

## EMPOWERING KOL WOMEN.....

Taking care of adults and children, doing the housework and working alongside their husbands in the fields; this is the daily life of many women from ethnic minorities in northern Bangladesh. No wonder that when families have to choose a child to continue with further studies, it is the girl who misses out, regardless of how talented she is. Of course, there may be other causes such as a lack of access to higher level education in the locality, poverty or other social issues. But no matter what the situation is, it is usually the girls who have to make the sacrifices. Often the only dream these women have is to be a housewife with a few cattle, a very small house and a kitchen garden.

SIL is working with the Kol community on a wide range of language, health, education and livelihood issues. One of the most important components of our work is to raise awareness of various topics among ethnic minorities. Learning circles are one of the ways in which we aim to empower women. In fact, women are among the most effective implementers of SIL's programs. In the field, the majority of the volunteers, youth leaders and teachers for multilingual education (MLE) classes are women. And they are doing a tremendous job.

Last August, SIL had the opportunity to celebrate Indigenous Day with the Kol community for the first time. Almost all the villagers attended the program in spite of heavy rain. The speeches were open to everyone and surprisingly, in a community where women usually remain silent, two women raised their hands to



participate. These two women had previously represented SIL at a regional level rally along with other NGOs on 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2017. One of them was Fuloboti Kol, a

“Kol people need to aim to reach this level for themselves and the generations to come.”

For more information on topics mentioned in this newsletter, please go to .  
http: <http://www.silbangladesh.org/>

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

Jan 06-09: ACYLT with Kurux community.

Jan 06-09: ACYLT with Santal community.

Jan 16-20: PRA Survey with Kurux community.

Jan 16-20: ACYLT with Usoi community.

Jan 29- 31: PRA Reflection Meeting with Mahle & Kurux community.

SIL BANGLADESH  
LANGUAGE, EDUCATION, AND DEVELOPMENT

SIL

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#### EMPOWERING KOL WOMEN...(CON'T)

volunteer in a learning circle and adult literacy group. She shared that it was an eye opening program for them as indigenous people. She is now aware that people from other indigenous groups are discussing their rights in front of groups of a thousand people at a national level. Fuloboti believes that Kol mothers can also take part in this movement by educating themselves and their children. Although it is a struggle at the beginning, she says that the next generation will enjoy the fruit of this struggle.

Kolpona Kol, an MLE teacher and volunteer had taken part in the same regional program. In her speech on Indigenous Day she emphasized the importance of sending children to school. She talked about how confident other indigenous communities feel while they are talking about the right to education, land and other civic issues, because they are aware of all these rights, and she pointed out that Kol people need to aim to reach this level for themselves and the generations to come.

SIL has also run gender training for the field staff and their spouses. At the end of the training the husband of one of the staff members talked about stopping early marriages for both boys and girls. He realized that his family life would have been different if he had got married a little later.

Though these changes are very small, I believe that these initiatives by individuals will bring changes to the whole community one day. I dream that men and women, boys and girls from all the ethnolinguistic groups will enjoy equal rights as human beings in the future.



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**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.**