

# The Mangrove Collective

## Deliverable 5

Final EMULI Evaluation Report

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## List of Acronyms

Acronym	Explanation
ALMA	Apoiua Lideransa, Mentoria no Aprendizajen - Leadership, Mentoring and Learning Support program
ATLPHD (PHD)	Australia Timor-Leste Partnership for Human Development
CAFE	Centros de Aprendizagem e Formação Escolar – Portuguese medium of instruction school
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
EGMA	Early Grade Maths Assessment
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EMBLI	Edukasaun Multilinge Bazeia ba Lian Inan / Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education
EMULI	Edukasaun Multilinge - Multilingual Education
GoTL	Government of Timor Leste
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
INFORDEPE	Instituto de Formação dos Docentes e Profissionais da Educação - Body responsible for in-service teacher training in Timor Leste
KEQ	Key Evaluation Question
LPP	Language Policy and Planning
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand)
MoE	Ministry of Education (Timor-Leste)

MTB-MLE	Mother Tongue Based - Multilingual Education
NatCom	Timor-Leste National Commission for UNESCO
SEA-PLM	South East Asia - Primary Learning Metrics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) contracted The Mangrove Collective through Partnership for Human Development (PHD) to undertake an independent evaluation of the EMBLI<sup>1</sup>/ EMULI<sup>2</sup> program<sup>3</sup> in Timor Leste. The evaluation was conducted between June and September 2024.

The EMULI/EMBLI program is designed to train and support teachers to provide children with mother tongue instruction in preschool (two years, preschool A and preschool B) and primary school (Years 1-6), gradually transitioning to Tetun as the language of instruction by Y5 while continuing to teach mother tongue as a subject. Established in 2012, this pilot program has been implemented in 5 preschool and 5 primary schools (10 total) across three municipalities (Lautem, Manatuto, Oecusse) and in three mother tongues (Fataluku, Galolen, and Baikeno).

This report presents evaluation findings and recommendations against three key evaluation questions (KEQs) related to the Impact, Effectiveness and Relevance of the EMBLI/EMULI program between 2012 and mid 2024. These recommendations may help inform Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL) decisions on language of instruction policy and practice, as well as further investments into mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) by DFAT and the Timor-Leste Ministry of Education (MoE).

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<sup>1</sup> Edukasaun Multilinge Bazeia ba Lian Inan / Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education

<sup>2</sup> Edukasaun Multilinge - Multilingual Education

<sup>3</sup> The program is referred to as EMBLI, EMULI and EMBLI/EMULI throughout this report, depending on whether the reference is to the first years of the program (EMBLI, 2012-2019); more recent years (EMULI, 2020-2024) or the entire life of the program (EMBLU/EMULI, 2012-2024).

## Background and Context

Timor-Leste is a linguistically diverse country where over two dozen languages are spoken. The Constitution names Tetun<sup>4</sup> and Portuguese as official languages, with English and Indonesian as working languages, and more than 20 Indigenous languages (also referred to as local languages or mother tongues) as national languages (see GoTL Constitution, 2002, Articles 13 and 159). With independence from Indonesia, and under the influence of lusophone donors, Portuguese replaced Indonesian as the language of instruction in 2002. However, by 2008, it became evident that teachers were not proficient enough to teach in Portuguese and students were not performing well (Taylor-Leech, 2021). The 2008 Basic Education Act established both Tetun and Portuguese as the languages of education. To date, Tetun and Portuguese remain the languages of instruction in Timor-Leste's 1093 standard (public) government schools providing basic education (Y1-6). In these schools, students learn in Tetun in the early years with Portuguese introduced as a language of instruction in Y4. In addition to these 'standard' schools, there are a number of private schools that teach in English or Portuguese, for example the 15 CAFE (Centros de Aprendizagem e Formação Escolar) schools which use Portuguese as language (or medium) of instruction.

It is estimated that only about 30.7% of the population of Timor-Leste speaks Tetun as either a mother tongue (first language) or as an additional (second) language, and that less than 10% of the population speaks Portuguese in the home (Ethnologue, 25<sup>th</sup> ed., 2022). Roughly extrapolating from these percentages, it can be estimated that at best only one third of the 302,447 children attending primary school<sup>5</sup> know Tetun, the language of instruction, and much fewer know Portuguese. This means that more than 209,560 children are 'learning' in a language they do not know as either a first or second language.<sup>6</sup>

The EMBLI/EMULI program is based on global evidence that children learn best in languages they know and understand (UNESCO, 2016).<sup>7</sup> EMBLI/EMULI is a very small pilot program initiated in 2012 to test the hypothesis that children will learn better in their mother tongues than in Tetun. Between 2012 and 2018, the program (known originally as EMBLI) was implemented by the Timor-Leste National Commission for UNESCO under the Ministry of Education (MoE) with funding from the Australian Government (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - DFAT) and GoTL. Since 2019, the program (rebranded as EMULI in 2020) has been embedded within the MoE under the Department of Policy, Planning, and Inclusion, with ongoing, though modest, financial and technical support from the Australian Government (DFAT) through the Partnership for Human Development (PHD). PHD also manages a second education initiative, Apoiu ba Lideransa, Mentoria no Aprendizajen (ALMA) – the Leadership, Mentoring and Learning Support program. The ALMA program helps strengthen school leaders to improve school-based teacher

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<sup>4</sup> Tetun-Dili/Prasa, the most widely spoken variant of Tetun

<sup>5</sup> Timor-Leste Education Sector Plan, (ESP 2020-2030)

<sup>6</sup> Ethnologue estimates that 3.7% of the population speaks Tetun - Dili (the language of schooling) as a first language, 27% as a second language. Adding these percentages (30.7%) an estimated 209,560 children are attending school in a language they do not know as either a first or second language.

<sup>7</sup> A 25-country evaluation of mother-tongue and bilingual education, 'Optimising Learning and Education in Africa - the Language Factor' for the Association for the Development of Education in Africa and UNESCO, led by civil society researchers (Alidou et al., 2006; Ouane & Glanz, 2011), confirmed the long-term educational advantages of systematic use of bi-/multilingual pedagogies.

professional development, particularly in support of the 'new' National Basic Education Curriculum, the bilingual Tetun-Portuguese curriculum used in standard (public) school.

While both EBMLI/EMULI and the 'new' National Basic Education curriculum utilise bi/multilingual language of instruction, there are significant differences in the languages of instruction (LOI) used and when additional languages are introduced - their language progression. The National Basic Education language progression follows an early exit (subtractive) approach where mother tongue may be used as a support or 'bridge' to Tetun; however, mother tongue is not taught or maintained. The intent is to transition fully to Tetun (the second language, or L2) as soon as possible, and then progress to Portuguese (the L3). In contrast, in EMULI schools mother tongue is used as the language of instruction in the two years of preschool and Y1, progressively joined by Tetun starting in Y2. Three languages - mother tongue (L1), Tetun (L2) and Portuguese (L3) - are taught as subjects, with Tetun first introduced at the end of preschool and Portuguese in Y2. This is a late exit (subtractive) multilingual approach because mother tongue is used as a language of instruction for six years (preschool through Y4) but it is not maintained as a language of instruction.<sup>8</sup>

The EMBLI/EMULI program is currently implemented in three of Timor-Leste's 13 municipalities (Lautem, Manatuto, Oecusse) and in three mother tongues (Fataluku, Galolen, and Baikeno). The program has been tested in just a fraction (10) of the country's 374 preschools (239 public; 135 private) and 1,282 primary schools (1093 public; 189 private).<sup>9</sup> Designed as a pilot, EMBLI/EMULI was meant to expand to additional schools (in 2020); however, vacillating political support has prevented this until quite recently (mid 2024). The current government – the 9th Constitutional Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL), elected in 2023 – is committed to supporting and expanding the EMULI program, and specifically to promoting mother tongue-based multilingual education using indigenous languages of Timor-Leste. Therefore, this evaluation of the EMBLI/EMULI program (2012-2024) may be of particular consequence as the GoTL applies for Global Partnership for Education (GPE) funding through a Partnership COMPACT<sup>10</sup> that has identified the need to address support for mother tongues in the basic education curriculum. This evaluation may also contribute to a growing body of evidence researching mother tongue/Indigenous language use in education, particularly studies coinciding with the United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL 2022-2032).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> per definitions of early and late exit transitions found in Aliou et al. 2006

<sup>9</sup> Timor-Leste Education Sector Plan, (ESP 2020-2030)

<sup>10</sup> The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) funds education in low- and middle-income countries through a framework known as the Partnership Compact. This compact serves as a strategic plan that aligns national education goals with GPE support

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.unesco.org/en/decades/indigenous-languages>.

## Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the evaluation is to provide evidence to inform the MoE and DFAT's future education investments regarding mother tongue-based early literacy and numeracy teaching in Timor Leste. Specifically, to:

1. Assess the impact of the EMULI program on student learning outcomes (literacy and numeracy);
2. Assess the relative importance and cost effectiveness of the key program components in supporting improved literacy and numeracy;
3. Assess challenges and opportunities to strengthen EMULI program; and
4. Make recommendations to MoE regarding options to adapt and scale up the program and embed mother tongue-based early literacy and numeracy teaching into broader MoE systems.

This evaluation reviewed the lifetime of the program; however, more emphasis has been placed on the period from early 2019 to July 2024. This decision was taken for two reasons: 1) the existence of a prior 'endline' assessment of EMULI, completed in 2016; and 2) the limited availability of historical financial and learning achievement data from 2012 - 2018. Other factors limiting the scope of this evaluation include:

- Brevity of the assignment and its timing during the academic year
- (In)completeness of the student achievement data collected by EMBLI/EMULI from 2018-2024
- Lack of disaggregated (gender/municipality/school) national level assessment data
- Lack of disaggregated data on progression and retention at student and school level.

## Responses to Key Evaluation Questions

The evaluation sought to answer 3 Key Evaluation Questions regarding program impact, effectiveness and relevance. Findings for each key question are summarised below.

### **IMPACT - To what extent has the EMULI program improved educational outcomes for children whose mother tongue is not Tetun or Portuguese?**

Two previous program evaluations (2015 and 2017) assessed the learning achievement of students in EMBLI/EMULI schools, as compared to students in CAFE and standard government schools. Both of these evaluations indicated higher positive learning achievement by students in EMBLI/EMULI schools, compared to students of similar linguistic backgrounds in standard government schools as well as students attending and CAFE schools.

Conducted in 2015 after three years of program implementation, the first evaluation (Walter 2016) considered 2015 Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) data and a curriculum-based assessment administered to Y2 students at schools with similar linguistic situations as EMBLI/EMULI schools (i.e., where the majority of students did not have Tetun or Portuguese as their first language). The review found that the EMBLI/EMULI intervention doubled the academic performance of children who attended its schools, compared against standard government schools. Moreover, children studying in the (semi)rural EMULI schools achieved mathematics, Tetun and Portuguese proficiency favourably comparable with that of children at the urban Portuguese medium CAFE schools.

The second review (in 2017) analysed EMULI-administered pre/post testing conducted at the start and end of the 2016 and 2017 school years. This analysis showed that students from schools implementing EMBLI/EMULI continued to outperform those from standard government primary schools.

As part of this evaluation, results from EMULI-administered 2019, 2021, and 2022 post tests<sup>12</sup> were analysed to test whether the positive achievements demonstrated earlier in the program continued through its handover to the Ministry of Education (end of 2018) and through the COVID-19 school disruptions. Our analysis suggests that students at EMULI schools continue to outperform students in standard government schools with similar language situations. For all three years, EMULI girls and boys both scored significantly higher ( $p < 0.05$ ) than their peers in their overall scores, and in the subject of mathematics and Tetun. At year levels, EMULI students scored significantly higher in preschool through to Y3 (in 2019) and preschool through to Y6 (in both 2021 and 2022).<sup>13</sup> Variation occurs across municipalities, subjects and year levels; however, if taken at this high level, the results suggest a continued positive learning achievement advantage for children participating in the EMULI program compared to similar students at standard public schools.

The results also indicate that EMULI students scored higher than students at the CAFE Portuguese medium schools in most instances. One notable, though not unexpected, exception is that overall Portuguese scores for CAFE students were higher than for EMULI students. Comparing EMULI and CAFE schools by year level, EMULI students scored much higher than CAFE students through Y3, and significantly higher in preschool and Y1, supporting global research findings that students learn better in languages they know.

While the scores of EMULI students are on average higher than for standard and CAFE students, EMULI students did not achieve passing marks (over 50%) - except in the early years of preschool and Y1. In fact, for all school types (EMULI, standard<sup>14</sup>, CAFE) and in all subjects, average scores are well below 50%. This may suggest a problem with the assessment tools (too difficult, not aligned with curriculum) and/or that the overall quality of student learning is concerningly low.

While it does appear that the EMBLI/EMULI program has improved educational outcomes for children whose mother tongue is not Tetun or Portuguese, there are critical limitations to our analysis. First, we were not able to access data on student retention or progression throughout the life of the program. These data could have contributed to an analysis of whether learning in mother tongue increases children's access to and successful progression through the education system. Second, due to time constraints, we have not conducted an independent review of the earlier evaluations (2015/2017) nor have we assessed the validity of the 2019, 2021, and 2022 post test results. In general, we note that data for measuring student achievement is quite limited, both as collected by the program and the Ministry of Education (MoE). This gap is a significant limiting factor for a full assessment of the program's impact over the life of the program, in particular after 2018.

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<sup>12</sup> Beyond some data cleaning, the evaluation team has not assessed the reliability of the testing - instruments, administration, or recording of results. That said, as these results have been attained using the same process as the pre/post tests in 2016 and 2017, we assume equivalent reliability of the data.

<sup>13</sup> The effect size, or importance of the difference between the relative scores, is medium (0.5 - 0.8) to high (> 0.8) in all but two cases (2019 Portuguese and Y5).

<sup>14</sup> 'Standard' or 'standard government' schools refer to standard, public government schools that are not currently implementing EMULI.

## **EFFECTIVENESS - To what extent has EMULI improved the effectiveness of classroom teaching of children whose mother tongue is not Tetun or Portuguese?**

Our limited classroom observations did not reveal consistent differences in the general teaching practices between the 10 EMULI and two standard (ALMA) schools visited, with most teachers (including EMULI teachers) using rote, teacher-centred methods. Over the period of the program (2013 - present) EMULI training has included training on child-centred pedagogies; however, teacher training appears to have been more robust in the early years of program implementation with regular teacher professional development provided through group training conducted during the school holidays (supported by visits from technical officers to individual schools). Owing to the shift of program implementation from UNESCO to the MoE, followed by a change to a Government<sup>15</sup> which was less supportive of EMULI, regular teacher training during the holidays was stopped. The current EMULI model of teacher professional development appears to centre on mentors providing teaching support at the school level, with occasional teacher training during school holidays (recently restarted). The mentoring model (with limited or no teacher training) does not appear to be successful at influencing teachers to consistently use child-centred practices included in EMULI.

The use of mother tongue-based multilingual education, globally recognised<sup>16</sup> as a best practice for improving student learning, was the key difference between EMULI and standard schools. According to the national curriculum language progression (used in standard schools) mother tongue (L1) is used only as a bridge to Tetun, *if necessary*. Mother tongue is not taught as a subject. In contrast, at EMULI schools, mother tongue is used as the language of instruction in preschool and Y1, progressively joined by Tetun starting in Y2. All three languages - mother tongue (L1), Tetun and Portuguese - are taught as subjects, with Tetun first introduced at the end of preschool and Portuguese in Y2. It is a premise of EMBLI/EMULI that teaching in mother tongue makes a critical difference in the effectiveness of classroom teaching, especially for children who do not know well the official languages of Tetun and Portuguese used in standard classrooms. In the 10 EMULI schools observed, mother tongue was used as language of instruction, though not consistently in all classes and not always according to the EMULI progression. We did, however, observe that when a better known language was used in the classroom (most often mother tongue, though at the Portuguese CAFE schools it was when Tetun was used) both students and teachers appeared more engaged in the learning process.

A critical aspect of the EMULI program is to teach in mother tongue (as language of instruction) and also to teach the mother tongue (as a subject). While a majority of the EMULI teachers observed are instructing in mother-tongue, from our interviews it was not evident that all teachers fully comprehend why they should teach mother tongue as a subject. In fact, several of the EMULI teachers interviewed referred to mother tongue merely as a 'bridge' to other languages - the exact wording found in the national language progression. EMULI teachers may be adopting, consciously or not, the rhetoric (and practice) of the national basic education curriculum (i.e., use of mother tongue as only a bridge, and only during very early years of schooling). Such comments may signal teachers' lack of full understanding about the program; or that initial teacher training focuses on implementing the national basic education curriculum which refers to

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<sup>15</sup> VIII Constitutional Government of Timor Leste (2018-2023)

<sup>16</sup> Inter alia, UNESCO Global Monitoring Report, page 267: [UNESCO Global Monitoring Report 2016](#)

mother tongue as a bridge; or simply resignation to swinging political stances towards use of mother tongue in basic education.<sup>17</sup>

Over the life of the program, politics appears to have substantial impact (both positive and negative) on the EMULI program's effectiveness – potentially more so than other factors, including COVID-19 and even program implementation. EMBLI began with political support from the Government of Timor Leste (GoTL), backed by strong international support from the UN and other donors. A change in government curtailed expansion of the pilot program, despite favourable evaluations, reduced the program funding and scope (limiting MTB-MLE<sup>18</sup> to just the first two years of primary school) and all but extinguished the program. With another change in government, the program is now being revitalised and expanded. These changing winds are not inconsequential, and appear to have influenced EMULI's ability to consistently improve the effectiveness of classroom teaching for children whose mother tongue is not Tetun or Portuguese.

**RELEVANCE - To what extent is the EMULI program an appropriate and cost-effective model that can be scaled up to ensure equitable access to education for children whose mother tongue is not Tetun or Portuguese?**

Appropriateness: The EMBLI/EMULI program is designed as a late exit mother tongue-based multilingual education program (MTB-MLE), with mother tongue to be used as language of instruction through Y4 and continued as a subject through Y6.<sup>19</sup> The EMULI program also includes a 2-year mother tongue-based preschool component. Global best practice shows that in well-resourced environments, a minimum of six years of mother tongue and second language instruction starting at the primary school level are required to consolidate the learning gains achieved through mother tongue instruction. Eight years provides stronger results and is the minimum in poorer resourced educational environments, like those of Timor-Leste (Heugh et al., 2007; UNESCO, 2011; UNESCO 2016). When combined with the two years of preschool mother tongue instruction, the EMBLI/EMULI program's prescribed language progression appears to meet the minimum requirement of six to eight years of mother tongue instruction. Research has not established whether two years of early years education (quality preschool) is sufficient to replace two later years of mother tongue instruction (i.e. continuing into upper primary); however, in the case of the EMBLI/EMULI program, the preschool years are formalised (as opposed to some community-based preschools) and thus may provide the structured mother tongue language learning required.

Key differences between the curriculum used in the EMULI program and the national curriculum include language(s) of instruction, language progression and language(s) taught as subjects (disciplines). Non-language subject content (maths, science, etc.) are similar. EMULI's different language progression may cause misunderstandings that EMULI is a separate curriculum – the 'EMULI curriculum' – especially when implemented fully from Y1-Y6 (cycles 1 and 2 of the basic education sequence). There is a risk in referring to EMULI as a distinct curriculum from the national curriculum as this appears to set EMULI up as a separate

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<sup>17</sup> It is not unusual for the mainstream discourse to be so pervasive that it overrides the discourse of a successful program leading it to be viewed as one less powerful/just a small scale program that does not enjoy widespread acceptance. Aspirations are likely to be linked to the idea that Tetun or Portuguese is the route to escape from poverty / marginalisation or to access imagined opportunity. This is a perception that is very difficult to shift unless there is coherent attention to minority languages from the political and economic elites.

<sup>18</sup> Mother Tongue Based - Multilingual Education

<sup>19</sup> Late exit is the best one could offer at this stage; however, it is also one that encourages the notion of 'bridge' to another more powerful language.

education system which may be perceived as contradicting and competing with the national curriculum. It may be more strategic to emphasise curricular similarities rather than over emphasising the language differences, highlighting instead how EMULI helps students who don't know Tetun well to access the national curriculum through their mother tongue – in essence, a linguistically enriched version of the mainstream curriculum.

Cost effectiveness: In its current model of implementation, the EMBLI/EMULI program is not as efficient as it might be. Since inception the program has been financed on a year-to-year basis rather than through long-term stable funding. Short-term tranches of funding do not permit long-term vision or planning. A second reason is that over the years some ill-advised implementation decisions have been taken.

Noting that funding arrangements cannot always be controlled, the program could be more affordable and cost effective if two critical program implementation adjustments were made, namely: 1) a shift in the way technical support is provided to teachers and 2) less frequent and more valid measuring of program impact and learning achievement.

Technical support: In 2020, EMBLI/EMULI adopted a mentoring model to provide technical support to teachers, with one mentor supporting each school. A model of one mentor per school is expensive, and international evidence shows that having a mentor at a school every day is unnecessary to provide an appropriate level of technical support. Experience in other Pacific and African countries suggest that a ratio of one mentor to 5-10 schools (depending on distance) is more cost effective while providing appropriate levels of technical support. For instance, a program in Fiji to pilot a revised primary literacy and numeracy curriculum in 90 schools across the entire country (for Years 1-4 in 2022 and Years 5-8 in 2023) used a ratio of 15 'coaches' to 90 schools, or one coach to 6 schools. While the former model of technical advisors visiting schools from time to time might be more cost effective, we cannot confirm this due to unavailability of financial records (including total cost per year by activity) from 2012 - 2018. That said, based on the evaluators' experience in other similar countries, a ratio of one qualified and well prepared mentor to between 5 to 10 schools is standard best practice.

Measuring impact and achievement: Pre/post testing appears to be the sole measurement of student learning achievement, and thus program impact. Testing administered since 2019 has not produced robust, reliable and valid data to demonstrate annual achievement or ongoing learning impact. Noted issues include:

- Questions regarding the validity of assessment tools (e.g., difficulty of questions; alignment with the curriculum).
- Incomplete data collection, particularly in the past two years.
- No set comparison schools, thus different standard schools have been used in different years.

Over the years of 2022 and 2023, testing cost AUD 33k (figures for previous years unavailable). This was an expensive exercise for data that cannot be used to assess student achievement and/or measure program impact. In order to increase the overall cost effectiveness of pre/post testing, we suggest the EMULI program considers reducing the frequency of testing to:

- every year for students in Y4 (completing 1st cycle)
- every 3-4 years for students at all levels (for longitudinal data collection).

Annual pre/post testing is costly and time consuming, and is not cost effective when it results in incomplete data sets. At the proposed intervals, the program could assess all students in EMULI schools and CAFE schools, and a sampling of students taken from a comparison group of standard public schools but at fewer points in time. This would reduce the cost and time investment, as well as the complexity and frequency of the activity, while still providing enough data to appropriately monitor student achievement.

Scalability: The EMBLI/EMULI mother tongue-based multilingual education program can be scaled up readily in mother tongues currently developed and used in Lautem (Fataluku), Oecusse (Baikeno), and Manatuto (Galolen); however, expansion to additional mother tongues would require substantial investment to develop the languages (grammar, orthography) as well as the learning materials. A teacher training program exists (in fact, additional teacher training was already underway as this evaluation was taking place, patterns for development of learning materials (Big books, primers) are established and some staff who spearheaded these activities are still affiliated with EMULI.

Before scaling up, however, it is advised that EMULI adjust its model for technical assistance, and specifically reconsider reverting from a mentoring model to the method of technical support used in the early years of the program. EMULI will also need to significantly strengthen its monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) processes to measure student achievement and lasting program impact. Finally, the program should seek a long-term multi-donor funding arrangement before commencing program expansion activities in order to avoid perennial issues of short-term tranche investments which limit long-term planning.

## Conclusion

It appears that the AUD 1,086,899 invested by Australia between 2019 and 2023 to maintain mother tongue-based multilingual education in 5 preschools and 5 primary schools has had limited lasting effect. During this period, student learning achievement in EMULI schools appears to have consistently surpassed that of students in standard schools, especially during preschool and Years 1-3, with EMULI students often scoring twice as high as their standard school peers. However, overall achievement is still well below a 50% pass rate.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, based on limited classroom observations, teaching practices do not appear to have improved over time, with many teachers over-using rote learning techniques. Additionally, investments in mentoring and pre/post testing have not been cost-effective. Significant changes to programme management, technical inputs and monitoring and evaluation systems (MEL) would strengthen the programme and support a case for continued investment. Short-term funding arrangements have hindered the development of a longer term vision and plan for the program. That said, EMULI children are still outperforming their peers in early years where mother tongue is the primary language of instruction. This may indicate that language of instruction is, indeed, the principal driver of higher achievement.

## Summary of Recommendations

The following is a list of all of the recommendations, by area, followed by suggested future directions.

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<sup>20</sup> The low pass rate may be of concern depending on the appropriateness of the assessment tools.

## Impact

1. The EMULI program should ensure that regular and reliable learning achievement data be collected, analysed and used to inform program decision-making.
2. EMULI should consider including analysis of Y9 national exam results into a monitoring and evaluation framework, as well as establishing a longitudinal study to track students' progress over their academic career.
3. MoE to record disaggregated data on progression and retention by school and individual student in EMIS, and make these data available to the EMULI program.

## Effectiveness

1. EMULI should continue to develop mother tongue resources and consider the development of more multilingual resources. EMULI teacher training should emphasise the importance of the use of the EMULI resources for mother tongue-based and child-centred learning.
2. EMULI should consider both how the in-service training currently happens, as well as the role of mentors, school leaders and inspectors in supporting teachers to use more child-centred pedagogies
3. EMULI should consider returning to the former model of professional development delivered during the first five years of the program.
4. EMULI should consider the role of both MTB-MLE and child-centred pedagogies in improving learning outcomes.
5. EMULI should consider ways to de-politicise mother tongue-based multilingual education in Timor-Leste.

## Relevance

1. EMULI should conduct further research into why teachers are not consistently implementing student-centred teaching techniques and why EMULI teachers are deviating from the language progression.
2. As part of ongoing advocacy work, the MoE and EMULI program should reinforce that EMULI uses national curriculum content in cycles 1-2. They should also communicate the benefits of the EMULI preschool curriculum and advocate for it to help inform revisions to the current national preschool curriculum, especially regarding language of instruction.
3. EMULI should try to influence preschool language policy to mandate use of mother tongues. EMULI should support the development of a Language in Education policy which includes mother tongue use (all mother tongues, including Tetun) at preschool and beyond.
4. As part of its strategic planning process, the EMULI program should clearly delineate the roles of MoE, the EMULI program team, DFAT and PHD and include clear steps to increasingly transition full technical and financial management to MoE, including any needed capacity development. They

may also wish to focus on ways to advocate for increased GoTL funding and look to attract investment from a wider range of donors.

5. Ensure a wider understanding of the role of EMULI in improving learning outcomes, and frame more advocacy around this.
6. As EMULI develops its strategic vision, it should consider which aspects of the current EMULI program should remain with the new department and which should move elsewhere.
7. Program monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) should be strengthened.
8. The EMULI team should reconsider the roles of mentor and field officer. Rather than revising the mentor and field officer roles, it is advisable to map the support activities needed for new and old teachers/schools, and then design an appropriate staffing structure to cover the needs, keeping in mind required expertise, technical and linguistic skills, and other attributes.

## Future Directions

In addition to the evaluation recommendations, we advise the EMULI team to consider six wider recommendations to inform the future direction of the EMULI program.

The original intention of the term mother tongue based bilingual education or mother tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) was not to drive a wedge between mother tongue and other languages – but to draw attention to the need to work within local linguistic ecologies. However, interpretation in much of the language discourse in Timor-Leste (and elsewhere) has been to separate and pose mother tongue as in conflict with and/or competition with the national/official language(s) of Tetun and Portuguese. It is our overarching recommendation that the EMBLI/EMULI program focus on the educational goal of multilingualism, with knowledge of mother tongues celebrated as an educational goal that offers mobility within and outside of the country, plus best opportunities for lasting literacy and educational success. This educational goal should be codified through a language in education policy and policy dialogue should be part of an overall Language Policy and Planning (LPP) process (Gazzola, Grin, Cardinal & Heugh, 2024; Language Policy Cycle Framework in Annex 1), which includes policy dialogue as well as the other 5 recommendations shared in this section.

- 1) Reopen policy dialogue and consider a language in education policy

Teachers, school leaders and mentors are asking for a stronger policy to codify the use of mother tongue; to increase the legitimacy of its use as language of instruction; and to protect against shifts in policy and practice when leadership changes. A language policy may also clarify any misunderstandings regarding the different language progressions currently in practice (i.e., EMULI and the National Basic Education Curriculum). Acknowledging that previous policy and stakeholder discussions were contentious, we note that the political and social tides appear to have shifted, opening up a space for more favourable dialogue. We note that policy dialogue is fraught; however, with a rejuvenated stakeholder base across various levels of society, and following a multi-level consultation process, policy change may be possible at this moment in time. Policy dialogue may accompany a national stakeholder forum to celebrate the UN Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022 – 2032).

- 2) Develop a strategic vision and costed work plan through consultation at municipal and community levels, as well as national level

Key stakeholders (MoE, DFAT, PHD) have identified the need for strategic planning, including a vision document and a costed work plan, before investing further in the EMULI program. As of the writing of this report, EMULI engaged consultants have confirmed that national level stakeholder consultation is completed. As part of the strategic planning process, we recommend holding stakeholder consultations at community and municipal levels, as well as national level. We suggest that the multi-level stakeholder consultations be used as a way to 1) celebrate what EMULI has accomplished to date; 2) clarify misunderstandings on mother tongue-based education; 3) (re)establish a coalition of proponents and partners from civil society and communities. These consultations may be followed by a national symposium to celebrate the UN Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022 – 2032).

- 3) Strengthen and grow the MTE stakeholder network (outward and downward)

‘Successful collaboration and policy outcomes require careful calibration of top-down and bottom-up mechanisms, often in dialogue with non-for-profit pressure-groups’ (Heugh, 2024, p. 13), yet such collaboration is difficult to achieve and sustain. It is our understanding that an MTE stakeholder group existed in the past, and that this has recently been revitalised by the EMULI Coordinator. This group, coordinated by EMULI at MoE, includes a diversity of donors and high-level stakeholders. In addition to rejuvenating this top-level stakeholder group, we advise that the MTE network be widened to bring in actors at all levels: national, municipal, community, school, and individual. Parents’ groups and civil society should be (re)mobilised to support the initiative. While there is a Facebook group – Repete 13 – a public online community of supporters of MTE in Timor-Leste (with approximately 1.6k members), this will only reach those with an online presence. Other means of reaching people, both formally and informally, should be considered. Municipal consultations is one way to identify supporters at municipality and community levels.

- 4) Update the language mapping to include the full language repertoires of students and teachers

As it has been 10 years since the last language mapping, the EMULI program may wish (funding dependent) to update the mapping and to consider including the entire linguistic repertoire (i.e., all languages known) for students and teachers, not just the ‘strongest’ one. Using the updated information, stakeholders may then assess whether to continue EMULI as a ‘monolingual’ mother-tongue based curriculum, or to introduce multilingual teaching practices that acknowledge the multiple language skills children (and teachers) are bringing to the classroom. Best practice in MTB-MLE would suggest introducing activities that build on all the known languages in the classroom, no matter how ‘strong’ that knowledge.<sup>21</sup> An updated language mapping would support development of a language in education policy.

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<sup>21</sup> See Heugh, K., French, M., Armitage, J., Taylor-Leech, K., Billingham, N., & Ollerhead, S. (2019). *Using multilingual approaches: Moving from theory to practice*. British Council. ISBN: 978-0-86355-958-7

[Using multilingual approaches: moving from theory to practice A resource book of strategies, activities and projects for the classroom](#)

- 5) Establish a professional development plan for existing and new teachers, and capacity development for education officials

Expansion to an additional 61 schools is underway, with initial teacher training conducted in July 2024. Before moving further, it is imperative that plans for ongoing technical support be considered before launching into new schools. The EMULI program is advised to design a professional development plan which includes both new and existing teachers. Consider ways to use current EMULI schools as model schools, and experienced EMULI teachers as coaches for new teachers. This might be done through municipal and/or local level training within an established cluster, or through matching old and new schools in a peer network. By having current teachers share their experiences implementing EMULI - challenges and successes – the EMULI team will be able to identify their strengths, weaknesses, and misunderstandings, while building off of previous long-term investments in their professional development. This model has the potential to be replicated beyond EMULI and to strengthen the MoE institutional professional development process. In addition, the program should provide professional learning for education officials to increase institutional memory and expertise in bilingual and multilingual education for Timor-Leste, with different iterations of multilingual education for urban and rural/remote communities.

- 6) Design a monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) Framework, including quality and appropriately timed student assessments and a longitudinal study

It is imperative that the EMULI program design a MEL framework and revise its systems, tools and procedures for data collection, storage, analysis, and use. The framework should include (1) Theory of Change, (2) Learning Agenda, (3) Measurement, (4) Analysis and Synthesis, and (5) Dissemination and Data Use. The framework should include a baseline and endline assessment and identify standard schools for comparison. In addition to establishing metrics and timeframes for data collection, student assessment should be prioritised, but at reduced intervals. EMULI should consider designing a longitudinal study to trace the progress of students in the EMULI program over time. EMULI may also wish to access national and regional achievement data, as available, to include in the framework for triangulation of data. A framework will help improve consistency of data collection/use over the life of the project, and help the program to establish an evidence-base for future funding and inform future direction.

## Introduction

### General context

Timor-Leste is a South East Asian country with a population of approximately 1.4 million. It became an independent country in 2002 after 400 years of Portuguese rule and 24 years of Indonesian occupation. Today, Timor-Leste is considered a relatively peaceful and democratic lower middle-income country; however, poverty is high with more than 40 percent of the population lacking the resources to satisfy basic needs. Since independence, Timor Leste has relied heavily on its sovereign wealth fund, made up of revenue from its oil and gas reserves. This fund is projected to run dry in the next decade as those reserves run out. The result is that government investment in all areas, including education, has been steadily

decreasing, and will continue to do so, unless alternative sources of income are found.<sup>22</sup> The country is also highly vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change (ESP 2020-2024). The country is young and rural, with a median age of 21.3 years and a rural population of approximately 65%.<sup>23</sup> Timor-Leste is also linguistically diverse with more than 30 spoken languages. The Constitution names Tetun<sup>24</sup> and Portuguese as official languages, with English and Indonesian as working languages, and more than 20 Indigenous languages (also referred to as local languages or mother tongues) as national languages (see GoTL Constitution, 2002, Articles 13 and 159).

## Education in Timor-Leste

Until 1975, education was limited and exclusive. By 1975, only about 10% of the country was literate. Under Indonesian control, education became more widespread; however, when Indonesia withdrew in 1999, most of the educational infrastructure was destroyed, including nearly 95% of schools. Moreover, around 20 percent of primary school teachers and about 80 percent of post-primary teachers, most of whom were non-Timorese, left the country, leaving Timor Leste largely without a skilled teaching workforce. With strong donor support, many education facilities were rebuilt by 2001 and strong emphasis was given to re-establishing the system and enrolling children.<sup>25</sup>

In the early years of independence, education was heavily influenced by Portuguese and Brazilian donors and advisors. Political violence and crisis in 2006-2007 brought in a new government, which led to a restructuring of the education system, the introduction of a reformed curriculum, and the 2008 Basic Education Act guaranteeing universal access to nine years' compulsory, free schooling, with Tetun and Portuguese as the languages of education (Taylor-Leech, 2021).

Today, 9 years of free basic education is provided by law for children ages 6 to 14 years old. This consists of primary school – cycle 1 (years 1-4) and cycle 2 (years 5-6) – and lower secondary – cycle 3 (years 7-9). Basic education and three years of upper secondary school are compulsory.<sup>26</sup> Two years of preschool (preschool A for ages 3-4 and preschool B for age 5) are also available in some (mostly urban) areas of the country, though just 21% of students access preschool (ESP 2020-2024). According to Ministry records,<sup>27</sup> there are approximately 374 preschools (239 public; 135 private); 1,282 basic education schools (1093 public; 189 private); and 155 secondary schools (94 public; 71 private) (ESP 2020-2024). Included in these schools are 10 EMBLI/EMULI schools (5 preschools, 5 primary schools) and 15 Portuguese medium Centros de Aprendizagem e Formação Escolar (CAFE) schools.

Timor-Leste has made great strides in education access since independence; however some measures are of concern.<sup>28</sup> For instance, gross enrollment rates of children in the first and second cycles of education

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<sup>22</sup> Inter alia, Lowy Institute: <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/timor-leste-s-uncertain-future>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.worldometers.info/demographics/timor-leste-demographics/>

<sup>24</sup> Tetun-Dili/Prasa, the most widely spoken variant of Tetun

<sup>25</sup> [https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/timor-leste\\_education\\_and\\_training.pdf](https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/timor-leste_education_and_training.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> [Timor-Leste | NON-STATE ACTORS IN EDUCATION](#)

<sup>27</sup> Available data are from 2018 as cited in the Education Sector Plan ESP 2020-2024.

<sup>28</sup> Further discussion of the wider education issues in Timor-Leste can be found in Annex 2 to this evaluation.

(109%) compared with gross enrollment in secondary school (71%) suggest that children are repeating primary school year levels (as rates are above 100%) and that nearly 30% of students drop out before high school<sup>29</sup> (ESP 2020-2024, 2018 data). With regards to student achievement, children are not acquiring the skills and knowledge expected at grade level. In 2017, an Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)<sup>30</sup> was administered to students at the end of first grade in a stratified random sample of 128 schools in four municipalities. A significant number of children assessed scored zero<sup>31</sup> in one, more, or all of the skills. For instance 72.37% of the students scored zero (no correct answers) for text reading, and 74.20% scored zero for reading comprehension. In the 2018 year 9 (Y9) national exams, 'the average composite score of the national exams was significantly less than 50%.' This means that 'more than half of all students achieved less than 50% of the skills and knowledge they are expected to acquire through completing the nine grades of basic education' (ESP 2020-2024, p. 20).

GoTL receives financial and technical support from various donors, notably the Australian Government. It has also been a member of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) since 2005 and received 10 grants worth nearly USD 30 million.<sup>32</sup> There is, however, much to be done to improve the provision of high quality education, particularly in languages that children know, understand, and in which they can successfully learn. Some of these areas are explored in further detail in Annex 2 'Wider Issues in the education sector in Timor Leste'.<sup>33</sup>

## Language(s) of Education in Timor-Leste

With Timor-Leste independence from Indonesia, and under the influence of lusophone donors, Portuguese replaced Indonesian as the language of instruction in schools in 2002. However, by 2008, it became evident that teachers were not proficient enough to teach in Portuguese and students were not performing well (Taylor-Leech, 2021). The 2008 Basic Education Act established both Tetun and Portuguese as the languages of education and to date they are the official languages of instruction in Timor-Leste's 1093 standard (public) government schools providing basic education. In these schools, students learn in Tetun in the early years with Portuguese introduced as a language of instruction in Y4. In addition to these 'standard' schools, there are a number of private schools that teach in English or Portuguese, for example the 15 CAFE schools which use Portuguese as language (or medium) of instruction.

A 'new' National Basic Education curriculum was developed in 2013 as a staged approach for preschool to Year 6 with a focus on improving literacy and numeracy, as well as reducing student attrition (Cassidy, Chainey, & Wong, 2022). This curriculum aimed to 'improve educational outcomes by creating a uniquely Timorese education system' which included 'use of local language and content relevant to Timorese

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<sup>29</sup> This percentage is predictable if children are not learning in home languages using a system of bilingual pedagogies (see Alidou et al., 2006; Ouane & Glanz, 2012; 2011).

<sup>30</sup> An Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) is a research-based and globally recognized one-on-one oral test to measure basic literacy skills in children in early grades (school years). It can be administered in a diversity of languages, including mother tongues.

<sup>31</sup> A zero score on the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) indicates that a student was unable to answer any question correctly on a given subtask.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.globalpartnership.org/where-we-work/timor-leste>

<sup>33</sup> [Annex 2: Wider issues in the education sector in Timor Leste](#)

culture, history, and environment' and incorporated international best practices such as learner-centred pedagogy and language-progression methodologies (Ogden-Smith, 2017, p. 51). The new curriculum provided prescriptive lesson plans in Tetun and specified that the language of instruction (LOI) in early basic education was to be Tetun, with a gradual and explicit introduction and transition to oral and written Portuguese between Y4-6. Prior to the new curriculum, most instructional materials were provided to teachers in Portuguese (through lusophone donors). While language of instruction was not clearly defined until 2008, there was a definite tendency to rely on Portuguese (Walter, 2016). With introduction of the new curriculum, language of instruction shifted to Tetun, with gradual transition to Portuguese by Y6.

Introducing Tetun in addition to Portuguese as a language of instruction was designed to strengthen student achievement, as well as national identity in Timor-Leste (Cabral and Martin-Jones, 2021; Da Costa Cabral, 2021; Taylor-Leech, 2013; 2021). However, it is estimated that only about 30.7% of the population of Timor-Leste speaks Tetun as either a mother tongue (first language) or as an additional (second) language, and that less than 10% of the population speaks Portuguese in the home (Ethnologue, 25<sup>th</sup> ed., 2022). For rural children the percentage who speak Tetun may be even lower at 20%.<sup>34</sup> Roughly extrapolating from these percentages, it can be estimated that at best only one third of the 302,447 children attending primary school<sup>35</sup> know Tetun, the language of instruction, and much fewer know Portuguese. This suggests that more than 209,560 children are 'learning' in a language they do not know as either a first or second language.<sup>36</sup>

Children need to learn in a language they know and understand. Likewise, teachers need to teach in languages they are comfortable using to communicate. They cannot transmit the content of a curriculum if they cannot freely and confidently use the language of instruction (UNESCO, 2016). In most instances, languages known and understood are the ones spoken at home by children and their parents/caregivers or in their immediate communities. These languages are home or local languages, also referred to as mother tongues. A mother tongue may also be referred to as a first language (L1), though it is not necessarily just one language nor the very first language acquired.

The 2008 Basic Education Act of Timor-Leste instituted Tetun/Portuguese bilingual education, an educational system where two languages are used as the language of instruction and may also be taught as subjects. In bilingual education, one of the two languages of instruction may be the mother tongue, though not always. In standard public schools of Timor-Leste, mother tongue is not used as an official language of instruction nor is it taught as a subject. It may, however, be used as a support for comprehension, if necessary.

The EMBLI/EMULI program uses three languages of instruction, mother tongue, Tetun and Portuguese. This is referred to as multilingual education (MLE). Because EMBLI/EMULI uses mother tongue as one of three languages, and prioritises mother tongue instruction, it is an example of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE). In MTB-MLE a learner's mother tongue is taught alongside the

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<sup>34</sup> Timor-Leste Population and Housing Census 2015, as cited in original EMBLI/EMULI evaluation terms of reference, 2021.

<sup>35</sup> Timor-Leste Education Sector Plan, (ESP 2020-2030)

<sup>36</sup> Ethnologue estimates that 3.7% of the population speaks Tetun - Dili (the language of schooling) as a first language, 27% as a second language. Adding these percentages (30.7%) an estimated 209,560 children are attending school in a language they do not know as either a first or second language.

introduction of a second (or additional) language(s), in this case Tetun. The mother tongue is a language of instruction as well as a subject of learning, especially in the early years, with a gradual transition to Tetun and then Portuguese.

Language progressions or transitions from one language of instruction to another may occur in different ways and times. Early/late exit transition models are subtractive approaches where the intent is to move learners from the early language(s) of instruction (often a mother tongue) to a second (additional) language of instruction (usually an official language). Early exit transitions take place within one to 4 years of education. Late exit transitions occur after 5 or 6 years of mother tongue instruction (Alidou et al., 2006). The national curriculum is an example of an early transition, with a complete transition to Portuguese by Y5. EMULI may be considered a late exit model because mother tongue is used for six years, two preschool years and four primary school years.

In contrast to transition models, a dual language approach maintains both languages throughout the education process. Research shows the strongest MTB-MLE programs are dual language and maintain study and use of the mother tongue for as long as possible through the primary school years, and even beyond. In additive MTB-MLE or dual language approaches, mother tongue is never removed as a language of instruction and is used at least 50% of the day/subject even into high school (Alidou et al., 2006).

MTB-MLE programs foster strong literacy skills in mother tongue that are critical for a children's cognitive development and the best pathway to build skills in additional languages (Alidou et al., 2006; Ouane & Glanz, 2011; Skutnabb-Kangas & Heugh, 2012; Heugh, 2015; Heugh, Li & Song, 2017; Mohanty, 2018), such as Tetun and Portuguese. Global best practice shows that in well-resourced environments, a minimum of 6 years of mother tongue and second language instruction starting at the primary school level are required to consolidate the learning gains achieved through mother tongue instruction (Alidou et al, 2006; Bamgbose, 2000, 2004). Eight years provides stronger results and is the minimum in poorer resourced educational environments, like those of Timor-Leste (Heugh et al., 2007; UNESCO, 2011; UNESCO 2016).

## The EMBLI/EMULI Program

EMBLI is an acronym for Edukasaun Multilingue Bazia Lian-Inan, which translates literally as 'multilingual education based in mother tongue' or MTB-MLE. The programme's current name, EMULI, means Edukasaun Multilinge, 'multilingual education' (MLE). The EMBLI/EMULI programme is based on global evidence that children learn best in languages they know and understand (UNESCO, 2016). Conceived within academic and political debates occurring in Timor-Leste and globally regarding best language(s) of instruction, the EMBLI/EMULI program is a very small pilot initiated in 2012 to test the hypothesis that children will learn better in their mother tongues than in Tetun.

Between 2012 and 2018, the programme (known originally as EMBLI) was implemented by the Timor-Leste National Commission for UNESCO under the Ministry of Education (MoE) with funding from the Australian Government and GoTL. Since 2019, the program (rebranded as EMULI in 2020) has been embedded within the MoE under the Department of Policy, Planning, and Inclusion, with ongoing, though modest, financial and technical support from the Government of Australia through the Partnership for Human Development Australia Timor-Leste (PHD) .

The EMULI/EMBLI programme is designed to train and support teachers to provide children with mother tongue instruction in preschool (2 years, preschool A and preschool B) and primary school (Years 1-6), gradually transitioning to Tetun as the language of instruction by Y5 while continuing to teach mother tongue as a subject through Y6. To date, the pilot has been implemented in 5 preschool and 5 primary schools (10 total) across three municipalities (Latuem, Manatuto, Oecusse) and in three mother tongues (Fataluku, Galolen, and Baikeno).

The program supports learning, linguistic, and social and economic goals, described in the 2010 draft National Policy for Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education for Timor-Leste.<sup>37</sup> These goals are:

- Learning goals: providing much greater access to curricular content, including cognitively demanding abstract information and skills. In addition, all learners will become multilingual (speaking all target languages well) and multiliterate (able to read and write all target languages) to maximise cognitive and communicative benefits.
- Linguistic goals: teaching initial literacy in the learner's best language, providing a foundation of competencies which are readily transferred to additional languages (Tetun, Portuguese and others).
- Social and economic goals: maximising the home--school connection, creating greater family cohesion, higher participation rates in schooling, improved retention rates throughout schooling, and more equitable attainment across gender, regional, rural and social class divides.

Key activities of the EMBLI/EMULI program include:

- Advocacy for MTB-MLE and promotion of community engagement to support EMBLI/EMULI schools.
- A multilingual curriculum and language progression, starting in preschool A, which includes one of three mother tongues, plus Tetun and Portuguese.
- A 2 year preschool curriculum<sup>38</sup> offered in each of the 3 mother tongues.
- Teacher training/professional development in student-centred pedagogies and mother tongue instruction, provided in collaboration with INFORDEPE,<sup>39</sup> the national body charged with promoting relevant areas of professional training for teaching staff and non-teaching staff in the education system.
- Professional development and school-based support to teachers (provided by technical advisors and later by mentors)
- Development of didactic and learning materials in mother tongues, including 15 titles of teaching materials, more than 600 stories and 4,000 copies of books published in three languages (Galolen, Baikeno, and Fataluku) (Grimes, 2018).

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<sup>37</sup> Published by the UNESCO National Education Commission and Ministry of Education, <https://www.laohamutuk.org/educ/CAFE/PolicyEn.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> The EMULI preschool curriculum is adapted from a 2011 Heritage Language Playschools curriculum for Indigenous minorities, written by Dr Karla J Smith.

<sup>39</sup> Insitituto de Formação dos Docentes e Profissionais da Educação

The EMBLI/EMULI MTB-MLE curriculum has been phased in over the years, starting with preschool A in 2012 and adding preschool B in 2013, Y1 in 2014, Y2 in 2015, through to Y6 in 2019/2020.<sup>40</sup> Prior to curriculum roll out in 2012, considerable work was done to develop the 3 target mother tongues (Baikeno, Galolen, and Fataluku), train teachers and develop instructional materials in mother tongue. In these earlier years, funding came from various donors and non-governmental organisations to the Alola Foundation, the architect of the EMBLI program.

EMBLI was designed independently and slightly earlier than the new curriculum, however, both programs shared a focus on using local languages (rather than Portuguese or Bahasa Indonesia) in education – for EMULI it was mother tongue, while for the new curriculum it was Tetun. Both programs also emphasised child-centred pedagogies and embedding local Timorese context. The MoE began implementing the new curriculum for grades 1 and 2 in 2015; for grades 3 and 4 in 2016, and for grades 5 and 6 in 2017.<sup>41</sup> Taylor-Leech (2021) suggests that ‘the start of EMBLI [in 2012] was not well-timed and led to confusion in the minds of the public between the two initiatives’ (p. 128).

The EMBLI/EMULI program sits beside another MoE education initiative funded by the Australian Government and managed by PHD, the Leadership, Mentoring and Learning Support programme (Apoiuba Lideransa, Mentoria no Aprendizajen) known widely as ALMA. The ALMA programme helps strengthen school leaders to improve school-based teacher professional development, particularly in support of the ‘new’ National Basic Education Curriculum, the bilingual Tetun-Portuguese curriculum initiated in 2013 and rolled out to standard (public) schools in 2015. Originally, ALMA and EMBLI/EMULI schools did not overlap because of the fundamental differences between the programs – ALMA supporting the ‘new’ bilingual curriculum and EMULI supporting mother tongue based multilingual education. However, as ALMA has expanded nationally, EMULI schools have been included, though most schools only very recently.

### **Changes to the EMULI Program**

The EMBLI/EMULI program has undergone several shifts over the period of 2012-2024, with notable changes in governance, staffing, monitoring and evaluation, teacher support, and program scope.

**Governance:** EMBLI/EMULI was implemented by the Timor-Leste National Commission for UNESCO under the Ministry of Education (MoE) from 2012 to 2018. In 2019 the program was embedded into the MoE; however, interest in the program varied with MoE leadership changes. In 2020 PHD, as Australia’s lead for education support in Timor-Leste, was tasked to provide increasing oversight to EMULI, with ongoing, though short term funding.

**Staffing:** In the early days of EMULI, an administrator and 3 technical coordinators<sup>42</sup> were based at the national level, with each coordinator assigned to support schools in one municipality. In each municipality

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<sup>40</sup> An EMULI technical advisor confirmed that Y5 was rolled out in 2018, though not as thoroughly as previous years, and assumed that Y6 was done in 2019. A PHD monthly report to DFAT in May 2020 suggests the Y6 curriculum was finished in 2020.

<sup>41</sup> ([National Curriculum for Preschool and Primary Education.](#))

<sup>42</sup> Technical coordinator positions ended in July 2023.

there was one<sup>43</sup> field officer who acted as a coordinator, arranging meetings, workshops, advocacy, etc). There were also 15 EMBLI teacher assistants.<sup>44</sup> The program was also supported by international advisors. In early 2019, staffing levels contracted to just a few individuals, resulting in a loss of institutional knowledge and some technical skills. By the end of 2019, an MoE-based national coordinator was appointed.<sup>45</sup> In 2020 local mentors were brought on at the request of MoE.<sup>46</sup> At present, the EMBLI/EMULI program has an MoE-based EMULI Technical Coordinator<sup>47</sup> and 5<sup>48</sup> staff, 6 school-based mentors,<sup>49</sup> 3 municipal field officers, and 15 EMULI teachers.<sup>50</sup>

Monitoring and evaluation: EMBLI was designed as a pilot and included a baseline (conducted by CARE in 2012),<sup>51</sup> a midline (also by CARE in 2014) and an endline assessment (by S. Walter in 2016). The results of the endline, shared more fully in a later section, supported plans for pilot expansion. Unfortunately these plans were frustrated in 2020 and have been on hold until very recently (mid 2024). In 2019, the program began collecting learning achievement data (pre and post tests) for students in EMULI schools and a group of comparison schools, including CAFE schools. Since 2020, the EMULI team has also been conducting classroom observations to collect data on teacher performance and student engagement in the class, with the intent of increasing MoE support to MTB-MLE<sup>5253</sup> Observations were first paper based and then done on tablets starting in 2021. In 2020, a new Minister of Education requested an independent EMBLI/EMULI evaluation to inform future programming and confirm earlier findings. The evaluation was delayed for several years, and this current evaluation responds to that earlier request.

Teacher support: In the early program years, a direct training model was used, with the 3 technical coordinators visiting EMBLI schools twice per trimester to observe teaching and provide immediate feedback and on the spot training. Their observations also informed larger trainings provided during the

<sup>43</sup> At some stage this was increased to 2 field officers because of the paperwork load (personal correspondence with Kirsty Sword-Gusmao, September 2024); however originally and at present there is one field officer per municipality.

<sup>44</sup> Paid through UNESCO.

<sup>45</sup> Paid through PHD.

<sup>46</sup> 'In June 2020, the previous minister issued a Ministerial Diploma to expand EMULI, adapt the ALMA model of local mentors to facilitate mother-tongue activities in the field and strengthen the linkages between ALMA and EMULI, in particular for school-based support in classroom observation.' (Jan-Dec 2020 6-monthly report)

<sup>47</sup> This is not a permanent MoE position.

<sup>48</sup> The fifth individual joined the team in August 2024, as this evaluation was under way.

<sup>49</sup> Mentors were introduced in 2020/2021. At some point there were more mentors, up to one per school.

<sup>50</sup> Paid by MoE since 2019.

<sup>51</sup> The evaluation team has not been able to access either the baseline or midline conducted by CARE. We know of their existence only through another program assessment, carried out by J. Caffery et al. in 2014.

<sup>52</sup> See the original EMBLI/EMULI Evaluation Terms of Reference (TOR), 2021.

<sup>53</sup> The purpose of the classroom observations was 'to capture how trained teachers apply their skills and knowledge (classroom observation) and how students participate in the active process of learning. The purpose of this is to produce evidence of the EMULI program effectiveness so that MoEYS can advocate for the program with national parliament, council of ministers and political parties.' (PHD monthly report to DFAT, July 2020).

trimester school breaks. In 2020, with the adoption of the mentoring model, training shifted to a training of trainer model. National coordinators provided training to local mentors and field officers in the capital, Dili, and the mentors and field officers took this training to teachers.<sup>54</sup> In 2021, during the covid-19 pandemic, training for mentors and field officers was conducted by zoom.<sup>55</sup> With the end of the national technical coordinator position in July 2023, mentors and field officers have continued to support teachers at the school level.

Program scope: EMBLI was designed as a pilot with the intent of expanding to additional schools and languages. In 2020 plans for the expansion proceeded, with support from MoE leadership at the time, and teacher training was conducted. However, a new minister in 2020 placed the expansion on hold, requesting a new program evaluation (mentioned above). In 2024, with the return of MoE leadership supportive of MTB-MLE, 66 schools sent requests to the minister to join the EMULI program - 41 schools in Oecusse (preschool-4; basic-37); 23 schools in Lautem (preschool-11; basic-12); 2 schools in Manatuto (all basic).<sup>56</sup> Some of these schools had participated in training in the aborted 2020 expansion. Teacher training was underway at the time of this evaluation (July/August 2024)<sup>57</sup> with a plan to implement EMULI in these additional 66 schools starting in the 2025 school year and to consider expansion to new mother tongues and new municipalities also in 2025.

A second change in program scope relates to plans to embed EMULI in other programs, such as ALMA and INFORDEPE teacher training. The ALMA teacher professional development program is an MoE program supported by PHD and implemented across Timor-Leste. As early as 2020, PHD reporting to DFAT indicated that a plan to link the EMULI and ALMA programs was underway, including drafting of a concept paper and 'repositioning of EMULI staff'.<sup>58</sup> A later report dated June 2023 states that EMULI 'has and will continue to be transitioned into AMLA through the integration of early grade literacy and numeracy approaches.'<sup>59</sup> An intent to embed EMULI into ALMA was also shared by PHD staff, though the extent to which this is a done deal was unclear. PHD reporting in 2022 also suggests a plan to shift EMULI from 'a standalone program...to being integrated into the INFORDEPE teacher professional development curriculum'<sup>60</sup> with a note in the June 2023 report that this transition is underway at the request of the President of INFORDEPE. This integration was likewise unclear to the evaluation team at the time of the evaluation.

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<sup>54</sup> See PHD monthly report dated September 2020 and November 2020.

<sup>55</sup> See PHD monthly report dated March-April 2021.

<sup>56</sup> According to the EMULI Coordinator, more schools from Manatuto applied, however their students have a diverse linguistic student body and/or speak other languages, and EMULI can only work in schools using the languages with existing resources.

<sup>57</sup> The first 5-day training took place in July/August covering the EMULI program, benefits of MTB-MLE, classroom management, positive discipline, comparison to national curriculum, intro to the didactic and learning materials, teaching methodology. Additional training is planned for November/December 2024 and March/April 2025.

<sup>58</sup> See PHD six monthly report, January-December 2020.

<sup>59</sup> See PHD six monthly report, January-June 2023.

<sup>60</sup> See PHD six monthly report, January-December 2022.

## Previous Evaluations

Between 2012 and 2016 a number of EMBLI evaluations were conducted, including a midline evaluation conducted in 2014 by CARE (not seen by our evaluation team), an evaluation in 2014 by J. Caffery et al, which recommended scale up of the project,<sup>61</sup> an endline evaluation by S. Walter in 2016, a measure of student learning achievement through EMBLI/EMULI pre/post testing from 2016 and 2017, and an MoE Joint Monitoring Report conducted in 2022. Findings from the endline evaluation and the 2016/2017 student learning achievement are shared below to help set the context for this evaluation.

The EMBLI Endline Evaluation Study to measure the educational effectiveness of the program was conducted in 2016 (Walter, 2016). The evaluation included: (1) testing of student achievement; (2) interviews with key stakeholders; (3) visits to schools; and (4) use of a public opinion survey to gather information on language attitudes. A close review of student achievement made up a significant portion of the report, with achievement assessed using two measures:

1. An Early Grade Reading Assessment – EGRA (the same one used by the World Bank in Timor-Leste in 2009) administered to children preschool B, Year 1 and Year 2.
2. A Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA) to test for knowledge in reading, mathematics, Tetun, and Portuguese language. This was administered to children in Year 2.

Both assessments were conducted at all 10 of the EMBLI schools as well as a number of standard government schools ‘randomly selected from a pool of eligible schools (i.e., linguistic situation similar to those of the EMBLI schools, where the majority of the students’ first language was not Tetun or Portuguese)’ (Walter, 2016). The EGRA was administered to a selection of children in preschool, Y1 and Y2 at these same schools, while the CBA was administered to all Year 2 students at these schools. Data was collected during the 2015 school year. Findings from the Walter 2016 evaluation assumed that comparison of learning achievement was between the ‘old’ Timor-Leste curriculum and the EMULI intervention because the ‘new’ National Basic Education Curriculum had only started rolling out in 2015 (Walter, 2016). The Walter 2016 assessment findings<sup>62</sup> were:

1. ‘The EMBLI program has produced very strong results, nearly doubling the academic performance of children attending these schools (p. 16).
2. ‘The educational effectiveness of the L1 [mother tongue] (EMBLI) model is more than twice that of the public L2 [Tetun] schools and 53 percent higher than that of the CAFE [Portuguese medium] schools’ (p. 66).
3. The EMBLI program was more cost effective at ‘producing good readers’ (USD 330 per successful reader) than either standard public schools (USD 1,233) or CAFÉ schools (USD 4,367) (p.119).

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<sup>61</sup> The Timor-Leste Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education Pilot Project: A Strategic Evaluation (Caffery, J., Coronado, G., Hodge, B, & Taylor-Leech, K., 2014)

<sup>62</sup> As our evaluation team was not provided with the primary data (student scores or financials) used for the Walter 2016 assessment, we have accepted the results of the 2016 assessment, namely that the results of the first three years of the EMBLI programme implementation (2012 – 2015) were a success both in terms of student achievement and program cost effectiveness for ‘producing successful readers.’

#### 4. Parents of EMBLI students reported high satisfaction with the program.

The 2016/2017 review of student learning achievement analysed EMULI-administered pre/post testing conducted at the start and end of the 2016 and 2017 school years. This assessment compared the scores of students at EMBLI schools with those of students studying at standard government schools and students studying in the CAFE program. The review found that students from schools implementing either EMBLI or CAFE outperformed those from standard government basic education schools. The comparison between EMBLI, CAFE and regular government schools varied between the municipalities and Year levels tested.<sup>63</sup> The ALMA program, supporting the delivery of the new basic education curriculum had not been implemented in Lautem or Oecusse when these assessments were conducted.<sup>64</sup>

Each of these programme reviews assessed learning achievement by students in EMBLI/EMULI schools, as compared to students in CAFE and standard government schools. Both of these evaluations indicated higher positive learning achievement by students in MTB-MLE EMBLI/EMULI schools, compared to students of similar linguistic backgrounds in standard bilingual Tetun/Portuguese government schools as well as students attending Portuguese medium CAFE schools. These findings align with global research indicating that MTB-MLE programs where students learn in languages they know and understand produce higher student achievement (Aliou et al., 2006, UNESCO 2003, UNESCO 2016).

## Political Climate

Post independence, education and language in education policy and practices in Timor Leste have been fraught. In the early post-independence years, disputes arose between Brazil and Portugal regarding their respective levels of influence in Timor Leste (Taylor-Leech, 2021). Meantime, a strong political movement prioritised Tetun as the language of freedom and a unifying element for a new country (Cabral and Martin-Jones, 2008; Taylor-Leech, 2021). Section 13 of the Constitution, adopted in 2002 states: “Tetun and the other national languages shall be valued and developed by the State.”

In 2004, the Education Policy Framework 2004 - 2009 referenced the use of both Portuguese and Tetun in education. The period between 2004 and 2008 was marked by debates around the role of Tetun in education, and in 2008, the Education System Framework Law established, for the first time, a space for the use of ‘national languages’ (i.e. mother tongue). However, the addition of mother tongues in education into policy debate initially increased debate and competition (Taylor-Leech, 2013; Cabral, 2021).

Over the lifetime of the EMULI program, there has been persistent (though varying degrees) of political pressure against using mother tongues as languages of instruction, preferring to consider these languages as merely a bridge to the official languages of Tetun and Portuguese. Key respondents (backed up by literature review) recounted the vehement disagreements against mother tongue instruction at the

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<sup>63</sup> see EMBLI/EMULI Program Evaluation RFQ, Scope of Services, 2024

<sup>64</sup> See the original EMBLI/EMULI Evaluation Terms of Reference (TOR), 2021.

conception and early years of EMULI implementation, and persistent subtext in public discourse may continue to perpetuate misunderstanding of the importance of teaching mother tongue.<sup>65</sup>

While the development of the program was politically complex, the most challenging time frame was between 2018 and 2022. In 2018, the 8th Constitutional Government came to power. Leaders initially expressed nervousness about the program,<sup>66</sup> which led to a decision to shift to a very early transition model, with mother tongue used only in preschool and Years 1 and 2 of primary school. This was despite the fact that EMULI was designed to go through to Year 6 and that by 2018, training and materials to Y5 had already been developed. At the end of 2018 the program was to pass to the Ministry of Education, yet the government was not keen on the program. At first EMBLI was told it could only implement its program in preschools. After some negotiation there was agreement to also permit Y1 and Y2; however, they were told they could not do any teacher training, only provide mentoring and coaching. No teacher training was permitted for over a year.

In 2019, the MoE requested that PHD to take on management of the program. DFAT continued to support EMULI, even though the government at the time was not supportive.

In 2020, there was a restructure of the 8th Constitutional Government, with some implications for EMULI. In June 2020, the Minister of Education issued a Ministerial Diploma to expand EMULI, adapt the ALMA model of local mentors to facilitate mother-tongue activities in the field and strengthen the linkages between ALMA and EMULI, in particular for school-based support in classroom observation.”<sup>67</sup> Despite the positive outcomes from the 2016 evaluation, the Government did not give permission for EMULI to expand, requesting a further evaluation in 2020, which due to COVID-19 disruptions did not take place until 2024.

For the EMBLI/EMULI program, the difficult early years (2012-2013) were followed by a period of calmer implementation until 2018. The period from 2018 to 2023 was again marked by multiple difficulties stemming from a lack of government support. Although the period since 2023 has enjoyed renewed government interest, some hostility remains in the public discourse towards the use of mother tongues, including suggestions that it is discriminatory against poor rural children (Taylor-Leech 2021). In addition, academic ‘squabbles’ continue regarding EMBLI/EMULI’s language progression with disputed claims that its distinct separation of languages produces ‘parallel monolingualism’ rather than multilingualism (to read more about these debates, see Cabral, 2021; Cabral & Martin-Jones, 2018; Taylor-Leech, 2021).

The 9th Constitutional Government has been in power since mid 2023. With the support of the current Minister of Education, Dulce de Jesus Soares, the program has been able to move forward. However, teachers, school leaders and mentors consistently suggested the need for a stronger policy to codify the

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<sup>65</sup> The evaluation team notes that countries like South Africa, the Philippines and Ethiopia have shelved their ‘late exit’ mother tongue models (where transition to a national language and/or a foreign language occurs after six years of mother tongue instruction). Suspensions are frequently due to geopolitical forces including globalisation, as well as pressure from parents keen for their children to prioritise proficiency in an international language. In these discourses, the fact that full fluency in a mother tongue supports the learning of other languages can be missed.

<sup>66</sup> This government was strongly influenced by scholars with a political preference for the use of Tetum in education (see Cabral and Martin-Jones, 2021; Da Costa Cabral, 2021).

<sup>67</sup> See PHD six monthly report, January-December 2020

use of mother tongue. Such a policy would increase the legitimacy of mother tongue as language of instruction and could protect against shifts in policy and practice with inevitable government changes.

## Summary

The EMBLI/EMULI programme is currently implemented in three of Timor-Leste's 13 municipalities (Latuem, Manatuto, Oecusse) and in three mother tongues (Fataluku, Galolen, and Baikeno). The programme has been tested in just a fraction (10) of the country's 374 preschools (239 public; 135 private) and 1,282 primary schools (1093 public; 189 private).<sup>68</sup> Designed as a pilot, EMBLI/EMULI was meant to expand to additional schools (in 2020); however, vacillating political support has prevented this until quite recently (mid 2024). The current government – the 9th Constitutional Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL), elected in 2023 – is committed to supporting and expanding the EMULI programme, and specifically to promoting mother tongue-based multilingual education using indigenous languages of Timor-Leste. Therefore, this evaluation of the EMBLI/EMULI programme (2012-2024) may be of particular consequence, especially as the GoTL applies for Global Partnership for Education (GPE) funding through a Partnership COMPACT<sup>69</sup> that has identified the need to address support for mother tongues in the basic education curriculum.

## Methodology

This evaluation aimed to provide evidence to inform the MoE and DFAT's future education investments regarding mother tongue-based early literacy and numeracy teaching. Specifically, to:

1. Assess the impact of the EMULI program on student learning outcomes (literacy and numeracy);
2. Assess the relative importance and cost effectiveness of the key program components in supporting improved literacy and numeracy;
3. Assess challenges and opportunities to strengthen EMULI program; and
4. Make recommendations to MoE regarding options to adapt and scale up the program and embed mother tongue-based early literacy and numeracy teaching into broader MoE systems.

As part of the RFQ, PHD developed a number of key evaluation questions (KEQs) to guide the evaluation. Broadly, those questions are themed around impact, effectiveness and relevance.

Questions about impact are largely related to the benefits the program has shown to the children in participating schools. That is, whether their learning achievements in literacy (Tetun and Portuguese), numeracy, and educational 'performance' are better, worse, or the same as those of children who attended schools where the language of teaching was Portuguese or Tetun (rather than their mother tongue).

Questions about effectiveness relate to whether the program has achieved its intended objective—broadly, to improve the teaching of children whose mother tongue is not Tetun or Portuguese.

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<sup>68</sup> Timor-Leste Education Sector Plan, (ESP 2020-2030)

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/timor-leste-partnership-compact-2024>

Questions about relevance related to whether the program is doing the right things to achieve its intended objective. Is it an appropriate and cost-effective model that could be scaled up to ensure equitable access to education for children whose mother tongue is not Tetun or Portuguese?

In order to achieve these objectives, the evaluation team used a mixed methods approach to examine both quantitative and qualitative data related to the EMULI program.

**Replication study:** This study analysed available post test data from 2019 and 2021, as provided by PHD, using a procedure similar to that used in the 2016 endline evaluation (noting that the endline used EGRA data) and the 2016/2017 pre/post test analysis. The procedure included comparisons of post test results for EMULI, CAFE and standard public schools (for 2019 and 2021). Both 2019 and 2021 were analysed in light of COVID-19 school disruptions in 2020 and 2021.

**Retrospective cohort study:** We were unable to do this study as originally conceived due to lack of data. Instead, a review of the Year 9 national exam data for 2023 was conducted.

**Student case studies:** We spoke with 8 EMULI 'graduates' (3 male, 5 female) to find out where they are now academically and/or professionally and to gather their personal impressions on how learning in their mother tongue and learning their mother tongue (as a subject) may have impacted their schooling, their current life trajectories, and their feelings of identity and belonging. A write up of the case studies is in Annex 3.

**Pedagogy and curriculum review:** This review had two parts. First, through a desk review, we compared the EMULI curriculum to the national curriculum, including language transition plans and teacher training materials. Second, we observed differences in classroom practices among the various school types (EMULI, CAFE and Government schools being supported through the ALMA program) to help us assess how EMULI teachers are being supported to know and use the mother tongue curriculum and to put specific MTB-MLE pedagogies into practice. In total, we visited all 10 EMULI schools in Manatuto, Oecusse and Lautem. We also visited the CAFE (Portuguese) school in Manatuto; and 2 non-EMULI Government Schools, one in Lautem, and one in Manatuto. We conducted classroom observations in 19 classes; and spoke with 40 teachers (21 female, 19 male) and 9 head teachers (2 female, 6 male). A full breakdown of focus group discussion (FGD) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) is provided in Annex 9.

**Cost-effectiveness analysis:** As expense data from 2012 to 2015 was unavailable, and data from 2016 to 2018 was provided as a single figure, it was not possible to conduct an historical review of expenditures by activity. Therefore, a brief review of provided data was conducted, comparing status and success of program components (from documents and observations) with levels of spending.

**Student, parent or caregiver and community interviews:** Selective interviews and focus groups were held with children, parents/caregivers and school community members. We spoke with 20 current EMULI students and 13 parents.

## Limitations

As part of the initial data review, several limitations were identified:

- **Timing and duration of the assignment:** The short duration of the evaluation, as well as its timing during the academic year, rendered unrealistic the possibility of collecting much additional new primary data related to learning outcomes.

- Political priorities of GoTL: Owing to various shifts in government priorities, it appears that activities were limited from 2018 - 2022, as explained further below under [cost effectiveness](#).
- Lack of national level assessment data: Data from the Year 9 exam was used for this evaluation where available. Although it is a standardised test, there were concerns expressed by stakeholders about the reliability of some years of the assessment. We used the results from years that were most reliable.<sup>70</sup>
- Lack of completeness of other EMULI-collected data: Classroom observation data is not complete for all relevant years, and available cost data was limited.
- Lack of disaggregated data on progression and retention at student and school level.
- Lack of availability of key stakeholders: for instance, we had planned to speak with groups of between 5 and 10 parents in each municipality, and did so in Manatuto and Oecusse; but we were only able to speak with 1 parent in Lautem owing to two funerals taking place in the village on the day we visited.

## Results against the Key Evaluation Questions

The Evaluation sought to answer 12 sub questions, organised under 3 Key Evaluation Questions.

### Impact

To what extent has the EMULI program improved educational outcomes for children whose mother tongue is not Tetun or Portuguese?

1.1 To what extent has EMULI improved learning outcomes (literacy and numeracy) for children who have passed through the EMULI program (compared with other government and CAFÉ schools)?

Finding 1: High student achievement as demonstrated in previous EMBLI/EMULI evaluations (Walters 2016 and Pre/Post test Analysis 2016/2017) is also apparent in later years data (EMULI program post test data 2019, 2021, and 2022).

Two previous program evaluations have assessed learning achievement by students in EMBLI/EMULI schools, as compared to students in CAFE and standard government schools. Both of these evaluations indicated higher learning achievement by students in EMULI schools, compared to students of similar linguistic backgrounds in standard public schools as well as students attending CAFE schools.

The first evaluation, conducted in 2015 and published in 2016, was the 2015 EMBLI Endline<sup>71</sup> Assessment (Walters 2016). This assessment was based on 2015 Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) data and a curriculum-based assessment administered to Y2 students at schools with similar linguistic situations as EMULI schools, i.e., where the majority of students did not have Tetun or Portuguese as their first language.

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<sup>70</sup> KII with MoE advisor, August 2024. MoE advisor spoke to lack of quality control in some previous years of Year 9 examinations, including questions not correctly aligned to the curriculum, questions with multiple possible correct answers, questions which were impossible to answer correctly; and suggested that proper quality control had been done on the examinations which we reviewed the results from.

<sup>71</sup> Note: this 'endline' did not respond to any 'baseline' data

The review found that EMBLI doubled the academic performance of children who attended EMULI schools, compared with regular government schools without the program. The Mathematics, Tetun and Portuguese proficiency of children in rural schools where EMBLI was implemented compared favourably with that of children from urban schools where the Portuguese CAFE program was being implemented.

The second evaluation was a review of EMULI-administered pre/post testing conducted at the start and end of the 2016 and 2017 school years. This review of pre and post-test data found that students from schools implementing EMBLI outperformed those from regular government basic education schools. The comparison between EMBLI, CAFE and regular government schools varied between the municipalities and Year levels tested.<sup>72</sup>

The EMULI program under the management of PHD and MoE continued to collect pre and post test data from 2019 to 2023 using the same pre/post test instruments<sup>73</sup>. Unfortunately, this data is not complete (not all years have pre and post test data) and includes some inconsistent use of names (student, teacher, observer, mentor, school) among other missing information.<sup>74</sup> As such, the evaluation team was not able to conduct an analysis of changes in academic performance among EMULI, standard and CAFE students over the course of an academic year (as in the Walter assessment). However, an analysis of the most complete data – average post test scores by school at the end of academic years 2019, 2021 and 2022 – was conducted to see if the high academic performance revealed in the analysis of the 2016/2017 pre/post test data *appeared* to continue after EMBLI transferred from UNESCO implementation to the MoE (end of 2018), through the COVID-19 pandemic (2021), and later (2022).

Results from the 2019, 2021, and 2022 post tests<sup>75</sup> show that students at EMULI schools continue to outperform students in standard public schools with similar language situations. For all three years, EMULI girls and boys both scored significantly higher ( $p < 0.05$ ) than their peers in overall scores, in mathematics and in Tetun. At year levels, EMULI students scored significantly higher in preschool through Y3 (2019) and preschool through Y6 (2021 and 2022).<sup>76</sup> Variation occurs across municipalities, subjects and year levels; however, if taken at this high level, these results demonstrate a continued positive learning achievement advantage for children participating in the EMULI program compared to similar students at standard public schools. Results from 2022 testing is shown in Figure 1.1, with 2019 and 2021 results included in Annex 5.

The results in Figure 1.1 also show that EMULI students scored higher than students at CAFE schools in most instances. Notable exceptions were that CAFE students in Oecusse did better than EMULI students, and overall Portuguese scores for CAFE students were higher than for EMULI students. However, these findings are unsurprising. Oecusse has historically had lower achievement, as demonstrated through earlier

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<sup>72</sup> see *EMBLI/EMULI Program Evaluation RFQ, Scope of Services*

<sup>73</sup> It is our understanding that pre/post testing in later years may have used a revised version of the same assessment tool

<sup>74</sup> see *RFQ, Scope of Services*

<sup>75</sup> Beyond some data cleaning, the evaluation team has not assessed the reliability of the testing - instruments, administration, or recording of results. That said, as these results have been attained using the same process as the pre/post tests in 2016 and 2017, we assume equivalent reliability of the data.

<sup>76</sup> The effect size, or importance of the difference between the relative scores, is medium (0.5 - 0.8) to high (> 0.8) in all but two cases (2019 Portuguese and Y5).

assessments. Moreover, it would be anticipated that students attending Portuguese medium CAFE schools would score higher in Portuguese language. Comparing EMULI and CAFE schools by year level, EMULI students scored much higher than CAFE students through Y3, and significantly higher in preschool and Y1, supporting global research findings that students learn better in languages they know - in this case, in mother tongue in EMULI schools, compared with Portuguese in CAFE schools.

It is important to note that the mean scores in figure 1.1 are a percentage of correct answers. This means that while the scores of EMULI students are on average higher than for standard and CAFE students, EMULI students are not achieving passing marks (over 50%) - except in preschool and Y1. In fact, nearly all scores - for all school types (EMULI, standard public and CAFE) and in all subjects - are well below 50%. This suggests that the assessment tools may be too difficult or not aligned with the curriculum, and/or that the overall quality of student learning is concerningly low.

Characteristic	Distribution		Mean scores (standard deviations in brackets)				
	N = 780	CAFE N = 126	EMULI N = 234	Public N = 420	Diff <sup>1</sup>	p.value <sup>2</sup>	Effect size <sup>3</sup>
Total	780 (100%)	38.3 (14.0)	40.4 (17.9)	26.9 (17.1)	13.5	<0.001	0.8
Gender							
F	390 (50%)	42.0 (13.6)	43.1 (19.0)	27.2 (18.1)	16.0	<0.001	0.9
M	390 (50%)	34.7 (13.6)	37.6 (16.4)	26.6 (16.2)	11.0	<0.001	0.7
District							
Lautem	318 (41%)	37.8 (12.5)	39.7 (15.7)	31.7 (19.0)	8.0	0.009	0.5
Manatuto	168 (22%)	36.4 (15.2)	53.9 (19.8)	27.7 (17.1)	26.2	<0.001	1.4
Oecussi	294 (38%)	40.8 (14.3)	34.6 (16.2)	21.8 (13.5)	12.8	<0.001	0.9
Subject							
Mathematics	260 (33%)	37.1 (9.5)	44.3 (17.5)	26.2 (16.4)	18.1	<0.001	1.1
Tetum	260 (33%)	34.5 (16.6)	35.0 (16.9)	25.3 (16.2)	9.7	<0.001	0.6
Portuguese	260 (33%)	47.6 (14.9)	40.2 (18.6)	31.3 (19.7)	8.9	0.062	0.5
Grade							
pre	108 (14%)	39.3 (6.7)	64.5 (19.4)	32.0 (21.5)	32.5	<0.001	1.5
Y1	114 (15%)	52.2 (8.0)	62.4 (14.6)	24.9 (20.1)	37.4	<0.001	2.0
Y2	114 (15%)	29.8 (9.0)	38.3 (17.5)	21.7 (13.0)	16.6	<0.001	1.1
Y3	114 (15%)	27.8 (10.1)	34.4 (11.4)	21.7 (16.5)	12.7	0.003	0.8
Y4	108 (14%)	40.2 (19.7)	39.5 (19.8)	28.1 (20.3)	11.4	0.009	0.6
Y5	114 (15%)	35.5 (6.1)	30.2 (9.2)	24.1 (11.7)	6.1	0.007	0.6
Y6	108 (14%)	47.1 (12.6)	43.2 (14.6)	34.4 (16.0)	8.7	0.016	0.6

<sup>1</sup>EMULI/EMBLI - Public

<sup>2</sup>Nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis rank sum test of equal means of EMULI/EMBLI and Public.

<sup>3</sup>Difference in terms of pooled standard deviations (Hedge's G)

Table. Mean scores by participant characteristic and program group

**1. Overall Results**

Group	N	CAFE Mean (SD)	EMULI Mean (SD)	Public Mean (SD)	Diff	p-value	Effect size
Total	780 (100%)	38.3 (14.0)	40.4 (17.9)	26.9 (17.1)	13.5	<0.001	0.8

**2. Results by Gender**

Gender	N	CAFE Mean (SD)	EMULI Mean (SD)	Public Mean (SD)	Diff	p-value	Effect size
Female	390 (50%)	42.0 (13.6)	43.1 (19.0)	27.2 (18.1)	16.0	<0.001	0.9
Male	390 (50%)	34.7 (13.6)	37.6 (16.4)	26.6 (16.2)	11.0	<0.001	0.7

**3. Results by District**

District	N	CAFE Mean (SD)	EMULI Mean (SD)	Public Mean (SD)	Diff	p-value	Effect size
Lautem	318 (41%)	37.8 (12.5)	39.7 (15.7)	31.7 (19.0)	8.0	0.009	0.5
Manatuto	168 (22%)	36.4 (15.2)	53.9 (19.8)	27.7 (17.1)	26.2	<0.001	1.4
Oecussi	294 (38%)	40.8 (14.3)	34.6 (16.2)	21.8 (13.5)	12.8	<0.001	0.9

**4. Results by Subject**

Subject	N	CAFE Mean (SD)	EMULI Mean (SD)	Public Mean (SD)	Diff	p-value	Effect size
Mathematics	260 (33%)	37.1 (9.5)	44.3 (17.5)	26.2 (16.4)	18.1	<0.001	1.1
Tetum	260 (33%)	34.5 (16.6)	35.0 (16.9)	25.3 (16.2)	9.7	<0.001	0.6
Portuguese	260 (33%)	47.6 (14.9)	40.2 (18.6)	31.3 (19.7)	8.9	0.062	0.5

**5. Results by Grade**

Grade	N	CAFE Mean (SD)	EMULI Mean (SD)	Public Mean (SD)	Diff	p-value	Effect size
Pre	108 (14%)	39.3 (6.7)	64.5 (19.4)	32.0 (21.5)	32.5	<0.001	1.5
Year 1	114 (15%)	52.2 (8.0)	62.4 (14.6)	24.9 (20.1)	37.4	<0.001	2.0
Year 2	114 (15%)	29.8 (9.0)	38.3 (17.5)	21.7 (13.0)	16.6	<0.001	1.1
Year 3	114 (15%)	27.8 (10.1)	34.4 (11.4)	21.7 (16.5)	12.7	0.003	0.8
Year 4	108 (14%)	40.2 (19.7)	39.5 (19.8)	28.1 (20.3)	11.4	0.009	0.6

Grade	N	CAFE Mean (SD)	EMULI Mean (SD)	Public Mean (SD)	Diff	p-value	Effect size
Year 5	114 (15%)	35.5 (6.1)	30.2 (9.2)	24.1 (11.7)	6.1	0.007	0.6
Year 6	108 (14%)	47.1 (12.6)	43.2 (14.6)	34.4 (16.0)	8.7	0.016	0.6

## Notes

- Scores shown as Mean (Standard Deviation)
- *Diff* = Difference between pooled EMULI/EMBLI and Public
- Effect size = Hedges' g
- p-values from non-parametric Kruskal–Wallis tests

Recommendation: The EMULI program should ensure that regular and reliable learning achievement data be collected, analysed and used to monitor learning and inform program decision-making.

Further discussion of pre/post testing, including a recommendation that it should be conducted much less frequently than annually, is found in section 3.5. It is also advised that the EMULI program look further into why the students are not passing the pre/post tests.

Finding 2: Based on data from the 2023 Year 9 national exam, EMULI students score equivalent to students in standard public schools, including in subjects such as Portuguese and Tetun. Gender differences are marginal, though girls seem to be scoring slightly higher in general.

To help assess the long-term impact of mother tongue based multilingual education on students in their later years of schooling, scores from the 2023 Year 9 national exam were analysed. At present, the only national standardised test in use across Timor-Leste is administered at the end of Year 9, the transition between primary and secondary education. Quality of the Year 9 exams is reportedly not consistent, with poorly worded questions and some with no correct answer. The 2023 exam results were, nevertheless, considered of high enough quality for analysis.

Due to data limitations (anonymisation of results) it was not possible to trace EMULI graduates from various schools/municipalities to their current Y9 schools and exam results. However, one cohort of EMULI students (70 students; 29 female, 41 male) was still studying at an EMULI school that continues through Y9. Many of these students would have started with the EMULI program as preschool A students in 2013<sup>77</sup>, making up the first cohort of EMULI learners and following the program rollout to Y6. Findings in this section are based on a limited comparison of that one group of 70 students to peers within their municipality and across the country. As evidenced through other data measurements (i.e. pre/post test data), this cohort is NOT from one of the higher performing EMULI schools, thus suggesting that the conclusions are quite conservative.

Results indicate that the EMULI students scored equivalent in the 2023 Year 9 national exams to children attending standard public schools, including in subjects such as Portuguese and Tetun. Gender differences were marginal, though girls seemed to be scoring slightly higher in general. EMULI Year 9 students performed relatively poorly in Tetun, though it should be noted that Tetun scores were generally low across all schools in that municipality – Oecusse.

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<sup>77</sup>Based on an assumption that movement in/out of the semi rural area around Boboloa School is limited.

Table 1: Year 9 exam results 2023-Mean estimates

Gender	N	TOTAL		TETUN		PORTU		MATH		CFN		HEG		ENG	
		mean	se	mean	se	mean	se	mean	se	mean	se	mean	se	mean	se
<b>EMULI - Boboloa</b>															
F	29	22.58	0.76	5.01	0.25	3.76	0.22	3.67	0.16	3.24	0.11	3.34	0.15	3.55	0.21
M	41	21.51	0.41	4.77	0.18	3.37	0.12	3.57	0.13	3.22	0.09	3.15	0.11	3.42	0.12
<b>Oecussi public</b>															
F	883	23.46	0.12	5.57	0.04	3.61	0.03	3.02	0.02	3.64	0.02	3.64	0.03	3.97	0.04
M	746	22.61	0.13	5.32	0.04	3.35	0.03	3.02	0.03	3.54	0.03	3.63	0.03	3.74	0.04
<b>Public elsewhere</b>															
F	13,381	25.76	0.04	6.28	0.01	3.85	0.01	3.30	0.01	3.89	0.01	3.93	0.01	4.49	0.01
M	12,658	24.18	0.04	5.76	0.01	3.50	0.01	3.22	0.01	3.77	0.01	3.82	0.01	4.11	0.01
<b>CAFE</b>															
F	336	33.13	0.37	8.01	0.06	5.61	0.09	3.76	0.07	4.75	0.05	5.24	0.08	5.76	0.08
M	288	29.38	0.39	7.24	0.08	4.64	0.09	3.42	0.07	4.41	0.06	4.75	0.08	4.93	0.09

NOTE: EMULI schools with data are located in Oecusse.

Table 2. Year 9 exam results 2023 Mean estimates

**EMULI – Boboloa**

Gender	Participants (n)	Total mean	Total SE	Tetum mean	Tetum SE	Portuguese mean	Portuguese SE	Mathematics mean	Mathematics SE	CFN mean	CFN SE	HEG mean	HEG SE	English mean	English SE
Female	29	22.58	0.76	5.01	0.25	3.76	0.22	3.67	0.16	3.24	0.11	3.34	0.15	3.55	0.21
Male	41	21.51	0.41	4.77	0.18	3.37	0.12	3.57	0.13	3.22	0.09	3.15	0.11	3.42	0.12

**Oecussi public schools**

Gender	Participants (n)	Total mean	Total SE	Tetum mean	Tetum SE	Portuguese mean	Portuguese SE	Mathematics mean	Mathematics SE	CFN mean	CFN SE	HEG mean	HEG SE	English mean	English SE
Female	883	23.46	0.12	5.57	0.04	3.61	0.03	3.02	0.02	3.64	0.02	3.64	0.03	3.97	0.04
Male	746	22.61	0.13	5.32	0.04	3.35	0.03	3.02	0.03	3.54	0.03	3.63	0.03	3.74	0.04

## Public schools elsewhere

Gender	Participants (n)	Total mean	Total SE	Tetun mean	Tetun SE	Portuguese mean	Portuguese SE	Mathematics mean	Mathematics SE	CFN mean	CFN SE	HGG mean	HGG SE	English mean	English SE
Female	13,381	25.76	0.04	6.28	0.01	3.85	0.01	3.30	0.01	3.89	0.01	3.93	0.01	4.49	0.01
Male	12,658	24.18	0.04	5.76	0.01	3.50	0.01	3.22	0.01	3.77	0.01	3.82	0.01	4.11	0.01

## CAFE schools

Gender	Participants (n)	Total mean	Total SE	Tetun mean	Tetun SE	Portuguese mean	Portuguese SE	Mathematics mean	Mathematics SE	CFN mean	CFN SE	HGG mean	HGG SE	English mean	English SE
Female	336	33.13	0.37	8.01	0.06	5.61	0.09	3.76	0.07	4.75	0.05	5.24	0.08	5.76	0.08
Male	288	29.38	0.39	7.24	0.08	4.64	0.09	3.42	0.07	4.41	0.06	4.75	0.08	4.93	0.09

Around half of the variation in scores occurs both between and within schools, with only minor differences attributed to gender and municipality. This implies that comparisons can be made across all public schools, not just those in the same municipality. Ainaro municipality stands out as a potential exception, as it is the only one that appears to score consistently above average by a meaningful margin.

This result refutes any potential suggestion that EMULI students would perform worse in Tetun or Portuguese than in other subjects because these languages were introduced into the classroom - and used as languages of instruction - much later than for students in standard public schools. Moreover, the findings show that EMULI students perform similarly across all subjects, including Tetun and Portuguese, to their peers. Thus, use of mother tongue as language of instruction (through Y3) does not appear to have delayed acquisition of additional languages or other subject matter content. On the other hand, the results do not show any significant increase in performance on the Y9 exam based on having learned in mother tongue in early years.

It would be important to triangulate these findings with student progression (between years) and transition (between cycles) to gauge if there is any difference in the number of EMULI students reaching Y9 compared to students in standard public schools.

Recommendation: EMULI should consider including analysis of Y9 national exam results into a monitoring and evaluation framework, as well as establishing a longitudinal study to track students' progress over their academic career. Y9 results provide a glimpse into students' later academic achievement. Triangulated with progression and transition rates, they could be a meaningful way to assess how/if learning in mother tongue affects attainment of higher years of learning and/or achievement. We recommend that EMULI gain access to Y9 results (anonymised but with identifiers/coded) so that cohorts of EMULI students can be traced through their schooling years, enriching a longitudinal study. It may be useful to investigate any specific factors contributing to Ainaro municipality's higher performance.

## **1.2 To what extent and how has EMULI contributed to improved retention and progression of students through basic education?**

Finding 3: We have not been able to access data on progression and retention rates at either school or student level, only at municipal level.

At the time of writing, the only data the evaluation team has been able to access on progression and retention rates is EMIS data, recorded to the municipal level, rather than school or individual student level. This aggregated data renders it impossible to identify individual EMULI schools and compare EMULI student achievement to student achievement at standard public schools.

Recommendation: MoE to record disaggregated data on progression and retention by school and individual student in EMIS, and make these data available to the EMULI program.

Data on progression and retention at student and school level is critical for assessing long term student achievement. While aggregated data to the municipal level is available, it is unknown if data to school and student level is in EMIS (PHD and advisors at MoE could not locate this for us). If disaggregated data is not currently being collected as part of EMIS, it should be, and then made available to EMULI. EMULI should then include these data points in its MEL framework as an important way to help measure long term student learning outcomes and any impact of mother tongue learning on students' educational achievement.

## Effectiveness

To what extent has EMULI improved the effectiveness of classroom teaching of children whose mother tongue is not Tetun or Portuguese?

### **2.1 Are there differences in teaching practice between teachers who have been trained and supported by the EMULI program and those who teach children from a similar language background in regular government schools? What are they?**

Finding 1: Little difference was observed between general teaching practices used in EMULI and standard public schools. As to be expected, there are key differences in language of instruction and languages as taught subjects between EMULI and standard public schools.

Pedagogical differences - There are varying opinions regarding whether there is much difference in pedagogies between EMULI and standard public schools, especially those benefiting from the ALMA program. Individuals associated with EMULI made comments such as 'EMULI teaches language and numeracy very differently than the national curriculum does...EMULI includes play and other activities.' Others, such as the MoE advisors, suggest that there is less difference than EMULI thinks, citing that both programs use phonics to teach reading, as well as purposeful switching between languages (known as

code-switching and translanguaging). Differences between teaching practices in EMULI and standard public schools may have been more apparent in the earlier years of the EMULI program; however, they appear to have converged starting in 2015, possibly for one of two reasons. First, as explained by EMULI advisors, the MoE adopted certain teaching practices and approaches to literacy from EMULI (use of phonics, big books, primers, listening stories, etc.) based on the advice of international consultants to EMULI in 2013 and 2014. Second, the ALMA program, started in 2015, was introduced in some of the same municipalities as EMULI. ALMA may have had some influence spreading teaching practices across ALMA-supported and EMULI schools, especially as it expanded to more schools and municipalities between 2015 and 2024.<sup>78</sup>

Our observations, though limited, did not show consistent differences in the teaching practices between the 10 EMULI and two standard (ALMA) schools visited, with most teachers (including EMULI teachers) using rote, teacher-centred methods. We did, however, observe a few instances of child-centred and inquiry based approaches at EMULI schools. For example, in Lautem a teacher used dice made of folded paper and tossed them amongst the children to practise their numbers. In Oecusse a teacher collected leaves from the school yard and had children identify different attributes (colour, shape, size) and then draw the leaves on a piece of paper. In Manatuto children read books written in their mother tongue in pairs. That said, the majority of lessons observed over the seven days of EMULI classroom observations were teacher centred, with significant time spent using a rote and repetitive teaching method<sup>79</sup> where the teacher says something and the children repeat, as a whole class, in groups and/or individually.

Over the period of the program (2013 - present) EMULI training has included training on child-centred<sup>80</sup> pedagogies, confirmed by the EMULI team and PHD staff. Given that the majority of teachers observed had been teaching in the EMULI program long enough to have been exposed to this training on several occasions (the average time teaching at an EMULI school was 11 years, with just one teacher having started only 3 years ago) the evaluators had anticipated observing more widespread child-centred practice in EMULI schools and a greater difference between EMULI and non-EMULI teaching practice. Yet this was not the case. Of note, the non-EMULI schools observed are supported by the ALMA school leadership program. The fact that child-centred practices were not observed consistently in either the EMULI or ALMA schools should be of concern to the various program stakeholders (DFAT, PHD, EMULI).

In Oecusse, the evaluators asked mentors directly why teachers were not using child-centred practices. At first, mentors suggested it was due to a lack of ongoing training. When questioned further why a teacher with 3 or more years in the program would still need training, the mentors admitted there is continued resistance from certain teachers to change their teaching practices. This would suggest that the challenge

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<sup>78</sup> We leave to the ALMA evaluation team to ascertain the influences ALMA may have had on EMULI.

<sup>79</sup> We note that rote methodologies are useful for some activities - learning times tables, spelling to increase automaticity necessary for reading comprehension - however, they should not be overused.

<sup>80</sup> Child-centred learning has been defined in many different ways. For the purposes of this evaluation, we refer to the principle of 'active' rather than 'passive' learning, or encouraging children to engage in higher-order thinking skills such as application, analysis, evaluation and creation, rather than just lower-order thinking skills such as remembering and understanding. See also a diagram of Bloom's Taxonomy: <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/>

might not lie in the amount or frequency of training and support provided but rather some teachers' motivation to fully embrace the EMULI practices.

Language differences - Use of mother tongue is a key difference between EMULI and standard public schools. According to the national curriculum language progression, implemented in standard public schools, mother tongue (L1) should be used only as a bridge to Tetun, *if necessary*. Mother tongue is not taught as a subject. Both mother tongue and Tetun can be used as languages of instruction in Y1 and Y2, with use of mother tongue phased out in Y3. Oral Portuguese is introduced as early as Y1 (see Annex 6, National Curriculum Language Progression). This is an early exit (subtractive) multilingual approach where mother tongue is not taught or maintained and full transition to education in the second language occurs by Y4.

In EMULI schools, mother tongue is used as the language of instruction in preschool and Y1, progressively joined by Tetun starting in Y2. All three languages - mother tongue (L1), Tetun and Portuguese - are taught as subjects, with Tetun first introduced at the end of preschool and Portuguese in Y2 (see Annex 6, EMULI Language Progression). According to the language progression, this is a late exit (subtractive) multilingual approach because mother tongue is used as a language of instruction for six years (preschool through Y4), however, it is not maintained as a language of instruction (per definition in Aliou et al. 2006)

In the 10 EMULI schools, we observed mother tongue in use, though not consistently in all classes and not always according to the EMULI progression. In the two non-EMULI schools visited, we noted some mother tongue used as a 'bridge' for understanding (i.e., translating from Tetun into mother tongue when students did not understand) per the language transition plan. In the CAFE school we visited, we did not hear any mother tongue used at all. Portuguese was the language of instruction, with Tetun taught as a subject.

We observed that some teachers in EMULI schools are not following the EMULI language progression. For example, there were at least 2 instances of teachers using Tetun as the main language of instruction in preschool. In one situation, a teacher of Preschool A in Oecusse chose to teach in Tetun because there was one student who did not speak the mother tongue. This teacher, who had been teaching at the EMULI school for nine years, did not, however, consider the children who do not know Tetun, even when the evaluator questioned her choice. In the second instance, a preschool B teacher in Lautem explained concepts first in Tetun and then translated them into Fataluku, rather than the other way around. These examples suggest that some EMULI teachers are choosing not to follow the language progression or do not understand why they should.

A critical aspect of the EMULI program is to teach in mother tongue (as language of instruction) and also to teach the mother tongue (as a subject). While a majority of the EMULI teachers observed are instructing in mother tongue, from our interviews it was not evident that they fully comprehend why they should teach mother tongue as a subject. In fact, several of the EMULI teachers interviewed referred to mother tongue merely as a 'bridge' to other languages - the exact wording found in the national language progression. Parents of students at EMULI schools and municipal education leaders also used the phrase 'mother tongue as a bridge' in reference to EMULI.

Teachers, parents and leaders may be adopting, consciously or not, the rhetoric of the national basic education curriculum. This adoption may signal discontent with the program, as in Lautem where an EMULI mentor shared that "the parents and some leaders are not happy with the program because they

say we are just teaching local language.”<sup>81</sup> Or it may signal political resignation, as with the municipal leader who stridently asserted that mother tongue is only needed through Year 2 (in line with past political opinion), and then later agreed that mother tongue should be used through Year 6 when reminded of research informed best practice. The use of the term ‘bridge’ by teachers might also be due to their initial teacher training, which would have referred to mother tongue as a bridge in line with the national basic education curriculum

Recommendation: EMULI should conduct further research into why teachers are not consistently implementing student-centred teaching techniques and why EMULI teachers are deviating from the language progression.

There is also a need to continue advocacy and awareness raising regarding the fact that EMULI teaches mother tongue as a subject as well as a language of instruction - Mother Tongue is not only a bridge to Tetun and Portuguese - and to emphasise the value of mother tongue instruction for a child’s linguistic and cognitive development, especially in the early years.

## **2.2 To what extent and how have mother tongue curriculum support materials contributed to early literacy and numeracy development?**

Finding 2: The evaluation team was not able to measure the impact of the support materials. We observed, however, that materials developed early in the EMULI intervention, such as primers and Big books, lesson plans, continue to be used in many of the classrooms. Teachers expressed appreciation for these materials. Our classroom observations showed that use of the Big books was especially appreciated by the teachers.

In the earlier years of EMBLI/EMULI, literacy primers, Big Books, and scripted lesson plans were developed with the support of experts in the field, and, as appropriate, inputs from the community. For instance, the primers in Galolen (Manatuto) were stories written by a retired EMULI mentor developed from local oral stories. Teachers and some students shared that they were allowed to borrow these primers from the school library. Although this was not the case in all schools, it is a good approach to the use of resources.

Some classroom resources - especially the Big Books and the primers - were used more than others in our classroom observations. Several municipal and local stakeholders appreciated the level of community involvement that had gone into developing various materials, including writing and publishing local children’s stories that had previously only been oral. In our classroom observations, we saw either Big Books or primers in use in 6 classes. Other didactic materials were in use in 8 classes, and included the use of stones, teacher-made 3D dice, flash cards etc.

In our observations, we saw the EMULI ‘Big Books’ used frequently in classes, as well as students using the EMULI literacy primers. Various stakeholders, including teachers themselves, commented on the importance and usefulness of these learning resources.

Many classes lacked the resources that EMULI has provided over the years, from primers and Big Books to paper, pencils and small chalkboards. In some cases, the resources were in the classroom but not used; and in others, including the preschool in Muapitine in Lautem, the resources were in the headteacher’s office or in the school library.

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<sup>81</sup> Key informant interview with EMULI Mentor and Field Officer in Lautem, August 2024.

We also noted that materials produced by other development partners were widely valued by stakeholders, for example Lafaek Magazine, published by CARE with the support of MFAT.<sup>82</sup>

Currently the materials are only provided in first languages/mother tongues and EMULI could look to develop different types of materials (e.g., bilingual L1-Tetum, multilingual L1-Tetum-Portuguese, etc.) in the future." We did not notice the use of the lesson plans, so we cannot comment on these.

Best practice would say that mother tongue learning resources would support literacy development (Heugh et al., 2019). We were not able to really test this due to the time limitations of this evaluation.

Recommendation: EMULI should continue to develop mother tongue resources (additional reading materials, perhaps a mother tongue magazine (in the style of Lafaek), more Big books). As EMULI progresses, it may wish to consider the development of bilingual and multilingual resources.

If EMULI expands into new areas with different languages, it should work closely with communities to ensure appropriateness of resources, as it did in the initial stages of EMULI. EMULI could also consider developing mother tongue or multilingual resources for use at home, emulating Lafaek magazine.

EMULI may wish to consider development of multilingual resources (where more than one language is included in the same resource, or stories where one language is printed on one side of the page, and another language is printed on the other<sup>83</sup>), especially for use in later school years after Tetun and Portuguese have been introduced.

Lesson plans could be developed in mother tongue as well as Tetun, with both languages side by side for the benefit of teachers who may have stronger language skills in mother tongue or in Tetun. The lesson plan format may need revisions to include more pictures and figures and to increase the white space and reduce the text.

### **2.3 To what extent and how has the teacher professional development model implemented by EMULI contributed to early literacy and numeracy development?**

The EMULI teacher professional development model currently consists of teacher training in the school holidays, which may have tailed off in recent years; and the local mentors in schools, adopted from the ALMA model.

Finding 3: The current model of teacher professional development implemented by EMULI which is largely based on mentors in schools is not delivering the desired outcome of child-centred mother-tongue instruction.

In the early years of EMULI, the model involved centrally-organised pre- and in-service teacher training with all EMULI teachers coming together for joint training in Dili, while in more recent years it has moved to the

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<sup>82</sup> Lafaek is not a mother tongue support material, as it is in Tetun. However, it provides a useful format which EMULI could consider borrowing. The magazine contains stories, games and puzzles, which are engaging for children. Children are able to take the magazine home, and we heard from several parents that they also enjoyed reading it.

<sup>83</sup> More examples of using multilingual approaches are available to download from this British Council website: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/publications/resource-books/using-multilingual-approaches-moving-theory-practice>

current model involving training of trainers, termly teacher training, and a field officer and a local mentor supporting teachers in schools in between those training sessions.

Training used to consist of 2 weeks of training before teachers began teaching (pre service), followed by a further two weeks during school holidays. The training involved small group practice as well. The training was conducted by national trainers who had also previously been trained by EMULI.<sup>84</sup> The current EMULI training is shorter than it used to be, and is then 'supported' by mentors who lack the appropriate training and experience to support changed teacher practice. The cost-effectiveness of the current mentor model is addressed below in section [3.5](#).

The current professional development model hinges on mentors regularly being in the classroom, observing teachers. This model has been in place since 2020; with a terms of reference that was adjusted in 2024. Both the old and new Terms of Reference require more than classroom observation, including involvement in teacher training, training of trainers, and conducting short training sessions with teachers; mentoring, which includes classroom observations, but also counselling teachers, and informing the school head teacher of the results of the observations. At the time of the evaluation visit in August 2024, there was a proposal to integrate the EMULI and ALMA mentors - that is to have a mentor who was able to support both programs at school level. However, the two programs have quite different emphases (EMULI - child centred multilingual education; ALMA - effective school management for improved teaching and learning) which render this proposal difficult to implement successfully.

Mentors observe teachers daily, checking off a list of metrics on a form or a tablet. The observations include a range of metrics, for instance: teachers' content knowledge; links between content and activities; creative use of didactic materials; demonstration of content through use of examples; time allocation, etc. This observation data should provide evidence of teaching practice (good or poor) over time; however, the observation tools have not remained consistent, nor have they been administered in a standard way. At present, classroom observations are not used as a tool for giving teachers timely constructive feedback to help them improve their teaching practice. Teachers we spoke to felt that this feedback was important and needed more focus, but they did not specify why.

Recommendation: We recommend that EMULI consider returning to the former model of professional development delivered during the first five years of the program.

This professional development may be provided through national-based technical advisors (or, as the program expands to many more schools, municipality-based advisors). Professional development may include:

1. targeted large group training at appropriate times during the school year (i.e., termly school holidays). This training could be provided to groupings of schools, based on the existing school cluster model.
2. consistent classroom observations (no more than fortnightly) to provide timely feedback on classroom practices, to model activities, to offer encouragement and answer questions, and to identify teaching practices for reinforcement during larger group training during the school breaks.

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

EMULI may also wish to consider online professional development sessions, similar to the weekly professional development seminars implemented in Australia's Education program in Fiji where teachers log on every Tuesday afternoon for a session with a remote/international technical advisor.

Recommendation: EMULI should consider the role of both MTB-MLE and child-centred pedagogies in improving learning outcomes.

The best outcomes for children are achieved when they are learning in a language they understand (i.e. their mother tongue) AND when child centred teaching practices are used. It is established best practice that the use of mother tongue is important for student learning outcomes; however, the use of child centred pedagogies should not be underestimated as a means to improve learning outcomes both through improved understanding of concepts and interest in learning. Given that our classroom observations showed fairly consistently that teachers were not using child centred methods, it is important to try to understand why that might be the case and what can be done about it. As noted above, It is likely that the current EMULI training which is shorter than it used to be, and is then supported by mentors who lack the appropriate training and experience to support changed teacher practice is partly to blame. It might be more cost effective to invest in more comprehensive training as was the case when the EMBLI Endline Assessment was written (i.e. prior to 2016). This would still require some level of ongoing support to teachers, but this support could be done differently - for instance in a cluster, and with a much clearer focus on constructive criticism and support to teachers in the classroom, rather than merely 'observing'. Finally, it is worth noting here that some stakeholders both at national level and in the municipalities referred to a lack of accountability of teachers to parents and communities. The lack of accountability may be due to a number of factors, including low levels of parental involvement in education<sup>85</sup>, and the lack of an earlier national standardised test which could indicate where children are failing to meet the required standards, and where teachers could use more support. Both of these are discussed in Annex 8, '[Wider Issues](#)', below.

#### **2.4 What other factors have enhanced or limited the achievements of the EMULI program?**

Finding 4: Over the life of the program, political factors appeared to have had more impact on the achievements of EMULI than other factors, including COVID-19. This was particularly true during the implementation period from 2019 - 2023, when there was ministerial pushback against the program expansion to additional schools and year levels. EMULI has been and continues to be perceived as being associated with one political party. When this supportive government is in power, the program moves forward.

Over the period of the program, government support for mother tongue-based education and the EMULI program in particular has ebbed and waned. EMULI and mother tongue instruction (i.e., teaching in mother tongue) have been perceived as associated with one political party - the CNRT (*Congresso Nacional de Reconstrução de Timor - National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction*). The program was initiated by the former First Lady of Timor Leste, Kirsty Sword Gusmão AO, who is currently involved again with the program as the Goodwill Ambassador for Education and Advisor to the Ministry of Education. The association with the CNRT and with the Former First Lady of Timor Leste likely helped the program in the early years. However, the association with one political party has made it difficult to sustain at times when that party is not in government.

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<sup>85</sup> KII, Dili, 16th August 2024

<https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/timor-leste-partnership-compact-2024>

During the VIII Constitutional Government - and in particular after the restructure of the Government in 2020 - support at the national level for mother tongue education decreased. Stakeholders explained that this occurred because the VIII Constitutional Government was of the position that Tetun was the unifying national language of Timor Leste and preferred to emphasise its use and growth in education over the use of mother tongue. The lack of political support for the program resulted in a stalling of many activities, including regular teacher training and expansion to new schools and year levels. The program continued regardless, but with a much reduced scope. PHD had the difficult task of supporting the program during this challenging political period.

In our discussions with stakeholders, COVID-19 was not mentioned at all. This does not mean that the pandemic had no impact on schools in the 2019 - 2022 period. However, it does appear from our conversations that political factors are perceived as having had the greater impact on the EMULI program in that period.

Recommendation: EMULI should consider ways to develop a broader base of support for mother tongue based multilingual education and delink the program from its perceived connection to one political party.

This may include removing the name/brand 'EMULI' from the approach as it is now associated with the current Government. Institutionalising the EMULI approach (covered further in [section 3.2](#), below) and embedding EMULI activities deeper within various ministry of education departments may help in this endeavour.

## Relevance

To what extent is the EMULI program an appropriate and cost-effective model that can be scaled up to ensure equitable access to education for children whose mother tongue is not Tetun or Portuguese?

### **3.1 To what extent does the EMULI program support the implementation of the (new) national curriculum?**

Finding 1: The key differences between the curriculum used in the EMULI program and the national curriculum are all language related – language(s) of instruction, language progression and language(s) taught as subjects (disciplines). Non-language subject content (maths, science, etc.) are similar. The EMULI language progression and preschool component may lead to the misunderstanding that EMULI is a separate curriculum, especially when implemented through both primary school cycles (Y1-Y6).

The EMULI program and the 'new' national curriculum were launched within a few years of each other around the same time (EMULI in 2013, the 'new' national curriculum in 2015). Thus, the EMULI 'curriculum' could not be based on the 'new' curriculum. EMULI advisors shared that they were not consulted on the development of the national curriculum, however they suggested that the national curriculum has adopted some teaching practices from EMULI. It appears that over time the EMULI program and the 'new' national curriculum non-language content have come into some alignment.

It is ambiguous to what extent EMULI supports the national curriculum. At EMULI schools mother tongue is the main language of instruction and is also taught as a subject. Tetun and Portuguese are introduced later than in the national curriculum. Otherwise numeracy and other non language content are the same. EMULI teachers use the same curriculum handbook, in Tetun, that other teachers use. There are, however, significant differences in the learning timetables, language progression, and assessment (exam) schedule and booklets because of the inclusion of mother tongue as a subject and because EMLUI includes 3

languages (mother tongue, Tetun, and Portuguese) while the national curriculum uses only 2 languages (Tetun, Portuguese). These differences contribute to a perception that EMULI is a separate curriculum.

Perceptions that the EMULI curriculum is different were shared during interviews at the municipal and school level, with one respondent noting that when EMULI is implemented through Y6 it appears to fully replace the national primary school curriculum. References heard by the evaluators to 'EMULI schools' and the 'EMULI curriculum' add to this conception. The evaluation timeline did not afford the evaluators time to go through the two 'curricula' in depth to determine to what extent the curricula differ (beyond the obvious language differences). The evaluators did note, however, the same lessons being taught in both the EMULI and standard public schools, just in different languages.

According to some EMULI MoE staff, the cycles 1 & 2 curriculums for EMULI and standard public schools 'are the same, just in different languages'. An EMULI advisor disagrees, however, referring to the 'EMULI curriculum' as 'not the same' because of the differing language progressions and EMULI's inclusion of mother tongue as a taught subject. An MoE Advisor suggests that the content of the EMULI and the national curriculum are not as different as some might claim. She agreed that the language progression and content differs, but that all non-language content and developmental learning is similar. Differences of opinion appear to depend on how fundamental the language component is considered, as well as comfort level in suggesting that EMULI presents a different curriculum (i.e., a parallel education program).

There is a risk in promoting EMULI as a distinct curriculum from the national curriculum, especially as this sets EMULI up as a separate education system which may be perceived as contradicting and competing with the national curriculum. It may be more strategic to focus on the similarities rather than over emphasising the language differences, highlighting instead how EMULI helps students who don't know Tetun well to access the national curriculum through their mother tongue.

Finding 2: The EMULI program includes a 2-year mother tongue-based preschool component that could support readiness to enter Y1 of the national curriculum.

The EMULI program includes a 2-year preschool curriculum in mother tongue that could support the national curriculum by preparing children to enter Y1. Under a third of children attend preschool and private (often community) preschools are not required to follow the national preschool curriculum (designed in 2014). EMULI preschools use a well-established curriculum<sup>86</sup> that is culturally appropriate; tested over time; and adaptable to many languages (evaluators observed it in Fataluku, Galolen, Baikenu, and Tetun). When implemented correctly it is engaging for the children, as observed by the evaluators during lessons presented by 4 teachers in 4 different schools, Obrata, Bobolo'a and 28 Agosto in Oecusse and Maina 1 in Lautem. Because children in the EMULI preschool are introduced to Tetun by the end of the second year of preschool, the EMULI mother tongue-based preschool could potentially, though not ideally,<sup>87</sup> support language transition to the national curriculum cycle 1 in Tetun. The EMULI preschool curriculum could also be used to inform revisions to the current national preschool curriculum, including preschool delivery in diverse mother tongue languages, not just Tetun. Stakeholder interviews revealed that the government plans to adopt an 'intensive' pre-school program, which is based on the preschool program used during COVID-19, when normal preschools couldn't function. Children would attend 15 weeks

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<sup>86</sup> The EMULI preschool curriculum is adapted from a 2011 Heritage Language Playschools curriculum for Indigenous minorities, written by Dr Karla J Smith.

<sup>87</sup> Global research shows that mother tongue should be the primary language of instruction for 6 years of quality schooling, and up to 8 years in less resourced situations (UNESCO, 2016).

of preschool (Aug – Dec) before entering school. The program has been piloted using Tetun. One key informant, previously with EMULI and now leading the local branch of an international NGO, advised that the EMULI team push to get mother tongue included for students feeding into EMULI schools (especially in Oecusse) and very remote areas where Fataluku, Galolen, or Baikenu are used.

Recommendation: EMULI should focus on the similarities between the EMULI and national curriculum, highlighting how EMULI helps students who don't know Tetun well to access the national curriculum through their mother tongue. This may help decrease opposition to EMULI and even increase understanding of the importance of mother tongue as a language of instruction.

As part of ongoing advocacy work, the MoE and EMULI program could communicate the benefits of the EMULI preschool curriculum and advocate for it to help inform revisions to the current national preschool curriculum, especially regarding language of instruction.

EMULI program advisors may wish to contact other stakeholders in the preschool space, for instance UNICEF and the HANDS program, which are supporting community-based Tetun-language preschools in other municipalities to share the benefits of the mother tongue preschool. Contingent on additional funding, EMULI may wish to consider updating/adapting the EMULI curriculum for use in additional mother tongues (including Tetun) and introducing bi/multilingual practices earlier, especially in areas where Tetun is used in the wider community, rather than remaining monolingual in one mother tongue though much of preschool.

Recommendation: EMULI should try to influence preschool language policy to mandate use of mother tongues. EMULI should support the development of a Language in Education policy which includes mother tongue use (all mother tongues, including Tetun) at preschool and beyond.

### **3.2 To what extent is the MoE managing and financing the EMULI program? How has this evolved over time?**

Finding 3: Although the EMULI program shifted from UNESCO implementation to MoE at the end of 2018, MoE is not yet fully managing the program either financially or technically.

The MoE EMBLI program was implemented by the National Commission for UNESCO with financial support from MoE and DFAT from 2012 to the end of 2018. Since 2019, the program (rebranded as EMULI in 2020) has been embedded within the MoE under the Department of Policy, Planning, and Inclusion, with ongoing financial and technical support from the Australian Government (DFAT) through the Partnership for Human Development (PHD). According to PHD reports to DFAT, EMULI has been fully embedded within the MoE since 2022, with reduced technical and financial support from DFAT/PHD.<sup>88</sup> The evaluation team has found this assertion to be only partially true, as discussed below.

Technical management - In 2019, a program coordinator was appointed by MoE (although paid by PHD) and office space allocated within the Ministry. The coordinator joined the existing three technical coordinators and three Field officers (one for each municipality) already in place. The establishment of this role signalled a management shift to MoE from UNESCO; however, the role of coordinator was short lived. According to a PHD respondent, in June 2020 the incoming Minister of Education from the restructured

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<sup>88</sup> From RFQ, Scope of Services; 6 monthly reporting.

8th Constitutional Government<sup>89</sup> put a halt on EMULI expansion and removed the EMULI coordinator from office. There was no one for EMULI staff to report to, except for the Director General of Policy, Planning, Inclusion and Informatics (PPII) who was also new and not supportive of EMULI. The DG requested that PHD step in to support and manage EMULI.

Around the same time, a steering committee (SC) and a program management team (PMT) were established to ensure joint decision-making among MoE, DFAT and PHD regarding technical issues and the use of Australian financial investment.<sup>90</sup> These governance bodies provide oversight for the entirety of Australian education support, including EMULI, however, they may have given the impression of increasing DFAT/PHD involvement in and control of the program.

In 2020, the ALMA<sup>91</sup> local mentor model was adopted for EMULI, presumably to strengthen technical support at the school level and to prepare for the anticipated program expansion to 37 additional schools. Four mentors were hired (one each for Lautem and Manatuto and two for Oecusse). In August 2023, the three technical coordinator positions were disestablished. It is assumed by the evaluators that adoption of the mentor model and termination of the technical coordinator positions were agreed by the steering committee (including EMULI and MoE), although we have not seen documentation to this effect.

From 2020 to July 2024, the EMULI mentors reported directly to a PHD staff member<sup>92</sup>, and over time their roles shifted to overlap with ALMA. Interview respondents from the EMULI program at different levels (national, municipal) shared frustrations that until recently PHD could change the mentor terms of reference without consulting EMULI. Very recently the reporting lines were adjusted to joint oversight by the EMULI Coordinator and PHD. However, the EMULI coordinator expressed that whoever pays the staff ultimately manages them. According to financial records shared with the evaluation team, since 2019 all EMULI staff have been funded by DFAT and paid by PHD through a contractor (Entrega Ba). Thus, it is unclear how much technical decision-making shifted to EMULI and whether both EMULI and PHD were in agreement. Interviews with EMULI program team indicate that they would like to increase their ownership of program technical decisions.

*Financial management* - From 2012 - 2018, DFAT funding covered all EMBLI personnel and activity costs. Funding totals, annual expenditures and line item breakdown of these costs during this period was unavailable and thus not shared with the evaluation team.

Since 2019, DFAT has continued financing EMULI through PHD with MoE contribution to some costs including salaries for 15 EMULI teachers and resource distribution costs, among other activities.<sup>93</sup> For best estimates of MoE monetary contributions to support EMULI activities, as a percentage of the overall EMULI budget, refer Table 3.2.1.

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<sup>89</sup> 8th Constitutional Government was in place from June 2018 - 2023, with a restructure that impacted on EMULI in 2020.

<sup>90</sup> 6th monthly report, Jan-Dec 2020

<sup>91</sup> ALMA supports improved school leadership for teacher professional learning and quality of teaching. It does not have a focus on MTB-MLE.

<sup>92</sup> Note that the request for PHD to step in and support/manage EMULI was from the MoE (DG - PPII).

<sup>93</sup> Extrapolated from PHD reporting; a list of activities funded by MoE was not provided to the evaluation team.

	MoE (USD)	DFAT (USD)	Annual total (AUD)	MoE %
<b>2020</b>	\$ 50,720	\$ 156,188	\$ 206,908	25%
<b>2021</b>	\$ 86,720	\$ 139,019	\$ 225,739	38%
<b>2022</b>	\$ 86,720	\$ 214,958	\$ 301,678	29%
<b>2023</b>	\$ 86,720	\$ 180,653	\$ 267,373	32%
<b>2024</b>	\$ 69,780	\$ 127,548	\$ 197,328	35%
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$ 243,220	\$ 523,159	\$ 766,379	32%

Table 2: Annual expenditure by MoE and DFAT on EMULI (2020-2024)

Table 3. Annual expenditure by MoE and DFAT on EMULI (2020–2024)

Year	MoE contribution (USD)	DFAT contribution (USD)	Annual total (AUD)	MoE share (%)
2020	50,720	156,188	206,908	25%
2021	86,720	139,019	225,739	38%
2022	86,720	214,958	301,678	29%
2023	86,720	180,653	267,373	32%
2024	69,780	127,548	197,328	35%
<b>Total</b>	<b>243,220</b>	<b>523,159</b>	<b>766,379</b>	<b>32%</b>

Note that this calculation does not include any MoE financing which may have supported both ALMA and EMULI, as it was not possible to discern that based on the level of detail provided. With that caveat, it appears that MoE's percentage of investment has ranged from 25-38%, and that since 2022 DFAT investment as a percentage of overall EMULI funding has marginally decreased from 71% to 65%. Thus, the majority of funding for EMULI continues to come from DFAT, through PHD, with PHD processing payment for most costs, including local mentors and field officers, who are contracted through a recruitment company, Entrega Ba.

The rationale for outsourcing these staff contracts is unclear. According to PHD, 'this approach provides [a] model for efficient transition to MoE, as per our experience with ALMA local mentors. EMULI staff salaries are agreed by MoE and consistent with their scale...they support PHD in providing administrative efficiencies and overall value for money.'<sup>94</sup> It is unclear to the evaluation team how the use of a recruitment company provides a model to transition to MoE, unless 1) MoE will contract their employment through

<sup>94</sup> Email correspondence with Tomi Zaini, 3 Sept 2024.

Entrega Ba in the future and 2) MoE is being trained to manage an external contractor. Neither of these cases appear to be true at present. Out-sourcing recruitment of personnel working within the MoE system may cause poor optics. At least one stakeholder questioned why persons working at school were recruited outside the MoE system. In addition, it appears to reduce MoE technical and financial management, not increase it.

A DFAT representative shared that ‘Australia had always planned to withdraw funding for [EMULI] but [has] kept topping it up at the request of the Ministry.’ Unfortunately, MoE budget constraints and wavering interest to fully take on the program have ultimately impacted the transition of the EMULI program to full technical and financial management through MoE structures. EMULI is scheduled to become a separate department in around 2026, with its own budget. It is unlikely, however, that EMULI will be able to manage its activities without continued outside donor support, both financially and technically. In part the need for ongoing financial support is due to a decreasing budget available for education as a whole in Timor Leste, which is partly due to the coming fiscal cliff when funds from Timor Leste’s oil and gas reserves run out, as mentioned in the context section, above.

*Views on program management* - More than a dozen stakeholders held a negative perception of the shift from Alola and then UNESCO implementation to PHD support. Although these are perceptions rather than established fact, it is nevertheless true that the perception exists among a wide range of stakeholders. Views expressed included that PHD was ‘too involved’ in the programme citing a lack of clarity regarding mentor reporting lines and other staffing decisions. One individual suggested that while some would say the program was ‘turned over to MoE’, they felt it was ‘taken over by PHD’. Another group of informants were disappointed about the ‘shift from local NGO implementation to bilateral DFAT/PHD,’ asserting that a local NGO can lobby for the program and exert political pressure in ways an outside agency cannot. According to DFAT, MoE requested ongoing support, and PHD became the mechanism because it housed DFAT’s education programming. However, this nuance may not have been transmitted to organisations and individuals involved in EMBLI before the shift. Moreover, streamlining Australian investment for EMULI through DFAT’s education program may have felt like it was limiting stakeholder engagement. Some of these perceptions could be addressed through better communication with stakeholders about the roles and responsibilities of PHD and MoE.

Several stakeholders acknowledged that if PHD had not ‘rescued’ the program when it did, during the period of the government’s lack of support for mother tongue education, the program may have ceased to exist. One stakeholder acknowledged that the shift was probably necessary given the wider political context at the time; however, it could have been managed better: ‘PHD tried to keep EMULI going when MoE wasn’t keen, which was good; but also bad because they did their own thing.’<sup>95</sup> PHD staff have expressed discomfort with the negative way the transition from Alola and then UNESCO to PHD has been understood and portrayed. It is not the intent of the evaluation team to assign blame, but rather to share these perceptions and misunderstandings so that they might be addressed.

Leadership transitions at MoE and within the EMULI program have disrupted the program. The general impression provided by nearly all stakeholders at all levels was that politics and staff turnover have had a strong negative impact on the EMULI program’s continued success. A few mentors shared that they are not yet confident in the current MoE/EMULI leadership, and feel there have been too many transitions of staff.

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<sup>95</sup> Stakeholder interview, Dili, 5th August 2024

Other respondents are hedging their bets, with at least one school and one municipal leader indicating that they are happy to implement EMULI but they are watching in case politics again disrupts the program.

Recommendation: As part of its strategic planning process, the EMULI program should clearly delineate the roles of MoE, the EMULI program team, DFAT and PHD and include clear steps to increasingly transition full technical and financial management to MoE, including any needed capacity development. They may also wish to focus on ways to advocate for increased GoTL funding and look to attract investment from a wider range of donors.

The EMULI program should prioritise rejuvenation of the stakeholders meetings as a way to address negative feelings and increase a feeling of engagement that appears to have decreased when the program shifted from Alola and then UNESCO management to DFAT/PHD management.

### **3.3 To what extent and how has the EMULI program (staff and activities) been integrated into the MoE and INFORDEPE national and municipal structures?**

Finding 4: Although EMULI is physically located at MoE and receives a portion of its budget from the ministry, staff and activities are not integrated across MoE and it is still considered 'a partners program'. Generally well regarded at municipal level, EMULI is not fully integrated into the municipal governance structure.

Moves to embed and expand the EMBLI/EMULI program at the MoE stalled with a change in leadership and priorities in 2020. After a time of limited engagement, the MoE is once again embracing EMULI. The EMULI staff have space in the ministry and a small budget, though office space is tight; the budget is limited and carved out of several departments (preschool, basic education, and inclusive education); staff positions are short term and staff turnover has led to a loss of institutional knowledge and misplacing of key documents; and there is currently no long term planning document (strategic plan) in place, only a perpetually updated 3-month work plan<sup>96</sup>. EMULI staff at national and municipal levels (local mentors and field officers) have not been absorbed into the MoE staffing structure and continue to be paid and managed (at least in part) by PHD<sup>97</sup>. EMULI leadership shared that 'EMULI is still considered a partners program, not fully MoE'.

The evaluation team also heard mixed messaging about whether EMULI teacher training activities are currently embedded in INFORDEPE. At least 2 stakeholders expressed concern that an updated training manual used at the most recent teacher training (expansion training in July 2024) had not been approved by INFORDEPE.<sup>98</sup> Another stakeholder mentioned that the President of INFORDEPE had indicated it does not receive reports regarding mentoring activities or other teacher training. A third stakeholder suggested that the relationship between EMULI and INFORDEPE may have been stronger in the past. An MoE adviser commented that because INFORDEPE trainers are weak and the quality of their training is often poor, EMULI finds it more effective to provide training itself. While this may appear more efficient and effective in the short term, it misses an opportunity to develop MoE training capacity and knowledge about mother tongue at the MoE and within INFORDEPE. Working through INFORDEPE has potential to 1) embed mother tongue more fully into the psyche of the ministry; and 2) build more ministry advocates as they see

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<sup>96</sup> The evaluation team note that at the time of writing, a strategic planning process for EMULI has begun

<sup>97</sup> A co-management structure between EMULI and PHD started in August 2024.

<sup>98</sup> The evaluation team did not confirm this with INFORDEPE (this was an oversight).

how teaching in mother tongue is taken up by the teachers; 3) prepare more mother tongue technical specialists; and 4) strengthen INFORDEPE commitment to mother tongue-based- multilingual education.

According to PHD documentation, the Vice President of INFORDEPE is keen to ‘integrate the EMULI teacher professional development methodology and resources into the current training programs on early literacy and numeracy pedagogy. This collaboration will replace the current standalone EMULI program.’<sup>99</sup> This would be an excellent opportunity to embed EMULI teaching practices into the MoE system, mainstreaming mother tongue-based multilingual education and institutionalising its practices. The report further states that MoE approved the strategy and later reporting in 2023 states that ‘PHD has begun discussing a draft EMULI transition plan with the MoE, however it is expected that the IX Constitutional government may reprioritise the use of mother tongue in basic education schools which may result in a further update and revision of the current EMULI transition planning.’<sup>100</sup>

EMULI leadership is positive that things are moving in the right direction, with the process begun for EMULI to become its own department (anticipated in 2026). Likewise, consultants have been engaged to help draft a long term strategic plan aimed at program sustainability and expansion.

**Recommendation: As EMULI develops its strategic vision, it should consider which aspects of the current EMULI program should remain with the new department and which should move elsewhere.**

The evaluation team advises that EMULI look for ways to more fully integrate its activities throughout the MoE, with mother tongue-based multilingual education mainstreamed, and key actors such as INFORDEPE kept informed and involved. Some aspects of EMULI, for instance child-centred teaching practices, are broader than EMULI. Other aspects, like the EMULI preschool have potential to influence wider MoE policy. EMULI as an integrated program (with advocacy, teacher training, mentors, preschool curriculum, Mother Tongue curriculum documents, lesson plans and resources) may need to be disbanded into its component parts, and these parts inserted into the general ministry structure, with continued support from development partners, financial and technical, as needed. While some aspects would shift to other departments (for example child-centred learning to INFORPEDE), the EMULI department will be freed up to take the lead for:

- Development of mother tongue and multilingual resources which encourage child-centred learning (as current EMULI resources already do).
- Training of teachers (alongside INFORDEPE) in mother tongue language and multilingual language-specific pedagogies.
- Coordination of ongoing professional development in mother tongue language teaching through the support of technical specialists located at municipal ministry of education offices.
- Support to municipal school inspectors and school leaders (directors and coordinators) to monitor teachers’ use of language-specific pedagogies in their classrooms, and to provide direct and timely feedback.
- Collaboration with the MoE assessment department to conduct assessments in EMULI and select comparison schools; integrate these data into the EMIS system; encourage MoE leadership at

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<sup>99</sup> 6-monthly report Jan-June 2023

<sup>100</sup> 6-monthly report, Jan-June 2023

national and municipal levels to use their results to monitor learner progress and inform language-related decision-making.

Maintaining all of the various components of EMULI as a separate MoE program (and soon department) prevents different aspects from becoming embedded into the overall MoE – for example, the spread of improved pedagogies through all teacher training (via INFORDEPE). It will also help to mitigate the risk that EMULI is considered ‘a system within a system’. In a sense, EMULI has created a parallel education system within the MoE. This parallel system, with a unique name and soon its own department, perpetuates the understanding (intentional or not) that EMULI is different, special, a separate curriculum and schooling system, unique from the national curriculum. As one stakeholder expressed ‘EMULI is supposed to be an inclusive program but because it only works in 10 schools it is really exclusive.’ Reimagining how EMULI fits into the MoE may correct such misconceptions.

Thus we recommend that the EMULI team distil the program down to its essential components (mother tongue and multilingual education) and seek to integrate other activities more fully into the existing MoE departments. This will help mainstream mother tongue throughout the ministry and avoid the perception that EMULI is a separate education system. Continue progressing the integration of EMULI training into INFORDEPE, as possible and appropriate. Find ways to embed EMULI staff into the MoE establishment by including salaries into the new department and national budget. Consider re-imagining EMULI and perhaps rethinking the name EMULI, as it has been politicised (see previous findings, section 2).

### **3.4 To what extent and how is the EMULI program valued by school leaders and teachers, parents, community, and political and cultural leaders?**

Finding 5: Most stakeholders that we spoke to - parents, teachers, and local education authorities - appreciated EMULI. However, the value ascribed to the EMULI program varied widely according to level of involvement in the program and length of time involved with it. Stakeholders suggested that children in EMULI schools, learning through their mother tongue, learned to read more quickly, understood concepts more quickly, and were more confident. Our observation was that children were more engaged in classes where their mother tongue, or another language children were already familiar with, was used.

In KIIs with stakeholders they were asked ‘What has EMULI done well?’ and ‘What has EMULI done less well?’. Their responses are summarised below:

What EMULI has done well:

- EMULI has improved student comprehension of curriculum content
- EMULI has improved literacy and numeracy in children
- Children are more engaged in their learning through being taught in their mother tongue or a language that is familiar to them
- EMULI has successfully advocated at various levels for the importance of MTB-MLE
- The resources and training have helped with making lessons more engaging

What EMULI has done less well: :

- EMULI has not (yet) successfully made the case for a late exit language progression plan. Many stakeholders could see the importance of MTB-MLE in the early years, but not as students got older.
- EMULI has not yet been able to overcome the perception that it is *only* about teaching mother tongue as a subject, rather than teaching through mother tongue.
- Lack of high quality ongoing teacher training over the last 5 years has been detrimental to the

program.

- EMULI has become politicised
- EMULI has not been consistently resourced or implemented

However, the value ascribed by stakeholders to EMULI was overwhelmingly positive. Below, we look at the value ascribed to it by various stakeholder groups. It is worth noting that the value various stakeholders ascribed to EMULI is not only related to improved learning outcomes for children (or ‘better’ learning outcomes than children in other schools). The evaluation team heard many instances of value being ascribed for language preservation, cultural identity, and a sense of belonging in the community and the wider world. For instance:

*“The program helps to preserve local language, and some local languages have already died. Local language is our cultural identity. The expansion to other schools with other Mother Tongues is good because it helps to preserve the language. There’s one language here that is already dying, and this program could help preserve it.”<sup>101</sup>*

And:

*“The local language resources really help the children to be interested in reading books because it’s their own stories and in their own languages, not from somewhere else”<sup>102</sup>*

From the Director of Education in Lautem:

*“EMULI has been useful for our children. A first door for the students to learn and to understand the world”<sup>103</sup>*

School head teachers and teachers valued EMULI because they felt that it helped the students to learn better and feel more confident:

*“The students then were afraid to speak [when the Indonesian curriculum was used]. But now, the students are very self-confident to respond to the questions.”<sup>104</sup>*

A Year 1 teacher in Muapitine Primary school in Lautem stated that she enjoyed teaching in mother tongue more than in other languages because the students already know the language so it makes learning easier<sup>105</sup>, while a teacher in Oecusse stated that previously some of his students were not able to read, and now 90% can read.<sup>106</sup>

Children may not be able to ascribe value to EMULI as such - however, our observations did indicate that children were more engaged in the classes where mother tongue - or, the language children are most familiar with - is being used to teach. Several student graduates of EMULI stated that they would want their

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<sup>101</sup> KII with director of education in Manatuto, August 2024.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid

<sup>103</sup> KII with director of education in Lautem, August 2024.

<sup>104</sup> KII with headteacher of Muapitine primary school, Lautem, August 2024.

<sup>105</sup> FGD with teachers, Lautem, August 2024

<sup>106</sup> FGD with teachers, Oecusse, August 2024.

own children to attend EMULI schools; but some also suggested that they'd enjoyed school for reasons other than learning in mother tongue.

For instance, in the Pre School B class at Maina 1 Pre School in Lautem, the children were thrown a dice with numbers on it and had to say the number first in Fataluku and then in Tetun; indicating that they were able to read the number, and knew and were able to recall the words for the number in both languages.

It is possible, however, that it is not solely the use of mother tongue that leads to more child engagement in those lessons; there may have been other factors including teaching style, personality of the teachers, ethnic background and age, relationship between children and teacher, and the teacher's comfort with the language. At the CAFE school, the female older Portuguese teacher elicited a very different reaction from the same classroom of students than the younger Timorese male, despite the Portuguese teacher being very warm and friendly. Likewise, at one EMULI school, children were very engaged during the mother tongue lesson, and less so in the Tetun class. However, the teachers acted very differently, with the Tetun teacher being very stiff and formal, while the mother tongue teacher was warm and engaging. Thus while it appears that children engage better in a classroom taught in (better) known language(s), other factors may also be in play.

Several of the student graduates of the program that we spoke to - especially the girls - stated that they would want their own children to attend EMULI schools. One in Manatuto stated that she felt this way because the students in the EMULI school (Rembor) were able to read better than students in other schools.<sup>107</sup> However, some students we spoke to in Oecusse were less enthusiastic, suggesting that the most positive thing about their school was that it was close to home, rather than anything related to learning through mother tongue.<sup>108</sup>

Parents were aware that their children were learning more effectively through mother tongue and identified that their children were enjoying school more than they had. When asked about their own experiences in school, most parents stated that they wished they'd been able to learn through their mother tongue.

*"The kids are excited because they want to learn. They are excited for their own futures."<sup>109</sup>*

Some parents and some students<sup>110</sup> expressed confusion about the need for children to learn mother tongue literacy when they already speak mother tongue at home. One parent expressed that she wanted additional language classes in Tetun and Portuguese for her children. Upon further discussion, it was revealed that these children are in preschool and the parent was concerned her children were not yet learning these languages. She did not understand the language progression. Several people who expressed support for the program did so because it is a program that is currently - and has previously been - supported by government, rather than because they necessarily understood the importance of the program for learning. Some of those who were positive about the program were a little superficial in their support - we noted responses where people described thinking that EMULI was a good program, but not

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<sup>107</sup> Student Graduate Case study, Manatuto, August 2024

<sup>108</sup> KII with EMULI graduate, Oecusse, August 2024.

<sup>109</sup> FGD with parents, Manatuto, August 2024

<sup>110</sup> For instance, a graduate student in Lautem, and a parent in Oecusse.

really understanding what the program did when probed further.<sup>111</sup> However, these examples indicate more the importance of clearly communicating with schools and communities what EMULI is - and what it isn't, rather than suggesting that EMULI has had a negative effect.

In general, the value ascribed to the EMULI program varied widely according to level of involvement in the program and length of time involved with it. Teachers and community members who had been involved for the longest time were generally very positive; but there was also a fair amount of confusion<sup>112</sup> about what EMULI is resulting in some antagonism towards the program. .

Recommendation: Ensure a wider understanding of the role of EMULI in improving learning outcomes, and frame more advocacy around this.

The political dimension of EMULI is discussed in [section 2.4](#). It will be important to ensure a wider understanding of the role of EMULI in improving learning outcomes. The aspect of language and cultural preservation is important, but many stakeholders already understand this, as illustrated above. Emphasising the role of EMULI in improving learning outcomes may help to depoliticise the approach somewhat - it is something that most stakeholders at all levels could support.

Advocacy is particularly important at the national level and with parents and communities. All staff involved with EMULI should be able to explain the role of fluency in mother tongue in children's understanding of curricular content, and improved learning outcomes, as well as in learning other languages such as Tetun, Portuguese and English. Ensuring the involvement of national civil society, especially local NGOs, in advocating with Government may be more effective than DFAT or other development partners advocating alone.

There is much literature about achieving this, including *Multilingual Education and Sustainable Diversity Work From Periphery to Center*<sup>113</sup>, co-authored by members of the evaluation team (Katheleen Heugh) and others:

*"Drawing on the most powerful and compelling research data to date ... this book explores the conditions and practices of robust bilingual and multilingual educational innovations ... It demonstrates how, in countries where educational practices are inclusive of linguistic diversity and responsive to local conditions and community participation, implementation of bilingual education even within limited budgetary investment can be successful."*

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<sup>111</sup> For instance, a Head teacher in Manatuto explained that some of the previous teachers in his school had not wanted the program, until he explained that it was a Government program and they had to implement it.

<sup>112</sup> Head teachers in both Lautem and Oecusse stated they'd come across confusion and resistance from parents initially.

<sup>113</sup> <https://www.routledge.com/Multilingual-Education-and-Sustainable-Diversity-Work-From-Periphery-to-Center/Skutnabb-Kangas-Heugh/p/book/9780415893671?srsId=AfmBOooePABkSIXOT4dLegjCecyaY8Abmkp60LQsudNoufTMvMKnP6L7>

### 3.5 How cost effective and affordable is the current EMULI model?

Finding 6: The EMULI program would be more affordable and cost effective if there were 1) a shift in the way technical support is provided to teachers and 2) less frequent and more valid pre/post testing. Simply teaching (well) in mother tongue may be the most cost-effective way to bring the largest benefit to student learning achievement.

The EMBLI/EMULI program has undergone several shifts over the life of the program, rendering it difficult to reliably address cost effectiveness and affordability over the entire period from 2012 to the present.

Therefore, to respond to this question, we will

1. accept the assertion made in the 2015 EMBLI Endline Assessment that at that point in time, the program was cost effective;
2. consider financial and technical support from 2016 - 2023 (the earliest data provided to the evaluation team to the most recent full year of expenses); and
3. assess effectiveness and affordability based on the current model of implementation.

Table 3.5.1 shows a breakdown of Australia's investment in EMULI from 2016-2023, as provided by PHD. Amounts are listed in AUD as PHD indicated that AUD numbers were more correct. Note that from 2016 to 2018, amounts are not broken down between personnel and activity, also that figures from 2019 to 2020 do not list activities, providing only a rolled up description of 'support costs.' Where the breakdown between personnel and activity is clear, we see that since 2020 the majority of funds has been used for personnel costs. This is not surprising considering the mentoring model was adopted in 2020. Financial records shared with the evaluators do not include a line item for mentor costs until 2022.

Table 3.5.1 Australian Investment in EMBLI/EMULI (2016 - 2023)

	Personnel	Personnel Cost	Activity	Activity Cost	Total (AUD)	Mechanism
2012						DFAT to UNESCO
2013						DFAT to UNESCO
2014						DFAT to UNESCO
2015						DFAT to UNESCO
2016					\$ 148,892.58	DFAT to UNESCO
2017					\$ 203,663.00	DFAT to UNESCO
2018					\$ 55,396.50	DFAT to UNESCO
2019	National Coordinator Other staff	\$ 68,303.13	Support costs	\$ 120,164.53	\$ 188,467.66	DFAT to PHD
2020	National Coordinator Other staff	\$ 122,527.46	Support costs	\$ 103,831.94	\$ 226,359.40	DFAT to PHD
2021	National Coordinator Other staff	\$ 151,988.56	Support costs	\$ 33,370.25	\$ 185,358.81	DFAT to PHD
2022	National Coordinator Mentors Field Officers Technical Officers Admin Staff	\$ 161,608.97	Pre/Post test Refresher training Capacity building Other	\$ 149,925.42	\$ 311,534.39	DFAT to PHD
2023	National Coordinator Mentors Field Officers Technical Officers Admin Staff	\$ 185,079.72	Pre test Teacher training Capacity building Other	\$ 88,635.83	\$ 273,715.55	DFAT to PHD
2024						DFAT to PHD
<b>Total AUD</b>		\$ 689,507.84		\$ 495,927.97	\$ 1,593,387.89	

Table 3.5.1. Australian investment in EMBLI/EMULI (2016–2023)

Year	Personnel roles	Personnel cost (AUD)	Activities	Activity cost (AUD)	Total expenditure (AUD)	Funding mechanism
2012	Not specified	–	Not specified	–	–	DFAT to UNESCO
2013	Not specified	–	Not specified	–	–	DFAT to UNESCO
2014	Not specified	–	Not specified	–	–	DFAT to UNESCO
2015	Not specified	–	Not specified	–	–	DFAT to UNESCO

Year	Personnel roles	Personnel cost (AUD)	Activities	Activity cost (AUD)	Total expenditure (AUD)	Funding mechanism
2016	Not specified	–	Not specified	–	148,892.58	DFAT to UNESCO
2017	Not specified	–	Not specified	–	203,663.00	DFAT to UNESCO
2018	Not specified	–	Not specified	–	55,396.50	DFAT to UNESCO
2019	National Coordinator; Other staff	68,303.13	Support costs	120,164.53	188,467.66	DFAT to PHD
2020	National Coordinator; Other staff	122,527.46	Support costs	103,831.94	226,359.40	DFAT to PHD
2021	National Coordinator; Other staff	151,988.56	Support costs	33,370.25	185,358.81	DFAT to PHD
2022	National Coordinator; Mentors; Field Officers; Technical Officers; Admin staff	161,608.97	Pre/post test; Refresher training; Capacity building; Other	149,925.42	311,534.39	DFAT to PHD
2023	National Coordinator; Mentors; Field Officers; Technical Officers; Admin staff	185,079.72	Pre-test; Teacher training; Capacity building; Other	88,635.83	273,715.55	DFAT to PHD
<b>Total</b>	—	<b>689,507.84</b>	—	<b>495,927.97</b>	<b>1,593,387.89</b>	—

Australia has invested AUD 1,593,388 in EMBLI/EMULI over an 8 year period of time. This equates to roughly USD 1,069,004 at current exchange rates.<sup>114</sup> According to PHD documentation, 1591 students have benefited from the program during this time.<sup>115</sup> Based on these figures, over the 8-year period, each EMBLI/EMULI student has received an extra USD 0.44 per day in addition to the standard school grant.

According to the EMULI Program Coordinator, EMULI and standard public schools receive the same school grant of USD 2 per student per day for 191 effective days. They also have the same management structure; receive the same financial support for school infrastructure; and teachers receive the same pay. Therefore the only difference in cost between EMULI and standard public schools is the extra USD 0.44 per day per

<sup>114</sup> For simplification, we have used a current exchange rate, noting there may be slight differences in actual USD costs each year.

<sup>115</sup> From the RFQ Scope of Services, 2024

child spent in excess of the MoE allocation of USD 2 per child. To state it another way, over the period of 2018 - 2023, an EMULI student received USD 2.44<sup>116</sup> of investment while a standard public school child received USD 2.

Cost differences lie in the extra teacher training, teaching support documents (lesson plans), learning resources (big books and primers), and mentoring that EMULI schools receive.<sup>117</sup> In the last two years (where line item breakdown of activities is available) the additional EMULI investment has been used primarily for pre/post testing, and mentor and field officer costs.

To assess the cost effectiveness of the EMULI program, *at the present time* and with the current model of implementation, we consider these two activities - the pre/post testing and the current model for school level support (mentors and field officers).

Pre/post testing administered since 2019, does not appear to be cost effective because it has not produced robust, reliable and valid data to demonstrate annual achievement or ongoing learning impact, as discussed in section 1.2. The primary issues are:

1. validity of the tools has been questioned (e.g., difficulty of questions; alignment with the curriculum) lack of set comparison schools, so different standard public schools have been used in different years
2. incomplete data collection, particularly in the past two years (post test for 2022 but no pretest pretest in 2023 but no post testing).

For this evaluation, we have examined some of the more complete data - post testing in 2019 and 2021 (see section 1.2) - but much of the rest is unusable. Over 2022 and 2023, testing cost AUD 33k (figures for previous years are unavailable). This was an expensive exercise for data that cannot be used.

Recommendation: Program monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) should be strengthened. Pre/post testing is important for program MEL and should continue and be conducted in a more reliable manner.

We advise that the two issues above be addressed to improve the usefulness of the testing. In addition, we suggest that in order to increase the overall cost effectiveness of pre/post testing, the EMULI program considers reducing the frequency of testing to

- every year for students in Y4 (completing 1st cycle) and Y6 (2nd cycle)<sup>118</sup>
- every 3-4 years for students at all levels (for longitudinal data collection).

Annual pre/post testing is costly and time consuming, and is not cost effective when it results in incomplete data sets. At the proposed intervals, the program could assess all students in EMULI schools and CAFE schools, and a sampling of students taken from a comparison group of standard public schools but at fewer points in time. This would reduce the cost and time investment, as well as the complexity and frequency of the activity, while still providing enough data to appropriately monitor student achievement. Less data will also be more manageable to analyse and disseminate, thus potentially more useful for decision-making.

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<sup>116</sup> We note that this does not include MoE contribution to EMULI. As this exercise is to consider Australian investment we feel this is appropriate.

<sup>117</sup> Information received from the EMULI Program Coordinator.

<sup>118</sup> In cases where EMULI has been implemented through Y6.

*The model for school-level support* has not proven cost effective due to the quality and usefulness of the mentoring, especially considering there are also field officers in the municipalities (6 mentors; 3 field officers). According to the scant financial details provided, field officers and mentors cost AUD 339,553 between 2020 and 2023. This amount does not include any mentor salaries included under 'support costs' in 2020 and 2021, nor does it include other costs for accomplishing their work (e.g., telecommunications, travel, etc.). Our estimation is that the cost of school-level support would be closer to AUD 400,000.

The value of the inputs of these positions is in question for four key reasons:

- 1) EMULI mentors do not appear to possess the experience, background, or education to be considered mentors, especially to experienced teachers. This sentiment was confirmed by MoE advisors, a school director and several teachers who suggested that the main benefit of the mentors is having them fill in as relief teachers. There was no indication of the mentors bringing additional technical knowledge, beyond being able to use the tablet technology used for classroom observation.
- 2) The mentor and field officer roles get confused, and when questioned, some of these individuals themselves do not understand the difference. A field officer (9 years in the position) and a local mentor (4 years in the role) were interviewed together regarding their positions. They both shared that there is confusion between their roles. The local mentor stated that she does materials development, provides direct support to teachers, and monitors teachers' progress. The FO said he does the exact same things. When asked which of them brings more technical knowledge, both claimed it was them. When asked about the difference between mentors and field officers, school leaders and teachers were also confused. Review of reports to DFAT also revealed confusion and overlap of what support these roles were providing.<sup>119</sup> Recently there has been an effort to clarify the two roles, but these staff were still confused.<sup>120</sup>
- 3) There may not be enough work for both the mentors and field officers. The same pair - mentor and field officer - were asked whether the other had enough tasks. Both agreed that the field officer should not be doing the same tasks as the mentor, but if he doesn't there is not enough for him to do. The field officer said he would get 'bored' and he wants to continue providing support in the classroom. Regarding the mentor, the field officer said that her tasks overlap with the ALMA mentor, and because she is not currently doing resource development, supporting one school is not enough work. They agreed that expansion to new schools would give the mentor more teachers to support, and thus more workload.

This information was triangulated with teachers and school leaders who were asked about the mentors and how they support schools. These individuals were hard pressed to identify any specific technical support that the mentors provide beyond conducting classroom observations. When it was suggested that the mentors' time at school should be reduced, teachers across the board expressed concern; however, one group of teachers did, eventually, agree that the mentors don't need to come everyday, perhaps just a couple times a week. One school leader suggested that once a week was sufficient.

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<sup>119</sup> See 6-monthly and monthly reporting documents from PHD to DFAT.

<sup>120</sup> The evaluation team also found confusion between the staff in those roles in Oecusse, and confusion about the roles at the level of teachers and headteachers in Lautem.

- 4) A key task of the mentor is conducting classroom observations; however, observation data collected by the mentors is not being used for immediate and direct feedback. A school director explained that mentors observe teachers and then share feedback on the teaching with the director. This process may have been confused with the ALMA program where mentors work with school leaders to improve professional development. An EMULI Advisor shared that EMULI mentors indicate that they provide daily feedback to teachers; however, teachers did not mention receiving daily feedback during focus groups with the evaluators, nor did they indicate that mentor feedback influenced their teaching practices. In the case of EMULI it is important that mentors engage in an effective and appropriate observation-feedback model where feedback is shared directly to the teacher in a timely fashion.

During the evaluation it was also revealed that there are scores of teacher observation sheets that do not appear to be used in any meaningful way to provide feedback to the teachers or to inform ongoing professional development topics. This is a poor use of time and money and a major gap in the program. The evaluators do not know why these observations are not being used. One school leader suggested that in addition to observing, it would be useful for the mentors to conduct professional development training for the teachers just at that school, based on topics identified through mentor and school leader observations.

It is unclear what benefit the mentors add to the program. The professional experience of the mentors does not appear to be of a high enough level to influence the teachers, and classroom observation is not providing the feedback needed to improve teaching practices on the spot, nor to inform ongoing training. While efforts have been made recently to revise the Terms of Reference of the two roles of mentor and field officer, confusion persists and a review of the field officer role shows that it is not sufficiently robust to merit being full time.

Recommendation: The EMULI team should reconsider the roles of mentor and field officer. Rather than revising the mentor and field officer roles, it is advisable to map the support activities needed for new and old teachers/schools, and then design an appropriate staffing structure to cover the needs, keeping in mind required expertise, technical and linguistic skills, and other attributes.

Having both mentors and field officers at the schools/municipalities in their current roles is not the most effective use of funding, especially if classroom observation data is not an integral part of a MEL framework and not informing refresher training or implementation decisions. The EMULI team should engage in an exercise to map out the technical support needed to provide ongoing support and training to EMULI teachers and schools. Work backwards from that to reconsider and clarify the roles of local mentor and field officer and determine if the mentor role is appropriate.

It is possible that more suitable support may be provided through a higher-level technical expert (as in the early years of EMULI) with teaching and training expertise who is respected by the teachers and able to add to their existing knowledge in meaningful ways. This person may be co-located at the municipal office (and eventually embedded into the MoE staffing structure).

While considering the support needs, the classroom observation activity should also be reviewed, as it is not necessary for a mentor to be observing teachers at one school all week, every week. More appropriate, cost effective, and impactful professional development may be provided by less frequent observation targeting specific, high-impact teaching techniques and practices introduced through a school cluster model. Immediate and direct feedback should be provided to the teachers themselves after each observation, with the feedback also informing cluster-based follow up training.

## Conclusions

It is the evaluators' impression that while the program started well and continued through 2015/16, key activities were not systematically sustained to provide on-going benefit. For instance student assessments have been too frequent and not maintained to standard, possibly due to human and financial capacity to manage the complex activity. This is unfortunate as the data collected cannot be reliably used, in full, to assess the program. In addition, certain management decisions, for example adoption of the ALMA mentoring model, were inappropriate - poorly conceived and executed.

Some setbacks of the program (and their associated costs) can be attributed to shifting political winds, such as delays in the anticipated expansion to new schools despite training new teachers. However, others are clearly due to a lack of evidence underpinning management decisions and practices. A lack of guiding program documents (strategic plan, MEL framework) which should have been drafted/updated when the program shifted to MoE with PHD technical oversight, has also adversely affected the results seen from the financial investments. For instance, even this discussion of cost effectiveness is a challenge, since there are no documents indicating exactly what the program was intended to achieve over this period of time, no milestones or success indicators, and no detailed financial information.

One stakeholder commented that 'EMBLI/EMULI wanted to provide a gold standard program to prove better outcomes; but over-resourcing may have overshadowed actual MTE benefits.' Her comment referred to the early years of the program and we do not have access to this information. At the present, however, it appears that *while earlier funding appears to have established a program that showed improved teaching and learning results, the AUD 1,086,899 invested by Australia through short-term funding mechanisms between 2019 and 2023 in order to maintain mother tongue education (child-centred teaching and consistent MTB-MLE) in 5 preschools and 5 primary schools has had limited lasting effect.* During this period, student learning achievement in EMULI schools appears to have consistently surpassed that of students in standard public schools, especially during preschool and years 1-3, with EMULI students often scoring twice as high as their standard public school peers (see section 1.2). Yet, according to our brief observations (see section 2.1), teaching practices do not appear to have continued to improve over time, with many teachers still using primarily rote learning techniques. These poor teaching practices are of special concern considering teachers in two of the three municipalities are also receiving support from the ALMA program.

It appears that investments in mentoring and testing have not been cost-effective, and continued investment at this level of funding for these activities is ill-advised unless there are significant changes to program management, technical inputs, and MEL, as well as an expansion to many more schools. A lack of language policy development, strategic planning and long-term funding has meant that while the EMBLI/EMULI program has continued it has not thrived. Despite this, EMULI children are still outperforming their peers in early years where mother tongue is the primary language of instruction. This may indicate that language of instruction is, indeed, the principal driver of higher achievement.

## Future Directions

In addition to the evaluation recommendations, we advise the EMULI team to consider six wider recommendations to inform the future direction of the EMULI program.

The original intention of the term mother tongue based bilingual education or mother tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) was not to drive a wedge between mother tongue and other languages – but to draw attention to the need to work within local linguistic ecologies. However, interpretation in much of the language discourse in Timor-Leste (and elsewhere) has been to separate and pose mother tongue as in conflict with and/or competition with the national/official language(s) of Tetun and Portuguese. It is our overarching recommendation that the EMBLI/EMULI program focus on the educational goal of multilingualism, with knowledge of mother tongues celebrated as an educational goal that offers mobility within and outside of the country, plus best opportunities for lasting literacy and educational success. This educational goal should be codified through a language in education policy and policy dialogue should be part of an overall Language Policy and Planning (LPP) process (Gazzola, Grin, Cardinal & Heugh, 2024; Language Policy Cycle Framework in Annex 1), which includes policy dialogue as well as the other 5 recommendations shared in this section.

Reopen policy dialogue and consider a language in education policy

Teachers, school leaders and mentors are asking for a stronger policy to codify the use of mother tongue; to increase the legitimacy of its use as language of instruction; and to protect against shifts in policy and practice when leadership changes. Acknowledging that previous policy and stakeholder discussions were contentious, we note that the political and social tides appear to have shifted, opening up a space for more favourable dialogue. We note that policy dialogue is fraught; however, with a rejuvenated stakeholder base across various levels of society, and following a multi-level consultation process, policy change may be possible at this moment in time. Policy dialogue may accompany a national stakeholder forum to celebrate the UN Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022 – 2032).

Develop a strategic vision and costed work plan through consultation at municipal and community levels, as well as national level

Key stakeholders (MoE, DFAT, PHD) have identified the need for strategic planning, including a vision document and a costed work plan, before investing further in the EMULI program. As of the writing of this report, consultants have confirmed that national level stakeholder consultation is completed. As part of the strategic planning process, we recommend holding stakeholder consultations at community and municipal levels, as well as national level. We suggest that the multi-level stakeholder consultations be used as a way to 1) celebrate what EMULI has accomplished to date; 2) clarify misunderstandings on mother tongue-based education; 3) (re)establish a coalition of proponents and partners from civil society and communities. These consultations may be followed by a national symposium to celebrate the UN Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022 – 2032).

Strengthen and grow the MTE stakeholder network (outward and downward)

‘Successful collaboration and policy outcomes require careful calibration of top-down and bottom-up mechanisms, often in dialogue with non-for-profit pressure-groups’ (Heugh, 2024, p. 13), yet such collaboration is difficult to achieve and sustain. It is our understanding that an MTE stakeholder group existed in the past, and that this has recently been revitalised by the EMULI Coordinator. This group, coordinated by EMULI at MoE, includes a diversity of donors and high-level stakeholders. In addition to rejuvenating this top-level stakeholder group, we advise that the MTE network be widened to bring in actors at all levels:

- Minister, DGs
- Inspectors at national and municipal levels
- Education director at municipality
- School directors and their deputies
- Cycle 1, 2, 3 coordinators at the schools
- Teachers (EMULI and others)
- Parents through the PTA (KIAR)
- Local mentors
- Community, religious, and other local leaders and groups
- Civil society

There is a Facebook group – Repete 13 – a public online community of supporters of MTE in Timor-Leste (with approximately 1.6k members). This reaches those with an online presence. Other means of reaching people, both formally and informally, should be considered. Identifying supporters, through the municipal and community consultations (mentioned above) would help grow a network that can be stronger than politics.

Update the language mapping to include the full language repertoires of students and teachers

The language mapping document used to identify additional languages for expansion is outdated and perhaps misleading. The language mapping exercise was conducted in 2014 (James E Owen II, SIL International, 2015). The aim of the report was to provide an evidence base for 'planning the extension and expansion of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Programs' (p. 3). The finding was that '63% of the 1,415 schools in Timor-Leste were monolingual which means that all the students in the school shared the same strongest language.'

This language mapping identified and mapped the so-called strongest languages of teachers and students. The report was, unfortunately, potentially misleading on three fronts. First, it stated that schools were monolingual. A school cannot be monolingual – it is the individuals within the schools – the children and teachers – that should be considered. Second, it was assumed that children (and teachers) have only one strong language and that they do not/cannot use multiple languages regularly and with fluidity. Third, only the strongest language was mapped. The report did not identify all of the languages a child spoke – the full multilingual capability (repertoire) of the student or teachers.

As it has been 10 years since the last language mapping, you may wish (funding dependent) to update the mapping and to consider including the entire linguistic repertoire (i.e., all languages known) for students and teachers, not just the 'strongest' one. Using the updated information, stakeholders may then assess whether to continue EMUIU as a 'monolingual' mother-tongue based curriculum, or to introduce multilingual teaching practices that acknowledge the multiple language skills children (and teachers) are bringing to the classroom. Best practice in MTB-MLE would suggest introducing activities that build on all the known languages in the classroom, no matter how 'strong' that knowledge.

Establish a professional development plan for existing and new teachers, and capacity development for education officials

Expansion to an additional 61 schools is underway, with initial teacher training conducted in July 2024. Before moving further, it is imperative that plans for ongoing technical support be considered before launching into new schools.

Going forward, EMULI focus will be on expansion to new schools; however, existing schools are not implementing the program well. As part of the strategic plan, there is a need to establish how to provide updated training and ongoing support to existing schools and teachers who have not received robust training in several years. As mentioned in other sections of this report, the local mentors are not providing quality teaching support. As noted from classroom observation and teacher focus groups, there are different understandings about the language progression, and it is being put into practice in different ways.

The EMULI program is advised to design a teacher professional development plan which includes both new and old teachers. Consider ways to use current EMULI schools as model schools, and experienced EMULI teachers as coaches for new teachers. This might be done through municipal and/or local level training within an established cluster, or through matching old and new schools in a peer network. By having current teachers share their experiences implementing EMULI - challenges and successes – the EMULI team will be able to identify their strengths, weaknesses, and misunderstandings, while building off of previous long-term investments in their professional development. This model has the potential to be replicated beyond EMULI and to strengthen the MoE institutional professional development process.

In addition, the program should provide professional learning for education officials to increase institutional memory and expertise in bilingual and multilingual education for Timor-Leste, with different iterations of multilingual education for urban and rural/remote communities.

Design a monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) Framework, including quality and appropriately timed student assessments and a longitudinal study

It is imperative that the EMULI program design a MEL framework and revise its systems, tools and procedures for data collection, storage, analysis, and use. The framework should include (1) Theory of Change, (2) Learning Agenda, (3) Measurement, (4) Analysis and Synthesis, and (5) Dissemination and Data Use. The framework should include a baseline and endline assessment and identify standard public schools for comparison. In addition to establishing metrics and timeframes for data collection, pre and post testing should be prioritised, but at reduced intervals (see section 3.5). EMULI should consider designing a longitudinal study to trace the progress of students in the EMULI program over time. EMULI may also wish to access national and regional achievement data, as available, to include in the framework for triangulation of data. A framework will help improve consistency of data collection/use over the life of the project, and help the program to establish an evidence-base for future funding and inform future direction.

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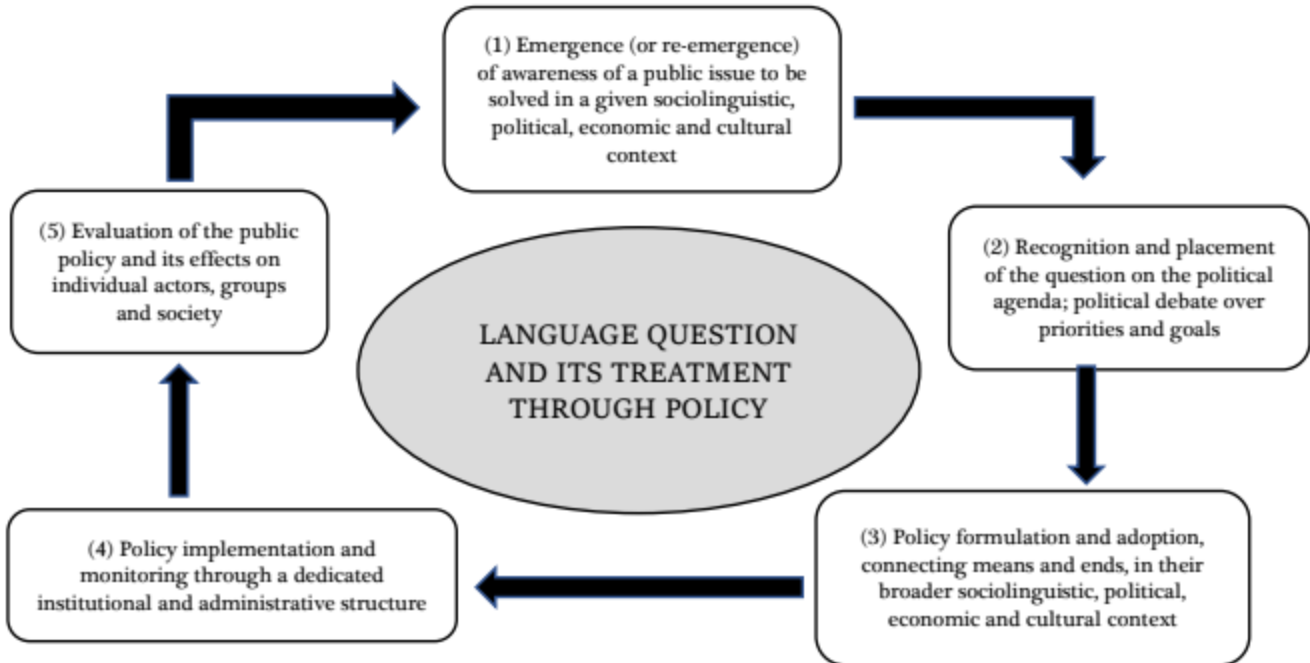
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## Annexes

### Annex 1: Language Policy Cycle Framework

The core of a policy analysis approach, across areas of human endeavour, can be described as a cycle comprising five steps, which can be visualised as a circular flow chart, as shown below. This flowchart summarises a very fundamental policy analysis approach, and it can be used both as a positive model to analyse and interpret reality and as a normative model to follow in the design of language policies. Its chief interest, however, lies not only with its characterization of policy analysis (whether applied to language, the environment, public transport or the health sector), but also with the fact that it helps us to:

- understand some of the limitations often observed in mainstream LPP research, and identify priority areas for progress in LPP;
- generate a highly inclusive complementarity among disciplines.



(Gazzola, Grin, Cardinal & Heugh, 2024)

## Annex 2: Wider issues in the education sector in Timor Leste

In the course of this evaluation, the evaluation team noted a number of issues which are relevant to the education sector in Timor Leste as a whole. While these are not issues specific to EMULI, they do affect EMULI schools. We list these as findings with recommendations below, noting that these recommendations are **not** specifically for DFAT or PHD, but should be considered by the sector as a whole.

Finding 1: Pre-service teacher education is of varying quality. In our observations, it does not appear to be preparing teachers to teach well, using child centred methodologies.

The evaluation team noted the lack of a cohesive pre-service teacher education system in Timor Leste. There are a number of avenues into teaching, and a number of institutions that offer pre-service teacher training, of various forms, and with various emphases. These include Marista in Bacau which is currently accredited by the National Agency for Academic Assessment and Accreditation (ANAAA); Naroman Esperansa College in Ermera Municipality; National University of Timor Leste which offers a 4-year training in Preschool and Basic Education, delivered in Portuguese; Instituto Superior Cristal (ISC), supported by the Fundação Cristal and Universidade Oriental Timor Lorosa'e (UNITAL)

The last two offer 4 year teacher training courses, but it was suggested to us by stakeholders that the quality and standards are not high<sup>121</sup>.

During the evaluation, the team conducted classroom observations in both EMULI and government schools. In most - despite the fact that the majority of the teachers we saw were qualified - the quality of teaching was poor. There were problems with both classroom management and pedagogy.

As noted [above](#), the majority of the lessons observed by the evaluation team were teacher centred, and focused on one main method of instruction - the teacher said something and children were invited to repeat. Although some classrooms were set up for easier work between students, we did not see pair or group work happening frequently. We did not see much evidence of children engaged in their own learning, or discovering things for themselves, or the development of other higher order thinking skills. This is despite the fact that most teachers we saw were 'qualified'<sup>122</sup> Using child-centred methods is more difficult for teachers than a rote 'repeat after me' method is, which may be one reason that more child centred methods are not widely in use. Some stakeholders suggested an additional reason was a general lack of accountability of teachers to anyone - reasons given include that the Inspectorate does not always function well as inspectors are often posted to work in their home communities, and may be inspecting teachers they know or are related to; and that teachers who are qualified are 'in the system' and unlikely to be penalised for not using child centred methods.<sup>123</sup> We will return to this point later, but a lack of standardised testing in the primary education cycle - at least until Year 9 - does not help with the lack of accountability. If there is little opportunity to assess whether children are learning at the appropriate level, there is also little opportunity to hold teachers and schools accountable for that failure, or to demand improvement.

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<sup>121</sup> Email correspondence with stakeholders.

<sup>122</sup> Interestingly, one of the teachers who did demonstrate a child centred lesson - in Preschool B in Maina 1 school - was not a qualified teacher.

<sup>123</sup> Remote interview with stakeholder, July 2024; and email correspondence with stakeholder, September 2024.

Teachers found effective classroom management a challenge. There were multiple examples of teachers leaving the majority of the class without a task - either while the teacher prepared part of the lesson, or while a small group or individual child was the focus of the activity (for instance, while one child came to the front to write on the blackboard, the rest of the class were not doing anything). In those cases, the majority of the children were not 'on task' and the teacher tended to ignore them, rather than attempting to bring them back to focus. Some teachers we observed interact negatively with the students: for instance shaming a child for being late; or chasisting a child for not having studied her Tetun.

Recommendation: The Pre-Service teacher education should be better aligned and integrated. Pre-Service teacher education should have a more explicit focus on multilingual education, child centred teaching methods, and classroom management.

The Ministry of Education should take the lead in ensuring that there is a consistent pre-service teacher education curriculum that all accredited teacher education institutions are obliged to use. Further, that this curriculum includes modules on multilingual teaching and learning, child centred teaching methods, and classroom management. The evaluation notes that the ESP 2020 - 2024 has the integration of a national system for pre-service teacher training as an activity<sup>124</sup>; however it is not clear that much - if any - progress has been made in this area.

Finding 2: Maintenance of the school environment and construction of new classrooms require continued and increased investment and attention.

The schools we visited were in relatively poor repair - this included both EMULI schools and government schools that were not implementing EMULI. This finding is corroborated by a similar finding in the Timor Leste ESP 2020- 2024.<sup>125</sup> One exception to this was the CAFE school in Manatuto which appeared relatively well resourced and in a good state of repair. We learned that most schools operated in shifts, with different ages of students using the same classrooms at different times. This was primarily due to lack of classrooms, and to some extent lack of sufficient numbers of teachers.

In the EMULI classrooms we observed, the walls were often damaged, and children were using furniture that was either old and damaged, or of an inappropriate size for the child. Walls were often bare, or had old and damaged learning posters on them. A few had the children's work or pictures on display, but many did not. Many classrooms had the childrens' desks arranged in rows facing the front of the class. Some of these issues, we were told - for instance in Bobolo'a Primary School - were due to the classrooms being used by different Years in shifts during the day. The same issue was mentioned in Lautem, and by the Ministry of Education. Although in most cases, teachers did not sit behind their desks, there was not a lot of interaction from the teacher moving around the class. A few classes had the desks arranged in small groups which would have supported children working together in small groups; or in a U-Shape to allow for children to work in pairs and also see the front of the class; but despite the desk arrangement, those other methods of having children work together was not evident.

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<sup>124</sup> Timor Leste Education Sector Plan 2020 - 2024, Government of Timor Leste and The World Bank (2019), p. 70:

[https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/timor\\_lete\\_Education\\_Sector\\_Plan\\_ESP\\_2020-2024.pdf](https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/timor_lete_Education_Sector_Plan_ESP_2020-2024.pdf)

<sup>125</sup> Timor Leste Education Sector Plan 2020 - 2024, *ibid*, p. 86

The combination of poor state of repair in most schools, lack of appropriately sized furniture in good condition, the lack of teaching resources and the lack of children's work on the walls are not conducive for a good learning environment for children. The same can be said of classroom management. It should be noted that these observations were not confined to EMULI schools, but were evident in all the schools - with the exception of the CAFE school in Manatuto, which is resourced on a different basis to government schools.

The evaluation team notes that the Education Sector Plan 2020 - 2024 recommends the construction of 1,181 new classrooms by 2024, prioritising schools with multiple shifts; and the provision of tables and chairs for students<sup>126</sup>. Assessing whether that work has taken place is beyond the scope of this evaluation, but we note that we did not observe many new classrooms; with the exception of relatively new classrooms for the preschool at Rembor in Manatuto. We did not notice much at all in the area of maintenance and renovation of existing classrooms. We note also the challenge suggested by development partner stakeholders<sup>127</sup> that capital investment in the education sector is becoming more and more difficult as the country approaches a fiscal cliff due to depletion of the state's Petroleum Fund, and that most of the education budget is currently allocated to pay teacher salaries.

Recommendation: Better school and classroom maintenance will support improved learning environments for children, and should continue to receive investment. Where possible, that investment should increase.

As noted, issues relating to school and classroom maintenance are beyond the scope of this evaluation, as they do not relate specifically to schools implementing EMULI. However, given the disrepair the team witnessed in many schools, it is clear that continued - and increased - investment is necessary to improve the learning environment for children. Clearly this is a challenge for the state, and it is likely to remain an area in need of financial support from development partners.

Finding 3: Development partner coordination in the education sector in Timor Leste does not function well, and the central role of Government in expressing its priorities is lacking.

A full analysis of the state of development partner coordination (internally among development partners, and with the Government) is beyond the scope of this evaluation. However, it should be mentioned that several national level stakeholders expressed concern over the system not working as well as it should<sup>128,129</sup>. There is a development partner coordination platform - ACETL (Acção Conjunta da Educação em Timor Leste); however, it currently meets only once a year; and the working groups that sit below it are not fully functional.<sup>130</sup> Some development partners including KOICA, MFAT, World Bank and UNICEF do meet to coordinate more regularly, with the intent to avoid duplication of effort, but this meeting does not include

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<sup>126</sup> Timor Leste Education Sector Plan 2020 - 2024, Government of Timor Leste and The World Bank (2019), p. 42:

[https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/timor\\_lete\\_Education\\_Sector\\_Plan\\_ESP\\_2020-2024.pdf](https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/timor_lete_Education_Sector_Plan_ESP_2020-2024.pdf)

<sup>127</sup> Stakeholder interview Dili, 15 August 2024.

<sup>128</sup> Stakeholder interview, Dili, 15 August 2024

<sup>129</sup> Stakeholder interview, Dili, 16 August 2024

<sup>130</sup> Stakeholder interview, Dili, 15 August 2024

MoE, and is currently ad hoc and informal.<sup>131</sup> The evaluation team were told that it is rare to see project designs being adapted on the basis of shared knowledge, which is unfortunate.<sup>132</sup>

In addition, the role of MoE in coordination in the sector is not where it should be. The view expressed was that the current situation is that Government tries to fill the gaps where development partners are not working, while it should be the other way around, with Government leading, deciding its priorities and what it can fund, and then asking development partners to fill the gaps. Another stakeholder ascribed the competition and lack of coordination of development partners to the MoE not being clear about what its priorities are, and how it wants to achieve them.<sup>133</sup>

Recommendation: Development partners should continue to work with the Ministry of Education to ensure a more effective approach to development partner coordination. The development of the next Education Sector Plan from 2025 provides an opportunity for better coordination. Efforts should be made to revitalise ACETL and its associated technical working groups for more effective cooperation and coordination.

Development partner coordination in the education sector is an essential part of a healthy ecosystem. This will benefit the EMULI program, but also all other education programs in Timor Leste. Development partners should work to revitalise the existing platform, ACETL, and the working groups below it. The current Education Sector Plan is due to be updated for the period from 2025. Its development provides an opportunity for the Ministry of Education to bring together sector stakeholders and develop a costed plan with clear priorities and actions for all stakeholders.

Finding 4: Limited learning outcomes data are recorded for students in EMIS (or elsewhere) in Timor Leste, and what data does exist is incomplete, of poor quality, and not standardised (across the country, the region, municipalities, or even schools themselves).

There is limited data to show learning outcomes of children across the education system in Timor Leste. All schools conduct testing once a term, but those tests are designed and implemented at individual school level, and so the data from them can not be used to compare learning outcomes between schools.

At present, the only national standardised test in use across Timor Leste is administered at the end of Year 9, the transition between primary and secondary education. Quality of the Year 9 exams is reportedly not consistent, with poorly worded questions and some with no correct answer. There are termly ('trimestral') exams conducted at school level, but as questions are written at school level and not standardised across schools/municipalities, exam results cannot provide reliable measurements of student achievement.

Recommendation: Consider substantial investment in improvements to MoE processes for collecting, recording, analysing and using learning outcome/student achievement data, including EMIS. Consider the development and implementation of standardised testing for children earlier in the basic education cycle.

Provide technical assistance for standardisation and improvement of termly assessments and Y9 national examinations (tools and protocols). The MoE and partners should consider the development and implementation of standardised testing for children earlier in the basic education cycle. In the UK, there are standardised tests administered at the end of several 'Key Stages'. There are tests in reading, language skills (grammar, spelling), maths and science. An alternative, at least in the shorter term, for Timor Leste would

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid

<sup>133</sup> Stakeholder interview, Dili, 16 August 2024

be to consider regular Early Grade Reading Assessments and Early Grade Maths Assessments at the end of Year 5. We emphasise here the need for **national, regular testing** - that is, every year for the relevant year group. Consideration should be given to a standardised test earlier than at the end of Year 9 - perhaps in Year 6, when children in all public schools in Timor Leste would have been taught through Tetun for at least 2 years. The evaluation team notes the controversy around standardised testing, but with proper consideration given to both the development of the tests, and how the results are used to inform students themselves, parents and schools they can be a useful instrument to support improvements in teaching and learning practices, and accountability of schools to parents and students.

Finding 5: Parental Engagement in education appears to be somewhat lacking.

This is perhaps not surprising given Timor Leste's recent history, and the fact that as a result of conflict, many parents with young children either did not attend school at all, or had their education disrupted. Some parents were able to say what their children were learning about, but mostly at the level of the subject they were learning, rather than in any detail (for instance, they may have been able to identify that their child was learning maths, but were not able to say whether they were learning addition, or fractions, for instance). It is likely however that parents will be able to become more involved in their children's education when they can understand the language their children are being taught through. Encouraging children to bring home reading books in mother tongue and asking parents to read with their children as is happening in some EMULI schools should be celebrated and increased.

Recommendation: Encourage more parental engagement in education.

variety of approaches to this could be considered, and by a range of stakeholders, especially civil society. Schools should be encouraged to allow children to bring home any mother tongue reading books for parents and children to read together. Where they do not yet exist, the establishment of parent teacher associations which meet to discuss children's education could be beneficial. We noted at some preschools that parents appeared to bring their children to school, and then wait outside the classroom, sometimes with their younger children, often for hours. There is potential to engage those parents - mostly mothers - in activities to support their older children's learning, for instance by engaging them in some classroom activities.

Finding 6: In-Service Education could be more cohesive and comprehensive.

EMULI is one provider of in-service teacher education in Timor Leste, with a specific focus on mother tongue based multilingual education. There are many others, and all should be under the remit of INFORDEPE, the national institute for the training of teachers and education professionals. Too often, though, INFORDEPE is side-stepped - this has also happened with EMULI. The result is a patchwork of training interventions in different parts of the country.

Recommendation: A range of stakeholders should work with INFORDEPE to improve teacher training across the board.

We have noted above the importance of improving development partner coordination, both internally, and with bodies of Government and associated agencies. In the area of in service teacher education, EMULI could work with other development partners, perhaps under a technical working group of a revitalised ACETL, to support INFORDEPE in the development of a much more comprehensive in service teacher education program for all teachers in Timor Leste. Such a program could include a focus on the use of child centred / active pedagogy in resource poor classrooms in a range of mother tongues - so that teachers are equipped to teach well through a range of mother tongues, which may include Tetun.

## Annex 3: Graduate Case Studies

### Case Study 1

Miguel, now aged 16, studied in his mother tongue from pre-B to Year 6 and was part of an EMULI-supported school in Oecusse.

Miguel is studying in year 10 and helps around the house, particularly in the kitchen, where he loves to fry fish.

Miguel liked studying in his mother tongue; sometimes, he didn't understand the words in Tetun, and the teacher would explain them to him in Baikenu. He currently finds geology most difficult at school. They are taught in Portuguese and translate this into Tetun with equal amounts of both languages used. However, it is not the language that challenges him but the subject itself.

Learning in his mother tongue did help at school. Maths and Chemistry are his best subjects as he likes to count, and he is learning maths in Baikenu. He uses both Tetun and Baikenu at home, and he knew Tetun before he went to school. He would recommend his younger sibling go to the same school as he did, mainly because it is close, and thinks that writing and reading in Tetun would be fine.

Miguel mainly speaks Tetun at home and Baikenu with other people (such as his neighbours); his father talks to his mother in both languages. Miguel considers the strength of his school a result of having been supported by EMULI and that he would have done as well if his schooling had been in Tetun, although learning in his mother tongue has helped him.

Miguel thinks that his teachers are good, and he would like to be a teacher someday, especially as his father is a teacher.

### Case study 2

Jenia, 19, studied in her mother tongue until year six and is currently in year 12—her last year of high school. She helps her parents cook and has a dog and cat.

She liked learning in her mother tongue; sometimes she didn't understand the words in Tetun and the teacher would explain them to him in Baikenu. Her biggest challenge in school is English; the teacher uses Tetun to teach English (and there is too much Tetun). Learning in Baikenu helped.

Jenia uses both Tetun and Baikenu at home, and her parents speak to each other in Tetun. She doesn't consider EMULI (or learning in her mother tongue) to have helped; she considers that she did well because she liked to talk. She thinks reading and writing in Baikenu is important, and while her home language was Tetun, she didn't think it was hard to learn Baikenu at primary school.

Jenia thinks that her teachers are good. She dreams of being a nurse one day and would like to care for pregnant mothers.

### Case study 3

Silvia, 19, is in her second year of Secondary School (she's studying in the natural sciences stream) at St Anthony's Secondary School in Manatuto. She learnt for eight years in her mother tongue at Rembor Preschool and primary.

Silvia likes to study hard to get good results in school. She is in sports teams, playing volleyball and basketball.

At primary school, her teachers taught her well. Silvia learnt to read and do maths easily. The teachers also used games, songs, and music to help students learn. In Years 2 and 3, she participated in a national science fair three times.

In primary school, Silvia was taught how to count, the teachers explained things well, and students had to do sums on the board. All of this has prepared her well to study natural science now. Teachers taught in Tetun and Galolen and used Galolen to help them understand. Teachers used phrases in Galolen and that made it easy for the students to understand – and the teachers also translated phrases into Tetun to help learn the other language.

The teachers would translate from Tetun to Galolen and later from Portuguese to Tetun or Galolen. They also asked them to read sentences in different languages to help them understand. In preschool to Year 3, the languages used were Galolen and Tetun; from Years 4 to 6, the languages used were Tetun and Portuguese. Making the transition in Year 4, to where there was no Galolen at all, was good. She found she could switch easily between languages, as she was used to using phrases sentences and composing in both Tetun and Portuguese. From Year 3 the students started writing stories and sentences.

Silvia would like her kids to go to an EMULI school. She thinks that students from Rembor (EMULI) are reading better than children from other schools and that EMULI helps students to understand numbers and facts quickly. She hopes the program continues as it is supporting her brothers and sisters to understand facts and numbers.

Silvia would like to go to university and study medicine so she can become a doctor.

#### **Case study 4**

Mariana, 16, is currently a Year 11 high school student in Santo Antonio de Manatuto Secondary school and started studying in her mother tongue in Pre A at Rembor (an EMULI school in Manatuto).

Mariana is a member of youth parliament (national program), plays basketball on the school team and started learning guitar a year ago.

Mariana is thankful for the EMULI program. She says it was easy to learn her letters and do counting, gave her confidence in the classroom. At the same time, while she was fluent in Galolen, she wasn't very confident in Tetun, and she made lots of mistakes and mixed up the languages. It took her until about year 6 to feel confident (she did this interview in Tetun).

Mariana learned Galolen at home and was taught by her parents. She expanded her vocabulary at school and is thankful that learning in Galolen helped her to learn Tetun and Portuguese. She thinks that learning mother tongue is like a guide to learn other languages; if you jump straight into learning in Portuguese you won't learn.

Mariana speaks Galolen at home. When friends come over and if they speak Galolen they all speak to each other in Galolen, but if not they would speak in Tetun. If they are friends from the community the language is normally Galolen, if the city the language would be Tetun. She thinks it is good to learn your own language; your own mother tongue is like 'a guide' and makes it easy to communicate and to learn ABCs. Through mother-tongue she can then learn Tetun. She would have her own children learn Galolen.

In the future, Mariana dreams of studying abroad in the USA or Australia and wants to learn other languages. Her first choice would be to study medicine to be a doctor, her second choice would be as an engineer.

She loves learning biology and says they teach it in a mix of Portuguese and Tetun. From years 3 to 6, teachers taught in a mix of Galolen, Tetun, and Portuguese. In years 7 to 9, subjects were taught in

Portuguese, but students didn't understand, so Tetun is sometimes used instead. She learned Galolen in preschool, in Year 1 Tetun was introduced, and Portuguese was slowly introduced, and she started learning Portuguese grammar in years 7 to 9. Mariana does find it difficult to hold conversations in Portuguese.

At Youth Parliament, Tetun is used because of a mix of identities; some use their mother tongue. However, the students are provided with training using Tetun and Portuguese, and their speeches are delivered in those languages.

Mariana is delighted and thankful for the EMULI program. Through the program, she had a chance to go to Dili 3 times to sing for the international day of mother-tongue languages, and she was able to meet President Gusmao.

### **Case study 5**

Jusmando, 17, is a student in the Secondary School (science and technology stream) in Lautem. Jusmando learnt in his mother tongue from Years 1 to 3 at Muapitine Primary School.

Outside school Jusmando likes to play football with his friend, in school Geology is his favourite subject.

When he was learning in his mother tongue, the teacher helped them learn with Fataluku and translate into Tetun because the students only knew a few words in Tetun. This made it easier to learn. Sometimes when the class was in Tetun and Portuguese they asked the teacher to explain in Fataluku so they could understand.

In the future, Jusmando would want his children to go to a Tetun and Portuguese- speaking school because they can learn Fataluku from their friends. To make the transition between languages easier, he would speak to them in both Fataluku and Tetun.

When he finishes school he wants to attend language courses such as English and Portuguese. Jusmando would like to be a geologist and explore different areas.

### **Case Study 6**

Laura, 16, is a current student at a secondary school (science and technology). She started studying in her mother tongue at preschool in Muapitine, until Year 2. After school, she likes playing volleyball and goes to volleyball training.

Laura has good memories of school. Learning through Fataluku made it easy for her to understand. Even though the main teaching language changed, the teacher was still able to use Fataluku to support students when it was difficult. If she had children, she would have them learn in the same way she did: through Fataluku first, then transitioning to other languages.

In the future, Laura would like to be a doctor.

### **Case Study 7**

Ferlia, 15, is a secondary school student studying science and technology. She started studying in her mother tongue in Year 1 in Muapitine school.

Ferlia lives with her brothers and sisters, who cook and eat together. She was happy in primary school and didn't have difficulty learning anything. Her parents used to speak in Tetun, but she learned Fataluku from her friends. Her family is from this area, but her parents started talking to them in Tetun when they were little. It wasn't difficult for her to make the transition at school.

If she had children, Ferlia would like them to learn the same way she did; with Fataluku and Tetun, so that they can communicate easily with everybody.

Ferlia hasn't decided what she wants to do in the future, but she would like to go to university in Dili. She hasn't decided yet what area.

### Case study 8

Jenilson, 14, is currently in primary school in Year 8. He learned in his mother tongue from Years 1 to 8 and goes to Muapitine school.

Jenilson likes playing soccer with friends and is happy at school with no difficulties. He was unhappy with always studying through Fataluku to Year 6 as he and his friends already knew Fataluku. He didn't feel like he was learning. As he already knew some Tetun, he found it easy to understand.

If Jenilson had children, he would like them to learn Tetun and speak to them in Tetun at home so that they would understand.

In the future, he would like to join the Police.

## Annex 4: Stakeholder Interviews (list)

Summary of Interview Numbers:

Methodology	Number	Number of participants	M	F	% of females
KIIs	16	36	20	16	44%
FGDs Parents	3	13	4	9	69%
FGDs Children	3	20	10	10	50%
FGDs Teachers	7	40	19	21	52.5%
Case Studies	5	8	3	5	63%

In addition, there were observations of 19 classes in all 10 EMULI schools as well as 1 CAFE school and 2 schools working with the ALMA project.

Parent Focus Group participants

**Table: Participant Demographic Information**

Gender	Attended School	Years of Schooling	Number of Children	Main Language Spoken at Home
Male	Yes	Finished secondary school	4	Fataluku
Female	Yes	Finished 2nd year of high school	2	Galolen

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Attended School</b>	<b>Years of Schooling</b>	<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Main Language Spoken at Home</b>
Male	No	Did not attend school	2	Tetun
Male	Yes	Finished junior high school (Year 9)	5	Tetun
Female	Yes	Finished secondary school	5	Tetun
Female	Yes	Finished 8th year	3	Tetun
Female	Yes	Finished 9th year	4	Tetun
Female	Yes	Finished 8th year	1	Galolen
Female	Yes	Finished 7th year	5	Tetun
Female	Yes	Finished 9th year	4	Baikeno
Female	Yes	Finished 9th year	6	Baikeno
Female	Yes	Finished 8th year	3	Baikeno
Male	No	Not applicable (N/A)	5	

## Annex 5 - Post test Results, 2019 and 2021

## Post-test 2019

Characteristic	Distribution		Mean scores (standard deviations in brackets)				
	N = 573	CAFE N = 114	EMBLI N = 183	Public N = 276	Diff <sup>1</sup>	p.value <sup>2</sup>	Effect size <sup>3</sup>
Total	573 (100%)	47.2 (14.0)	45.4 (19.3)	33.9 (15.1)	11.5	<0.001	0.7
Gender							
F	285 (50%)	51.6 (13.5)	47.9 (19.6)	34.8 (16.1)	13.1	<0.001	0.7
M	288 (50%)	42.8 (13.2)	43.0 (18.9)	33.0 (13.9)	9.9	0.001	0.6
District							
Lautem	213 (37%)	44.7 (11.2)	50.2 (18.7)	36.5 (11.2)	13.8	<0.001	0.9
Manatuto	144 (25%)	45.2 (15.7)	47.2 (20.9)	38.4 (16.6)	8.8	0.059	0.5
Oecussi	216 (38%)	51.9 (14.1)	39.3 (17.8)	28.6 (15.5)	10.7	<0.001	0.7
Subject							
Mathematics	191 (33%)	47.5 (14.9)	50.1 (20.6)	34.4 (15.5)	15.7	<0.001	0.9
Tetum	191 (33%)	47.5 (13.7)	44.2 (17.8)	35.3 (15.1)	8.9	0.023	0.5
Portuguese	191 (33%)	45.9 (12.3)	34.0 (12.8)	29.4 (13.1)	4.6	0.3	0.3
Grade							
pre	96 (17%)	52.7 (18.0)	75.6 (20.4)	39.9 (25.5)	35.7	0.011	1.5
Y1	96 (17%)	69.7 (8.2)	67.7 (9.3)	45.0 (14.6)	22.8	<0.001	1.7
Y2	96 (17%)	45.7 (11.8)	51.1 (11.9)	39.4 (17.4)	11.7	0.005	0.7
Y3	96 (17%)	48.6 (12.9)	48.4 (22.0)	28.9 (12.8)	19.5	0.002	1.1
Y4	96 (17%)	44.9 (11.4)	35.6 (13.0)	29.2 (12.6)	6.4	0.10	0.5
Y5	93 (16%)	39.7 (9.8)	33.0 (6.5)	32.7 (8.0)	0.3	0.7	0.1

<sup>1</sup>EMULI/EMBLI - Public

<sup>2</sup>Nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis rank sum test of equal means of EMULI/EMBLI and Public.

<sup>3</sup>Difference in terms of pooled standard deviations (Hedge's G)

## Annex 5. Post-test results (2019)

Table A5-1. Post-test results by participant characteristics, 2019

## 1. Overall Results (Post-test 2019)

Group	N	CAFE Mean (SD)	EMBLI Mean (SD)	Public Mean (SD)	Diff	p-value	Effect size
Total	573 (100%)	47.2 (14.0)	45.4 (19.3)	33.9 (15.1)	11.5	<0.001	0.7

## 2. Results by Gender

Gender	N	CAFE Mean (SD)	EMBLI Mean (SD)	Public Mean (SD)	Diff	p-value	Effect size
Female	285 (50%)	51.6 (13.5)	47.9 (19.6)	34.8 (16.1)	13.1	<0.001	0.7
Male	288 (50%)	42.8 (13.2)	43.0 (18.9)	33.0 (13.9)	9.9	0.001	0.6

## 3. Results by District

District	N	CAFE Mean (SD)	EMBLI Mean (SD)	Public Mean (SD)	Diff	p-value	Effect size
Lautem	213 (37%)	44.7 (11.2)	50.2 (18.7)	36.5 (11.2)	13.8	<0.001	0.9
Manatuto	144 (25%)	45.2 (15.7)	47.2 (20.9)	38.4 (16.6)	8.8	0.059	0.5
Oecussi	216 (38%)	51.9 (14.1)	39.3 (17.8)	28.6 (15.5)	10.7	<0.001	0.7

## 4. Results by Subject

Subject	N	CAFE Mean (SD)	EMBLI Mean (SD)	Public Mean (SD)	Diff	p-value	Effect size
Mathematics	191 (33%)	47.5 (14.9)	50.1 (20.6)	34.4 (15.5)	15.7	<0.001	0.9
Tetum	191 (33%)	47.5 (13.7)	44.2 (17.8)	35.3 (15.1)	8.9	0.023	0.5
Portuguese	191 (33%)	45.9 (12.3)	34.0 (12.8)	29.4 (13.1)	4.6	0.3	0.3

## 5. Results by Grade

Grade	N	CAFE Mean (SD)	EMBLI Mean (SD)	Public Mean (SD)	Diff	p-value	Effect size
Pre	96 (17%)	52.7 (18.0)	75.6 (20.4)	39.9 (25.5)	35.7	0.011	1.5
Year 1	96 (17%)	69.7 (8.2)	67.7 (9.3)	45.0 (14.6)	22.8	<0.001	1.7
Year 2	96 (17%)	45.7 (11.8)	51.1 (11.9)	39.4 (17.4)	11.7	0.005	0.7
Year 3	96 (17%)	48.6 (12.9)	48.4 (22.0)	28.9 (12.8)	19.5	0.002	1.1
Year 4	96 (17%)	44.9 (11.4)	35.6 (13.0)	29.2 (12.6)	6.4	0.10	0.5
Year 5	93 (16%)	39.7 (9.8)	33.0 (6.5)	32.7 (8.0)	0.3	0.7	0.1

## Post-test 2021

Characteristic	Distribution		Mean scores (standard deviations in brackets)				
	N = 678	CAFE N = 126	EMULI N = 216	Public N = 336	Diff <sup>1</sup>	p.value <sup>2</sup>	Effect size <sup>3</sup>
Total	678 (100%)	41.1 (16.7)	44.0 (19.2)	27.9 (16.8)	16.1	<0.001	0.9
Gender							
F	339 (50%)	45.0 (17.1)	46.2 (19.7)	29.1 (18.0)	17.1	<0.001	0.9
M	339 (50%)	37.1 (15.6)	41.9 (18.7)	26.8 (15.4)	15.1	<0.001	0.9
District							
Lautem	258 (38%)	38.9 (12.4)	44.8 (15.9)	27.1 (16.9)	17.6	<0.001	1.1
Manatuto	168 (25%)	45.2 (19.1)	55.3 (21.7)	39.2 (17.8)	16.1	0.001	0.8
Oecussi	252 (37%)	39.1 (17.8)	37.7 (18.8)	21.3 (11.3)	16.4	<0.001	1.1
Subject							
Mathematics	226 (33%)	39.2 (12.4)	46.1 (17.4)	25.4 (13.7)	20.7	<0.001	1.4
Tetum	226 (33%)	38.8 (14.4)	38.2 (16.6)	26.3 (15.2)	11.8	<0.001	0.8
Portuguese	226 (33%)	49.1 (25.7)	49.3 (25.1)	36.5 (22.5)	12.8	0.011	0.5
Grade							
pre	96 (14%)	38.6 (25.5)	67.3 (13.6)	27.0 (14.5)	40.3	<0.001	2.8
Y1	96 (14%)	49.6 (8.1)	65.6 (13.2)	25.0 (17.9)	40.6	<0.001	2.4
Y2	102 (15%)	36.2 (8.8)	42.6 (14.2)	23.8 (16.5)	18.9	<0.001	1.2
Y3	96 (14%)	31.6 (7.8)	39.2 (8.6)	20.5 (11.8)	18.8	<0.001	1.7
Y4	96 (14%)	49.8 (25.9)	45.9 (27.3)	33.9 (23.4)	12.0	0.040	0.5
Y5	96 (14%)	38.2 (8.3)	29.8 (8.3)	23.8 (7.7)	6.0	0.004	0.7
Y6	96 (14%)	42.7 (15.1)	45.8 (15.4)	35.1 (14.9)	10.7	0.003	0.7

<sup>1</sup>EMULI/EMBLI - Public

<sup>2</sup>Nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis rank sum test of equal means of EMULI/EMBLI and Public.

<sup>3</sup>Difference in terms of pooled standard deviations (Hedge's G)

## Overall Results (Post-test 2021)

Group	N	CAFE Mean (SD)	EMULI Mean (SD)	Public Mean (SD)	Diff	p-value	Effect size
Total	678 (100%)	41.1 (16.7)	44.0 (19.2)	27.9 (16.8)	16.1	<0.001	0.9

## 2. Results by Gender

Gender	N	CAFE Mean (SD)	EMULI Mean (SD)	Public Mean (SD)	Diff	p-value	Effect size
Female	339 (50%)	45.0 (17.1)	46.2 (19.7)	29.1 (18.0)	17.1	<0.001	0.9

Gender	N	CAFE Mean (SD)	EMULI Mean (SD)	Public Mean (SD)	Diff	p-value	Effect size
Male	339 (50%)	37.1 (15.6)	41.9 (18.7)	26.8 (15.4)	15.1	<0.001	0.9

### 3. Results by District

District	N	CAFE Mean (SD)	EMULI Mean (SD)	Public Mean (SD)	Diff	p-value	Effect size
Lautem	258 (38%)	38.9 (12.4)	44.8 (15.9)	27.1 (16.9)	17.6	<0.001	1.1
Manatuto	168 (25%)	45.2 (19.1)	55.3 (21.7)	39.2 (17.8)	16.1	0.001	0.8
Oecussi	252 (37%)	39.1 (17.8)	37.7 (18.8)	21.3 (11.3)	16.4	<0.001	1.1

### 4. Results by Subject

Subject	N	CAFE Mean (SD)	EMULI Mean (SD)	Public Mean (SD)	Diff	p-value	Effect size
Mathematics	226 (33%)	39.2 (12.4)	46.1 (17.4)	25.4 (13.7)	20.7	<0.001	1.4
Tetum	226 (33%)	38.8 (14.4)	38.2 (16.6)	26.3 (15.2)	11.8	<0.001	0.8
Portuguese	226 (33%)	49.1 (25.7)	49.3 (25.1)	36.5 (22.5)	12.8	0.011	0.5

### 5. Results by Grade

Grade	N	CAFE Mean (SD)	EMULI Mean (SD)	Public Mean (SD)	Diff	p-value	Effect size
Pre	96 (14%)	38.6 (25.5)	67.3 (13.6)	27.0 (14.5)	40.3	<0.001	2.8
Year 1	96 (14%)	49.6 (8.1)	65.6 (13.2)	25.0 (17.9)	40.6	<0.001	2.4
Year 2	102 (15%)	36.2 (8.8)	42.6 (14.2)	23.8 (16.5)	18.9	<0.001	1.2
Year 3	96 (14%)	31.6 (7.8)	39.2 (8.6)	20.5 (11.8)	18.8	<0.001	1.7
Year 4	96 (14%)	49.8 (25.9)	45.9 (27.3)	33.9 (23.4)	12.0	0.040	0.5
Year 5	96 (14%)	38.2 (8.3)	29.8 (8.3)	23.8 (7.7)	6.0	0.004	0.7
Year 6	96 (14%)	42.7 (15.1)	45.8 (15.4)	35.1 (14.9)	10.7	0.003	0.7

## Annex 6: EMULI v National Language Progression

### National Basic Education Curriculum Language Progression

National Curriculum								
Plan for the progress of the first and second cycles.								
Language is a curriculum component.	Preschool		Cycle 1				Cycle 2	
	Preschool A	Preschool B	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
L1 = mother tongue			L1: Oral to support and as a bridge to L2, if necessary.	L1: Oral to support and as a bridge to L2, if necessary.	L1: Oral to support and as a bridge to L2, if necessary.	L1: Oral to support and as a bridge to L2, if necessary.		
L2 = Tetun			Tetum: Oral and write and read. (400 minutes each week)	Tetum: Oral and write and read. (325 minutes each week)	Tetum: Oral and write and read. (250 minutes each week)	Tetum: Oral and write and read. (250 minutes each week)	Tetum: Oral and write and read. (200 minutes each week)	Tetum: Oral and write and read. (200 minutes each week)
L3 = Portuguese			Portuguese: Oral (25 min each week)	Portuguese: Oral (75 min each week)	Portuguese: Oral and introduction to writing (150 min each week)	Portuguese: Oral, reading and writing (150 min each week)	Portuguese: Oral, reading and writing (200 min each week)	Portuguese: Oral, reading and writing (200 min each week)
Instructional language: teaching is not a language curriculum component.			L1 - L2 - L1 Introduce academic terms in L2.	L1 - L2 - L1 Introduce academic terms in L2.	L2 - L1 - L2 Introduce academic terms in L2 and L3.	L2 - L3 - L2 Introduce academic terms in L2 and L3.	L2 - L3 - L2 Introduce academic terms in L2 and L3.	L3 - L2 - L3 Introduce academic terms in L3.

### EMULI Language Progression

EMULI Programme								
Plan for the progress of preschool and the first and second cycles.								
Language as a discipline	Preschool		Cycle 1				Cycle 2	
	Preschool A	Preschool B	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
L1 = mother tongue	L1: Oral	L1: Oral Start literacy in mother tongue	L1: Oral Continue literacy in mother tongue	L1: Oral Literacy in mother tongue	L1: Oral Literacy in mother tongue	L1: Oral Literacy in mother tongue	L1: Oral Literacy in mother tongue (discipline 1)	L1: Oral Literacy in mother tongue (discipline 1)
L2 = Tetun		Start oral Tetun	Develop oral Tetun	Continue developing oral Tetun; start literacy in Tetun (trimester 3)	Oral Tetun and literacy	Oral Tetun and literacy	Oral Tetun and literacy	Oral Tetun and literacy
L3 = Portuguese				Start oral Portuguese (trimester 3)	Continue oral Portuguese	Oral Portuguese and introduce Portuguese literacy	Oral Portuguese and literacy	Oral Portuguese and literacy
Instructional language: non-language disciplines	L1	L1	L1	L1	L1 + L2	L1 + L2	L2	L2
				L1 - L2 - L2 Start academic terms in L2 for each discipline	L1 - L2 - L1 Academic terms in L2 for each discipline	L1 - L2 - L1 Academic terms in L2 and start terms for L3 for each discipline; daily L1 + L2	L2 + L1 Academic terms in L2 and L3 for each discipline; use L1 + L2 for explanation	L2 + L1 Academic terms in L2 and L3 for each discipline; use L1 + L2 for explanation

## Annex 6. EMULI v National Language Progression

Table A6-1. National Basic Education Curriculum – Language Progression

Education stage	Year / level	L1: Mother tongue	L2: Tetum	L3: Portuguese	Curriculum notes
Preschool	Preschool A	–	–	–	Language is a curriculum component
Preschool	Preschool B	–	–	–	Language is a curriculum component
Cycle 1	Year 1	Oral to support L2 if needed	Oral and written Tetum (400 minutes/week)	Oral Portuguese (25 minutes/week)	L1–L2–L1 approach; introduce academic terms in L2
Cycle 1	Year 2	Oral to support L2 if needed	Oral and written Tetum (325 minutes/week)	Oral Portuguese (75 minutes/week)	L1–L2–L1; introduce academic terms in L2
Cycle 1	Year 3	Oral to support L2 if needed	Oral and written Tetum (250 minutes/week)	Oral Portuguese, introduce writing (150 minutes/week)	L2–L1–L2; introduce academic terms in L2 and L3
Cycle 1	Year 4	Oral to support L2 if needed	Oral and written Tetum (250 minutes/week)	Portuguese reading and writing (150 minutes/week)	L2–L3–L2; introduce academic terms in L2 and L3
Cycle 2	Year 5	–	Oral and written Tetum (200 minutes/week)	Portuguese reading and writing (200 minutes/week)	L2–L3–L2; introduce academic terms in L2 and L3
Cycle 2	Year 6	–	Tetum oral and written (200 minutes/week)	Portuguese reading and writing (200 minutes/week)	L3–L2–L3; introduce academic terms in L3

Table A6-2. EMULI Programme – Language Progression

Education stage	Year / level	L1: Mother tongue	L2: Tetum	L3: Portuguese	Instructional language approach
Preschool	Preschool A	Oral L1	–	–	L1 used
Preschool	Preschool B	L1 oral; start literacy in mother tongue	Start oral Tetum	–	L1 used
Cycle 1	Year 1	Continue literacy in mother tongue	Develop oral Tetum	–	L1 used
Cycle 1	Year 2	Oral literacy in mother tongue	Developing oral Tetum; start literacy (Trimester 3)	Start oral Portuguese (Trimester 3)	L1–L2
Cycle 1	Year 3	Literacy in mother tongue	Oral Tetum and literacy	Continue oral Portuguese	L1 + L2
Cycle 1	Year 4	Oral literacy in mother tongue	Oral Tetum and literacy	Oral Portuguese; introduce Portuguese literacy	L1 + L2
Cycle 2	Year 5	Oral literacy in mother tongue (discipline-specific)	Oral Tetum and literacy	Oral Portuguese and literacy	L2–L3 + L1 support
Cycle 2	Year 6	Oral literacy in mother tongue (discipline-specific)	Oral Tetum and literacy	Oral Portuguese and literacy	L2–L3 + L1 support

## Annex 7: Overview of findings from stakeholders

(responses to the questions ‘What has EMULI done well?’ and ‘What has EMULI done less well?’)

<b>EMULI has done well</b>	<b>Number of responses backing statement, and stakeholder type</b>	<b>Extract from transcript or quotation</b>
EMULI has improved student comprehension of curriculum content	10 - all responses from stakeholders in municipalities. Stakeholder types are: headteachers, municipal director of education, EMULI graduate student, teacher and parents.	She began teaching in 2008, and was using Fataluku and Tetun to teach. In 2010, they attended training for teaching in Portuguese, Fataluku and Tetun. But the students didn't really understand. Then in 2012, they switched to the EMULI method with Fataluku and Tetun, and now the students understand better. Before the students could only do the numbers up to 20; now the students know the numbers up to 100 in both Fataluku and Tetun. "When we use mother tongue, the students can easily understand". (Lautem stakeholder)
EMULI has improved literacy and numeracy in children	5 - all responses from stakeholders in municipalities. Stakeholder types are: municipal director of education, headteachers, parents, EMULI graduate student, teachers	"Before EMULI, the grades for students, they didn't know how to read. Now, the students know how to read at the right level." (Manatuto stakeholder)
Children are more engaged in their learning through being taught in their mother tongue or a language that is familiar to them	7 - all responses are from stakeholders in municipalities. Stakeholder types are municipal director of education, teachers, EMULI graduate student, parents, mentors	"When we ask the kids in their first language they respond actively, they are not shy, they feel like they are at home" (Oecusse stakeholder)

<p>EMULI has successfully advocated at various levels for the importance of MTB-MLE</p>	<p>5 - all from stakeholders in municipalities. Stakeholder types are municipal director of education, school head teacher, mentor and parents.</p>	<p>When they first implemented the community was cautious, because the community wanted to use the official languages after independence. But slowly with some advocacy they came on board with using Fataluku. They invited community leaders to be involved in writing the stories in the local language; they also invited the parents to come and see the teacher training. This helped to convince them.</p> <p>"We invited them also in the development of the Fataluku alphabet/written language." (Lautem stakeholder)</p>
<p>The resources and training have helped with making lessons more engaging</p>	<p>5 - all responses from stakeholders in municipalities. Stakeholder types are municipal director of education, teachers, head teachers, mentors.</p>	<p>"Even with 45 students in one room, it's ok, the teacher will group the students, they can sing, the pictures are attached on the wall and they can look together, students enjoy it, because of the lesson plans and resources you can do it even with a large class" (Oecusse stakeholder)</p>

<p><b>EMULI has done less well</b></p>	<p><b>Number of responses backing statement, and stakeholder type</b></p>	<p><b>Extract from transcript or quotation</b></p>
<p>EMULI has not (yet) successfully made the case for a late exit language progression plan. Many stakeholders could see the importance of MTBE-MLE in the early years, but not as students got older.</p>	<p>5 - all responses from stakeholders in municipalities. Stakeholder types are: municipal director of education, parents, mentors,</p>	<p>"Some of the parents/community members are still sceptical of learning through Fataluku in Years after Year 2 rather than the main language of instruction." (Lautem stakeholder)</p>
<p>EMULI has not yet been able to overcome the perception that it is about teaching mother tongue, rather than teaching through mother tongue.</p>	<p>8 - all responses from stakeholders in municipalities. Stakeholder types are:  Headteachers, municipal director of education,</p>	<p>"Some parents/community think that the students won't learn; they will be stuck only in the local language and not learning new things, only mother tongue which they already know." (Lautem stakeholder)</p>

EMULI has done less well	Number of responses backing statement, and stakeholder type	Extract from transcript or quotation
	parents, mentors	
Lack of high quality ongoing teacher training over the last 5 years has been detrimental to the program.	4 - combination of Dili stakeholders and stakeholders in municipalities. Stakeholder types include: development partner stakeholder, mentors, teachers	"Initially they [the EMULI program] did well on the teacher training. That is an area that has been very much neglected over the last 5 years, with the holding pattern phase since 2018." (Dili stakeholder)
EMULI has become politicised	7 - combination of both Dili stakeholders and stakeholders in municipalities. Stakeholder types are: development partner stakeholder; headteacher, municipal director of education, mentor	"EMULI is seen as a program of the CNRT party; no other party will continue with it". (Dili stakeholder)  "The government wanted to completely close EMULI; they really wanted to close when they said not to expand." (Oecusse stakeholder)
EMULI has not been consistently resourced or implemented	4 - combination of both Dili stakeholders and stakeholders in municipalities. Stakeholder types are: development partner stakeholder, mentor, municipal director of education.	"EMULI started well but wasn't sustained"  "Wasn't well structured (staffed); no consistent resourcing"  (both, Dili stakeholder)

## Annex 8: List of EMULI Schools

Municipality	Level of education	Name of school
Lautem	Basic Education	EBF 1.2 Maina I
Lautem	Basic Education	EBF 1.2 Maupitine
Manatuto	Basic Education	EBF 1.2.3 Rembor
Oecusse	Basic Education	EBC 1.2.3 Boboloa
Oecusse	Basic Education	EBF 1.2 - 28 de Agosto
Lautem	Pre-School	EPE Maina I
Lautem	Pre-School	EPE Futuru de Muapitine
Manatuto	Pre-School	EPE Moris Foun Rembor
Oecusse	Pre-School	EPE Boboloa
Oecusse	Pre-School	EPE Nossa Senhora do Rosario de Fatima

## Annex 9: Teachers interviewed

Gender	Municipality	Total years teaching	# years at this school	Year teaching	Languages spoken	How confident do you feel teaching through mother tongue (1 = not at all confident, 5 = very confident)	What language do you think the children you teach learn best through?
F	Oecusse	16	9	Pre A	Tetun; Baikenu (before she married); very good Portuguese	4.5	Baikenu and Tetun
F	Oecusse	14	14	Pre B	Baikenu (mother tongue); Tetun, little Portuguese	4.5	Baikenu and Tetun
F	Oecusse	12	3 mo. (transferred from another)	Pre B	Baikenu (MT); Tetun, little Portuguese	4.5	Baikenu and Tetun

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Total years teaching</b>	<b># years at this school</b>	<b>Year teaching</b>	<b>Languages spoken</b>	<b>How confident do you feel teaching through mother tongue (1 = not at all confident, 5 = very confident)</b>	<b>What language do you think the children you teach learn best through?</b>
			EMULI school)				
F	Oecusse	3	3	Y1	Baikenu, Tetun, Bahasa	5	Baikenu
F	Oecusse	10	10	Y1	Baikenu, Tetun, Bahasa	5	Baikenu
F	Oecusse	10	7	Y2	Baikenu, Tetun, Bahasa	5	Baikenu
F	Oecusse	24	24	Y6	Baikenu, Tetun, Bahasa, Portuguese	1	Baikenu
M	Oecusse	22	9	Y4	Baikenu, Tetun, Bahasa	3	Baikenu
M	Oecusse	10	8	Y5	Baikenu, Tetun, Bahasa	2	Baikenu
M	Oecusse	24	10	Y3	Baikenu, Tetun, Bahasa	5	Baikenu
M	Oecusse	24	15	Y2	Baikenu, Tetun, Bahasa	5	Baikenu
F	O ecusse	10	10	Y1	Baikenu, Tetun, Bahasa, Portuguese	5	Baikenu

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Total years teaching</b>	<b># years at this school</b>	<b>Year teaching</b>	<b>Languages spoken</b>	<b>How confident do you feel teaching through mother tongue (1 = not at all confident, 5 = very confident)</b>	<b>What language do you think the children you teach learn best through?</b>
F	Oecusse	14	14	Y2	Baikenu, Tetun, Bahasa, Portuguese	5	Baikenu
F	Oecusse	23	15	Y4	Baikenu, Tetun, Bahasa, Portuguese	5	Baikenu
F	Oecusse	14	14	Y1	Baikenu, Tetun, Bahasa, Portuguese	5	Baikenu
M	Oecusse	18	13	Y6	Baikenu, Tetun, Bahasa, Portuguese	5	Baikenu
M	Oecusse	14	14	Y1, Y3	Baikenu, Tetun, Bahasa, Portuguese	5	Baikenu
M	Oecusse	24	13	Y5	Baikenu, Tetun, Bahasa, Portuguese	5	Baikenu and Tetun
M	Oecusse	24	8	Y3	Baikenu, Tetun, Bahasa, Portuguese	5	Baikenu
M	Manatuto	21	Not asked	Y3	Galolen	1	Tetun as is national language (supported by local lang and Portuguese)

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Total years teaching</b>	<b># years at this school</b>	<b>Year teaching</b>	<b>Languages spoken</b>	<b>How confident do you feel teaching through mother tongue (1 = not at all confident, 5 = very confident)</b>	<b>What language do you think the children you teach learn best through?</b>
F	Manatuto	11	Not asked	Pre School B	Galolen	5	Galolen
F	Manatuto	10	Not asked	Y3, Y4	Galolen	3	Galolen
F	Manatuto	39	Not asked	Y5	Galolen	3	Galolen (easy to implement lesson and students understand better)
F	Manatuto	12	Not asked	Y2	Galolen	5	Mix all languages in higher Years. She likes mother tongue. Helps to ensure all students are comfortable to learn.
M	Manatuto	14	Not asked	Y2	Galolen	4	All 3 languages! To ensure understanding.
M	Manatuto	22	Not asked	Pre School B	Galolen	5	Guides with Galolen if students don't understand Portuguese.
F	Manatuto	2	Not asked	?	Galolen	5	Galolen
F	Lautem	16		Year 1	Fataluku, Tetun and little	5	Fataluku

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Total years teaching</b>	<b># years at this school</b>	<b>Year teaching</b>	<b>Languages spoken</b>	<b>How confident do you feel teaching through mother tongue (1 = not at all confident, 5 = very confident)</b>	<b>What language do you think the children you teach learn best through?</b>
					Portuguese. She doesn't speak Bahasa anymore.		
F	Lautem	9		Year 1	Fataluku and Tetun, little Bahasa, little Portuguese	5	Fataluku
M	Lautem	16		Year 5	Portuguese, Tetun and Bahasa and Fataluku	3	Tetun and Portuguese
M	Lautem	24		Year 5	Tetun, Portuguese, Fataluku and little Bahasa	3	Tetun and Portuguese
M	Lautem	12		Year 2	Fataluku, Tetun, Portuguese (little), little Bahasa and little English	5	Fataluku
M	Lautem	12		Preschool B	Tetun, Fataluku, little Portuguese and Bahasa	5	Fataluku
F	Lautem	16		Preschool A	Fataluku, Tetun, little Bahasa and Portuguese (she finds it difficult)	5	Fataluku
F	Lautem	12		Year 1	Fataluku, Tetun, Portuguese (oral)	5	Fataluku

NB: Some questions such as the number of years that the teacher had been at their current school were not asked of teachers in Manatuto, as the team refined their tools on that visit.

## Annex 10 - EMULI Classroom Observation form

Pictures of the section of the EMULI Classroom Observation form showing the metrics measured for lesson content and delivery (in Tetun)

### 5. Disiplina sira

#### » Lisaun

1

\* Lisaun Ensinu Pre Eskolar

\* Lisaun Ensinu Basiku

#### Konteudu Lisaun

Lisaun

*Favor rate afirmasaun sira tuir kategoria sira*

La diak (1)

Naton (2)

Diak (3)

Diak Tebes (4)

*Komentariu espesifiku ba valor ne'ebe observador hili*

\* Kuinesementu ba kontiudu





*Komentariu espesifiku ba valor ne'ebe observador hili*

\* Hatudu ezemplu kona-ba kontiudu





*Komentariu espesifiku ba valor ne'ebe observador hili*

\* Fahe tempu ba alunus kona ba kontiudu





*Komentariu espesifiku ba valor ne'ebe observador hili*

\* Fahe tempu ba kada atividade





*Komentariu espesifiku ba valor ne'ebe observador hili*