

EMPOWERING WOMEN.....

Recently I facilitated a meeting about the writing system of a language spoken near Cox's Bazar in the south of Bangladesh. We are always keen for women to come along to these meetings, contribute their opinions and make decisions. On this occasion I was very pleased that seven women attended and all took part in the discussion. I could see that women from this particular ethnolinguistic community are aware of their rights and are participating in activities to develop their families and society. This made me wonder what effect SIL has had on the women of the communities with whom we work.

When SIL started working with the Kol community in 2009, their socioeconomic situation was very challenging. Most were farmers, but they did not own land. It was very rare to come across educated people. Girls got married at an early age and had to look after their families. SIL helped to start a multilingual education (MLE) project with the Kol community, but it was hard to find people with a high enough level of literacy to teach. A teacher from the neighboring Mahle community taught in one MLE school. Most Kol women were unaware of their rights and had little power. They were neglected in their community. However, the picture is changing.



Kolpona Kol, an MLE school teacher and adult literacy volunteer working with SIL Bangladesh, is one example. Kolpona is a hard working woman who married at an early age. Her father was a farmer and her family was so poor that she did not get the opportunity to complete her studies. At a young age she started her own family and now has two children. In 2011, Kolpona attended a training

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For more information on **topics mentioned in this newsletter**, please go to .

[http: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kol)

<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/ekl>

**... SNAPSHOTS ...
WHAT'S PLANNED FOR
THIS MONTH**

Nov 05-10: Active Citizens Youth Leadership Training-3

Nov 08-10: MLE Awareness and Child Protection Training.

Active Citizens Youth Leadership Training-4

Nov 12-19: Mat. Dev. with Hajong.

Nov 15-19: Active Citizens Youth Leadership Training-4

Nov 27-Dec03 Adult Literacy Mat. Dev-1, Usoi Orthography with Ushoi-Tripura and Kol.

Nov 27-Dec03 : Active Citizens Youth Leadership Training-5

SIL BANGLADESH
LANGUAGE, EDUCATION, AND DEVELOPMENT

SIL

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WOMEN EMPOWERMENT...(CON'T)

session on 'Participatory Rural Appraisal' organized by SIL Bangladesh in the town of Rajshahi. This was the beginning of her journey with SIL. Later she received training as an MLE school teacher and started work at Notunpara School. Then she undertook adult literacy training and started to work in her village as a volunteer. Now she and her husband are both earning money to develop their family. She has saved her salary and built a new brick house and also started farming a paddy field as a sharecropper (giving some of her crops as rent). Kolpona's daughter is studying in second grade at primary school and her younger son started at the MLE pre-primary school this year.

Kolpona started her own studies again and completed her secondary education through the Open University. She has demonstrated her determination and confidence and became an example for her community, working with SIL Bangladesh to develop the lives of others. Nothing was easy for her at the beginning, but she did not give up and worked hard to achieve her goal. When I started working with her in 2016, I found that she was already very confident, full of creative ideas and enthusiasm, and with a high level of understanding. Now she can facilitate teacher training sessions confidently. Children enjoy her lessons and she also teaches adults in her home.

It is inspirational to meet a woman like Kolpona who has changed her life through hard work. There are many stories about successful women developing their communities in the history of SIL Bangladesh. We continue to work alongside ethnolinguistic communities to empower women and we dream of seeing many more Kolponas.

Written by: Scholastica Shefaly Rebarue.

***SIL Bangladesh helps communities achieve their development goals while retaining their ethnolinguistic identities.
SIL Bangladesh is an organization in SIL International's LEAD Asia network – Language, Education, and Development.***