related to a story they had read, the average score was only 10%. When students were tested on comprehension by having to identify images that correspond to descriptions of images they had read, the average score was only 19%. Children have very good receptive vocabulary skills (80% in L1 and 72% in L2).

Figure 6. LITES Student Assessment Data^{lxxiv}



Gender disparities in learning outcomes show boys outperforming girls, particularly in math and reading, with a narrowing gap in urban areas compared to rural settings.^{lxxv} For instance, SACMEQ IV data showed that urban girls slightly outperform boys in foundational reading in some provinces, representing a reversal of historical patterns. Data from World Bank's Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) survey, although slightly dated now, shows that girls from the southern region were the top performers in language and that there was no significant gender gap in the South. However, there were disparities in the Central and Northern regions, particularly in Portuguese. For example, in the Central region, boys scored 42% higher than girls in Portuguese and 18% higher in mathematics. In the North, the situation was similar, with boys scoring 48% higher in Portuguese and 24% higher in mathematics. Researchers from the World Bank note that these results may, in part, be explained by the fact that the Central and Northern regions have, on average, between 68-80% male teachers, while in the Southern region, this percentage goes down to 54%. Nationally, on average, boys outperformed girls in all aspects of the pupil assessment. Nevertheless, girls continue to face significant barriers to educational achievement, particularly in rural areas where sociocultural factors and early marriage remain obstacles.

Socioeconomic factors consistently emerge as powerful determinants of learning outcomes in Mozambique. Analysis of SACMEQ data shows that students from wealthier households outperform their less privileged peers by significant margins.^{lxxvi} This socioeconomic achievement gap has persisted across all assessment periods, suggesting that despite policy interventions, the educational system continues to reproduce rather than reduce social inequalities. World Bank analysis of SDI data shows having breakfast before attending school, a proxy for household income, strongly predicts student performance across all measured competencies.^{lxxvii}

Recent interventions have shown promise in improving specific aspects of foundational learning, though on a small scale and on one language or another (and not on bilingual outcomes per se). The Literacy Boost program implemented in select provinces demonstrated significant improvements in letter recognition, word reading, and reading comprehension compared to control schools.^{lxxviii} Similarly, a mathematics intervention program utilizing structured pedagogy and teacher coaching showed gains of 0.4 standard deviations in numeracy skills among participating schools.^{lxxix} Both these programs provided support to students in Portuguese, the *Lol*. These targeted interventions suggest that improvements are possible with sustained, evidence-based approaches.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated learning challenges in Mozambique. Initial assessments conducted after school reopening in 2021 indicated substantial learning losses, with students demonstrating performance levels approximately 1.5 years below pre-pandemic expectations.^{lxxx} These setbacks have further complicated efforts to improve foundational learning outcomes, creating an even more urgent need for effective remediation strategies and interventions.

Repetition rates in Mozambique vary substantially by grade level, province, and over time (see Annex C). The table below shows the repetition rates by grade level and province for 2024, based on the Annual School Census. Grade 3 and grade 6 consistently show higher repetition rates across nearly all provinces, often double or triple the rates in surrounding grades. This is likely due to the existence of national exams at these grades. The grades without exams have much lower repetition rates, reflecting the automatic promotion policy in effect for most non-exam grades.

The learning outcomes data and the repetition rates must be placed in the context of widespread occurrence of students being overage for the grade they are in. In 2019, about 39% of students enrolled in primary school were at least 2 years overage for their current grade. While this figure has come down from 49% in 2009, this is still a high percentage. An additional

nuance is that data on student age are prone to error given students' inability to correctly state their age as well as the schools' inaccurate recordkeeping.

Together these data paint a picture of very low foundational learning outcomes, an environment which is not conducive for bilingual education. This important context in which we can leverage cognitive and language resources that children *do* have (their own languages) instead of focusing on what they do *not* (e.g. socioeconomic resources) and use language science and transfer to overcome socioeconomic barriers.^{lxxxix}

Overview of Orthographic Properties of Mozambican Languages

In this section, we present evidence on key aspects of Mozambique's linguistic landscape that are critical for informing the design of biliteracy curricula. First, we analyze available data on student and teacher language proficiency in Mozambican national languages and Portuguese. Second, we describe the orthographic and linguistic properties of the target languages to inform the scope, sequencing, and progression of skills within a biliteracy curriculum. Third, we examine evidence on the nature and extent of cross-linguistic transfer between reading skills in Mozambican languages and Portuguese to inform the timing and design of the transition from L1 to L2 instruction. Together, these analyses provide a comprehensive evidence base to support the development of biliteracy curricula, teaching and learning materials (TLMs), and teacher PD resources. Specifically, this section addresses the following questions:

What languages do teachers and learners understand best, and how do these align with the current LoI?

Which factors influence L1–L2 transfer and transition processes?

Demographics and Regional Distribution

Portuguese serves as the official language of Mozambique, yet it is spoken as a first language by only about 17% of the population, predominantly in urban areas and among the educated elite.^{lxxxix} This relatively low percentage underscores the nature of Portuguese as primarily a second language for most Mozambicans, though its use in official, educational, and media contexts gives it prominence beyond what raw speaker numbers might suggest. Urban centers, particularly Maputo, demonstrate higher rates of Portuguese usage, with approximately 36.8% of Maputo residents claiming Portuguese as their primary language.^{lxxxiii}

Emakhuwa (also called Makhuwa) stands as the most widely spoken local language in Mozambique, with native speakers comprising approximately 26.1% of the population.^{lxxxiv} This language dominates the northern provinces, particularly Nampula and Cabo Delgado, where it serves as the primary language of communication for the majority of residents. Various dialects

of Emakhuwa exist across this region, including Emetto, Esaaka, and Enlai, though these are generally mutually intelligible.^{lxxxv} The prevalence of Emakhuwa in these provinces reflects historical settlement patterns of the Makhuwa ethnic group, one of the largest in Mozambique.

Xichangana (also called Changana) represents the second most widely spoken indigenous language, with approximately 11.4% of Mozambicans identifying it as their first language.^{lxxxvi} This language predominates in the southern provinces, particularly Gaza and Maputo provinces, extending into neighboring areas of South Africa and Zimbabwe. Xichangana belongs to the Tsonga language group and shares considerable linguistic features with Citshwa and Xizronga (or Ronga), also spoken in southern Mozambique, collectively accounting for about 24% of the population's first languages.^{lxxxvii}

Elomwe (also called Lomwe) represents another significant language, spoken by approximately 7.9% of the population and concentrated in the Zambézia province.^{lxxxviii} This language shares linguistic features with Emakhuwa, being part of the same language group, yet remains distinct enough to be considered a separate language rather than a dialect. The geographic distribution of Elomwe roughly corresponds to the historical territory of the Lomwe people, centered around the districts of Alto Molócuè, Gilé, and Ile.

Echuwabo (also called Chuabo) serves as the primary language for approximately 6.3% of Mozambicans, mainly concentrated in central Zambézia province, particularly around the city of **Quelimane** and surrounding districts. This language belongs to the Bantu language family but represents a distinct language group from neighboring Emakhuwa and Elomwe, reflecting different historical migration patterns and ethnic identifications.^{lxxxix}

Cindau (also known as Ndau), spoken by approximately 7.8% of the population, predominates in parts of central Mozambique, particularly in Sofala province and portions of Manica province.^{xc} This language extends into neighboring Zimbabwe, where it is known as Ndau, and exhibits significant dialectal variation across its geographic range. The distribution of Cindau speakers corresponds largely to the historical territory of the Ndau people, centered around the Buzi and Gorongosa districts.

Cisena (also known as Sena) represents another significant language, spoken by approximately 7.0% of the population, primarily in Tete province and parts of Sofala and Manica provinces along the Zambezi River valley.^{xci} The geographic distribution of Cisena roughly follows the lower Zambezi River, reflecting historical settlement patterns influenced by trade routes along this major waterway. Several dialects of Sena exist, including Tonga Sena and Rue, which show varying degrees of mutual intelligibility.

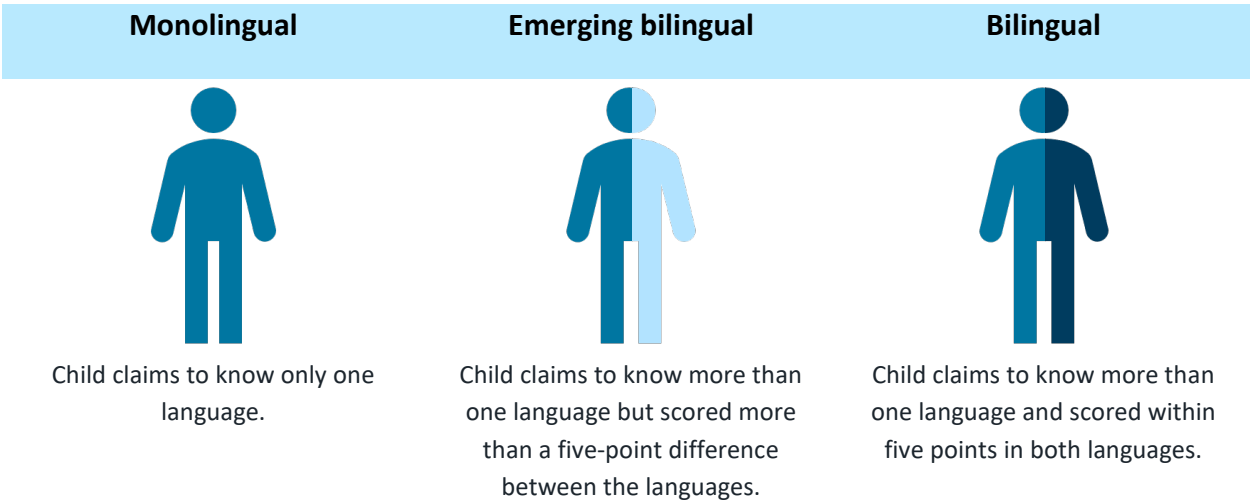
Regional linguistic patterns in Mozambique generally follow provincial boundaries, with northern provinces (Cabo Delgado, Niassa, Nampula) dominated by Emakhuwa and related languages; central provinces (Zambézia, Tete, Manica, Sofala) characterized by a mix of languages including Elomwe, Echuwabo, Sena, and Cindau; and southern provinces (Inhambane, Gaza, Maputo) featuring predominantly Xichangana, Citshwa, and Xizronga.^{xcii} Urban centers tend to show greater linguistic diversity than rural areas, with higher percentages of Portuguese speakers alongside speakers of various indigenous languages, creating multilingual environments particularly in provincial capitals.

Urbanization has significantly impacted language distribution patterns in Mozambique. Census data from 2017 compared to 2007 shows an increase in Portuguese as an L1 in Maputo, rising from 42.9% to 62.2% over this decade.^{xciii} This trend reflects both internal migration patterns and the increasing importance of Portuguese for economic advancement in urban settings. However, even in urban environments, most residents maintain proficiency in indigenous languages alongside Portuguese, creating complex patterns of bi/multilingualism and code-switching.

One of our main goals for this tier was to empirically determine how well students spoke any language they could speak. We utilized the semantic fluency assessments from the LITES project, which measured expressive oral language fluency and dominance, as well as information from Vamos Ler! project for this purpose. We classified students as monolingual (i.e., the student knows only one language, even if the student claims to know more, or one language dominates and the student has far less proficiency in the other language[s]), bilingual/trilingual (i.e., the student knows two/three languages and neither language dominates), and emerging bilingual (i.e., the student knows more than one language with slight dominance of one language).

The largest language mapping study in Mozambique to date was conducted by AIR under the USAID-funded Vamos Ler study in Nampula and Zambezia provinces in 2017, in preparation for the expansion of BE in these two provinces. At the time, schools were mostly using Portuguese as the LoI. In this study, data was collected from 4,177 students in 212 schools, with 2,078 students from grade 1 and 2,099 students from grade 3. Using this data, children were grouped into three categories: monolingual, emerging bilingual, and bilingual. Definitions for classification of children into different categories of language abilities are described in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7. Language classifications



According to the semantic fluency test, most children (both in terms of the sample and as weighted population percentages) were monolingual in a local language. The bilingual portion of students was higher in urban schools, although it was still relatively small at only 14.4%. Students in Grade 3 had higher L1 scores across all languages, although the difference was only weakly significant for Emakhuwa. The semantic fluency score for Portuguese L1 was statistically significantly higher for urban students than rural students, which is to be expected given that Portuguese is more commonly spoken in urban settings. The reverse held for Elomwe, where the semantic fluency score for Elomwe L1 was statistically significantly higher for rural students than urban students. While girls scored higher in Portuguese, boys scored higher in all other L1s, although the results were not statistically significantly different.

In the study sample, within linguistically homogeneous schools where only one L1 was present, Elomwe was the most common L1 (in terms of number of schools), followed by Echuwabo and Emakhuwa. We define linguistically homogenous schools as those in which only one language is spoken by the students. There were only a handful of schools with Portuguese-only speakers. Specifically, there were Portuguese-only speakers in five schools in total, all of which were in urban settings in Zambézia province. Overall, more than one-third of the schools in the sample (38%) were homogeneous (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Number of languages within each school

	N SCHOOLS	% OF SAMPLED STUDENTS				
		PORTUGUESE	ELOMWE	EMAKHUWA	ECHUWABO	BILINGUAL
Echuwabo only	21				100.0%	
Emakhuwa only	13			100.0%		
Elomwe only	41		100.0%			
Elomwe and Echuwabo	1		10.0%		90.0%	0.0%
Portuguese only	5	100.0%				
Portuguese and Echuwabo	29	37.6%			57.0%	5.3%
Portuguese and Emakhuwa	58	5.2%		71.6%		23.2%
Portuguese and Elomwe	33	28.7%	65.9%			5.4%
Portuguese, Elomwe, and Echuwabo	11	57.2%	8.8%		28.6%	5.5%
Total	212					

Both qualitative and quantitative analyses found a high degree of mismatch between the official LoI and the oral language proficiency (OLP) of students. For 73% of the quantitative sample and the population, the students' L1 OLP scores did not match the official LoI (see Figure 9). It is important to note that this study was conducted prior to the introduction of BE in a specific region of Mozambique and played a formative role in shaping the case for beginning instruction in a Mozambican language (L1). However, the findings are not generalizable nationwide, although similar mismatches between student proficiency and the language of instruction are likely in other monolingual schools.

Figure 9. *L1 Match Data*^{xciv}

	ANY LI MATCHES LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION						TOTAL
	NO			YES			
	SAMP. N	SAMP. %	POP. %	SAMP. N	SAMP. %	POP. %	SAMP. N
Location							
Rural	2,402	83.03%	76.01%	491	16.97%	23.99%	2,893
Urban	622	49.60%	42.60%	632	50.40%	57.40%	1,254
Sex							
Female	1,472	72.80%	72.09%	550	27.20%	27.91%	2,022
Male	1,546	73.00%	74.00%	571	27.00%	26.00%	2,117
Grade Level							
Grade 1	1,589	77.00%	75.97%	474	23.00%	24.03%	2,063
Grade 3	1,435	68.90%	67.99%	649	31.10%	32.01%	2,084
Bilingual School							
No	3,010	75.10%	77.99%	997	24.90%	22.01%	4,007
Yes	14	10.00%	2.95%	126	90.00%	97.05%	140
Total	3,024	72.90%	73.02%	1,123	27.10%	26.98%	4,147

Abbreviation: L1 = first language. Statistics in bold font tested statistically significantly higher than the comparison group at a 5% or 1% significance level. Significance testing was completed for sex, location, and grade level only, as determined by the sampling strategy.

AIR, in collaboration with the University of Notre Dame and UEM, conducted semantic fluency assessments for 600 children in Nampula province. All the schools in this study's sample were part of the *Vamos Ler!* project. Analysis of the data revealed that nearly two-thirds of the students were bilingual—66% in Grade 4 and 63% in Grade 3. Approximately one-fifth of the students were monolingual, with 19% in Grade 3 and 18% in Grade 4. A similar proportion are classified as emerging bilinguals, representing 18% of Grade 3 students and 16% of those in Grade 4.

Figure 10. Language mapping data - Grade 3^{xcv}

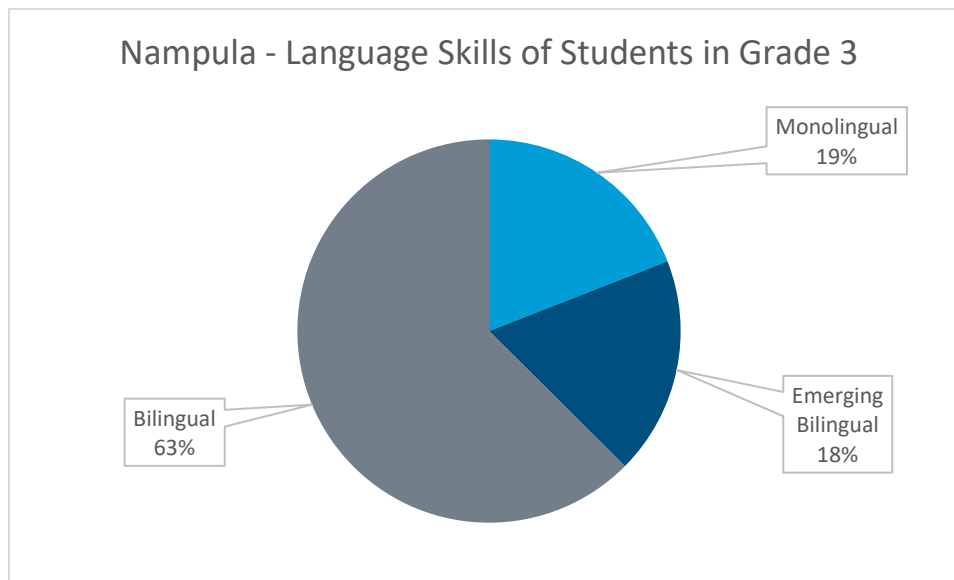
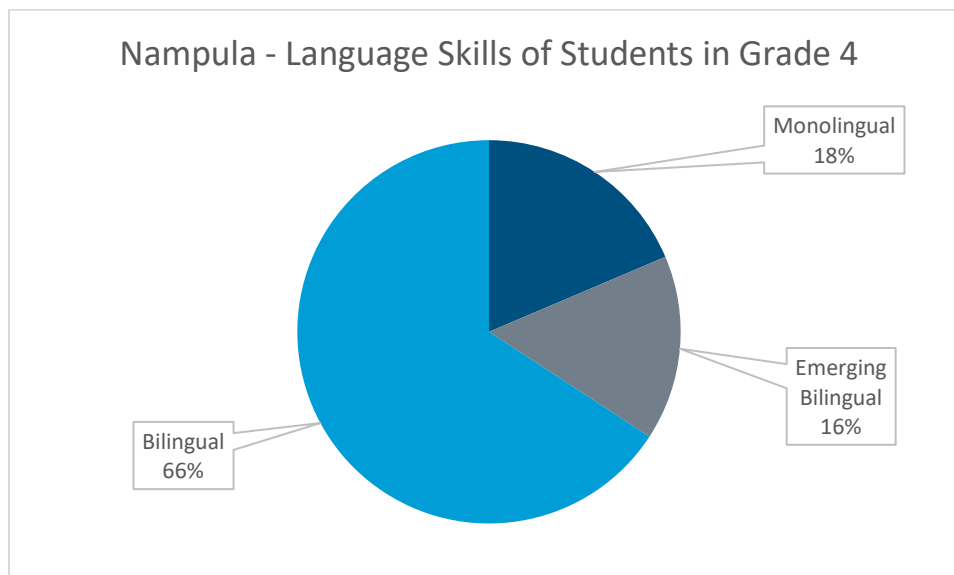
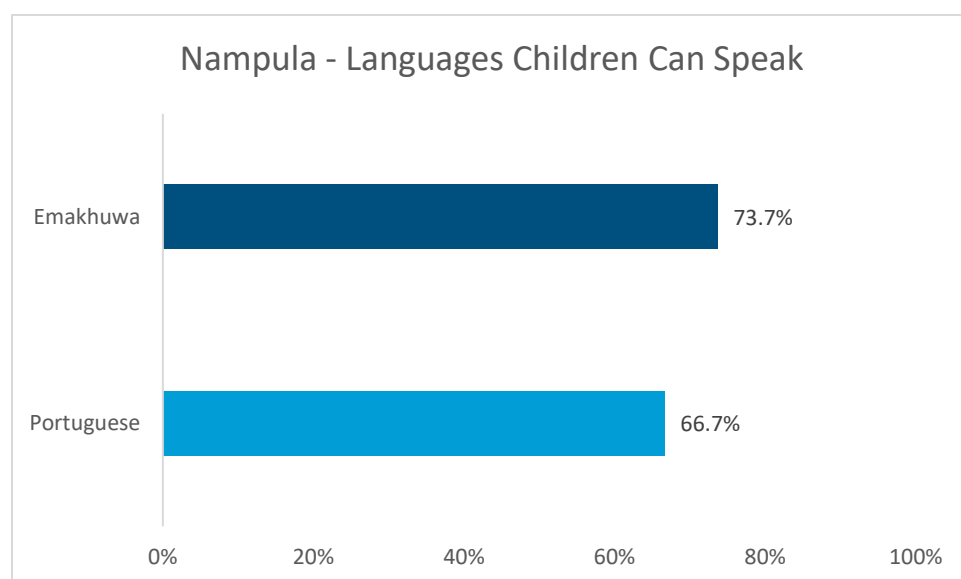


Figure 11. Language mapping data - Grade 4^{xvii}



There are two languages that children widely speak in the sample—Portuguese and Emakhuwa. Close to three-fourths of the students in the sample (74%) speak Emakhuwa and two-thirds of the students speak Portuguese (67%).

Figure 12. Language mapping data - Grade 4^{xcvii}



While national-level data does not exist on objectively measured proficiencies of languages that teachers know, data collected during the LITES project indicates that teachers use students' L1 extensively – both when it is the Lol as well as when it is a subject. In Grade 3, where the Lol is the students' L1, teachers used only L1 to communicate content during teaching, give directions, and discipline students. In contrast, in Grade 4, during which the Lol gradually shifts to Portuguese, there was widespread use of L1 when communicating instructions to the learners by the teacher including giving directions. For example, in classes where Xichangana and Emakhuwa are the Lol (and L1) in Grade 3 but not in Grade 4, around 70% of observed lessons had teachers using L1 to give directions and discipline students. Further, codeswitching is common in grade 4 classrooms where the Lol is the L2 language – in grade 4 classrooms where Xichangana and Emakhuwa are the L1, more than one-quarter of the teachers switched from one language to another very frequently. A similar pattern was observed among students communicating with each other or responding to teachers. In Grade 4, where L2 is supposed to be the Lol, around 91% and 76% of observed classes had students communicating with each other in Xichangana and Emakhuwa, respectively, while in Xizronga, the percentage was 100%.

Orthographic Analysis

To create any kind of bilingual L1-L2 transition action plan and to properly account for all the ways L1-L2 impacts may play out (and thus how the curriculum design may change) it is critical to ensure a deep understanding of the linguistic and orthographic features of the language pair. In this section we describe the key orthographic factors that may have implications on programmatic design.

Portuguese, as the official language of Mozambique, uses an alphabetic writing system. Portuguese orthography utilizes the Latin alphabet consisting of 26 letters with additional diacritical marks.^{xcviii} While it maintains a moderate level of transparency² in its sound-symbol correspondence, Portuguese orthography presents several challenges to learners. The relationship between graphemes and phonemes is not entirely consistent, with some letters representing multiple sounds, and different letters representing the same sound, depending on context and position within words.^{xcix} For example, the letter 'c' can represent /k/ before 'a', 'o', and 'u', but /s/ before 'e' and 'i'. These inconsistencies make Portuguese slightly less transparent than some other alphabetic systems.

Emakhuwa is the most widely spoken Mozambican language across the country. The standardized Emakhuwa orthography uses the Latin alphabet with some modifications to represent sounds specific to the language.^c The orthography of Emakhuwa, as well as other Bantu languages, demonstrates a high degree of transparency, with a near one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds. This transparency potentially facilitates easier decoding acquisition for native speakers, as readers can rely on consistent sound-symbol relationships when decoding text. However, tone, which is linguistically significant in Emakhuwa, as well as all Bantu languages, is typically not marked in the standard orthography, creating a potential gap in the written representation.^{ci} Xichangana, predominantly spoken in southern Mozambique, uses an alphabetic writing system also based on the Latin script. Similar to Emakhuwa, Xichangana orthography exhibits relatively high transparency in its sound-symbol relationships. The writing system includes some digraphs to represent specific consonant sounds not found in European languages, again similar to Emakhuwa. The orthography was standardized relatively recently compared to Portuguese, with ongoing efforts to refine the writing system.^{cii, ciii, civ, cv, cvi}

The differences in orthographic transparency among these languages significantly impact student learning outcomes. Research in literacy acquisition suggests that more transparent orthographies generally facilitate faster initial reading acquisition.^{cvi} Students learning to read in Emakhuwa or Xichangana may acquire basic decoding skills more rapidly than those learning in Portuguese due to the greater orthographic transparency of these Mozambican languages. This advantage is particularly pronounced in the early stages of literacy acquisition, where the cognitive load of decoding is highest.

Bilingual and multilingual education contexts in Mozambique present unique challenges related to these orthographic differences. Students transitioning between Mozambican language

² Transparent languages have one-to-one relation between units of meaning and units of form. In other words, there is consistency in how symbols map onto sounds.

literacy and Portuguese literacy must adapt to varying levels of orthographic transparency.^{cvi} The relatively deeper orthography of Portuguese may present obstacles for students initially instructed in more transparent local writing systems. Research from within Mozambique has shown that literacy skills can transfer across languages, but orthographic differences can complicate this transfer, requiring explicit instruction in the specific rules and patterns of each writing system.^{cix}

Phonological awareness plays a crucial role in literacy development across all languages. While none of the languages in Mozambique use an alpha syllabic system (where symbols represent syllables and their phonemic level diacritic markers, rather than individual phonemes), syllable and phonemic structures vary significantly among them. Portuguese features more complex syllable structures including consonant clusters, while Bantu languages like Emakhuwa and Xichangana typically have CV (consonant-vowel) syllable patterns.^{cx} While the teaching of phonemic skills remains critical across these alphabetic systems, these structural differences affect how students develop various levels of phonological awareness and approach the task of learning to read and write.

Teaching practices in Mozambican schools must account for these orthographic differences. Effective literacy instruction requires approaches tailored to the specific features of each language's orthography. For Portuguese, with its deeper orthography, phonics plus explicit instruction in complex spelling rules and patterns is often necessary. For local languages with more transparent orthographies, more basic phonics-based approaches may yield effective results more quickly.^{cx} However, the relative scarcity of teaching materials in local languages presents a practical challenge to implement optimal instructional methods.

Recent educational policy in Mozambique has moved toward BE models that introduce literacy first in Mozambican languages before transitioning to Portuguese instruction. This approach capitalizes on the relative transparency of indigenous language orthographies to establish foundational literacy skills.^{cxii} Evidence suggests that students who develop strong initial literacy in a transparent orthography may be better equipped to later navigate the complexities of a less transparent system like Portuguese.

In conclusion, the evidence tier shows the following key takeaways:

- Children's foundational learning levels are consistently low, exacerbated by gender, socioeconomic and linguistic factors.
- Bilingual education is implemented in about 25% of schools, with a stated strategy to expand the program, though implementation modalities still need to be discussed and agreed upon.

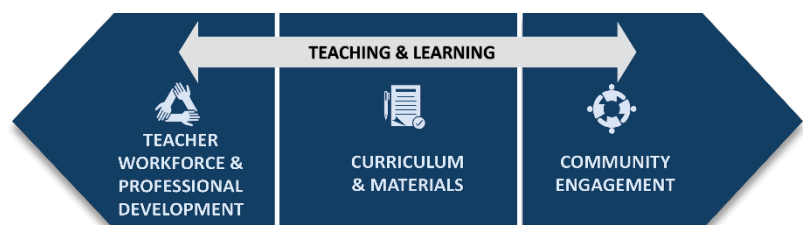
- 9 languages are the most used in Mozambique as an L1, with Emakhuwa, Portuguese, Xichangana, Cinyanja, and Elomwe spoken by the bulk of the population.
- While Mozambique doesn't collect teacher language proficiency data (see Tier 4 in the report), roughly 60% potentially lack the required dual-language capability for the bilingual model, indicating a need to understand teachers' language abilities and subsequently, deploy them appropriately.
- Language mapping shows that linguistically heterogeneous classrooms are common, and in some urban areas there is more bilingualism than in rural areas amongst students
- Tonality must be taken into consideration in teaching Bantu children, and while both syllabic and phonemic phonological features should be considered, it is critical that phonemic awareness and explicit phonics is a part of teaching the L1, and then the L2 after a decoding threshold is achieved in the L1
- The orthographic differences between the language suggested teaching the transparent orthographic first until some point of sufficiency and then the non-transparent Portuguese. The point of transfer is unclear and needs further research. The number of words/oral language skills needed before transition is unclear and needs more research.

Teaching and Learning

In the central tier of the BUILD framework, we focus on teaching and learning practices that directly shape classroom implementation of LoI policy in Mozambique. This tier

examines three interrelated components: the teacher workforce and professional development, curriculum and TLMs, and community engagement. Together, these elements determine whether bilingual education policy is translated into effective instructional practice that improves FLN outcomes.

We begin by reviewing the national primary curriculum and associated materials used in Mozambican public schools, with particular attention to how Mozambican languages and Portuguese are sequenced across grades, how early literacy skills are introduced, and how the transition from L1 to Portuguese (L2) is operationalized in classroom practice. This includes an analysis of both government-produced materials and key donor-supported resources to assess their alignment with the SoBR and the country's transitional bilingual model.



We then examine teacher recruitment, placement, and professional development systems to assess the extent to which teachers are linguistically prepared and pedagogically supported to implement bilingual instruction. This analysis considers teachers' language proficiency, pre-service and in-service training opportunities, and the availability of coaching and supervision structures that support bilingual teaching. Finally, we review evidence on community engagement, focusing on how parents, caregivers, and local stakeholders are involved in LoI decisions and supported to reinforce learning in children's home languages.

Curriculum and Materials

We first examine how the MOHEBS curriculum is designed across key literacy subskills, assess the MOHEBS TLMs provided to schools, and briefly describe some of the regular assessments administered to students. Critically, we examine the alignment across these materials. In doing so, we respond to the following question:

To what extent are teaching and learning materials designed to support bilingual and multilingual learners?

Curriculum

Within the Mozambican primary education system, we reviewed the Grade 1–3 curriculum, national teacher guides, and Grade 1 student textbooks. National MEC materials do not include supplementary instructional resources; additional materials used in classrooms are largely available only through donor-funded support. Mozambique's primary education curriculum serves as the national framework guiding teaching and learning in primary schools and reflects the country's linguistic realities, where most children enter school speaking a Mozambican language as L1 and learn Portuguese as a L2. ^{cxiii}

The MEC curriculum offers two instructional modalities: a monolingual Portuguese track and a bilingual track. Under the bilingual modality of the *Plano Curricular do Ensino Primário* (PCEP), children begin schooling in a Mozambican language, while Portuguese is introduced orally in Grades 1 and 2, expanded to reading and writing in Grade 3, and gradually becomes the primary language of instruction by Grade 6. This design is intended to ensure that children develop foundational literacy skills in a familiar language before transitioning to Portuguese-medium instruction.

Primary education is organized into two learning cycles. Cycle 1 (Grades 1–3) focuses on the development of basic literacy and numeracy, with reading and writing introduced first in the child's L1 in bilingual schools and Portuguese integrated gradually. Cycle 2 (Grades 4–6) builds on this foundation, consolidating core skills and broadening the curriculum to include natural

sciences, social studies, artistic education, and physical education. Portuguese serves as the primary L1 by Grade 6, while Mozambican languages continue to support comprehension and are maintained as subjects. Weekly instructional time reflects these priorities, with language (L1 and/or Portuguese) and mathematics emphasized in the first cycle, and increased attention to scientific knowledge, social studies, and cultural expression in later grades.

Across the early grades, the curriculum emphasizes progressive skill development rather than isolated content exposure. Foundational literacy instruction prioritizes oral language development, followed by the systematic introduction of letter recognition, syllable construction, word reading, and writing. In the bilingual modality, these skills are first taught in L1, with Portuguese oral language development running in parallel and later supporting the transition to Portuguese literacy. However, while the curriculum clearly specifies when Portuguese is introduced and how much instructional time is allocated to each language by grade, it is less explicit about how skills developed in L1 are expected to transfer to Portuguese. The curriculum does not consistently articulate transition thresholds—such as minimum levels of decoding accuracy or oral language proficiency—nor does it provide detailed guidance on pacing or sequencing literacy skills across languages. As a result, teachers are often left to interpret how to align L1 and L2 instruction in practice, particularly during the critical transition period in Grades 3 and 4.

Teachers Guide

The Grade 1 MEC teacher guide uses the analytic–synthetic method as the primary approach for teaching early reading and writing in Mozambican primary schools. Developed within the broader framework of bilingual education reform, this method is explicitly endorsed by MEC as the standard approach for early literacy instruction in Mozambican languages. The guide emphasizes that teacher trainees are expected not only to understand the theoretical foundations of the analytic–synthetic method, but also to demonstrate the ability to apply it effectively in classroom practice through structured lesson planning, instructional mediation, and ongoing assessment of learners’ progress.

The analytic–synthetic method is presented as an integration of two complementary instructional processes. In the analytic dimension, instruction begins with whole words that are meaningful and familiar to children, often introduced through images or concrete objects. These words are then broken down into syllables and letters. For example, words such as *maasi* (Emakhuwa), *mazi* (Cisena), or *mati* (Xichangana) are introduced visually and orally before being segmented into syllables (*ma–si*, *ma–zi*, *ma–ti*) and subsequently into their constituent letters (*m*, *a*, *s*, *i*). In this approach, instruction focuses on letter recognition rather than explicit teaching of phoneme sounds.

In the synthetic dimension, instruction proceeds in the opposite direction, beginning with the smallest units—letters or sounds—which are gradually combined to form syllables, words, and eventually complete sentences. When applied together, these analytic and synthetic processes enable learners to move fluidly between deconstructing and reconstructing words, reinforcing both decoding and encoding skills.

In addition to the analytic–synthetic approach officially endorsed by MEC, the Ministry has agreed to the inclusion of phonics within donor-funded programs focused on early grade literacy. However, phonics does not appear to be systematically implemented within the broader public education system. Adapted from the *Vamos Ler!* teacher guide (2018), the MEC teacher guide defines the phonics approach as one in which learners explicitly establish the relationship between speech sounds and the letters that represent them. Through this process, learners develop phonemic awareness, which supports both decoding (reading) and encoding (writing). While the analytic–synthetic approach has been driven and institutionalized by MEC, the phonics approach has largely been introduced and operationalized through donor-supported initiatives such as USAID’s *Vamos Ler!* and SABER programs. This may contribute to inconsistencies in instructional guidance and potential confusion among teachers.

The MEC teacher guide also draws attention to similarities and differences between Portuguese and Mozambican Bantu orthographies. Zones of convergence include letters that are written and pronounced similarly across languages (e.g., *a, m, p*). Zones of tension refer to graphemes that are written the same but pronounced differently (e.g., *nh, ts, ph* in Bantu languages compared to Portuguese). Unique graphemes are those specific to either L1 or L2, such as nasalized vowels in Portuguese (*ão, ãe*) or long vowels in Emakhuwa (*aa, oo*). By highlighting these distinctions, the guide aims to support teachers in anticipating areas of transfer and potential difficulty as learners move between languages.

Student Textbooks

The MEC Grade 1 student textbooks are organized into five thematic units—school, family, community, environment, and health—and follows a consistent analytic–synthetic approach to early literacy instruction. Across units, learners move from meaningful whole words (analytic phase) to syllables and letters, and then back to syllables, words, and simple sentences (synthetic phase). Each lesson begins with a familiar image drawn from children’s lived experiences. Teachers prompt oral discussion to ground instruction in meaningful vocabulary. A key word associated with the image is introduced and then analytically broken into syllables and individual letters. At the letter level, instruction emphasizes letter names rather than letter sounds.

In the synthetic phase, learners reconstruct language by combining letters into syllables (e.g., *ma, me, mi, mo, mu*) and then into familiar words (e.g., *maama, papa*). Reading practice reinforces recognition of syllables and short words, followed by writing activities in which learners trace and independently write the target letter and related words. This structured instructional cycle—picture and oral language, word analysis, letter recognition, syllable construction, word building, reading, and writing—is repeated consistently across units. The predictable progression from whole to part and back to whole exemplifies the analytic–synthetic method and provides routine reinforcement of foundational literacy skills in learners’ first language.

Our review of the Grade 1 Mozambican language student textbooks indicates that, while the materials are grounded in a transitional bilingual education framework, they do not fully align with the SBoR. The Emakhuwa textbook, for example, applies a structured analytic–synthetic methodology, progressing from whole words to syllables and letters and then reconstructing words through patterned practice. This design reflects an instructional routine and situates early literacy development in learners’ L1, consistent with research demonstrating the cognitive and academic benefits of strong L1 foundations.

However, from the perspective of evidence-based reading research, critical instructional components are underdeveloped and not aligned with the SoBR. For example, instruction emphasizes letter names rather than explicit phoneme–grapheme correspondences, limiting systematic development of phonemic awareness and efficient decoding. While learners practice syllable patterns, the materials do not clearly incorporate cumulative, explicit phoneme segmentation and blending routines that characterize structured phonics approaches. The absence of systematic sound-level instruction weakens alignment with the robust body of research demonstrating that explicit phonics and phonemic awareness are foundational to reading acquisition, including in transparent orthographies.

Moreover, the instructional design does not appear to operationalize principles of cross-linguistic transfer central to the science of bilingual reading. Although Portuguese is introduced alongside Emakhuwa, the two languages are taught through parallel but methodologically distinct approaches: analytic–synthetic literacy instruction in L1 and primarily oral, communicative exposure in L2. There is limited evidence of explicit cross-linguistic transfer—such as drawing attention to shared orthographic patterns, phonological contrasts, or cognate relationships—that would facilitate transfer of decoding skills and linguistic knowledge across languages. Research consistently indicates that such bridging supports more efficient transition to L2 literacy and strengthens overall bilingual development.

Taken together, the materials reflect a coherent L1 policy orientation but fall short of fully implementing instructional practices supported by the SoBR. In particular, gaps in explicit phonemic awareness instruction, systematic phonics, cumulative decoding practice, and structured cross-language transfer limit the extent to which the textbooks operationalize current evidence on effective bilingual literacy instruction.

Supplementary TLMs

Supplementary TLMs—particularly those supporting early-grade literacy, bilingual instruction, and the transition from L1 to L2, have not historically been developed or produced by MEC. Instead, these materials have largely been generated through donor-funded initiatives, most notably USAID-supported programs such as *Aprender a Ler* (APaL), *Vamos Ler!*, and SABER. As a result, much of the evidence base and practical experience informing bilingual and early-grade literacy materials in Mozambique originates from these externally supported programs rather than from fully institutionalized national systems.

The USAID-funded APaL program, implemented by World Education between 2012 and 2016, laid the foundation for subsequent literacy initiatives. APaL focused on improving early-grade reading outcomes in Grades 1–3 in Nampula and Zambézia Provinces by strengthening the quality and quantity of reading instruction. The program combined teacher training and coaching, school leadership support, and the development of phonics-based teaching and learning materials. APaL produced student textbooks, decodable books, leveled readers, and scripted lesson plans aligned with explicit early-grade reading instruction, as well as coaching and ZIP-level support materials. While largely monolingual in design, APaL established a strong instructional model grounded in systematic phonics and generated rigorous evidence on early-grade literacy improvement, helping to shape the design of later bilingual programs.

Vamos Ler!, implemented by Creative Associates International between 2016 and 2022, built on the APaL program by developing a more explicitly bilingual suite of materials in Emakhuwa, Elomwe, Echuwabo, and Portuguese for Grades 1–3. Student textbooks were structured around a phonics-based scope and sequence aligned with the science of reading and were complemented by a wide range of supplementary materials, including decodable and complementary readers, big books, conversation posters, letter and syllable charts, and read-aloud texts. Teacher-facing resources included bilingual scripted lesson plans and manuals for Grades 1–3 in both L1 and L2. Together, these materials represent one of the most comprehensive efforts to integrate phonics-based literacy instruction with bilingual classroom practice in Mozambique, although implementation experience highlighted challenges related to the volume, storage, and usability of some supplementary resources.

The SABER program, implemented by World Education for a short period of time, due to the termination of USAID programs, further expanded and refined this materials ecosystem with the explicit aim of supporting scale-up and alignment with national systems. Although the program was terminated in 2025 due to the shutdown of USAID, SABER program developed bilingual student textbooks, complementary Portuguese readers, teacher manuals, coaching guides, and model lesson plans spanning Grades 1–6. SABER placed particular emphasis on strengthening the transition from L1 literacy to Portuguese oral language and reading, including the development of draft transition notebooks and revised Portuguese materials for bilingual classrooms, although not all materials were finalized or printed at scale. SABER also introduced digital and audio-supported resources—such as smartphone-based letter-sound tools and teacher support content delivered via WhatsApp—to extend instructional support beyond print materials.

TLMs developed by APaL, *Vamos Ler!*, and SABER, including supplementary materials, have played a central role in classroom instruction, supporting phonics routines, oral language development, small-group practice, and cumulative reading exposure. Examples include letter, word, and syllable charts; story cards and read-aloud books; conversation posters; and big books for shared reading. While pedagogically valuable, the effectiveness of these materials depended heavily on their alignment with daily lesson routines and practical considerations such as durability, storage, and ease of use—factors that influenced whether materials were sustained, adapted, or discontinued across programs.

Taken together, the materials reviewed in this report reflect a system in which innovation in early-grade literacy and bilingual instruction has been driven primarily by donor-funded programs rather than by MEC’s core materials production systems. APaL established a strong phonics-based foundation; *Vamos Ler!* demonstrated how that foundation could be adapted for bilingual contexts through rich supplementary materials; and SABER sought to consolidate and extend these approaches within national structures. Collectively, these materials provide a robust evidence base and practical starting point for future consolidation, adaptation, and institutionalization under the SoBR framework.

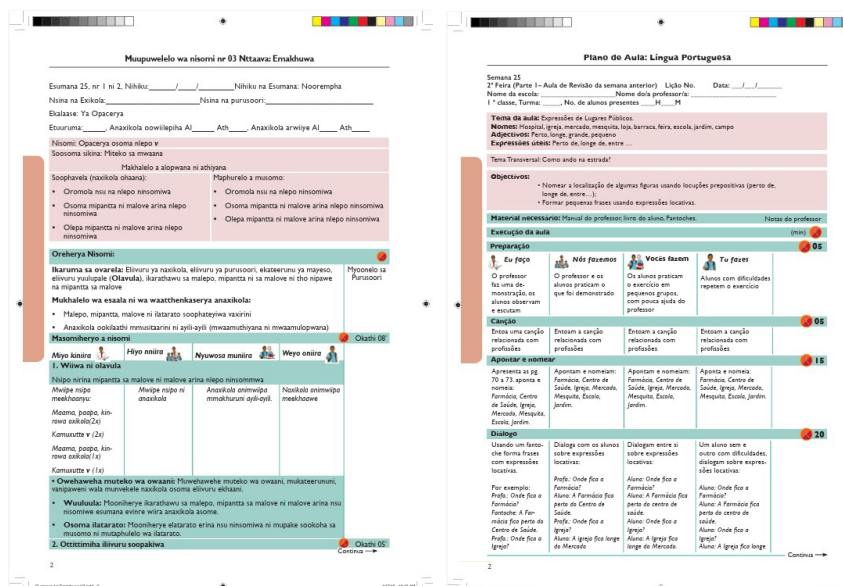
Vamos Ler! Materials

The USAID-funded *Vamos Ler!* project (2016–2022) materials were developed in four languages: Emakhuwa, Elomwe, Echuwabo, and Portuguese. Teacher guides were developed in Portuguese, while student materials for Grades 1–3 were produced in the Mozambican languages, with a structured focus on oral language development in Portuguese.

Teachers Guide

The *Vamos Ler!* Grades 1–3 Teachers Guide reflects a highly structured and explicitly scripted approach to early literacy instruction grounded in systematic phonics and closely aligned with the SoBR. Unlike the analytic–synthetic approach, *Vamos Ler!* provided teachers with bilingual scripted lessons that specify what the teacher says, what learners respond, how sounds are modeled, and how practice is sequenced (See Figure 12). This scripting reduces instructional ambiguity and aims to standardize delivery of evidence-based practices across classrooms.

Figure 13. Vamos Ler! scripted lessons



A central feature of the teachers guide is explicit phoneme–grapheme instruction. Each lesson introduces a single grapheme paired with its corresponding phoneme in a carefully sequenced scope and sequence. Teachers are directed to display the target letter, articulate its sound clearly (not its name), and lead students in repeated choral responses. For example, in a lesson on m, the script instructs the teacher to pronounce /m/ distinctly, have learners repeat it multiple times, and immediately connect the sound to meaningful oral vocabulary. This modeling–response routine is repeated systematically to reinforce automaticity in sound–symbol correspondence.

Importantly, phonological and phonemic awareness activities precede and accompany decoding. Lessons include scripted prompts that guide teachers to help learners isolate initial, medial, or final sounds in familiar spoken words before introducing print. For instance, when using a picture of mama, the teacher script directs the teacher to ask targeted questions to elicit the initial /m/ sound prior to presenting the letter. These routines ensure that learners are

not memorizing visual symbols in isolation but are explicitly mapping speech sounds to print—an instructional feature strongly supported by reading research.

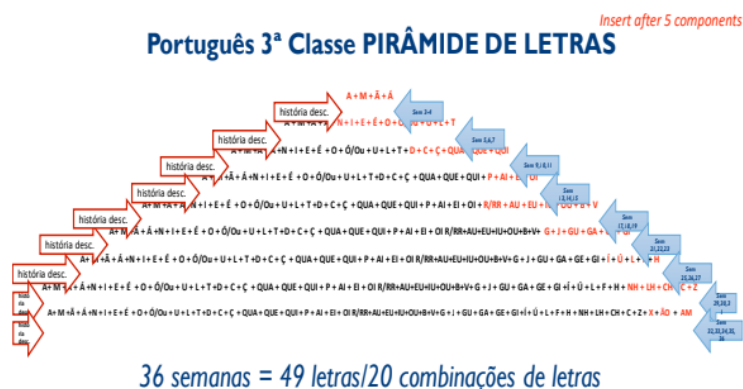
The guide further incorporates cumulative blending and segmenting routines. Learners practice combining phonemes into syllables and words through repeated, scaffolded drills. Unlike the letter-name emphasis observed in the MEC materials, *Vamos Ler!* prioritizes phoneme articulation and blending. Practice progresses from isolated sounds to syllables, to decodable words, and eventually to short, controlled texts. This cumulative structure aligns with core features of systematic phonics instruction, including gradual release, distributed practice, and increasing complexity over time.

Comprehension and vocabulary development are also embedded within the lessons. After decoding target words, teachers are prompted through scripted questions to engage learners in brief discussions that connect words to meaning. This integration reflects the SoBR, recognizing that decoding and language comprehension jointly contribute to reading development. However, decoding instruction remains the instructional anchor.

Within Mozambique’s bilingual education model, the guide attempts to operationalize cross-linguistic transfer more deliberately than the standard MEC textbooks. The scope and sequence for Portuguese builds strategically on letters and sound patterns already mastered in the learners’ L1. Teachers are encouraged to highlight similarities (e.g., shared vowel patterns such as ma) and to explicitly address differences where orthographic or phonological features diverge. Instruction begins with highly transferable graphemes common across languages before introducing less familiar or more complex Portuguese digraphs (e.g., nh, lh, ch). This structured sequencing reflects principles associated with Cummins’ interdependence hypothesis and contemporary research on bilingual transfer.^{cxiv}

Figure 14. Letter pyramid

The teacher guide’s “Pyramid of Letters” visually maps a 36-week progression covering 49 letters and 20 grapheme combinations, reinforcing a predictable, cumulative pathway through increasingly complex orthographic patterns (See Figure 13). The scripted lessons are designed to ensure



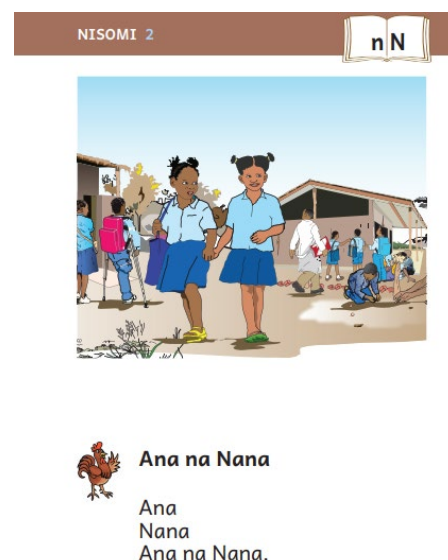
consistency in pacing, coverage, and instructional routines, particularly in contexts where teacher preparation and content knowledge may vary.

Overall, the *Vamos Ler!* teachers guide and scripted lesson plans demonstrate substantially stronger alignment with the SoBR than the standard MEC analytic–synthetic materials. Its emphasis on explicit phoneme–grapheme mapping, cumulative blending practice, structured scope and sequence, and scripted teacher modeling reflects evidence-based instructional design. At the same time, its coexistence alongside the analytic–synthetic approach in national materials introduces methodological duality within the system. This parallel implementation may contribute to inconsistencies in teacher practice and uncertainty regarding instructional expectations, particularly where teachers are required to navigate differing methodological frameworks.

Student Materials

Vamos Ler! student materials were developed in Emakhuwa, Elomwe, Echuwabo, and Portuguese (See Figure 14). The Grade 1 Emakhuwa student book exemplifies strong alignment with a phonics-based approach grounded in the science of reading. Instruction is explicit and systematic: each lesson introduces a new letter or digraph, links sounds to symbols through meaningful contexts, and progresses from phonemic awareness to syllable formation, word reading, and short connected texts. The book uses consistent routines, cumulative practice, and integrated oral language, reading, and writing activities to build automaticity and support orthographic mapping. Together, these features demonstrate a coherent, evidence-based design that provides learners with the foundational skills needed for fluent reading.

Figure 15. Figure 14. *Vamos Ler!* Emakhuwa student book grade 1 example



Aprender+ Materials

The World Bank funded Aprender+ materials consist of scripted teacher lesson plans for grades 1-3. The lesson plans are written in Portuguese and designed to support teachers in delivering foundational reading and language skills through a monolingual modality. The lesson plans are embedded within a teacher manual that begins with general pedagogical guidance. The reading instruction methodology is organized around eight color-coded skills, in alignment with the World Bank’s “reading rainbow.” In grade 1, the emphasis is placed on the red, orange, and yellow skills, which correspond to meaning, sounds, and letters. As students progress to grade 2, the focus shifts to word-level skills (green), and by grade three, to writing, fluency, and comprehension (blue, indigo, violet).

There is a strong emphasis on oral language development, phonological awareness, and basic vocabulary acquisition, beginning with familiar domains such as the home, body parts, animals, and classroom objects. New vocabulary is introduced through thematic units that mirror everyday life in Mozambican households. For example, in grade 1, learners explore vocabulary related to homes, while in grade 2, the scope expands to include modes of transportation, hygiene, and animals.

The guides follow the gradual release model, focused on “eu faço” (I do), “vamos fazer juntos” (we do), and “tu fazes” (you do). This approach emphasizes explicit instruction, guided practice, and independent work, allowing learners to move from modeling to mastery. Teachers engage students through group repetition, peer dialogue, rhymes, songs, visual aids, and drawing or labeling activities. Call-and-response techniques, dictated writing, and informal assessments like “polegar para cima/baixo” (thumbs up/down) are used to check understanding and maintain engagement. The guide also incorporates components of early reading, including:

- Phonological Awareness: Emphasized through syllable clapping, rhyming, and initial/final sound identification.
- Decoding and Word Recognition: Developed through letter-sound correspondence and the use of syllabic families (e.g., GE/GI, NH/LH in grade 2).
- Vocabulary: Introduced through storytelling and labeling of contextual images, although opportunities for deeper oral production remain limited.
- Oral Reading Fluency: Built through repeated reading of short, familiar texts with strong thematic links to student experiences.
- Reading Comprehension: Assessed through literal questions, though inferential questioning is minimal.

In conclusion, this review of curriculum, teacher guidance, student materials, and supplementary TLMs highlights a system in which Mozambique’s BE policy is conceptually well articulated but only partially translated into coherent, evidence-aligned classroom practice. The national curriculum clearly prioritizes L1-based foundational learning and a gradual transition to Portuguese, reflecting both linguistic realities and international evidence on early literacy. However, gaps in instructional guidance—particularly around explicit phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, and structured cross-linguistic transfer—limit the extent to which this policy vision is operationalized consistently across classrooms.

At the instructional level, the coexistence of multiple pedagogical approaches further complicates implementation. MEC-endorsed analytic–synthetic methods emphasize meaningful whole-word instruction but underdeveloped key components of the SoBR, while donor-funded programs such as APaL, *Vamos Ler!*, and SABER have introduced more explicit, phonics-based approaches with stronger alignment to evidence. Although these donor-supported materials have played a critical role in advancing instructional quality, their partial institutionalization and parallel operation alongside national materials contribute to variability in teacher practice and uncertainty around instructional expectations.

The materials landscape reviewed in this section underscores both a strength and a vulnerability in Mozambique’s system. On one hand, donor-funded initiatives have generated a rich body of instructional resources, implementation experience, and empirical evidence on what works for early-grade bilingual literacy. On the other hand, the absence of a fully institutionalized mechanism within MEC to consolidate, align, and sustain these approaches has resulted in fragmentation across curriculum, teacher guidance, and classroom materials.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of Mozambique’s bilingual education policy hinges not only on curriculum design, but on the coherence of the instructional ecosystem that supports teachers and learners. Strengthening alignment across curriculum, TLMs, teacher preparation, and community engagement—while grounding all components in the SoBR—will be essential to translating policy intent into consistent instructional practice and improved FLN outcomes. This analysis points to the central BUILD challenge: moving from parallel, project-based innovation toward a unified, system-owned model of bilingual literacy instruction that is both evidence-based and operationally feasible at scale.

Teacher Workforce and Professional Development

Teachers play a central role in translating Lol policy into effective classroom practice, and the success of bilingual education reforms depends heavily on their language competencies, pedagogical skills, and deployment. In this section, we examine teachers’ language proficiency and MEC’s recruitment, placement, and deployment practices. We then review the professional development opportunities available to teachers to strengthen their capacity for bilingual and multilingual instruction, including support for early literacy teaching and language transition. Through this analysis, we address the following guiding question:

How are language considerations integrated into teacher recruitment, placement, and training (both preservice and in-service)?

Teacher Recruitment, Placement, and Language Skills

Local language requirements are acknowledged in the rules, but day-to-day recruitment and deployment remain largely “language blind.” The 2020-2029 *Estratégia de Expansão do Ensino Bilingue* states that every bilingual class should be staffed by “*professores falantes da língua local a usar como língua de ensino*.”^{cxv} (teachers who are speakers of the local language that will be used as the medium of instruction) Yet, to ensure national unity, Mozambique’s national vacancy bulletins let any qualified applicant compete for posts anywhere in the country, and district officers indicate this has produced “many cases where teachers did not speak the local language used in the school where they worked.”^{cxvi} USAID’s *Vamos Ler!* therefore had to create its own algorithm to “match teachers and students who speak the same language,” a task the Ministry’s regular HR system still cannot do.^{cxvii}

Entrance exams and placement interviews test Portuguese and Mathematics but never local-language proficiency and consequently, language skills do not influence who gets into teacher college or where graduates are posted. Admission regulations for the *Institutos de Formação de Professores* (IFPs) require a pass mark in written Portuguese and Mathematics and an oral interview. No element assesses mastery of any Mozambican language.^{cxviii} Once hired, the same omission persists in deployment criteria, perpetuating the mismatches documented above.

Teacher Professional Development

The *Estratégia de Expansão do Ensino Bilingue 2020–2029* (EEEB) makes teacher development one of its four core pillars. It distinguishes clearly between *formação inicial* (pre-service) and *formação em exercício* (in-service/continuous), and it defines what teachers must be able to do (skills/competências) and how those skills will be built.

The strategy’s framing of teacher development is driven by four “*enfoques principais*” (key focus areas), beginning with teacher training (*Formação de professores (inicial e em exercício)*). It sets the overarching teacher outcome as “Garantir que até 2029 todos os professores do ensino primário estejam habilitados para leccionarem turmas do ensino bilingue.” (“Ensure that by 2029 all primary school teachers are qualified to teach bilingual-education classes.”) (4.1.1, Objectivo geral). The word “habilitados” implies that the strategy isn’t just about exposure, but about teachers *acquiring and demonstrating* the ability to run bilingual classrooms.

During pre-service training, the strategy insists that new teachers graduate from training able to work fluently in both modalities (monolingual Portuguese and bilingual) and in the specific local languages mapped to their training institution. Specifically, the document states “Os currículos de formação inicial de professores deverão ser desenhados de modo a assegurar que todos os professores sejam capazes de leccionar em ambas as modalidades de ensino:

monolingue e bilingue.” (“The initial teacher training curricula should be designed to ensure that all teachers are able to teach in both modalities of instruction: monolingual and bilingual”)

The underlying idea is to foster two competency blocks:

- 1) linguistic competence in the designated Mozambican language(s) of their catchment area: “Identificar e definir as línguas moçambicanas a serem leccionadas em cada IFP em função do mapeamento linguístico.” (4.1.2.1, ii), and
- 2) pedagogical competence in BE approaches (transition model, use of L1 to scaffold L2, creation/use of contextualized materials).

To achieve the objectives of pre-service training, the document envisions pre-service reform as an interlocking combination of curriculum redesign, language allocation, and candidate selection policy so that entrants *start* with (or are selected to acquire) the necessary language and bilingual pedagogy skills. In the document, these 3 ideas are laid out as:

“4.1.2.1. Para a formação inicial

- i. Rever o quadro actual de formação inicial de professores;
- ii. Identificar e definir as línguas moçambicanas a serem leccionadas em cada IFP...;
- iii. Rever a política de selecção de candidatos à formação de professores.”

- (i. Review the current framework for pre-service teacher training;
- ii. Identify and define the Mozambican languages to be taught at each IFP ...;
- iii. Review the policy for selecting candidates for teacher training.)

The strategy’s wording makes clear that in-service programs should bring teachers up to the same bilingual instructional standard as pre-service graduates in a short timeframe. Specifically, the document states “Na fase inicial da expansão... prestar-se-á maior atenção à capacitação de professores... Esta estratégia permitirá, em pouco tempo, habilitar os professores em exercício a trabalhar com as turmas do ensino bilingue, bem como assegurar a sua assistência pedagógica regular.” (4.1.3.3, Capacitação de professores). There is emphasis also on the ability to plan and run bilingual lessons and support peers locally (“equipas de facilitação... assegurar as acções de capacitação permanentes”) and the use of L1 strategically across subjects (“A língua moçambicana poderá ser usada como recurso no processo de ensino-aprendizagem para explicar ou clarificar conceitos difíceis em qualquer disciplina e classe.” (sec. on modelo de transição, after 4.1.3).

The strategy envisions in-service teacher development as a decentralized, layered system that equips existing teachers quickly and sustains their growth over time. The plan is for districts to be strengthened with their own local trainers, teacher colleges (IFPs) to be resourced, and their

trainers upskilled in BE, and teachers being able to access distance education to reach scale. At all administrative tiers (central, provincial, district, ZIP) facilitators are prepared to run ongoing capacity-building, forming local facilitation teams that keep professional learning continuous even when higher-level specialists aren't present. In short, continuous professional development is anchored in ZIPs and districts, runs in recurring cycles, and leverages both face-to-face and distance modalities so that support.

However, there are many teachers in Mozambique who are assigned to bilingual classes where they do not speak the local language used at the school or even without any BE training. According to education stakeholders, this typically happens when there are not enough teachers in the school who speak the local Lol or are trained in bilingual pedagogy. There are also reported cases of mismanagement of teacher deployment at district and school levels. The placement of teachers in schools who are not familiar with the Lol has jeopardized the quality of instruction and frustrated parents and guardians. In this regard, a representative of an implementing partner reported that:

"It is true that there are cases of teachers who are assigned to bilingual classes without proper training or even without speaking the local language used in the school where they work. Some are even native speakers of the languages used in their schools, but do not have formal command of these languages that would allow them to use them to teach. Unfortunately, in many cases school principals are aware of these limitations, but have no other alternative than to assign these teachers to bilingual classes. However, there are also cases of negligence on the part of principals, assigning teachers without the skills to teach bilingual classes when there are capable teachers in the school. (Education partner representative 1)

To address the persistent misalignment between teacher language competencies and school language needs, the Ministry of Education is actively revising its teacher recruitment and placement procedures. Notably, for the 2025 academic year, the Ministry explicitly stated in its recruitment call that proficiency in the local language would be considered an asset when selecting candidates for bilingual schools. This strategic adjustment is intended to better align teacher assignments with the linguistic demands of individual schools, thereby facilitating the recruitment of bilingual educators who can effectively support multilingual instruction and improve learning outcomes.

Primary teacher training in Mozambique is typically conducted in Portuguese, including pre-service and in-service training. Although BE is expanding, teachers in bilingual programs have also been trained exclusively in Portuguese. Several stakeholders acknowledge that, ideally, teacher training should be available in Mozambican languages, but many argue that logistical challenges make this difficult. Teacher Training Institutes (IFPs) across the country enroll

candidates who speak different local languages, making it hard to determine which language to use for instruction. There are also questions in relation to the human capacity to use local languages for teacher training. While some specialists and trainers have been trained in Bantu language education, their numbers remain insufficient to meet the national demand for bilingual teacher training. As a senior educational officer shared:

“We also do not know to what extent teacher trainers may be able to conduct their classes in Mozambican languages. Most of them were trained in Portuguese and did not take courses in teaching Mozambican languages. The curriculum stipulates that training should be given in Portuguese, and this applies to all curricular areas offered.” (Education officer 2)

Until recently, initial teacher training curricula did not focus on BE, requiring teachers to undergo additional training after completing their studies. As a result, many teachers assigned to BE lack sufficient preparation, both in teaching methodologies and BE principles. However, the new 12+3 training model aims to address this gap by preparing teachers for both monolingual and bilingual instruction. This model increases the number of training hours dedicated to Bantu languages and bilingual teaching methodologies. However, as graduates are only now entering the system, its effectiveness is yet to be evaluated, although some stakeholders anticipate that this new model also tips more towards training for monolingual teaching in Portuguese.

“The new 12 + 3 training model seems to focus more on the bilingual teaching component. However, in general, the basis for initial teacher training continues to be that of monolingual teaching. Priority continues to be given to training teachers for monolingual teaching in Portuguese, both in terms of the program and in terms of pedagogical practices.” (Researcher 2)

The 2019 teacher training curriculum does talk about Mozambican languages and bilingual pedagogy; however, the reform remains largely theoretical. Course outlines list *Estrutura das Línguas Moçambicanas*, *Língua Moçambicana* and *Literatura Oral em Línguas Moçambicanas*, and *Didactica de L1 e Metodologias de Ensino Bilingue* (L1 Didactics and BE Methodologies) among the common-core subjects, and the reform is praised for “a valorização das línguas nacionais ... através da expansão do programa de Educação Bilingue.”^{cxix} In practice, many teachers interviewed in 2022 still reported that they had received “no pre-service training in bilingual education” at all, given that the new 12+3 model is newer.^{cxx}

Meanwhile, in-service training programs remain inadequate. Short training sessions of 3–5 days are not enough to equip teachers for bilingual instruction, especially if they did not receive BE training initially. Most in-service teachers were trained under the now-discontinued 10+ 1 model, which did not include preparation for BE. Poor in-service training is aggravated by lack

of supervision and coaching, a component that is internationally considered key for improving teaching and learning quality.⁸⁰

“The sector also struggles with a lack of resources to provide supervision and pedagogical support to teachers in the field. Teachers who benefit from in-service training do not receive the necessary support in the classroom due to a lack of resources to send district technicians and ZIP coordinators to schools.” (Education Officer 6)

As a result, teachers do not fully grasp the methods they need to use in bilingual classrooms, hindering their ability to teach effectively. To improve this, training time should be extended, and the content should be carefully prioritized and organized.

In-service training at the start of each year should focus on teaching methods, and teachers should be trained separately based on whether they are monolingual or bilingual. Effective supervision and evaluation of teaching practices are crucial for successful implementation. Additionally, initial teacher training must better prepare educators to teach in bilingual programs. Therefore, improving both pre-service and in-service training is crucial for strengthening Mozambique’s BE system.

In-service provision is driven by donor projects, not by the regular cascade housed within government structures, and is typically brief. *Vamos Ler!* trained 123 provincial facilitators in Nampula to coach teachers on local-language literacy, reaching 21 districts, but these workshops lasted only a few days and were financed entirely by USAID.^{cxix} One veteran teacher recounted receiving just “three days” of Xichangana training before being expected to teach and later train peers.^{cxix} When donor funding lapses, the specialized mentors, materials and coaching apps are archived rather than absorbed by the Instituto de Formação de Professores.

System-Level Gaps and Implications for Lol Implementation

Overall, key gaps and unknowns persist in incentives, data, and sustainability of teacher recruitment, placement and training from a bilingual lens. Neither the teacher-management database nor Sistema de Informação para Gestão de Educação (SIGE) records teachers’ L1 or their written competence in the local Lol, so planners cannot target recruitment or transfers.^{cxix} No allowance rewards bilingual teaching, and promotion criteria are silent on local-language mastery. There is still no nationwide study quantifying how many teachers now meet the Lol criterion or how that correlates with learning outcomes. Pre-service syllabi include language modules, but lecturers themselves often lack bilingual teaching experience; in-service packages rely on external grants.

National reports include activity- and coverage-type data, not a centralized placement dataset keyed to teacher language. For example, Joint Sector Review notes track numbers of bilingual schools/teachers trained, and implementation reports count classes taught across Portuguese plus 19 Mozambican languages, which are useful for scale monitoring, but they do not show whether individual teachers were posted based on verified L1 proficiency.^{CXXIV, CXXV} Older EMIS diagnostics likewise found limited teacher attributes and inconsistent capture of mother-tongue information.^{CXXVI}

Mozambique’s rules and strategies clearly expect teacher placement to reflect local-language needs, and the system monitors bilingual coverage and training.^{CXXVII, CXXVIII} However, publicly available data do not show nationwide, routine use of teacher language-proficiency records to drive recruitment/placement in primary. A practical next step would be to add and use a teacher-language proficiency field in HR/EMIS, and to publish simple indicators (e.g., “% Grade 1–3 classrooms where Lol matches teacher L1”) by province/district to close the loop between policy and deployment.

Language considerations are increasingly reflected in teacher-training curricula and in select, donor-funded placement initiatives. However, recruitment examinations, human resource records, and incentive structures continue to privilege Portuguese as the sole criterion of professional competence. Until the Ministry systematically assesses, records, and rewards teachers’ proficiency in Mozambican languages—and finances sustained bilingual coaching through domestic resources—the Lol ambitions of Mozambique’s bilingual education strategy are likely to remain only partially realized.

Community Engagement

Mozambique’s bilingual education reform does not only depend on pedagogical quality and system design, but also on the extent to which parents, caregivers, and communities support and engage with Lol decisions. Evidence from Mozambique suggests that community engagement efforts have been largely donor driven. This section examines these efforts and addresses the following guiding question:

How are parents and community members involved in decisions about the Lol?

Community engagement has played an important role in supporting BE and the implementation of Lol policies in Mozambique. A central mechanism for community participation is the *conselho de escola* (school councils), which typically includes parents, local leaders, and teachers. In principle, these councils participate in school-level decision-making, including deliberations related to Lol, school operations, and the development and contextualization of

TLMs, as demonstrated in programs such as *Vamos Ler!* and SABER. School councils also contribute to broader school management functions, including promoting student attendance.

Despite their potential, several challenges limit the effectiveness and sustainability of school councils. Many council members have limited literacy skills and receive minimal training, constraining their ability to engage meaningfully in pedagogical and administrative decision-making. In addition, council participation is entirely voluntary, with members often contributing their time and personal resources without compensation or institutional support. This reliance on unpaid labor raises concerns about long-term viability, particularly in under-resourced communities where competing demands on time and income are significant. Strengthening the capacity and sustainability of school councils is therefore essential if community engagement is to remain a meaningful and effective pillar of BE in Mozambique. In many low-performing and under-resourced schools, community engagement remains limited, with school councils frequently inactive or altogether absent.

Beyond school councils, a range of initiatives illustrates the potential of community-led engagement. Under the USAID-funded *Vamos Ler!* program, for example, local non-governmental organizations such as the Development Support Association (NANA) and Facilidade mobilized communities in Nampula and Zambézia provinces through reading clubs, radio programming, and theatre performances that promoted the value of mother-tongue instruction. These activities contributed to increased parental engagement and strengthened student learning outcomes in local languages.

Local-language literacy volunteers further reinforced classroom instruction by leading reading clubs, storytelling circles, and other learning activities in communities, helping to cultivate a culture of literacy in the home. The program also engaged community members, particularly elders and traditional storytellers, in the development of culturally relevant teaching materials, ensuring that content was both linguistically and culturally appropriate.

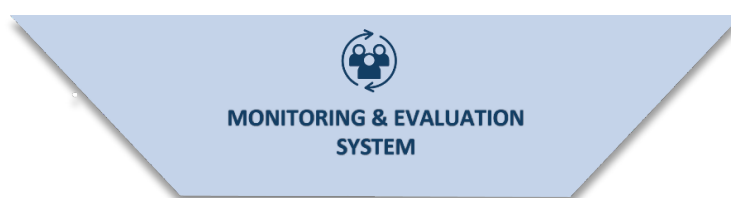
Community media has also played a supportive role. UNICEF and other partners have promoted early learning through local-language radio programming, particularly in remote or conflict-affected areas. These broadcasts often feature songs, stories, and messages emphasizing the value of education in a child's first language. In addition, efforts to recruit bilingual or multilingual teachers from within the communities they serve have helped ensure closer linguistic alignment between educators and students, improving communication, classroom engagement, and learning outcomes. Collectively, these approaches have been associated with tangible benefits, including increased school attendance, reduced dropout rates in the early grades, greater parental involvement in learning, and stronger alignment between home and school languages.

Nevertheless, community engagement efforts continue to face significant challenges. Many activities—such as reading clubs, community meetings, and radio broadcasts—remain heavily dependent on donor funding. Without sustainable domestic financing, these initiatives risk diminishing once external support ends. Rural communities, in particular, often lack basic materials, such as books in local languages, to sustain engagement at home.

Social and gender norms further shape participation. In some communities, women and youth—who play critical roles in supporting children’s education—are excluded from decision-making spaces. Cultural expectations may limit mothers’ involvement in school councils or restrict girls’ participation in literacy activities outside of school. Insecurity and displacement, especially in conflict-affected provinces such as Cabo Delgado, have further disrupted education systems and weakened community structures. When schools are damaged or families displaced, maintaining consistent local leadership and alignment between home and school languages becomes increasingly difficult.

Monitoring and Evaluation

In the final tier of the BUILD framework that we analyze (the final is the improved outcomes which are meant to be tracked over time), we assess Mozambique’s M&E system to see how well the country regularly incorporates data related to each of the other education system components, including language considerations, for ongoing refinement.



M&E System

First, we address the following question:

Does Senegal have a regularly updated M&E plan, and are there national or subnational mechanisms to use this data for continuous improvement in FLN outcomes?

Mozambique has an ongoing and institutionalized standing M&E architecture and regular review forums (set in the 2020–2029 Education Strategic Plan), and there are national and subnational channels intended to use data for course-correction in FLN. But implementation is uneven, with outcome-level tracking and systematic feedback loops to classrooms/provinces still being strengthened. The Plano Estratégico da Educação (PEE) 2020–2029 establishes an M&E platform through an annually updated three-year rolling Plano Operacional (PO) and a yearly Programa de Actividades (PdA) that align activities and budgets. The PEE codifies an

Annual Review Meeting (Reunião Anual de Revisão- RAR) each March/April as well as thematic working groups and a Joint Coordination Group (GCC) to follow up on recommendations.

Mozambique's core mechanisms for turning data into action are the RAR and a district-level supervision system that feeds school-level signals into national decision-making. The Education Strategic Plan (PEE) anchors a recurring RAR in March/April to review sector performance and agree on follow-ups; this cadence is reiterated in implementation reports and the independent technical appraisal.^{CXXIX, CXXX} To strengthen the feedback loop from schools, the ministry designed a management platform piloted across districts, through which supervisors report attendance of directors, teachers, students, the functioning of school councils, school management, and basic learning information.

Mozambique's subnational feedback loops for FLN are built into devolved roles for provinces and districts, school-based pedagogical networks (ZIPs), and school councils, with national review forums linking back to these levels for course-correction. The Education Strategic Plan (PEE) assigns provincial directorates (DPE) to support, monitor, and supervise district services (SDEJT) and teacher training institutes, and it calls for allocating resources to decentralized levels to fulfill these responsibilities; ZIPs are explicitly tasked with monitoring how school-level resources and pedagogical guidance is implemented.^{CXXXI, CXXXII} School councils provide a participatory governance channel at the school, reinforcing accountability around management and learning; their functions and guidance are documented in ministerial regulations and manuals summarized in recent sector syntheses.^{CXXXIII, CXXXIV} Finally, the Annual Review Meeting (RAR) convenes each year with provincial participation and follow-up through the Joint Coordination Group (GCC), creating a loop from local data and supervision back to national decision-making and back down again through provincial/district action plans.

A critical lever for monitoring, Mozambique's education management information system (EMIS), has evolved into a more robust and integrated system, improving the availability of timely education data across multiple levels.^{CXXXV} Since the rollout of SIMEC (Sistema de Monitoria e Estatística da Educação e Cultura) in the late 2000s, Mozambique has made sustained investments in developing a unified EMIS platform that aggregates school-level data on infrastructure, teachers, and enrolment. The system now captures data from pre-primary to secondary levels and has introduced modules to track indicators aligned with SDG 4. This digital transformation, if rolled out, can enable annual statistical yearbooks, decentralized data collection, and the development of dashboards at provincial and district levels, enhancing transparency and facilitating.^{CXXXVI}

A key strength of Mozambique's EMIS is its capacity to provide disaggregated and regularly updated data that supports decision-making at multiple administrative levels.^{CXXXVII} With support

from development partners like UNICEF and GPE, MEC has extended EMIS coverage to include gender, location, and school condition variables. This has allowed policymakers to monitor equity gaps in access and infrastructure and respond with targeted resource allocation.^{cxviii}

Continuous Improvement

Finally, we assess the extent to which Senegal uses its M&E system for continuous improvement, as aligned with the following question:

How are M&E findings used to inform and revise curriculum, teacher training, and LoI policies?

Mozambique draws on recurrent sector reviews and assessment evidence to inform adjustments to early-grade curriculum and pedagogy; however, the feedback loop from evidence to classroom practice remains uneven. At the 2020 *Reunião Anual de Revisão* (RAR), the Ministry explicitly linked weak learning outcomes—particularly in early-grade reading and writing—to the need for targeted (“pontual”) curriculum revisions. These revisions emphasized increased instructional time and the introduction of new teaching techniques in the early grades, alongside expectations that teacher-training institutes strengthen their focus on early literacy methods. This approach is consistent with the *Regulamento Geral de Avaliação* (Diploma Ministerial No. 7/2019), which defines assessment as an integral component of the curriculum and mandates corrective actions and the redefinition of strategies and methodologies when assessment results indicate the need for improvement.

Findings from evaluations have also prompted substantial reform of teacher training. In response to identified weaknesses in the former 10+3 model, the Ministry redesigned initial teacher preparation into a 12+3 model, launched in August 2019, with explicit competencies for teaching in both monolingual and bilingual classrooms. The revised model also incorporates monitoring and continuous improvement mechanisms across pre-service and in-service training. These reforms directly respond to evidence on instructional gaps and the operational demands of a bilingual education system.^{cxix} Nevertheless, implementation remains uneven across training institutes, and effective classroom uptake continues to depend on the extent to which provincial and district supervision translates national priorities into sustained, practice-oriented coaching.

System evaluation is conducted through a combination of national examinations and national and external large-scale assessments. National examinations are end-of-year assessments administered by the Ministry of Education, while national large-scale assessments are also managed by the Ministry (e.g., INDE/MINED, 2014, 2017). External large-scale assessments are conducted through the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ), providing comparative regional benchmarks.^{cxl}

Language-of-instruction (LoI) decisions are similarly refined through evidence review and problem-solving within formal sector review forums. The Education Strategic Plan (PEE) institutionalizes the annual RAR, thematic working groups, and joint monitoring visits to assess implementation progress and impact, including the pace and quality of bilingual education expansion and transition timelines.^{cxli,cxlii} The 2020 RAR minutes highlight precisely the types of LoI-related bottlenecks that M&E systems are intended to surface, such as delays in textbook distribution for Grades 1–2, high pupil–teacher ratios, and practical barriers to implementing bilingual teaching practicums.^{cxliii}

On the data systems side, RAR documentation notes the rollout of an online supervision and management platform—designed in 2018 and piloted in 2019—to enable district supervisors to report on attendance, school council functioning, school management, and basic learning indicators.^{cxliv} This platform provides the government with more timely insight into school-level conditions; however, uneven adoption across provinces and persistent technical challenges related to hosting and connectivity limit its effectiveness. In parallel, the World Bank–GPE program has institutionalized a National Learning Assessment (NLA) to be administered every three years, with results disseminated across system levels.^{cxlv} The program also tracks whether teachers receive pedagogical guidance informed by NLA and annual assessment results, representing a deliberate effort to push evidence into day-to-day instructional practice. Despite these efforts, challenges remain in establishing routine processes through which NLA findings and supervision data consistently inform lesson planning, coaching, and the procurement of teaching and learning materials.^{cxlvi} Moreover, the most recently published NLA results date to 2016; the subsequent round, conducted in 2024, has been affected by data quality concerns.

The Education Management Information System (EMIS), while significantly strengthened in recent years, illustrates ongoing system-level constraints. Although reporting coverage has expanded, data quality—particularly from remote schools—remains uneven due to limited digital capacity and unreliable connectivity. Data collection is still largely paper-based at the school level and digitized at the district level, increasing the risk of errors. In some provinces, school leaders lack sufficient training or incentives to ensure accurate and timely data entry, resulting in underreporting or delays. In addition, limited interoperability between EMIS and other administrative systems, such as payroll and budgeting platforms, constrains its usefulness for cross-sectoral planning and accountability.

The use of EMIS data in policymaking therefore remains partial. While the central ministry produces annual reports drawing on EMIS data, subnational planners often lack the analytical tools or training needed to interpret and apply the information effectively. This limits the system’s capacity to support responsive planning decisions, such as teacher redeployment or

adjustments to school grants. A broader culture of data use at the school level is also underdeveloped, with many headteachers viewing EMIS primarily as a reporting requirement rather than a management tool. Data reliability is further affected by informal structural incentives to inflate enrollment figures, given their link to resource allocation. Digitization at all levels remains incomplete, with district staff frequently transferring data manually from paper forms into spreadsheet-based systems.

In terms of instructional monitoring, schools receive irregular pedagogical supervision visits from provincial and district officials, typically focused on observing teacher performance. Schools are also organized into *Zonas de Influência Pedagógica* (ZIPs), or school clusters, usually led by the director of a relatively better-resourced school. ZIPs are intended to support professional development through teacher meetings, in-service training, and workshops facilitated by provincial, district, or Teacher Training Institute (IFP) staff. In practice, however, many planned ZIP activities are not implemented, most commonly due to resource constraints, limiting their effectiveness as vehicles for sustained instructional support.

Findings from evaluations have also prompted substantial reform of teacher training. In response to identified weaknesses in the former 10+3 model, the Ministry redesigned initial teacher preparation into a 12+3 model, launched in August 2019, with explicit competencies for teaching in both monolingual and bilingual classrooms. The revised model also incorporates monitoring and continuous improvement mechanisms across pre-service and in-service training. These reforms directly respond to evidence on instructional gaps and the operational demands of a bilingual education system. Nevertheless, implementation remains uneven across training institutes, and effective classroom uptake continues to depend on the extent to which provincial and district supervision translates national priorities into sustained, practice-oriented coaching.

LoI decisions are likewise iterated through evidence and problem-solving in the review forums. The PEE formalizes the annual RAR, thematic working groups, and joint monitoring visits to check implementation and impact, intended to take stock of bilingual expansion and transition timelines.^{cxlvii, cxlviii} The 2020 RAR minutes surface exactly the kinds of LoI bottlenecks M&E should catch, such as late book distribution for Grades 1-2, high pupil-teacher ratios, and practical barriers to bilingual teaching practicums.^{cxlix}

On the data systems side, RAR records the rollout of an online supervision and management platform, which was designed in 2018 and piloted in 2019, for district supervisors to report attendance, school council functioning, management, and basic learning information, giving the

government a more immediate view of what schools are experiencing.^{cl} Uneven use of this platform across provinces remains a challenge, along with technological issues related to hosting the platform. In parallel, the World Bank/GPE program institutionalizes a National Learning Assessment (NLA) every three years with results disseminated at all levels, and the World Bank program tracks whether teachers receive pedagogical guidance based on NLA and annual assessment results, which acts as a deliberate attempt to push findings into day-to-day instruction.^{cli} While the intent is strong, the challenge is building routines so NLA insights and supervision data systematically shape lesson plans, coaching, and procurement of TLMs in each term.^{clii} Further, the last published results for NLA are from 2016, after which it wasn't conducted until 2024, which has in turn been marred by data quality issues.

An illustrative example is the EMIS, which despite its progress, still faces persistent challenges in data quality, system interoperability, and real-time usage.^{cliii} While data reporting coverage has increased, the accuracy of inputs, particularly from remote schools, remains uneven due to limited digital capacity and irregular connectivity. Data is collected on paper forms at the school level and digitized at the district-level, increasing chances for error. In some provinces, school directors lack the training or incentives to ensure accurate data entry, leading to underreporting or delays. Moreover, integration between EMIS and other administrative databases (such as payroll or budgeting systems) is close to non-existent, reducing the system's utility for cross-sectoral planning and accountability.^{cliv}

The use of EMIS data in policymaking remains partial, constrained by weak feedback loops and limited analytical capacity at subnational levels. While the central ministry produces annual reports based on EMIS data, district planners often lack the technical tools or training to interpret and apply the information effectively. This hampers the use of data for responsive planning, such as reassigning teachers or adapting school grants. There is also a limited culture of data use in school management itself, where headteachers often see EMIS as a reporting obligation rather than a tool for internal decision-making.^{clv} Further, the data is not reliable, with structural incentives, albeit informal, to inflate numbers with a view to receiving more resources as they are tied to enrollment numbers. Another area of improvement is the digitization of the system at all levels since currently district staff enter data from paper forms into an Excel database.

In terms of monitoring, schools receive unsystematic pedagogic supervision visits from provincial and district officials, who check on teaching performance of staff. In addition, schools are organized into ZIPs (school clusters), where usually the better resourced school and the respective Director are named the head of the ZIP. Among other things, ZIPs are meant to serve professional development purposes (in-service training, workshops, etc.) either involving

meetings among teachers of the ZIP schools, or training mainly offered by provincial, district and/or Teacher Training Institute (IFP) staff. Unfortunately, the planned activities are often not implemented, reportedly due to lack of resources.

Linguistic Considerations

Next, we examine how the M&E system addresses language issues in response to the following question:

To what extent does M&E incorporate linguistic considerations, including data on teachers' and learners' Lol?

Mozambique's routine monitoring systems do capture *some* Lol information, but gaps in coverage, depth and use mean that most linguistic realities in classrooms are still being tracked only through one-off donor studies rather than the national M&E architecture. The Sistema de Informação para Gestão de Educação (SIGE) education-management information system records whether each primary school is bilingual or monolingual. What SIGE still *does not* collect is class-level or individual-level detail: it cannot tell the ministry *which* local language is actually used in a grade-1 classroom at any given point in time, which language each child speaks at home, or whether the assigned teacher is literate in that language. It does indicate the languages of instruction of the school, but not the languages of the children or teachers. As a result, headline indicators can mask major within-school variation. Teacher-management and school-supervision tools likewise omit systematic language fields, like the ones discussed earlier, leaving planners blind to teacher-pupil language matches. However, the current district supervision guidelines capture some information on language, such as whether teachers in BE classrooms speak the Lol of the school.

National learning assessment streams collect virtually no linguistic metadata, so results cannot be disaggregated by Lol.^{clvi} The high-stakes Avaliação Nacional da Aprendizagem (ANA) and Mozambique's participation in SEACMEQ are administered only in Portuguese. ANA in 2024 did attempt to collect this data but it hasn't been made public yet. Item booklets are not translated, and pupils' home languages are not recorded. By contrast, donor-financed EGRAs (e.g., *Vamos Ler!*) have tested children in any or all of three widely spoken local languages and in Portuguese, but those datasets sit outside the ministry's regular EMIS/assessment pipeline and are not mined for national reporting.

Project-level M&E has temporarily filled some gaps but remains siloed and time-bound. *Vamos Ler!* built dashboards that tracked each observed lesson by language, the teacher's oral language proficiency, and pupil reading scores by language comprehension sub-tasks. However, when the project ended in 2022, the dedicated database and coaching app were archived

rather than merged into SIGE, illustrating how language data can disappear once external funding dries up.

The LITES study found that while this is the general pattern in the education system as a whole, the deficit is more pronounced in the bilingual program when compared to the monolingual program in Portuguese.^{clvii} Chibutane and Reinikka also found a lack of monitoring and support to BE schools, allegedly due to the lack of resources. Exceptions are schools with direct support from NGOs or aid agencies, which tend to have more regular supervision, M&E exercises.^{clviii}

MEC acknowledges the system weakness in supervision and M&E. To address this issue and ensure education quality, the 2020–2029 Education Sector Strategic Plan defines as one of the system priority activities “ensuring the regular implementation of the National Learning Assessment to allow monitoring of learning progress and adjusting activities to improve quality throughout the implementation of the PEE.”^{clix}

Mozambique’s path forward involves consolidating EMIS as a tool for both monitoring and management, with a stronger emphasis on real-time analytics, school-level engagement, and cross-system integration. Planned upgrades include the rollout of mobile-based data collection for hard-to-reach schools, expanded links with HR and finance systems, and automated data quality checks. Development partners continue to support technical training, but long-term sustainability will require stronger national ownership and institutional embedding of EMIS in planning and accountability frameworks.

In conclusion, Mozambique has the framework for an institutionalized M&E system, which includes elements such as the PEE’s annual RAR/GCC cycle and rolling PO/PdA to an expanding EMIS and supervision platform, that can, in principle, drive continuous improvement in FLN under a bilingual model but mechanisms to effect change at the classroom level remain a work-in-progress. To get there, outcome-focused indicators (for e.g., indicators for grade 2/ grade 3 reading in L1, grade 4 oral Portuguese, grade 6 Portuguese comprehension) should be routinely collected and reviewed alongside simple fidelity checks (teacher–language match, language used per subject, materials readiness) so that RAR decisions translate into concrete coaching, redeployment, and procurement actions the very next term. Strengthening EMIS integration with HR/finance and adding language-specific fields will close critical blind spots on teacher placement and Lol implementation, while language-disaggregated learning reports will let provinces target support where it matters most. Finally, building analytic and supervisory capacity in provinces/ZIPs and cultivating a school-level culture of data use will turn national reviews from compliance exercises into real course corrections for curriculum pacing, teacher training, and the Lol transition.

Summary and Assessment of System Progression

This section synthesizes the evidence across each tier of the BUILD framework to assess Mozambique’s current position along the BUILD Progression Scale. Overall, Mozambique demonstrates strong policy commitment and a coherent bilingual education vision, placing the system largely in the Developing stage across most BUILD components. However, persistent gaps in implementation, data systems, and institutionalization of evidence constrain progress toward more advanced stages of system maturity. The analysis below summarizes Mozambique’s standing across each tier.

FLN Goals and Language Policy

Mozambique’s FLN goals and Lol policy place the system at the **Developing** stage of the progression scale. The government has articulated a clear commitment to bilingual education through national legislation and strategic planning, including a defined gradual transition model from Mozambican national languages (L1) to Portuguese (L2). These policies are well aligned with the science of bilingual reading and demonstrate increasing government ownership. However, implementation remains uneven, particularly in operationalizing the concept of “transfer” from L1 to L2 in a way that is clearly defined, measurable, and aligned with the science of bilingual reading. As a result, while policy intent is strong, translation into consistent classroom practice remains limited.

Table 2. Progression criteria for Lol policies

Absent	Emerging	Developing	Established	Institutionalized
No official Lol policy is in place to reach the FLN goal(s).	A Lol policy exists, but it is vague, fragmented, or not aligned with the FLN goal(s).	A Lol policy is defined, with growing government commitment and early implementation to achieve the FLN goal(s).	A Lol policy is applied in practice and supported by implementation structures in support of the FLN goal(s).	A Lol policy is embedded in national education systems and reviewed regularly in alignment with the FLN goal(s).

Evidence and Data Use

Mozambique’s use of evidence related to language and literacy outcomes is best characterized as **Emerging**. While policy instruments specify assessment points and outline rules for bilingual expansion, two critical evidence gaps remain: nationally representative language mapping and clearly defined language thresholds for FLN outcomes. Existing insights into student and teacher language proficiency largely derive from donor- and research-funded initiatives such as LITES and *Vamos Ler!*, rather than from an institutionalized national data system. Although

regular assessment windows exist and there is stated intent to use evidence for pacing transition and monitoring expansion, the absence of language-disaggregated benchmarks and a national pipeline for language data limits the system’s ability to use evidence systematically for decision-making.

Table 3. Progression criteria for evidence and data use

Absent	Emerging	Developing	Established	Institutionalized
Education stakeholders do not use or have access to evidence related to student language skills to inform and adapt policies and practices.	Education stakeholders have access to some data related to student language skills, but the data are only available on a limited scale or have suboptimal quality.	Education stakeholders have access to student language mapping on a large scale, some evidence on language transfer between some L1s and the desired L2, and some other LoI indicators.	Education stakeholders have access to student and teacher language mapping data on a national scale, language transfer data between the most prominent L1s and the desired L2, and data on additional LoI indicators.	Education stakeholders not only have access to language mapping, language threshold data, and other LoI indicators aligned with all BUILD tiers but also regularly use and update those data to inform policies and practices.

Curriculum and Materials

Mozambique’s curriculum and instructional materials fall within the **Developing** stage of the progression scale. The system has made notable progress in developing bilingual teaching and learning materials, particularly in early grades and in several national languages. These materials increasingly reflect principles from the science of reading and are broadly aligned with the bilingual model. However, shortages of materials, especially in upper primary grades, along with inconsistencies in pedagogical guidance and classroom use continue to constrain effective implementation. As a result, while the curriculum framework supports multilingual instruction in principle, although in practice remains inconsistent.

Table 4. Progression criteria for curriculum and materials

Absent	Emerging	Developing	Established	Institutionalized
The curriculum does not address multilingual teaching. Instructional materials in local languages are unavailable.	The curriculum addresses multilingual teaching to a minimal extent. Some instructional materials integrate language considerations.	The curriculum and materials incorporate the science of reading for multilingual learners, reflecting students' linguistic contexts. Instructional materials increasingly integrate language considerations.	The curriculum and materials are fully aligned with the science of reading for multilingual learners, reflecting students' linguistic contexts.	A high-quality, regularly updated curriculum and corresponding materials support evolving FLN and LoI goals.

Teacher Workforce and Professional Development

Teacher recruitment and placement in Mozambique are assessed as **Emerging**. Although policies recognize the importance of aligning teacher language skills with classroom assignments, these policies are not yet fully operationalized. Many teachers continue to be placed in bilingual classrooms without sufficient proficiency in the Lol or preparation in bilingual pedagogy. This misalignment undermines instructional quality and weakens confidence in the bilingual model among communities and educators alike.

Table 5. Progression criteria for teacher recruitment and placement

Absent	Emerging	Developing	Established	Institutionalized
No official teacher recruitment or placement plan is in place that accounts for teachers' language skills.	A teacher recruitment and placement plan that accounts for teacher language skills exists, but it is vague, fragmented, and not operationalized.	A teacher recruitment and placement plan exists with a focus on Lol, though it is in early implementation and not fully operationalized.	A strong teacher recruitment and placement plan exists with a focus on Lol and is supported by implementation structures.	A strong teacher recruitment and placement plan that focuses on Lol exists, is embedded in national education systems, and is reviewed regularly in alignment with FLN goal(s).

Teacher PD also falls within the **Emerging** stage. The introduction of the 12+3 pre-service training model represents an important step toward integrating bilingual education principles. However, the majority of teachers currently in the system were trained under earlier models that did not prepare them for multilingual classrooms. In-service training opportunities remain short, inconsistent, and insufficiently supported through coaching or follow-up, limiting their effectiveness.

Table 6. Progression criteria for teacher professional development

Absent	Emerging	Developing	Established	Institutionalized
Teachers receive no pre-service or in-service training on teaching in multilingual contexts or using national languages for instruction.	Teachers receive limited training on teaching in multilingual contexts or using local Lols, but that training is not sufficient for teachers to feel prepared to teach in local languages.	Teachers receive more notable trainings on teaching in multilingual contexts and using local Lols, yet these trainings are not yet comprehensive and system-wide. Some gaps exist in teacher preparedness.	Trainings on teaching in multilingual contexts and using national Lols are integrated extensively into in-service and pre-service teacher training.	Ongoing, adaptive training responds to demographic and linguistic shifts among teachers and learners.

Community Engagement

Community engagement around bilingual education in Mozambique is assessed as **Emerging**. While awareness-raising activities and consultations have occurred, community participation remains limited and largely informational rather than participatory. Persistent resistance to bilingual education—often driven by perceptions of lower quality or limited economic utility compared to Portuguese-only instruction—continues to affect uptake and local support. Community voices are not yet systematically integrated into decision-making, implementation, or feedback mechanisms.

Table 7. Progression criteria for community engagement

Absent	Emerging	Developing	Established	Institutionalized
Communities are largely unaware of the benefits of multilingual education. Little or no sensitization efforts are in place. Communities have no tools to support children to read in school languages. Communities are not engaged in supporting education in school languages.	Information-sharing efforts such as awareness campaigns may be in place, but they are not yet at scale with proven effectiveness. Families and communities have limited involvement in supporting multilingual education.	Families and communities are generally aware of the benefits of multilingual education. Communities are somewhat engaged in decisions and/or implementation of multilingual education through, for example, language mapping, focus groups, materials development, or supporting student language and literacy development at home.	Families and communities are largely aware of the benefits of multilingual education. Parents and communities actively support learning in the home language and/or the transition to the L2.	Community engagement and commitment to multilingual education is deep and sustained. Families and community members are continually involved in governance, curriculum feedback, material development, and home language and literacy support.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The M&E systems is categorized as **Developing**. The education sector benefits from multiple data collection mechanisms anchored in national planning and review cycles, including annual planning instruments, supervision structures, and national and international assessments. However, the use of these data to inform and refine LoI policy and practice remains limited. Key constraints include uneven data quality, limited interoperability and analytical capacity within EMIS platforms, irregular supervision, and the absence of critical linguistic variables such as student home language, teacher language proficiency, and classroom-level LoI. Additionally, national assessments conducted primarily in Portuguese lack language metadata, limiting the system’s ability to track LoI fidelity or teacher–student language alignment.

Table 8. Progression criteria for M&E

Absent	Emerging	Developing	Established	Institutionalized
No systems are in place to monitor student learning or assess LoI-related practices.	Some basic monitoring of outputs occurs (e.g., enrollment, textbook distribution) but not of student learning outcomes.	Student learning outcomes are tracked but not yet used to refine or inform LoI strategies.	Outcomes are continuously monitored; early evidence of what works is used to adjust approaches.	Robust systems track learning outcomes, assess the impact of LoI policies, and inform iterative policy adaptation.

Mozambique Blueprint

In this section, we draw on the BUILD framework and the full set of data and analyses presented in this report to inform Mozambique’s next phase of bilingual education reform. While bilingual education has appeared in policy documents and smaller-scale pilots for decades, these efforts have yielded limited improvements in learning outcomes. To address this challenge, MEC is preparing to implement an L1–L2 Transition Action Plan, with support from Integra (World Bank), a potential Gates Foundation–supported pilot, and other key development partners. This roadmap presents a draft blueprint that outlines priority, evidence-backed actions and, tier by tier, provides guidance that national and subnational stakeholders can use to develop an LoI-integrated implementation plan that is scientifically grounded in the BUILD framework and responsive to Mozambique’s sociopolitical context.

Tier 1: FLN Goals and Policy

The current Mozambican bilingual education policy, characterized by gradual transition from an L1 subject-by-subject to an L2, is highly aligned with the science of reading acquisition. It is also encouraging that the MEC along with the support from the MEC’s Integra project, Gates Foundation and possibly other donors are focusing now on the expansion and implementation of this policy. Generating consensus and a plan among key stakeholders within the current and foreseeable political environment, in line with science for improving learning, and funding availability is what is necessary to convert the BE action plan into an implementable and scalable reality. At the policy level, this would involve the following steps:

1. Convening of SoBR workshops that that brings together stakeholders to define what “transition” means in the Mozambican context. These workshops will help clarify that transition is not merely about improving mother tongue reading or teaching Portuguese more effectively, but about understanding how both languages interact to support foundational learning. For example, it will explore how Mozambican languages can be

taught to facilitate skill transfer to Portuguese, and how Portuguese oral language skills should be sequenced for children who do not speak it at home.

2. Identification of champions and accountable parties in a BE action plan steering committee, including those who will be responsible for each BUILD component.
3. Ensuring the bilingual education provisions in the policy remain intact through changing administrations and political parties
4. Fleshing out further whether the goal is for bilingual outcomes or Portuguese language outcomes more explicitly and adding this information into the policy.

Tier 2: Evidence and Data

Build a national “bilingual data spine” to inform decision-making. Establish a minimum viable dataset that serves as the common evidence base for all bilingual education decisions. This should include: (i) the addition of a teacher language-proficiency field in EMIS; (ii) systematic capture of class-level Lol by subject and grade through school timetables; (iii) recording of student home language and baseline L1 oral proficiency at Grade 1 entry (and in higher grades for learners already enrolled), using a semantic fluency or comparable assessment; and (iv) integration of an Lol fidelity checklist—capturing language used during lessons, time-in-language, and materials observed on desks—within the supervision app. These data streams should feed a small set of high-utility indicators, including the percentage of G1–G3 classrooms with teacher–language match, an Lol fidelity index, and G2/G3 L1 decoding and comprehension rates. Indicators should be reviewed quarterly at the district level and annually during the RAR. Together, these measures address key policy-to-practice blind spots and provide the operational inputs required to target coaching, redeploy teachers, and refine instructional strategies.

Launch a rapid evaluation portfolio linked to RAR decisions over a two-year cycle.

Institutionalize short-cycle A/B tests and process evaluations focused on the limited set of levers the system can realistically move at scale. Priority areas include: (a) teacher posting rules that prioritize language match; (b) variation in instructional dosage for L1 decoding and L2 oral Portuguese while maintaining L1 as the Lol (e.g., 20 versus 40 minutes per day); and (c) alternative community-messaging strategies to strengthen acceptance of L1 instruction. Each evaluation should be sufficiently powered to assess impacts on summative learning outcomes and cost-effectiveness, with a clear protocol requiring the RAR to adopt the most effective variant into the subsequent *Plano Operacional*. This approach shifts M&E from compliance-oriented reporting toward decision-oriented learning and keeps the bilingual strategy adaptive rather than static. Importantly, no additional data-collection burden should be placed on instructional staff, ensuring that teachers’ time and attention remain focused on

student learning. Implementing this agenda will likely require targeted capacity strengthening or the establishment of a small research unit within the education department.

Implement a longitudinal “thresholds and transfer” study (Grades 1–4). Undertake a longitudinal study to test the hypothesis—observed in other sub-Saharan African contexts—that once learners cross critical thresholds in L1 decoding and oral language, L2 learning accelerates in a non-linear manner. Cohorts should be followed term-by-term across three high-coverage language pairs (e.g., Emakhuwa–Portuguese, Elomwe–Portuguese, Xichangana–Portuguese), with joint measurement of L1 decoding, L1 oral language, L2 oral language, and L2 decoding and comprehension. Analyses should employ structural equation models and generalized additive models to detect non-linear effects, incorporating covariates such as teacher–student language match, materials readiness, and instructional time. The resulting, language-pair-specific thresholds would provide empirically grounded guidance on when to intensify L2 oral instruction and when to delay or accelerate transition to L2 as the Lol.

Develop a national projection and prediction tool (BLTM) for FLN. To support system-level planning and proactive decision-making, develop a Bilingual Learning Trajectory Model (BLTM) that projects cohort movement through defined proficiency bands (e.g., L1 decoding A/B/C; L2 oral A/B; L2 comprehension A/B) from Grades 1 to 6, using EMIS and assessment microdata. At its core, the model would estimate transition matrices that calculate the probability of moving between proficiency bands each term, conditional on current L1/L2 skills and key inputs such as teacher–language match, Lol fidelity, instructional time, coaching frequency, and materials readiness. The model could be calibrated using recent EGRA, NLA, or LITES-type datasets, with province-specific parameters and scenario switches for policy levers (e.g., increased teacher-language matching, added L1 decoding boosters, improved book delivery). Outputs would include dashboards and maps projecting G2/G3 L1 outcomes and G4/G6 L2 outcomes by province and language, alongside early-warning flags for ZIPs unlikely to reach inferred thresholds on time. For transparency, the tool should present counterfactual scenarios (status quo versus reform) and sensitivity bands, with annual updates as new assessment and supervision data become available. This would transform the M&E system from a descriptive function into a predictive and prescriptive one, guiding where to deploy coaching, adjust staffing, or recalibrate transition pacing to achieve FLN targets.

Tier 3: Teaching and Learning

Curriculum and TLMs

A practical and effective curricular roadmap for Mozambique’s bilingual education system should begin by leveraging the substantial body of L1 teaching and learning materials already

developed in 19 local languages. Rather than creating new resources from the ground up, these materials can be systematically adapted and strengthened using the SoBR framework, guided by a rigorous, evidence-based quality rubric. To ensure continued relevance and instructional effectiveness, materials should undergo annual review and revision by designated technical stakeholders, with explicit alignment to the latest bilingual SoR frameworks.

A critical shift is required in early-grade reading instruction. The curriculum should incorporate a more explicit and systematic phonics approach, emphasizing the direct teaching of grapheme–phoneme correspondences in both L1 and Portuguese. Sequencing and instructional emphasis should be developmentally appropriate and responsive to the linguistic context of each grade. This shift must be reflected not only in teaching and learning materials (TLMs), but also in teacher training resources, ensuring that educators are adequately prepared to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction across both languages.

The curricula for both L1 and L2 should be reviewed and revised, as needed, to ensure that the transfer of skills from L1 to L2 is intentional, sequenced, and pedagogically coherent. The introduction of Portuguese should follow a layered progression. First, oral Portuguese is introduced using translanguaging strategies, with the mother tongue serving as a bridge for meaning-making and comprehension. Reading and writing in Portuguese should begin only after learners have achieved key decoding milestones in L1. As students advance, Portuguese academic vocabulary and subject-matter language should be introduced through structured transfer techniques that build on concepts already mastered in the mother tongue. Over time, Portuguese becomes the primary LoI, while L1 continues as a subject, reinforcing biliteracy and supporting sustained academic achievement.

To operationalize this curricular vision, the MEC should adopt two complementary matrices developed during the Science of Reading Workshop held in June 2025. The first matrix (Table 13) delineates the phases of biliteracy acquisition, providing a clear and structured progression from L1-based literacy to L2 proficiency. The second matrix (Table 14) maps the subject-by-subject transition to Portuguese as the primary LoI, offering a practical and coherent roadmap for teachers, curriculum developers, and planners. Together, these tools promote alignment across curriculum, instruction, and materials, and position Mozambique’s bilingual education system in line with the latest bilingual SoR evidence—ensuring that all learners are supported to become confident, proficient readers in both their mother tongue and Portuguese.

Table 9. Phases of biliteracy acquisition

Literacy component	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Concept of Print	L1/L2					
Phonological Awareness	L1/L2					
Oral vocabulary/listening comprehension	L1/L2	L1/L2	L1/L2	L1/L2	L1/L2	L1/L2
Letter naming/sounds	L1/L2					
Decoding	L1/L2	L1/L2	L1/L2	L1/L2	L1/L2	L1/L2
Reading fluency and reading comprehension	L1	L1/L2	L1/L2	L1/L2	L1/L2	L1/L2
Academic Vocabulary and subject matter	L1/L2	L1/L2	L1/L2	L1/L2	L1/L2	L1/L2

Table 10. Subject-by-subject transition into Portuguese

Content Area	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Literacy	L1	L1	L1	L1	L1	L1
	L2	L2	L2	L2	L2	L2
Mathematics	L1	L1	L1	?	?	?
		L2	L2	L2	L2	L2
Science	L1	L1	L1	L1	?	?
			L2	L2	L2	L2
Social Studies	L1	L1	L1	L1	?	?
			L2	L2	L2	L2
Health	L1	L1	L1	L1	?	?
			L2	L2	L2	L2

As Mozambique advances its BE expansion, a comprehensive audit of TLMs should be undertaken, guided by the SoBR framework. This audit will provide the foundation for revising existing resources and developing new materials that effectively support both L1 and L2 instruction. The process is designed to ensure that all TLMs are linguistically relevant, while also aligned with the latest evidence on how children learn to read in more than one language.

The revision process should be systematic and iterative. On an annual basis, a designated technical lead should review all TLMs for alignment with the SoBR, ensuring that materials remain current and responsive as new research findings and classroom-level data emerge.

Given Mozambique’s significant linguistic diversity, TLM development must explicitly account for the orthographic, tonal, and structural differences across the country’s many mother tongues, as well as between MTs and Portuguese. For example, Portuguese has a deeper orthography—characterized by less predictable sound–letter correspondences that require explicit and sustained instruction—whereas Mozambican languages tend to have more transparent orthographies, allowing learners to acquire decoding skills more rapidly through phonics-based approaches. Materials should therefore explicitly highlight rare, contrasting, or potentially interfering patterns between L1 and L2, using visual cues such as color or typographic emphasis to draw learners’ attention to these features.

A key recommendation is the development of a dual-language anthology comprising stories, activities, and assessments that target both oral language development and decoding skills. This anthology, together with student writing notebooks and supplementary resources—such as flashcards and story cards—should be mapped to specific languages and tailored to learner needs identified through assessment data. The objective is to ensure that every learner, regardless of linguistic background, has access to materials that support their individual learning trajectory.

During the L2 (Portuguese) oral language introduction phase, instruction should prioritize the development of oral Portuguese while consistently drawing on concepts and content taught in the L1 classroom. This approach, commonly referred to as conceptual transfer, enables learners to leverage existing knowledge as they acquire a new language. When L2 decoding instruction begins, targeted reference materials should be provided to support teachers in addressing areas where L1 structures may interfere with L2 learning.

All L2 decoding materials should be fully aligned with a systematic phonics approach, introducing sound–symbol correspondences in a deliberate, letter-by-letter and sound-by-sound sequence. Simple, visually engaging reader anthologies should guide learners progressively from decoding individual letters to words, phrases, and complete sentences in a coherent and developmentally appropriate progression.

To promote sustainability and cost-effectiveness, books should be designed for reuse across multiple years, with no consumable activities embedded in the texts themselves. Instead, each learner should receive a writing notebook and basic supplies, while classrooms are equipped with shared supplementary materials—such as flashcards and story cards—aligned with the skill progression and instructional routines of the SoBR.

Finally, all TLMs should be systematically mapped to specific languages and aligned with assessment data to ensure instructional relevance, coherence, and effectiveness across Mozambique’s bilingual education system.

Teacher Workforce and Professional Development

A persistent challenge in Mozambique’s bilingual education system is the misalignment between teacher language proficiency and the mother tongues used for instruction. Many teachers lack sufficient proficiency in the local languages they are assigned to teach, undermining the effective implementation of bilingual policy. To address this challenge, MEC should introduce a standardized language-proficiency screener for teachers and record the results in a dedicated field within the national HR and EMIS. Systematically tracking and publishing simple indicators—such as the percentage of Grade 1–3 classrooms in which the LoI matches the teacher’s first language—at provincial and district levels would strengthen accountability, improve deployment decisions, and help close critical gaps between policy intent and classroom practice.

At the same time, current teacher training programs tend to focus on either mother-tongue instruction or Portuguese-medium teaching, with limited attention to the specific pedagogical demands of bilingual classrooms. To bridge this gap, pre-service and in-service training curricula should be revised to include comprehensive modules grounded in the SoBR. Teachers need a clear understanding of how literacy skills transfer between L1 and L2, how to use formative assessments for language mapping and monitoring transfer, and how to identify both opportunities and constraints related to cross-linguistic transfer—particularly in relation to sound–letter correspondences. Training should also provide concrete examples and classroom strategies for translanguageing, emphasizing the purposeful and flexible use of both languages to support comprehension and skill development.

Teacher training manuals should further be updated to offer explicit guidance on leveraging students’ first languages as instructional resources. This includes support for planning the timing and sequencing of skill transfer from L1 to L2, using the SoBR to guide instructional decisions and cross-linguistic transfer.

Finally, a dedicated training module should be developed for teachers working in Portuguese-monolingual schools. In these settings, targeted scaffolding strategies—including structured translanguageing—can help bridge the gap between learners’ home languages and the LoI. Training should also emphasize pedagogical approaches specific to teaching in a second or later-acquired language, such as prioritizing oral language development and systematically building the vocabulary required for foundational literacy. These approaches can be reinforced

using audiovisual resources and cost-effective AI-enabled education technologies that increase learners' exposure to oral language during instructional time. Explicit phonics instruction becomes particularly critical in these contexts, given the limited opportunity for metalinguistic transfer from a shared mother tongue. As students transition from learning to read to reading to learn, instruction should deliberately and systematically introduce academically oriented and domain-specific vocabulary to support comprehension across the curriculum.

Community Engagement

Community engagement in support foundational learning remains uneven and largely dependent on donor-supported initiatives, rather than being systematically embedded within national structures. Investments by donor-supported programs in community sensitization and school-level engagement have strengthened alignment among schools, families, and instructional goals. However, the absence of a nationally institutionalized approach to community engagement around LoI decisions remains a key gap in translating bilingual education policy into system-wide practice. To strengthen community engagement in support of LoI policy FLN, MEC should consider mobilizing communities through a nationally institutionalized, school-centered approach that builds understanding, trust, and sustained participation.

Critically, MEC should formalize community engagement around BE and LoI decisions. This would involve developing simple messaging—delivered through schools, ZIP meetings, and district forums—that explains the rationale for L1-based instruction, the phased transition to Portuguese, and the links between early literacy in familiar languages and long-term learning outcomes. Parental skepticism about bilingual education remains a key barrier to scale-up, largely because communities lack clear, consistent information about how the model works the evidence on why it supports children's foundational learning outcomes.

School councils should be repositioned as the primary vehicle for community engagement on learning, not only school administration. While school councils already exist and manage ADE resources, their effectiveness varies widely. MEC could strengthen their role by issuing clearer guidance that explicitly includes supporting attendance, reinforcing early literacy at home, and promoting understanding of LoI choices as part of councils' core responsibilities. Active school councils are associated with stronger attendance, better school management, and higher-performing classrooms.

Finally, successful community engagement practices from donor-supported programs should be documented and mainstreamed. Programs such as *Aprender a Ler*, *Vamos Ler!*, and SABER have demonstrated that targeted sensitization and school-level engagement can shift parental attitudes and improve alignment between families and schools. MEC could convene a technical

working group to identify which approaches are most feasible for national adoption and integrate them into existing policy instruments, such as the Bilingual Education Expansion Strategy and the national action plan for L1–L2 transition.

Tier 4: Monitoring and Evaluation

To strengthen Mozambique’s M&E strategy to effectively track bilingual education in primary schools for FLN outcomes and enhance system capabilities, this report proposes four recommendations. Each is actionable, system-owned, and grounded in current policy frameworks and operational realities.

1. Adopt a bilingual FLN results framework and a streamlined dashboard.

Establish a concise results framework anchored in a small set of high-utility indicators that capture both L1 foundations and the transition to Portuguese. Six core indicators are proposed: (i) % of Grade 2 pupils decoding at grade level in the LoI (L1); (ii) % of Grade 3 pupils reading with comprehension in L1; (iii) % of Grade 4 pupils demonstrating oral Portuguese proficiency; (iv) % of Grade 6 pupils achieving reading comprehension in Portuguese; (v) an LoI fidelity index by grade and subject (measuring time-in-language against timetables); and (vi) materials readiness (complete L1/L2 sets available by the first month of the school year). These indicators should be populated through the planned NLA cycle, school-based monitoring, and the supervision platform, then published via quarterly provincial and district dashboards reviewed during the RAR. This approach aligns with the PEE’s assess-and-adjust strategy and the World Bank program’s commitment to disseminating NLA results at all levels, while responding to evaluators’ calls to shift from activity tracking to outcome-level monitoring.

2. Make teacher–language match a tracked and enforceable variable in HR/EMIS.

The EEEB conditions bilingual expansion on the availability of teachers who speak the local language used in the school. To operationalize this requirement, HR/EMIS should include a teacher language-proficiency field that is validated at recruitment and during deployment. This would enable routine reporting of simple, transparent KPIs—such as the % of Grade 1–3 classrooms in which the LoI matches teacher language capacity—disaggregated by province and district. These indicators should be reviewed annually during the RAR and used to inform province-specific placement adjustments in the subsequent rolling Plano Operacional. This addresses a current implementation gap in which staffing expectations are articulated in policy but not yet enforced through data systems.

3. Institutionalize LoI fidelity and materials-readiness audits through the supervision platform.

A short bilingual checklist (approximately 10–12 items) should be embedded within the supervision platform, including teacher–language match, language used by subject,

adherence to timetabled language allocation, availability and condition of L1 readers and Grade 1–3 Portuguese materials, and the use of small-group reading routines. Supervision visits should occur monthly during Term 1 and at least once per term thereafter. Data should be automatically aggregated at ZIP and district levels to trigger immediate coaching responses and escalate persistent gaps into provincial planning processes. This formalizes the data-to-action loop, leverages the ministry’s existing supervision investments, and provides near-real-time signals directly tied to FLN outcomes.

4. Publish a rolling two-year learning agenda and evaluation calendar linked to planning cycles.

Commit to a focused, rolling set of rapid evaluations or A/B tests targeting high-leverage bilingual levers (e.g., parent communication scripts to support L1 acceptance, alternative early-grade coaching models, or print versus print-plus-audio readers), with clear decision rules reviewed during the RAR. Successful pilots should be budgeted in the subsequent *Programa de Actividades and Plano Operacional* and embedded within teacher support systems. This learning agenda should be paired with a triennial NLA featuring language-disaggregated reporting and an annual JSR memo documenting which findings informed changes to curriculum pacing, coaching, or materials. Together, these steps align with the PEE review calendar, leverage the World Bank program’s NLA architecture, and respond directly to ITAP recommendations to shift MEL from activity reporting toward decision-making that improves learning outcomes.

Annex A. Document Review List

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Annex B. Stakeholder Consultation Guide

Blueprint for the Use of evidence In Language of Instruction (LOI) Decisions (BUILD) Stakeholder Consultation Guide: Mozambique

March 2025

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BUILD Consultation Guide

The following is a list of guiding questions that can be used with education policy makers, assessment experts, linguists, or other key stakeholders in national language of instruction decision-making. AIR will tailor these questions to each country targeted for consultations in the development of the country roadmaps and to each informant.

Language policy review

For use with: All

- What is the language policy in this country and approximately what % of children speak the official language of instruction in Grades 1-3?
- In order to prepare children in Mozambique to live and work successfully, which language or languages do you think are important for them to learn foundational literacy and numeracy skills?
 - What language or languages are important for children to succeed in higher education and the workforce?
 - In what language or languages would it be ideal to see your country's children be literate at the end of high school?
 - What skills should children ultimately learn in local languages like Emakhuwa, Elomwe, Cindau, Cisena, Cinyanga, Ciyaawo, Citshwa, Cicopi, Xichangana, Xizronga, etc. in Mozambique?
 - i. Probe: Do they only need to speak Mozambican languages, but not necessarily read them? Should they learn foundational skills like reading, writing, or math in those languages? Should they have professional proficiency in those languages? Anything else?
- What is your understanding of children's current language skills in Portuguese and Mozambican languages? How happy are you with those skills?
- What is your understanding of children's current learning outcomes in various Portuguese and Mozambican languages? How happy are you with those outcomes?
- I know that in addition to Portuguese, Mozambican languages are also being used as languages of instruction in Mozambique. What do you think about that policy? What do you think are its weaknesses and strengths?

- Would you like to see the language of instruction policy change in any way?
- If so, how would you like to see it change? If not, why not?
- How, if at all, do you think a change in the language of instruction policy would impact foundational learning outcomes? (For better for worse?)
- Why do you think that?
- What is the government's disposition towards bilingual education programming in Grades 1-3 (materials and timetabling) in this country?
 - For example, are they open to using L1 to teach L2? Is it straight-for-Portuguese etc.?
 - Can you provide a short description and then also indicate if they are (a) Very Hostile to L1 and/or bilingual, (b) Not in favor of L1 and/or bilingual, (c) Neutral, (d) In favor of L1 and/or bilingual, (e) Very Keen to work on L1 and/or bilingual and also the direction this is moving – towards more L1/bilingual or away from L1/bilingual?

Language mapping/assessment of multilingual oral language competence (AMOLAC)

For use with: All

- To your knowledge, what is the most comprehensive and up-to-date data available on primary school students' foundational learning (basic literacy and numeracy) outcomes?
 - Where or how might we access that information?
- Do you know if there have been large-scale reading assessments done in both students' home languages and in Portuguese?
 - If so, where or how might we access that information?
- To your knowledge, what kind of data is available on students' language abilities in various languages for example, through language mapping studies, census data or any other source?
 - Where or how might we access that information?

Orthographic mapping

For use with: Linguists

- To your knowledge, what kind of information is available on the “depth” (degree of consistency between sounds and symbols) and “breadth” (possible graphemic combinations, phonemes in each syllable and so on) of local languages used in Mozambique?
 - Where or how might we access that information?

- Do you have information on the phonological and orthographic distance between the Mozambican languages and Portuguese that children learn in school?
 - Where or how might we access that information?

Evidence base

For use with: All

- How many languages are there in the country?
- Apart from Portuguese, how many Mozambican languages are used in schools officially? How would you know?
- How many languages are used in schools in practice? How would you know?
 - Are you aware of any studies that have been done on what works to help children to read in Portuguese in Mozambique? If so, what can you tell me about them?
 - i. What are the key takeaways from these studies?
 - To your knowledge, what evaluations have been done of specific reading programs in Mozambique? What can you tell me about those programs?
 - i. What are the key features of those programs?
 - ii. What scale were those programs implemented (i.e., pilot in select schools, community-level, provincial-level, regional level, national-level)?
 - iii. What was effective and what was not?
 - Where or how might we access the findings from these studies?

For use with: Policymakers

- How, if at all, has evidence been used for decision-making related to languages of instruction in Mozambique?
 - Can you provide some examples?
- What are the top 2-3 roadblocks to using evidence for policymaking related to languages of instruction?
 - What evidence do you wish you had?

Curriculum and assessment analysis (scope and sequencing)

For use with: Educators at any level, curriculum experts

- Are there different reading curricula for different languages?

- For example, are the milestones, scope and sequence, and skill objectives for reading and language skills different for different languages used in education in Mozambique? If yes, how so?
- How is language of instruction integrated throughout the curriculum to teach reading?
- When and how is the introduction made to teach a new language/teaching *in* new language as the LOI in the bilingual education program in Mozambique?

TLM inventory Analysis

For use with: Policymakers, bureaucrats, educators at any level, curriculum experts

- What teaching and learning materials (i.e., teachers guides, student books, supplementary materials) are currently provided to schools?
 - In what language or languages are materials?
 - Are there enough materials in Portuguese and in Mozambican languages for all schools and children? Can you elaborate on this?
 - What is your assessment of the quality of the materials provided?
 - Are any technology-based teaching and learning materials available to teachers or students? If so, please describe.
- What is the process for developing teaching and learning materials?
- When was the last time that the current teaching and learning materials updated?
- Generally, how often are they updated, or are they updated on an ad hoc basis?

Teacher professional development

For use with: Educators at any level, bureaucrats, policymakers

- In what language or languages is existing pre-service teacher training provided? In your opinion, how effective is that policy?
 - In what language or languages is existing in-service teacher training provided? In your opinion, how effective is that policy?

There are several different teaching issues that I am curious about and for each, I'd like to know a) what kind of support is available, b) what methods teachers are taught for dealing with those issues, c) the extent to which teachers implement those methods, and d) how helpful those methods are.

- What support, if any, do teachers receive for teaching in multilingual classrooms where children use and understand different languages? *(if needed, clarify that support which might include training, mentoring, handbooks, etc.)*
 - What methods are teachers provided for teaching in multilingual classrooms?
 - To what extent do you think teachers implement those methods?
 - How helpful do you find those methods and the support provided?
- What support, if any, do teachers receive for transitioning from local languages of instruction in the early grades to later teaching in Portuguese?
 - What methods are teachers provided for language of instruction transitions?
 - To what extent do you think teachers implement those methods?
 - How helpful do you find those methods and the support provided?
- What support, if any, do teachers receive for transferring children’s reading skills in L1 to Portuguese/L2?
 - What methods are teachers provided for teaching reading skills in multiple languages?
 - To what extent do you think teachers implement those methods?
 - How helpful do you find those methods and the support provided?
- What support, if any, are teachers provided for supporting students with concepts they are struggling with, particularly in Portuguese/L2?
 - What methods are teachers taught for remediation?
 - How do teachers implement those methods?
 - How helpful do you find those methods and the support provided?
- In your opinion, what are some gaps in existing teacher training and support?

Teacher placement and language proficiency

For use with: Policymakers, bureaucrats, educators at any level

- What data, if any, is available on the language skills (Portuguese and Mozambican languages) of teachers?
 - Where or how might we access that information?

- What data, if any, is available on the teaching skills of teachers?
 - Where or how might we access that information?
- What data, if any, is available on the teaching skills of teachers specifically for bilingual/multilingual contexts?
 - Where or how might we access that information?
- To what extent do current teacher placement practices take teachers' language skills (including skills in the local language of instruction in the school where they are placed) into consideration before assigning them to schools?
- To what extent do administrators take teachers' strengths and weaknesses into consideration before assigning them to specific schools/classrooms?

Matching LOI policy to classroom implementation / Fidelity of implementation

For use with: Policymakers, bureaucrats, educators at any level

- To what extent do you think language of instruction policies are implemented in the classroom? For example, is Portuguese used as the primary language of instruction in the same way and at the same time that the official policy specifies?
 - How does classroom practice differ from the official policy?
 - Why does classroom practice differ from the official policy? (What makes following the policy difficult?)
 - In your opinion, what should be done in order to ensure classroom practice matches official language policy?

Annex C. Supplementary Tables

Repetition Rates by Province and Grade Level (2024, grades 1–6)¹⁶⁰

Province	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Niassa	0.8%	1.7%	2.4%	2.5%	2.9%	5.0%
Cabo Delgado	3.3%	3.5%	4.1%	4.4%	4.7%	6.9%
Nampula	4.7%	5.3%	5.9%	6.7%	6.9%	9.9%
Zambézia	5.4%	5.9%	6.4%	7.1%	7.5%	10.9%
Tete	2.2%	2.8%	4.0%	3.6%	3.6%	6.6%
Manica	1.3%	1.8%	4.2%	2.5%	2.4%	9.0%
Sofala	1.2%	1.4%	2.9%	2.4%	2.3%	5.8%
Inhambane	-	-	6.6%	-	0.0%	7.8%
Gaza	0.5%	0.9%	13.3%	1.3%	1.4%	19.2%
Maputo	0.3%	0.4%	14.9%	0.9%	2.0%	23.2%
Cidade de Maputo	0.0%	0.0%	22.7%	0.0%	0.0%	29.5%

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