Community-based language development: the role of community action in achieving sustainable development

By M. Paul Lewis

Community-based language development identifies local speech communities as the initiators, designers, and implementers of their own language development efforts.

The alignment of those more local and immediate goals with the Sustainable Development Goals requires that the community be provided adequate awareness and perspective to be able to understand not only the language and culture preservation dynamics of their situation, but also the relationship of those activities to the larger, more global issues addressed by the Sustainable Development Goals. The provision of that awareness and perspective can lead not only to better-informed choices and language development strategies but also to an increased level of capacity within the community to carry out its development goals over the longer term.

The paper discusses three necessary areas of capacity building: (1) the capacity of the language itself, (2) the capacity of the community, and (3) the capacity of the language development agencies involved in implementation.