Mother-tongue-first approaches to adult learning enable non-dominant language speakers to become literate in their mother tongue, while building a strong foundation for successful acquisition of national and international languages.

What can you do?

Break down barriers that block non-dominant language communities from achieving their education and development goals.

YOU can help remove barriers of access to quality adult education for lifelong learning through:

- **Supportive policy-making**: develop supportive language and education policies that increase access and quality of education opportunities for non-dominant language speakers.
- **Inclusive education programming**: incorporate mother-tongue-based multilingual approaches in your own adult education programs.
- **Peer-to-peer advocacy**: raise awareness about barriers to education for non-dominant language speakers within your own sphere of influence.

SIL International: *Partners in Language Development*

SIL International is a faith-based nonprofit organization committed to serving language communities and institutions worldwide through developing capacity for sustainable language-based development.

As a nongovernmental organization, SIL has special consultative status with Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and formal consultative relations with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

For more information on how mother-tongue-based multilingual education can make a difference in addressing illiteracy in your context, please contact us.

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What do half the world’s non-literate adults have in common?
Incorporating mother tongue into adult learning environments respects learners and affirms their local languages, cultures and identities.

They are speakers of non-dominant languages.

Languages matter.

According to the Ethnologue, over 6900 languages are spoken in the world today.

Visit www.ethnologue.com or www.sil.org for more information.

Languages matter.

Of approximately 776 million remaining non-literate in the world, an estimated 50 percent speak non-dominant languages.

Including the excluded

Everyone has the right to an education that enables them to use their unique talents to improve their lives and transform their societies. However, adult education programs accessible only in the national language leave behind non-literate who speak a different mother tongue.

Despite considerable research demonstrating that learners benefit most from education when it starts in their mother tongue, few countries reflect this in adult education systems and policies.

Adult education initiatives that do not account for the role of the mother tongue in lifelong learning fail those who need them most. Non-dominant language communities are not yet experiencing equitable approaches to Education for All.

All benefit from adult education for life-long learning

Mother-tongue-first approaches to adult learning enable non-dominant language speakers to become literate in their mother tongue, while building a strong foundation for acquisition of national and international languages.

Adults have confidence in an environment that values the knowledge they already bring to their learning. Mother-tongue approaches respect the learner’s local language, culture and identity.

Multilingual education (MLE) allows for the use of several languages in the learning process, for example:

- by using the mother tongue as the language of initial and recurrent literacy,
- as languages of instruction in nonformal and formal education, and
- by using a combination of these languages as a means of lifelong learning.

Mother-tongue based multilingual education contributes to the development of vibrant, multilingual societies. Non-dominant language communities can use their languages as bridges to participation in broader society, without sacrificing their unique ethnolinguistic heritage.

Language also plays an important role in achieving education for sustainable development. Essential information on HIV-AIDS and malaria prevention, or sustainable agricultural techniques, for example, are most effectively communicated in languages understood by learners.