

## Raising Their Voices

SIL  
Bangladesh  
helps  
communities  
achieve  
their  
development  
goals  
while  
retaining  
their  
Ethno  
linguistic  
identities.

Members of the Kol community are becoming more aware of their rights and are gradually more united in raising their voices. They are among the most marginalized groups in Bangladesh, with many facing chronic poverty. This largely Hindu community lives mainly in the Rajshahi and Chapainawabgonj districts. They number only about 1600, according to SIL's Field Coordinator in the area. Most work as day laborers on other people's land and many have not had the opportunity to learn to read.

SIL International Bangladesh has been running a Health, Education and Livelihoods Program (HELP) with the Kol community since 2015. Some other NGOs, particularly those focusing on micro credit, have been reluctant to work with a community who face so many challenges.

### ..... SPECIAL COMMENTS

The program has also been trying to bridge the gap between different generations. They have connected with local government and are able to meet and talk with officials in their sub-district. Two or three years ago the situation was very different. People were afraid of the government officials and would not have thought of arranging to meet with them.



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

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SIL BANGLADESH  
LANGUAGE, EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT



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## **Raising Their Voices ....(cont'd)**

SIL is involved in various types of awareness raising program including training sessions, seminars and meetings. We also work with the community on multilingual education (MLE), learning circles and a youth program known as Generation Next Group. These activities have led to a growth in leadership skills amongst adults and young people. The program has also been trying to bridge the gap between different generations. Mr. Lacham Kol represents older leaders and Mr. Nirmol Kol is a younger leader. They are now working together and communicating well. They have connected with local government and are able to meet and talk with officials in their sub-district. Two or three years ago the situation was very different. People were afraid of the government officials and would not have thought of arranging to meet with them.

These days the Kol community is better organized and they are able to raise concerns about their rights and entitlements through advocacy and lobbying. As a result, the community has accessed new services. For example, 17 students now receive a stipend and community members are accessing safety net services from the local government including allowances for widows, pregnant women and elderly people.

In the village of Notunpara, they now have solar power, a tube well and a sanitary latrine for the MLE School. In Babudayang village they have electricity and a road has been built to their village. Before the construction of the road, this was the most remote village we worked in. Kol people are able to identify the root causes of their poverty and it is exciting to see the ways in which they are moving forward to find solutions.

*Written by: Uzzal Azim*

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

**August 1-2, 2018:** Seminar with Local Govt. & Local Administration on different services with Mahle community.

**August 11-13, 2018:** MLE Awareness with Govt. Officials in Sherpur.

**August, 2018:** Orthography & MLE Awareness with Govt. Officials with Kurux community.

**August, 2018**

Nutrition Program with lesson delivery and Learning Corner among 5 communities.

**August 16-17, 2018**

Awareness raising seminar on Ensuring Local Government Health Services for Kol community (Ensuring 50 persons including local doctors, nurse and health workers).

**August 18-19, 2018**

Awareness raising seminar on Ensuring Local Government Health Services for Koda community (Ensuring 50 persons including local doctors, nurse and health workers).