Steps towards achieving education and development goals through participation:
Bangladesh context

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Bangladesh is known as an ethnodiverse country. Most of the indigenous people continue to be deprived of basic socioeconomic rights, including education, healthcare, food and nutritional security, access to safe drinking water, and so forth.

Language plays a vital role as people participate to overcome these challenges. In the process of achieving any developmental goals it is critical to communicate life-changing information in a language that people understand very well. The use of mother tongue as people engage in education and development activities builds up their self-esteem and, in the process, they take increased ownership of the development process, which contributes to achieving better results both in education and development. Higher literacy rates, for example, often result in higher per capita income. As people gain more confidence, they participate more and more in development activities, connect with government, and raise a voice for their rights; which contributes to their development efforts both in the short and long term.

SIL Bangladesh helps to strengthen and empower ethnic communities to overcome the challenges they face in society. At present SIL is supporting four communities to empower them and connect them with resources available both from the government and non-government sectors through a project called HELP.

This paper will explore the experience of and lessons learnt in the process of working with four indigenous communities in Bangladesh by helping them to engage and encouraging their participation in development activities, where use of their own language plays a vital role.