

Call for Submissions by 3 October 2019

Education, Language and the Human Rights of Minorities

In accordance with his mandate pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 34/6, [the Special Rapporteur on minority issues](#), Dr. Fernand de Varennes, intends to present a thematic report at the 43rd Session of the UN Human Rights Council, which will provide a detailed analysis and highlight the issue of “Education, Language and the Human Rights of minorities”. The report will address areas pertaining to the recognition, protection and promotion of minority languages in education, including education in and teaching of minority languages, and the adoption of inclusive pedagogical and educational approaches, with the view to ensuring equal access to quality education by persons belonging to minorities, in line with the international commitments under the post-2015 development agenda (SDG 4).

The report will also provide suggestions and recommendations addressed to all relevant stakeholders at the local, national, regional and international levels, and identify examples of good practices and initiatives that recognize and support the linguistic rights of minorities and promote inter-culturalism and multilingualism in the educational systems.

Context

The issue of education as a human right and its contours and impact for minorities constitutes one of the thematic priorities of the Special Rapporteur. It is also a topical issue, given the persisting significant challenges faced by minorities around the world today in accessing quality education and in particular education that contributes to the preservation of their language and identity.

Laws and policies which provide for a monolingual approach to education and to the provision of services, and which also impose restrictions on the use of minority languages in the public sphere, especially as medium of instruction, are often based on the misconception that investing in minority languages and creating an environment for their use and further development would alienate minorities from the learning of the national/official language, create linguistic segregation that would undermine minority integration and threaten national unity, societal cohesion and harmony.

Inclusion of minority languages in education, both as separate subjects and as mediums of instruction, and the adoption of inter-cultural and multi-lingual approaches and methods in educational and vocational training programmes, have a direct positive impact on the educational performance of minority students, their self-esteem and development, and their integration in society in general.

In addition, protection of minority languages and the recognition, respect and promotion of the educational needs of minorities, is a crucial component of the protection and preservation of minorities’ cultural heritage and promotion of society’s diversity and development, and thus an important factor in reducing inter-ethnic tension and preventing conflicts.

In 2009, the inaugural session of the [Forum on Minority Issues](#) focused on minorities and the right to education and recommended that States provide adequate opportunities to persons belonging to minorities to learn their mother tongue or to learn through the medium of the

mother tongue, and such opportunities be chosen in consultation with them. It also recommended that teachers and appropriate teaching and reading materials, including textbooks, should be available in the mother tongues of minorities.

Furthermore, in its section on education, the 2017 publication by the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues entitled “[Language Rights of Linguistic Minorities: a practical guide for implementation](#)” highlights the importance of designing and implementing educational programmes in minority languages along with the teaching of the official language(s), and advocates for the preservation of minority languages, because as stated “a language that is not taught is a language that will ultimately vanish”. Furthermore, the practical guide emphasizes that “the rights of linguistic minorities are human rights”, and that education “deals with what is perhaps the central linguistic right of minorities, and is also fundamental to the maintenance of linguistic diversity.” It also indicates that “quality public education in the mother tongue should ‘be extended to as late a stage in education as possible’, up to and including public university education where practicable.”

The thematic report will address existing challenges with regard to such access to quality education by persons belonging to minorities, and will highlight good practices with regard to the inclusion of minority languages in national curricula, the effective involvement of minorities in the design and implementation of educational programmes, as well as other positive legal and policy developments that recognize and guarantee the right of minorities to learn and study in their own language.

In his analysis on minority language integration in the educational systems, the Special Rapporteur will pay particular attention to the educational needs of deaf people, as members of a linguistic minority, the recognition of sign language as a minority language and its inclusion as a medium of instruction at all educational levels.

Call for submissions

In accordance with the established practice of thematic mandate-holders, the Special Rapporteur welcomes inputs by States, UN agencies, regional and international organizations, national human rights institutions, civil society, scholars and research institutions, and others who may wish to submit for this purpose. Such submissions may include, for instance, recommendations, evidence and case studies, as well as analyses relevant to

1. Please provide information on the specific legislative, institutional and policy framework at the national and local levels that address minority education, and education of and in minority languages, including sign language. Please provide examples of key laws, policies and practices, including good practices, as well as gaps.
2. Please provide examples of programmes of linguistic diversity, learning materials, multi-lingual and multi-cultural approaches to and methods of teaching and learning, involving the teaching and learning of minority languages and cultures.

3. Please provide information on initiatives and programmes that effectively address challenges faced by minorities in accessing quality education, including the issue of direct and indirect costs of education.
4. Please provide examples of training programmes for teaching staff and educational administrators, including inter-cultural training, aiming at preparing them to respond to the educational needs of minority students.
5. Please provide examples of programmes and initiatives to strengthen the availability of teaching staff who speak minority languages, including teaching staff from minority communities.
6. What are the identified challenges in the design and implementation of programmes and initiatives to facilitate access to education, including vocational education and training, by persons belonging to minorities and to integrate minority languages in the national curricula as separate subjects and as mediums of instruction?
7. Please describe to what extent and how are persons belonging to minorities and their representative organizations involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of educational programmes and curricula.
8. Please provide any other relevant information and statistics on access to education by persons belonging to minorities, covering all educational levels. Such information may include:
 - a) the number of educational institutions (public and private) at each education level, in which minority languages, including sign language, are either taught as a separate subject or are used as mediums of instruction, and their proportion to the total number of educational institutions. Please indicate the average weekly frequency of hours of teaching both of and in minority languages;
 - b) the number of bi-/multi-lingual classes.

Submissions and inputs on the above-mentioned areas can be submitted in English, French or Spanish and addressed to the Special Rapporteur by email to minorityissues@ohchr.org **by 3 October 2019**.

Submissions and inputs will be considered public records unless otherwise expressed by the submitter and will be published on the website of the Special Rapporteur.