

REVIVING THE THAR KOCH LANGUAGE

Bangladesh is undoubtedly a culturally and ethnically diverse country. It is said that there are more than 45 different ethnic groups. Some of these ethnic communities are passionately using their language, culture and rituals in their everyday life. Others are struggling to pass on their ethnic heritage. The Thar Koch dialect is blessed with some devoted community members who are working hard to preserve the language for future generations.

SIL Bangladesh first interacted with Thar speakers back in 2015. Some interested community members came to visit SIL with the hope of revitalizing their language. We started with an awareness raising event about the importance of language and culture preservation and community ownership in one of the sub districts where Thar Koch people live. People from different backgrounds and age- groups came to the event from several neighboring villages, though some of them had hardly heard their forefathers' language spoken. Some older people who had a clear understanding of the language also travelled a long way to join the event.



SIL worked with the community to analyze their language using Fishman's scale (a scale for measuring language vitality). Unsurprisingly, the community identified their language as being at stage 7 on the scale, meaning that the older generation can speak the language but the younger generation is not learning it at all. One of the

younger participants compared the Thar language to a patient in the ICU

“one of the committee members, had already collected more than 2000 words from different villages. Many young people who are studying in college and university are taking part in the process and motivating others to learn the language.”

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http: <http://www.silbangladesh.org/>

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

June: MLE refreshers
Training with Koch, Kol
and Koda community.

June: Program evaluation
and survey with Kurux
community.

SIL BANGLADESH
LANGUAGE, EDUCATION, AND DEVELOPMENT

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department in hospital; it needs special care and medication, otherwise it will die soon with the grandparents' generations. The community immediately took steps to learn the language as soon as possible. The steps included learning the language from their grandparents, encouraging others to learn and respect their language, writing their language down, practicing speaking the mother tongue in the home and developing dictionaries.

SIL is providing technical support to the **Koch Community Development Association** to develop the spelling system and a dictionary on a very small scale. In discussions about the spelling system, the community realized that some of their language had already been forgotten. Raychan Bormon, one of the committee members, had already collected more than 2000 words from different villages. He is the only young person who can speak the language fluently. Recently SIL worked with the community to collect words with the community, recording them using dictionary software. Raychan Bormon was one of the leading participants at the event. Along with his team, he travelled to different villages to collect more words for the dictionary. Many young people who are studying in college and university are taking part in the process and motivating others to learn the language.



The **Koch Community Development Association** shows that community ownership is key to sustainable development. Though they are working on a small scale, they have not given up on their efforts. The most important thing is that people of different ages are taking part in the process. The SIL family is also looking forward to seeing the dictionary published soon.

Written by: Alpona Joyontee Kujur.

**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.**