SIL International

Statement of Purpose

SIL serves language communities worldwide building their capacity for sustainable language development, by means of research, translation, training and materials development.
Message from the Country Director

When referring to the beauty of Nepal, people often refer to the majestic Himalayas. No doubt this true, but perhaps one of Nepal’s greatest treasures is her languages. The linguistic diversity is staggering.

However, this also poses many challenges, especially in terms of communication and education. Those Nepalis that are born into language communities that do not speak Nepali as their first language struggle to educate their children. Many adults in those communities also struggle to read and write. It is SIL’s belief and experience world-wide that mother-tongue literacy and bi-lingual education is a powerful solution to this problem. Focusing on the mother-tongue initially helps to break down those linguistic barriers to learning and opens the door to becoming literate in Nepali.

In addition to bi-lingual education and literacy, language development is another powerful tool to helping linguistically marginalized communities. Not only is this a way to honor and preserve a rich cultural heritage that represents the beauty of Nepal, but it has practical benefit as well. A dictionary, for example, can help speakers in a community connect more deeply to the outside world. In developing a writing system for their own language, they can develop materials that will help them achieve their own development plans. Health materials, for example, can be made very relevant to their specific community.

It is SIL’s privilege and joy to be involved in work in Nepal. While this past year has brought along with it many challenges, we have also seen much fruit. This can be seen in the smile of so many children that have learned to read and write, or in the eyes of a grandmother that for the first time understands how letters go together to form a word.

In the pages that follow, you can read the details of the work. None of this could have been achieved without our partners, for whom we are very grateful. They have proven to be hard-working, with a shared vision for the people of Nepal. They are also passionate about this work and have taught us much.

May you also be pleased with our small contribution to your great country.

Sincerely,

Daniel P. Watters
Country Director
SIL International has worked in Nepal for nearly 50 years, first working under a formal agreement for linguistic research under Tribhuvan University from 1966-1976.

In 2008 we began to support the Central Department of Linguistics on their Linguistic Survey of Nepal to “lay a foundation that provides for the linguistic rights of the citizens of Nepal so that all her people, regardless of linguistic background, will be included in the overall fabric of the nation.”

In 2011-12 SIL International (Nepal) signed General and Project Agreements with the Government of Nepal to implement multi-lingual education programs, mother-tongue-based adult literacy programs, linguistic surveys, orthography and dictionary development, and language documentation. We do this because we believe that every person has worth and that worth can be affirmed through language development. We believe that language development will contribute to social harmony and will help minority ethno-linguistic communities more fully integrate into broader society.

SIL International Nepal’s overall objective is to assist ethno-linguistic communities in developing a series of ongoing, planned actions that ensure that their language continues to serve their changing social, cultural, political, economic and spiritual needs and goals.

Some of our specific objectives are to:

- Provide mother-tongue based education for Rajbanshi students.
- Conduct regular and carefully sequenced workshops to train communities in language development mobilization, language documentation and survey, orthography and dictionary development, story book production, and literacy and education material development.
- Help speakers of several language groups to achieve basic literacy and numeracy skills in their language by the end of 2016.
- Assist the Linguistic Survey of Nepal's (LinSuN) management committee in completing the sociolinguistic survey of Nepal.
About SIL International

SIL International is a faith-based nonprofit organization committed to serving language communities worldwide as they build capacity for sustainable language development.

Founded in 1934, SIL (formerly Summer Institute of Linguistics) has grown from a small summer linguistics training program with two students to a staff of over 4,400 coming from over 86 countries. The organization has completed linguistic investigation in over 2,590 languages representing over 1.7 billion speakers in over 100 countries. The organization makes its services available to all, without regard to religious belief, political ideology, gender, race or ethnolinguistic background.

As an international nongovernmental organization (INGO), SIL partners with government organizations, local groups and other INGOs. SIL has special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and formal consultative relations with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

SIL is about languages and the people that speak them. Language is a deeply personal part of individual and community identity. Connecting with people by using their own languages speaks to their hearts.

No community should have to choose between preserving their heritage and accessing resources. Our vision is that language communities have the information and skills to ensure that their language continues to serve their changing social, cultural, political and spiritual needs. We serve alongside communities as researchers, trainers and consultants, supporting efforts such as translation, literacy and development of books and other resources in the local language.

We are especially concerned for those whose languages are different than the ones used by most people in their nation. Language shouldn’t be a barrier to experiencing the wholeness and fullness of life that God intends for all people.

For more information see www.sil.org/about.

Photo: Courtesy of Rajbanshi School
Children’s Education

Rajbanshi Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE)

Working together with our NGO partner Nepali National Languages Preservation Institute (NNLPI), this mother-tongue-based multilingual education program provides a high quality education program for KG-G5 students in three schools in Jhapa District, modeling a program of progressive introduction of Nepali language and English language subjects as well as a carefully designed transition from mother-tongue medium-of-instruction between Grade 2 to Grade 5 with an extended period of dual language medium instruction for other academic subjects.

Accomplishments

- 3 schools have successfully completed year 6.
- All grades (KG-G5) materials reviewed, revised, printed and distributed to schools.
- 2 in-service teacher trainings for all teachers.
- 48 students are graduated from primary level in March 2016
- 341 students enrolled for 2015-16. Consistently high attendance (72%) and low drop out (0.58%, 2 out of 341 students).
- A successful experiment to run a multi-grade classroom solves a teacher shortage problem.

Overall, I find that this Rajbanshi-based MLE program has a theoretically sound approach, a well-conceived curriculum, appropriate materials and teaching methods, and sustainable means of supporting teachers, school staff and community members. I would strongly encourage the Nepali government and NGOs working in primary education and even adult literacy to make good use of the model, pedagogy and experiences from these pilot schools. This includes any future expansion of Rajbanshi-medium education and any adaptation of MLE for speakers of other languages.

--Dr. Carol Benson,
Associate Professor, Teachers College, Columbia University

Lhomi Mother-Tongue-Based MLE Preschool Project

Working together with our NGO partner Nepal Lhomi Society (NELHOS) the Lhomi Mother-Tongue-Based MLE Preschool Project is in the material development and program implementation phase for children in far north Sankhuwasaba District. SIL is primarily providing technical support to this project and the program started in 2 government schools in April 2016.

Accomplishments

- Awareness raising in the Lhomi community continued
- KG1 and KG2 curriculum developed
- KG1 materials produced and 1st teacher training conducted in April 2016
- KG1 pilot class starts in two government schools in mid-April 2016, 44 of children enrolled in the KG1
W Tamang Mother-Tongue-Based MLE Project

Working together with our NGO partner Nepali National Languages Preservation Institute (NNLPI), this mother-tongue-based multilingual education program (KG-G3) is for children in the northern part of Dhading District. The program is in preparation phase. SIL is primarily providing technical support to this project which aims to begin class in July 2017.

Accomplishments

- MTB-MLE needs assessment was done in northern part of Dhading District in December 2015
- Teachers, school management committee (SMC) and parents of the government schools show interest in this program
Mother-Tongue Adult Literacy
SIL has conducted two mother-tongue literacy programs, for speakers of Lowa in Mustang District and Rana Tharu in Kailali and Kanchenpur Districts. The aim of these programs is to equip adults with basic literacy and numeracy skills first in their mother tongue and then transitioning to Nepali. In addition, foundational activities are underway to begin mother-tongue adult literacy programs in 5 new languages in the coming year.

Rana Tharu Accomplishments
- Teacher training: Training of Teachers for 12 Rana Tharu class facilitators, followed by 3-day refresher course. 7 Nepali class facilitators were trained for conducting post literacy class.
- A basic and Nepali literacy primer were completed and printed.
- 158 Rana Tharu participants completed Advanced Nepali literacy course and 252 Rana Tharu participants completed basic MT literacy course.
- Enthusiastic support by community stakeholders, the Rana Tharu Society, and government officials.

Most of the participants have higher self-esteem after the course. They are able to introduce themselves in front of people. The basic mathematical skills help the participants to keep record of their household expenses and small business. Some participants applied what they learnt from the topic discussion and start small business such as selling vegetable in the market, opening tailor/ grocery shop. Right now the Rana Tharu people are more aware of the importance of education and how their mother tongue can make their learning better.

Lowa Accomplishments
(implemented by HIS Nepal, http://hisnepal.org/)
- Advanced Nepali primer books were printed.
- 16 Advanced Nepali literacy classes were conducted. 8 of them were funded by government and implemented by HIS Nepal.
- 197 of male and 163 of female participants completed the advanced Nepali literacy course.
- Lowa trilingual dictionary, Lowa story book, earthquake booklet, Lowa health book and monthly Wall Sheet (Local news) were published.
- District Education Office recognized HIS Nepal’s Literacy Program success and declared their target communities as “literate community/VDCs.”
Language Survey

SIL has provided technical support to the Linguistic Survey of Nepal (LinSuN), a project of the Central Department of Linguistics, TU to survey all of Nepal’s languages.

Language Survey Accomplishments

- The LinSuN report on the Danuwar language is in progress.
- SIL survey specialists conducted a Research Methods Course for LinSuN researchers and provided training in participatory methods and data analysis.
- A detailed sociolinguistic survey of Gurung was completed and the report published.
- A comparative study of Danuwar and related varieties was conducted and a report is in progress.
- A comparative study of Majhi and Bote varieties is in progress.

Much of the planned sociolinguistic fieldwork was prevented by the earthquake on Baisakh 12, 2072 and the border situation lasting the first half of the fiscal year.
Language Development Planning

SIL International has developed a practical tool called *A Guide for Planning the Future of Our Language*. This participatory tool is meant to be used by local communities who are interested in maintaining the use of their traditional language. The tool helps language communities to discover the state of the language, decide what they would like the future of their language to look like and develop a plan to move forward toward that desired future.

Our NGO partner Mother Tongue Centre Nepal (MTCN) has conducted trainings for members of different language communities and the trained people have then lead discussion groups in their own areas. One discussion facilitation normally has 15 to 30 participants.

Language Development Planning Accomplishments
(Implemented by MTCN)

- Majhi: 11 discussion facilitations
- Darai: 3 discussion facilitation
- Gurung, Dotyali, Kumal, Jumli: 1 discussion facilitation each

Language Documentation

Our NGO partner Mother Tongue Centre Nepal (MTCN) has continued to make progress in language documentation. Our Language Documentation project records audio and video text samples from different minority languages, seeking to create as thorough a record as possible of the speech community for both posterity and language revitalization. Text samples are then transcribed and translated and made available to both local community members and linguists around the world. This work provides a foundation for all subsequent language development work such as orthography and dictionary development.

Language Documentation Accomplishments
(Implemented by MTCN)

- Language documentation recordings published online in 2 languages (Mid-Eastern Tharu: www.mptharu.com, Syuba: www.syuba.org)
- Majhi: 113 texts (over 10 hours) recorded from 75 people
- Dotyali: 86 texts (7 hours) recorded from 61 people
- Lowa: 27 texts (5 hours) recorded from 12 people
Orthography (Alphabet) Development

Before literacy programs, literature, and dictionaries can be developed, alphabets need to be established and standardized. SIL has developed a participatory orthography development process that enables communities, with the help of trained linguists, to develop an alphabet and spelling rules within a two-week workshop. Participants leave with a draft writer’s guide for further testing and input. After testing and receiving input from the language community, revisions are made at a review meeting and the orthography is finalized.

After the orthography is finalized for a language, two local facilitators are trained to lead orthography promotion classes in their language area. These two-day classes give an introduction to people how to read and write the mother tongue. As the participants are already fluent readers of Nepali, they are not learning literacy skills *per se*, but how to apply their literacy skills to their own mother tongue. These classes have proven very popular and effective.

Orthography development accomplishments (in partnership with MTCN and HIS-Nepal)

- Orthography (alphabet development) workshops were held for Majhi, Rana Tharu and Chitwania Tharu. For each language a draft writer’s guide was produced.
- Orthography review meetings were held for Chitwania Tharu, Majhi, Yamphu, Western Tamang and Dhimal language communities and the writing rules were finalized.
- Orthography promotion classes in Chitwania Tharu (8 classes, 227 participants), Syuba (7 classes, 193 participants), Athpariya (1 class, 28 participants), Lowa (1 class, 16 participants)

Impact stories from orthography promotion classes:

- **Lowa**
  "I had seen many reading materials in our language. When I started to read them there were some dots and new letters and I didn’t know how to read them properly. So that made me lazy to read those books. Then I thought to attend this class so that I would know the new symbols and to be able to read those books. The class was very helpful and now I know how to read those dots and letters."

- **Chitwania Tharu**
  Participants were very excited to attend the classes and they were saying that "To have right to read and write in our language was our main agenda to the Government. We were even doing protest for this with Government for a long time. Now we got this right to read and write our language."
For the OP classes the maximum number of participants is limited to twenty, but in all classes many more people came. One class had 48 participants and another had 34. The people said: "You cannot stop us coming to learn to read and write our own language by fixing the number of participants." So there was no way to stop them joining! People are now asking more classes for same villages and also for new villages.

"This training on Tharu language writing system is historical and first time in our district. It gave us awareness and a big concern towards our mother tongue", said one leader.

A teacher for the orthography promotion classes, Ronu Chaudhary, said: "It is our responsibility to promote our language, but we have not been able to do that so far. Now, HIS-Nepal [national partner organization] and SIL came to our area and helped us to conserve our language and culture. We are so happy. The classes were done in many villages and it has given us a positive attitude towards our language. I have heard about multilingual education but I did not get to see any multilingual program. I am really excited and happy that I have been able to be involved in promotion of our orthography as a teacher of these classes."

Mr Nar Bahadur Mahato, “I am so happy to attend this program. I have learned about our mother tongue and how to read and write our language. I learned something new here.”

Tek Narayan Thabet, “I am happy that I attended the class. I came to know many new things about our language and new information about our Tharu language and culture.”

One of the OP teachers (Ronu Chaudhary) said, “in Baisakh month, there was a writer Workshop organized by TFN where OP students and me were also invited. It was a privileged for me to each C. Tharu writing system to participants of Writer Workshop even. And participants, who came from OP, were leading the group discussion in writer workshop time. They were actively participating in the story writing workshop and one participant even came in front of the group and said, “it made easy to write story for us since we already knew the writing system because of OP”.

Chitwania Tharu

Left Photo: Chitwania Tharu
Right-Photo: Syuba OP
Dictionary Development

Having a dictionary is foundational to any language group. Especially for minority language groups it has the effect of validating the language to the speakers themselves as well as to other language groups. It paves the way to further language development and even to mother-tongue education activities.

In order to respond to the demands of the digital age, this year we have started to publish dictionaries in electronic format. Six different dictionaries from Nepal can be browsed at www.webonary.org. They can also be downloaded for any Android device (phone and tablets) from Google Play Store or installed using an SD-card.

Accomplishments (in partnership with MTCN and HIS-Nepal)

- Rapid Word Collection workshop held for Western Tamang language community.
- Reviewers meeting for the Mid-Eastern Tharu dictionary work. Final editing is going on.
- Trilingual dictionaries published in 5 languages (Athpariya Rai, Yakkha, Lowa, Chepang, Syuba) by NFDIN and HIS-Nepal.
- Dictionaries in electronic format published in 6 languages (Khaling Rai, Athpariya Rai, Yakkha, Lowa, Syuba, Dumi Rai - including audio recordings).
Financial Summary

Income
In the year to date 30th April 2016, the consolidated income of SIL International (Nepal) was NRS 24,977,364.43 (USD 235,635.51) of which NRS 24,934,314.9 (USD 235,229.39) or 99.83%, came from SIL International and NRS 43,049.53 (USD 406.13), or 0.17%, was generated from other sources.

Expenditures
Consolidated expenditures year to date 30th April 2016 were NRS 24,934,314.9 (USD 235,229.39) allocated to programs as follows:
Earthquake Construction Program

SIL International (Nepal) Annual Report 2072-2073

Conclusion

SIL International (Nepal) is now wrapping up its final year of registration and is pleased and encouraged by the progress made toward providing service to the language communities of Nepal and the growth of sustainable language development movements within the country. The organization is especially grateful to the Government of Nepal, its implementing NGO partners, and finally the language communities themselves, through which none of these efforts would have been possible. SIL International (Nepal) trusts that in some small and perhaps unseen ways the rich and diversified minority language speakers of the country may have genuinely been served.