



*Each workshop participant wrote a story in Koda and made his own book. These men have started to fulfill their community's desire to protect and preserve their language.*

**“No one has ever seen a book in our language before.”**

Until this year, the Koda community in Bangladesh did not have a written form of their language. Some Koda people thought it was impossible to write their language. A cooperative education and development program for this community was started by Food for the Hungry and SIL. In 2009, a group of eager Koda men met several times with SIL staff to make decisions about a writing system for their language.

The men—some of whom had only attended school for two years—participated in an orthography workshop with SIL consultants and began to write in their own language. They worked together to identify the speech sounds that are the same as in Bangla (the national language), the several sounds that are different, and how to represent each sound in an alphabet—the first step towards uniform spelling.

When workshop participants were asked to write stories about their daily lives and culture, they responded, “We have never written a story before.” But by the end of the workshop, each participant had written a short story and made his own book to take back to his village—an achievement that gave them confidence and increased self-esteem.

SIL grew out of one man's concern for people speaking languages that lacked written alphabets. William Cameron Townsend started SIL in 1934 as a summer linguistics training program with two students. Over the past 75 years SIL has expanded into an international organization that has conducted linguistic analysis in nearly 2,600 languages spoken by more than 1.7 billion people.

I have had the privilege this past year of meeting many dedicated people who are striving to preserve their languages and cultural identities. This *Update* highlights a number of opportunities we have had in 2009 to continue our 75-year commitment to serve ethnolinguistic communities. We look forward to continuing our participation in partnerships that support communities in their own language development efforts.



Fredrick A. Boswell  
*Executive Director*



"The future survival of remaining Indigenous languages across the Americas has become an increasing area of concern among Indigenous groups engaged in emerging community-based and school-based language initiatives,"  
Dr. Christine P. Sims, a Native American from the Acoma Pueblo



"Our goal... is to take forward the agenda of adult learning and education by securing stronger political recognition of its critical importance for development."  
Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO,  
opening session of CONFITEA VI



"One's own language enables a child to express himself or herself easily, as there is no fear of making mistakes."  
Dr. Ricardo D. Nolasco,  
linguistics professor,  
University of  
Philippines

## National Language Policy

Globalization, international aid, the marketing of education and the needs of speakers of non-dominant languages complicate strategic planning for education systems. Language policy also has a long-term impact on whether endangered languages survive or become extinct.

As a recognized authority in mother-tongue-first education, SIL participated in international conferences during 2009 that addressed national policies on multilingualism, language of instruction and community-based multilingual education (MLE):

- *The UK Forum on International Education and Training: Civil Society and Grassroots Engagement with Policy and Progress in Education and Development*, Oxford, UK
- *International Indigenous Language Policy Research Symposium*, Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA
- *Bamako International Forum on Multilingualism*, Bamako, Mali
- *Eighth International Conference on Language and Development: Language and Development: Sociocultural Issues and Challenges*, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 2009 Bonifacio P. Sibayan Distinguished Professorial Chair lecture, Manila, Philippines, Diane Dekker, MLE Consultant for SIL Asia
- *The 6th Pan-African Reading for All Conference*, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

SIL consultants figured prominently in a two-year SEAMEO project to explore how Southeast Asian countries—through appropriate language policies—can achieve the area's Education for All goals: widening access, reducing student repetition and dropout rates and improving learning. One outcome of the project was a book co-edited by two SIL MLE consultants, *Mother tongue as bridge language of instruction in Southeast Asian countries: Policies and experiences in Southeast Asia*. The compendium features:

- case studies from Southeast Asia
- language-in-education policy recommendations
- the use of mother tongue as bridge language of instruction
- good practices in mother-tongue-first MLE
- region-wide action plans

Policy makers from many nations are looking to SIL for expertise to strengthen the process of promoting languages and multilingualism as vehicles for national development, fundamental human rights, democracy, peace and dialogue in the world.



## CONFITEA VI Focuses on Adult Learning and Non-formal Education

A team from four continents represented SIL International at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFITEA VI) in Belém, Brazil, 1–4 December. This event brought together more than 1000 participants from most of UNESCO's 193 Member States (with approximately 90 delegations headed by Ministers of Education), from the UN and other international agencies, and from civil society organizations. CONFITEA provided a high-level platform for policy dialogue and advocacy on adult education and life-long learning. SIL advocated for the importance of language issues in adult learning and collaborated with UNESCO Bangkok in organizing a workshop *First language-based adult education and learning*. SIL also participated in preparatory regional meetings, contributed to conference deliberations and documents, distributed hundreds of copies of relevant advocacy materials and networked informally with other participants.

confitea VI

## Nepal Language Survey Begins

An initial step for a comprehensive linguistic survey of Nepal is being conducted by Tribhuvan University's Central Department of Linguistics (CDL), Kathmandu, Nepal. In March, the survey was inaugurated at the University and training for language surveyors began. This is one of the collaborative projects envisioned in a Memorandum of Understanding signed between CDL and SIL last year. In partnership with CDL, SIL provides technical input and training for linguistic surveyors, and assists with planning and management functions.

Information gathered from the linguistic survey will assist representatives of the Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution for Nepal. Survey results will also provide useful information for language development and educational initiatives in the country. The *Ethnologue* currently lists 123 living languages in Nepal, plus three other languages considered to be extinct.





## Partners in Language Development



Sustainable language development gives a community the freedom to express its own ethnolinguistic identity.



**East Asia**  
Celebrating 10 Years  
1999-2009



**Senegal**  
Celebrating 25 Years  
1984-2009



**Cameroon**  
Celebrating 40 Years  
1969-2009



*"Attending CILTA has been an unprecedented experience in my life. It has expanded my vision for service among the indigenous groups of my country."*  
Jaqueline Britto La Torre, Peru



## Welcome to OpenOffice.org

Create a new document



Text Document



Presentation



Database



Template



OpenOffice.org Document

### OpenOffice Upgrade to Use SIL Graphite Software

SIL's *Graphite* smart font software for complex scripts and writing systems has been accepted to be part of the new upgrade, version 3.2, for *OpenOffice.org*, a popular, free office software package.

Where there is no written form for a language, orthography development is a significant part of literacy promotion efforts. It is common to find linguistic elements that might complicate orthography development. For example, a local language may be tonal while the national language is not. This may require tone diacritics to supplement the national writing system.

Many writing systems around the world have complex rules governing the way scripts are written. These writing systems require cutting-edge computer technology—smart fonts—in order to display and print properly with computers. Smart fonts allow a computer to handle special symbols in an orthography, such as tone marks or other diacritics, ligatures between letters, and glyphs that may shift in shape or position. *Graphite* is designed to be flexible enough to handle any orthographic need that might arise in any writing system based on any modern script.

### Linguistics, Translation and Literacy Courses in Spanish

The SIL-developed CILTA (Curso Internacional de Lingüística, Traducción y Alfabetización\*) is a two-semester training program for those involved in language development. For the past seven years this accredited course has been offered at the Ricardo Palma University in Lima, Peru. On 16 December, fifteen students from seven Latin American countries received a diploma or a certificate of linguistics applied to either translation or literacy. Adjunct faculty from Chile, Colombia and Peru joined SIL linguists to form the CILTA staff.

The first semester introduces phonology, morphology-syntax, semantics-pragmatics and sociolinguistics. The second semester consists of translation and literacy.

\*International Course in Linguistics, Translation and Literacy

### Literacy Seminar on Capacity Building in Togo

Sixty participants from local language-development associations representing 12 languages attended a training seminar in Togo designed for literacy program coordinators, supervisors and administrators. Eleven of the language groups had already developed mother-tongue literacy materials and an ongoing literacy program.

Experienced SIL literacy personnel led discussions on ways to encourage local communities to value language development through literature production, mother-tongue literacy and education. One activity—representing home, community, ethnic group, region and nation—used concentric circles to discuss the desired outcomes of language development and literacy work.



*Through concrete examples, seminar participants learned how to show their communities the benefits of reading and writing in their own mother tongue.*

### A Leadership Course for Literacy Trainers in PNG

Papua New Guineans are in training to initiate and sustain mother-tongue education and literacy programs for people of all ages. The SIL-developed STEP\* course—in its 16th year—equips teachers to serve their own communities. Five one-month classroom modules are spread over a two-year period.

STEP course participants learn the main components of a successful literacy program. Understanding of teaching and learning principles helps participants train teachers by building on local learning styles. An integral element of the course is the development of leadership competency and character. Between classroom modules, the participants return to their communities to put into practice the concepts and skills they have learned.

\*Strengthening Tokples Education in Papua New Guinea; tokples 'mother tongue' in Melanesian Pidgin English



*Participants develop culturally appropriate curricula centered on locally authored materials.*

*In this figure of Indic script, the Tamil virama is written as a dot above the first consonant, but omitted in the ligated combination.*



### Deaf Linguists Strategize for Global Development of Sign Languages

Representatives from an international committee of Deaf linguist-translators met in November with SIL consultants for a workshop on the application of linguistic and translation principles to sign languages. The committee, which formed in 2008, seeks to foster cooperation in sign language development and translation among Deaf communities worldwide. More than 220 sign languages have been identified around the world so far, and linguists estimate the actual number to be much higher.

The participants came from six countries—Japan, Colombia, Finland, Brazil, Costa Rica and the United States. The eight Deaf committee members discussed strategic planning for global cooperation in sign language development through networks, consultants and resources.



*Deaf linguists from Finland, the US, Colombia and Japan learn to use ELAN, a linguistic software used to analyze sign language phrases.*

### *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*—2009 edition

The most comprehensive reference volume of its kind, the *Ethnologue* catalogs the world's 6,909 known living languages. With language descriptions, color maps, statistical summary tables and a bibliography, it is available both in hardcover and online.  
www.ethnologue.com



### About SIL

SIL International is a faith-based nonprofit organization committed to serving language communities worldwide as they build capacity for sustainable language development. SIL does this primarily through research, translation, training and materials development.

As a nongovernmental organization, 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 offers training in applied linguistics at many institutions around the world. Course topics include phonetics, phonology, grammar, linguistic research, cultural anthropology, sociolinguistics, literacy, translation and program planning.

SIL operates on contributions from individuals and organizations interested in various aspects of language-based development. Major contributors include affiliated member organizations of Wycliffe International.

SIL makes its services available to all without regard to religious belief, political ideology, gender, race or ethnic background.



### SIL Statistics

	Year	Languages	Publications	Population
25 Years	1959	172	more than 1,800	
50 Years	1984	1,182	more than 16,900	
75 Years	2009	2,594	more than 37,500	more than 1.74 billion

- 6,909 Languages spoken in the world (*Ethnologue*, 16th Edition)
- 1,990 Active language projects (used by 1.2 billion people)
- Over 5,500 Active personnel
- Over 60 Nationalities of SIL staff

*These statistics offer the most current estimates available.*

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