Left photo: Advancements in technology and the rising availability of digital devices, such as smartphones, allow a growing number of people worldwide to access information and transmit data on a never before seen scale.

At SIL, we long to see people flourishing in community using the languages they value most.

People flourish when they can engage with what is important to them. Languages, a foundation for community flourishing, have the potential to provide people equal access across all sectors of daily life and help affirm the rich diversity of cultural identity that brings glory to God. By increasing the opportunity to succeed in economic, political, spiritual, educational and cultural interests, the unhindered use of these languages further promotes flourishing and helps cultivate attitudes and initiatives promoting peace, harmony and reconciliation.

When communities face crises, their languages emerge as critical response tools. Global threats like COVID-19 shed light on the urgent, practical importance of local languages like never before. By defying conventional response strategies, the recent pandemic further highlights how important local languages are to effective communication of safety information in a crisis.

Despite many obstacles, communities worldwide are proving to be creative, adaptive and resilient as they respond to the challenges of current world events. SIL is committed to building a positive context for people to expand their possibilities through: adequate access to education, engagement with the Bible, and integration within the socio-economic life of their nations. We will continue supporting language communities in their goals to expand possibilities, gain equal access to critical resources and flourish together.

We at SIL look forward to the onset of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, declared by the UN as 2022-2032. Please join us in celebrating these communities worldwide as they lift their voices and gain confidence and expertise in using their languages for a better life.

Michel Kenmogne
Executive Director, SIL International
**COVID-19**

As COVID-19 emerged early in 2020, its effects were felt by everyone around the world. Staying informed became the best way to stay healthy, so it was imperative for all communities worldwide to have access to clear and relevant information. However, our research estimated that 30% of the world’s population did not have access to basic health information in their local languages.

When the world rallied together to help one another overcome the unfolding pandemic, SIL partnered with local and global organizations and local-language leaders to create relevant materials to support vulnerable under-resourced communities. The following are some examples:

### Local Community Response

In March of 2020, SIL launched a grassroots fundraising campaign that funded 22 projects in Africa, Asia and South America. SIL worked alongside local teams to create basic health and prevention materials related to the pandemic in locally used languages. These materials helped many local people feel ready and included in the fight against COVID-19, prompting additional volunteers to further produce and distribute materials to their friends and neighbors.

### Bloom Books

One of SIL’s premier software resources, Bloom enables local-language speakers with minimal computer skills to help create books in their own languages. By the end of 2020, 262 COVID-19 books in 184 languages had been added to the Bloom Library. One book, About Coronavirus, was first added to Bloom in English on 24 March 2020. Within two months it had been translated into 95 languages.

### COVID-19 Resource Index

In May of 2020, SIL LEAD (an SIL subsidiary) began to compile an extensive index of COVID-19 related health and prevention resources. The index is organized by language, the primary country where the language is spoken and the organization responsible for the resource. As of March 2021, the COVID-19 Resource Index includes over 5,000 resources in more than 1,000 languages.

**COVID-19** affected local communities worldwide in unique ways. Many SIL staff come from the very communities we work alongside. Their unique perspective on COVID-19 impact among their people helps highlight the diversity of local cultures and reaffirm the need for community-based and contextually appropriate response strategies.

- **Mary Chavez, Mexico**
  
  Lots of things have changed, and we have had to adapt to a different way of life. The economic situation and the loss of jobs has been difficult. We can’t just go out to visit places or eat in restaurants; we can’t have in-person meetings with other people; we can’t enjoy any of these activities.

- **Adolfo Betancourt, Peru**
  
  High death rates, especially in Peru have led to the longest and strictest quarantine in the region, which includes long periods of tight lockdown and curfews in many cities. Many people mourn the departure not only of older relatives and friends but also of their sons and daughters.

- **Yohdang Flaubert, Chad**
  
  In Chad, social greetings are very important, and refusing to shake someone’s hand implies that you have a problem with them. The social distancing restrictions that have been put in place, while necessary, have caused a great deal of tension on community members who want to interact respectfully while maintaining harmony and goodwill with their neighbors.

- **Prithvi Chaudhary, Nepal**
  
  In Nepal, before COVID-19, almost all the time meeting in person was being practiced. After nationwide lockdown, people, schools and offices have started virtual meetings. Technology has made things easy, and COVID-19 has taught us to make maximum use of it.

- **Jill Choa, Philippines**
  
  Filipinos love to gather together, give hugs and bosa-bosa (like kissing cheek to cheek), share meriendas (snacks) together with family and friends. Fear of spreading the virus has forced us to exchange these traditions for an elbow bump or a foot bump to show that one is still warm and welcoming to each other. Not being able to show our affection or share our food with our friends and family is very stressful for us, but we know that in order to protect each other, we have to adapt to change.

- **Beautlyn Eliab, Papua New Guinea**
  
  COVID-19 uniquely affected people and the government of PNG in how they respond to emergencies, resulting in close working relationships between local leaders and officials as they work to develop response strategies. It has also demonstrated the unity and resilience essential to the Melanesian way of life.
“There are more than 7,000 languages in the world today and each of these languages is somebody’s mother tongue. Each language matters, because all people matter.”

Dr. Michel Kenmogne
Children from the Kali* community in Eurasia often endure nearly insurmountable difficulties in school. Not speaking the language of national instruction, Kali children begin school in a haze, unable to understand the teacher and unable to grasp the concepts taught. Mocked by teachers and fellow classmates for not learning “fast enough” or being “as smart” as the other children, ridicule and shame drive a staggering number of children to drop out before completing the third grade.

Recognizing that the language barrier plays a key role in preventing their children from learning to read and write, the Kali community asked SIL staff to help establish mother tongue preschools. These early-learning programs teach young children to read and write in their own language before they transition to learning in the national schools. This builds a solid foundation for learning confidently in the national language when they enter higher grades.

A mother tongue approach also gives Kali students a step up on the national school’s method of sight reading, where children memorize words they see instead of sounding out letters phonetically. This method limits children’s reading vocabulary to a collection of memorized words and prevents them from reading new words. However, through the Kali preschool programs, children learn to sound out letters, read new words and write.

This project presents significant opportunities, especially for women and girls. Traditionally given in marriage at a young age, Kali girls often did not attend or finish school. However, a growing understanding and appreciation for the value of education in their children’s future is beginning to change this disparaging trend.

To implement the project, SIL worked alongside community leaders to train teachers, develop the Kali curriculum and related learning materials, and monitor progress throughout the year. The resources created by this project promise to benefit young students for years to come, and the head start provided by mother tongue education illuminates the children’s natural learning potential. Furthermore, the students’ success convinced teachers and staff of the importance of children learning to read and write in their own language, lighting a bright educational future for generations.

*pseudonym used to safeguard vulnerable populations

An Early Start on Learning

Mother tongue preschools give children an educational head start.

“The resources created by this project promise to benefit young students for years to come, and the head start provided by mother tongue education illuminates the children’s natural learning potential.”

2020 Annual Update | SIL International
The 2020 SIL Story
in numbers

897+ Million
People Impacted
As of September 2020, SIL works alongside 1,347 communities in 96 countries. The work we do together makes language solutions available for more than 897 million people worldwide.

4,200+
SIL Staff
SIL staff includes 4,266 people from 84 countries who work alongside thousands more partners and volunteers from local communities worldwide.

1,610
Language Programs
SIL’s involvement in 1,610 language programs is carried out through three streams of engagement:
1. Linguistic analysis
2. Scripture access/engagement
3. Literacy, education and development

Software
Through software development, SIL partners with communities to support their languages for use online. Nearly 40 SIL software tools are currently available, including:

Bloom Library
• 35,721 books created (2020)
• 197,249 books created (total)
• 369 languages (total)
• 14,653 users from 180 countries (total)

Keyman Keyboards
• 491 keyboards added (2020)
• 686 keyboards (total)
• serving 2,122 languages (total)

Paratext (a joint project with UBS)
• 927 new projects registered
• 562 languages (2020)
• used by 10,460 users (2020)
• used in 175 countries (2020)
• serving over 2,900 languages

Webonary
• 57 dictionaries added (2020)
• Dictionaries in 257 languages (total)

Other Contributions
Ethnologue
Ethnologue is SIL’s comprehensive resource for language intelligence, cataloguing the details of the 7,139 known living languages.
• In 2020, 1.5M users from 235 countries accessed the Ethnologue website.

Publications
In 2020, SIL language experts produced these books.

Language and Culture Archives
SIL’s digital archive of language resources provides a wealth of materials to support local communities, governments and development agencies in education, literacy and language preservation efforts.
• 2020 was a record year, adding over 4,063 items, to end the year with 84,789 total items.
• 78 more languages are now represented in the Archives (totaling 4,281 languages).
Until recently, few Deaf children participated in Tanzanian church services. Inspired by this observation, BILAT (a Deaf organization committed to Bible translation, promoting sign language use and advocating for Deaf people) set a goal in 2018 to develop child-friendly translations of biblical passages in Tanzanian Sign Language to bridge this divide in their worship community.

Of Tanzania’s estimated Deaf population of 500,000, most Deaf children have non-Deaf parents who, if they attend services, go to non-Deaf churches. With no sign language resources or interpretation available at these venues, Deaf children find themselves isolated from community worship alongside their families.

In March 2020, BILAT, with assistance from SIL, started a project to engage Deaf children through the translated passages and began recruiting volunteers to teach. BILAT focused on Bible storying, drama, Scripture-based songs and teaching as fun, creative ways to engage the children.

Eleven adults volunteered—all of them Deaf. These volunteers serve as role models for the young students who rarely meet Deaf adults with similar life experiences, which unfortunately for many include abuse, neglect and abandonment.

After three months of training, the volunteers began working with the Deaf children at their schools. Through memorization, songs and acting out dramas about Bible passages, the children learned important lessons about the biblical concepts of forgiveness and kindness. One Deaf student from Bukoba recalled, “I was bitter and my schoolwork suffered too because I hated most people. I just felt life was unfair. I have learned to study Scripture engagement every day . . . I have learned to forgive."

The volunteers now serve eleven local schools in five regions of Tanzania. The lessons are so effective that staff and parents have noticed a positive change in the children and asked project volunteers to continue counseling Deaf children facing struggles. Their training and experiences raised the stature of these Deaf volunteers in the eyes of the community, and they have been asked to serve as leaders in their churches.
A new generation of leaders and advocates emerge in rural Bangladesh.

As the world makes strides toward equal access, equality and social justice for all, traditionally marginalized communities are projecting their voices into the dialogue of their nations. However, language-related barriers still present major obstacles to progress. Without the confidence to speak clearly, local leaders struggle to advocate for the needs of their people with government officials.

The Kol people of Bangladesh felt this plight deeply. A Kol leader described the isolated life his community previously experienced: “Before we started working with SIL, I can’t remember if any government bodies ever visited our villages. People from my age group are illiterate. Things like early marriage, infant death, poor maternity health were very common . . .”

After partnering with SIL, the Kol began social leadership training programs among youth to mobilize them as agents of positive change within the community. These Generation Next Groups (GNG) played a vital role in cultivating leadership skills necessary for community leaders to interface with the government and develop the interagency relationships to address their needs. And the formation of multilingual education (MLE) programs benefit the earliest generations by helping young students thrive in the classroom.

“Without the confidence to speak clearly, local leaders struggle to advocate for the needs of their people with local authorities.”

The enhanced communication skills and confidence these programs facilitated among the GNG youths, MLE teachers and village committee members equipped the Kol to approach the higher authorities and respectfully present their needs in a way that produced great results. Through the information shared in these programs, parents now use health care services, like vaccine clinics, to keep their children healthy.

Appealing to local authorities during the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the government to provide the community with emergency relief. Additionally, cooperation with the government produced provisions for clean water, electricity and a latrine for the village, as well as student stipends, disability care where needed and groceries for local widows. This good rapport now leads the government officials to ask the Kol’s opinion on matters related to their community, something that would have been highly unlikely several years ago.
SIL is a global faith-based nonprofit organization that works with over 1,300 local communities around the world to develop language solutions that expand their possibilities for a better life.

SIL’s work is fueled by a desire to see people flourishing in community using the languages they value most.

Inspired by God’s love, SIL advocates, builds capacity, and works with local communities to apply language expertise that advances meaningful development, education, and engagement with Scripture.

Audited Financial Statement: sil.org/financial-information

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