MTB-MLE Initiatives and Advocacy Efforts for Indigenous Language Communities of Northern Pakistan

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Forum for Language Initiative (FLI) Background

Training and resource center working to enable the language communities of northern Pakistan to preserve and promote their mother tongues

- Founded in 2002
- Nonprofit organization
- Formerly known as Frontier Language Institute, based in Peshawar
- In 2009 changed to Forum for Language Initiatives, based in Islamabad
Target Language Communities

30 disadvantaged language groups in northern Pakistan

Language Families:

- Indo-Aryan
- Iranian
- Tibeto-Burman
- An isolate
Advocacy

Three approaches:

*For, with* and *by* those affected by a situation
Strategizing advocacy efforts

● On the occasion of IMLD 2004 FLI representatives were disappointed by majority Pashtun group
● In 2005 joined hands with second majority language group
● Every year IMLDs were celebrated together with GHB and other Language society in Peshawar
● First national conference on languages of KP held in 2006 by FLI & GHB
● Several conferences held for policy change and language rights
Pashtun mindset change

- ANP, the Pashtun nationalist party won election in KP in 2008 and made their own government
- FLI and their partners approach them for language and education policy change
- In 2011 a bill passed in assembly and thus 5 languages included in education up to secondary level
- Subsequently KP Languages authority bill passed for promotion and preservation of all KP language's
Advocacy with Textbook Board

- KP textbook board were approached and thus made a good relationship with them
- FLI provides the name of curriculum developers to TBB
- FLI representatives included in curriculum editing/revision
- Three TBB/KPLA guys brought to MLE4 in 2013 by FLI
- Several presentations on effectiveness of MTB-MLE with TBB
Engagement with media

- Media seminars each year held in different locations
- Swat seminar focused on minority languages and well advertised by media
- Most of these media persons reported on smaller languages in that district
- Media seminar in Gilgit held in July 2016
- Less than 20 days after this event a bill passed as a result of that seminar in the GB assembly
Gilgit-Baltistan policy changed

- A female representative of GB tabled the bill to include 5 regional languages in education
- Bill was passed with a big majority
- Very soon curriculum development work will start
- FLI is in close contact with them and they already asked for some help
- Follow-up meetings held with MPs
Partnerships with other Organizations

● Providing language development and MTB-MLE trainings
● Good relationship and network with Asia-Pacific MLE WG
● UNESCO Pakistan
● USAID Pakistan
● Some regional and federal universities
MTB-MLE Initiatives

MTB-MLE = Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education

Building a strong foundation in the learner’s mother tongue (L1), and a good bridge to the national language and others (L2, L3)
Targeted Language Communities

Currently 30 language groups are involved in language development activities

6 of them are implementing MTB-MLE projects in their respective communities
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th># of Schools</th>
<th># of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gawri</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torwali</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palula</td>
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<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hindko</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indus Kohistani</td>
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<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khowar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Facilitation and Training

Literacy Development Training

- Orthography Development
- Curriculum Development Training
- Writer Workshops
- Teacher Training
- Desktop Publishing Training (DPT)
- Child Rights Production (CRP)
Facilitation and Training (cont’d)

- Leadership Development Training
- Lexicography Workshop
- Basic Linguistics Workshop
- Adult Literacy Program Training in 3 language communities
- Identity Based Community Development (IBCD) affiliation with Payap University, Thailand
Achievements of FLI

- Trained Pakistani citizens becoming master trainers in the areas of linguistics, anthropology, orthography and MLE.
- Published a series of books and promotional materials in the fields mentioned above.
- Helped to organize language-related conferences.
- Advocated for language rights and multilingual education.
Challenges

- FLI need support nationally and internationally to further enhance its programs.
- Militancy and “Talibanization” in parts of northern Pakistan
- The establishment feels threatened by ethnolinguistic development in rural areas
- Full length training for the teachers
- Pre- and in-service training for teachers
- Changes to the curriculum
What next?

- MLE schools expanded to grade 5
- Language development work is not supported in Pakistan, so we have to do it
- FLI has the vision and mission to educate the people through MLE schools and to expand the MLE projects
- All children, especially girls, will have access to primary and higher education
- Implemented Adult literacy programs in 3 language communities
Thank You
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