

Forum for Language Initiatives



Spring 2012

About FLI

The Forum for Language Initiatives (FLI) was founded in 2003 as a resource centre for the many language communities in Pakistan's mountainous northern region. For the last nine years, FLI has provided resources, training, mentorship, curriculum development, and project facilitation for many people working to preserve and document the languages and cultures of northern Pakistan. FLI's goal is to assist them in preserving their oral traditions, poetry, proverbs, folk tales, and other aspects of their linguistic and cultural heritage, as well as enable the members of these language communities to improve reading and writing skills through mother-tongue-based literacy Programmes. It also aims to support the production of literature in the national, regional, and vernacular languages of northern Pakistan.



One of the trainings FLI has developed is called *The Discovery Programme*. This programme, consisting of 4 courses, gives people specialized skills so they can carry out a variety of language-based development initiatives. In February and April 2011, FLI held the 3rd & 4th course in this programme. The topic for course 3 was *Discovering My Culture*, and participants learned research methodologies so that they could conduct culture research in their particular communities. During the workshop, participants described unique aspects of their respective cultures, broadening one another's cultural perspective and gaining mutual appreciation.

The 4th course, *Discovering the Structure of My Language*, was designed to enable trainees to analyze the grammatical and phonological structures of their languages. This was the last workshop in the Discovery series, which began in February 2010. Throughout the year, participants completed fieldwork in their language communities related to the courses, discussed issues that arose and received feedback on their findings from their mentors in the programme. After completing all four courses in this series and the related fieldwork, participants then shared in the *Discovery Programme* Graduation, held on 2 July 2011 in Gilgit. This was the 3rd cohort to complete the *Discovery Programme* and included 12 trainees from 4 language communities.



Literacy Programme

FLI has helped to start mother tongue-based multi-lingual education (MTB-MLE) projects in three language communities—Gawri, Palula, and Torwali. These projects introduce children to reading and writing in their first language, providing a smoother transition to the national language education system. FLI trained people from these communities in school management, curriculum development, and teacher and supervisor training. A total of approximately 150 boys and girls have now completed this 2-year MLE Programme and have transitioned smoothly into the mainstream school system. Currently FLI is engaged in training people from 4 more language committees: Hindko, Indus Kohistani, Khowar, and Shina. Towards these ends, FLI has held two training courses already this year.



The first MTB-MLE Committee Training Course was a 3-day workshop held in Gilgit from 3-5 July. Naseem Haider, Training Coordinator, and Muhammad Zaman, Language Development Consultant, facilitated the training for 28 participants from the target language groups. The main objective of this workshop was to introduce the participants to the overall structure of the MLE Programme, to make them aware of the roles and responsibilities of the MLE committee, coordinator, and community, to review the status of their literacy needs assessment (LNA), and to agree on a plan for future training.



The second training was held in Mansehra from 27 September to 1 October with Naseem Haider and Zaman again facilitating for twenty-five participants. Each language committee reported on the tasks they had completed since the first workshop. They were then guided in analysing their LNA survey information, given an

introduction to the RBM framework to improve their planning and monitoring skills, provided an overview of the approach and methodology of community-centred MTB-MLE programmes, and instructed in the key role of cultural context for curriculum and instructional materials development. All committee members actively participated in each session. They completed many of the assignments during the workshop, which enabled them to then carry out additional awareness and educational activities subsequent to the workshop.

International Literacy Day!

Each year 8 September is celebrated as International Literacy Day! FLI was very excited to see multiple language communities plan and host celebrations once again. At these events, community leaders and MLE teachers delivered speeches on the importance of literacy. Students in the MTB-MLE programmes sang songs and recited poetry in their mother tongue. It is exciting to see how the MTB-MLE programmes are helping to increase the awareness in these communities that early education needs to begin in the mother tongue.





Capacity Building at FLI

As FLI develops the capacity of the language groups of northern Pakistan, it also works hard to continually improve the scope of skills and the vision of its own staff. Throughout the past year, FLI has participated in many conferences and workshops towards this end. For example, *The Training for Project Leaders and Project Accountants* was held in Sri Lanka from 15-21 May. FLI's Assistant Director and Account Officer participated in this PMU-sponsored event which provided key information on finance management, practice and policy.

Another was *The International Conference on Language and Social Cohesion*, held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 17-19 October. This event was facilitated jointly by the British Council, Sri Lanka Ministry of Education, and GIZ. FLI's board member Khawaja A. Rahman and Language Development Consultant Muhammad Zaman presented a joint paper entitled, *Status on English Language Proficiency among the MLE Students in Pakistan*. For this paper, Rahman and Zaman gathered and researched data from Palula, Gawri, and Torwali MLE projects as well as from other educational projects around the country. This event highlighted FLI's MLE initiatives as well as strengthened FLI's links with UNESCO, UNICEF, Save the Children, and the British Council.

A semantics workshop was held at FLI from 14-18 November. This was part of a series of advanced training for FLI's facilitators. FLI's Research Consultant, Dr. Henrik Liljegren, facilitated this workshop for five people from four different languages communities. The main goal of this workshop was to enhance the participants' knowledge of semantics and examine relevant features in their own languages. When compiled, some of the fieldwork that resulted from this workshop will be published.

At the same time that FLI's facilitators train and mentor language activists working in various communities throughout the northern regions of Pakistan, they themselves continue to receive training and mentoring as well. During the past year, many coaching sessions have been held for FLI facilitators on topics including literacy, project development, linguistics, and finance management. As a result, they expand their understanding of their field, and which leads to better resources and training for those in the language groups they serve. Involvement in international conferences, like in Sri Lanka, allows FLI personnel to build rapport with the international academic and development community and expand their influence and credibility in their respective fields of focus. Overall, the past year has witnessed substantial capacity development within FLI. Its programmes have grown to provide better training and resources for the local language communities, while simultaneously increasing the organization's credibility on the international level.

Library

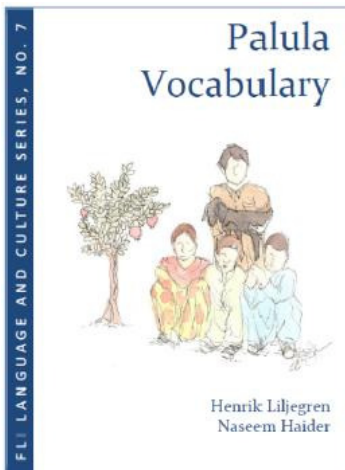
FLI has a substantial, highly specialized library available to language activists, which offers a wealth of resources on specific languages of the region and a variety of topics related to language-based development. During the last several months, FLI purchased yet more new volumes to add to this library, bringing the total number of printed resources to 1003; the number of electronic resources significantly increases FLI's library inventory. The main topics of these new volumes include management, linguistics, literacy, culture, and dictionaries.



Website

New information continues to be uploaded to FLI's website. New articles include information about international language and literacy days observed worldwide, and the celebrations held on these days in Pakistan. Information regarding FLI's new publications and academic articles on linguistics and literacy has also been added. To view these and other articles and resources, please visit our website at www.fli-online.org.

New Publications



"Status on English Language Proficiency among the MLE Students in Pakistan," written by Khawaja Rahman and Muhammad Zaman and presented at The International Conference on Language and Social Cohesion The conference paper is available at the following:

<https://languageandsocialcohesion.org/content/krehmanmzamanpaper.htm>

Ormuri Language in Past and Present, originally written in Russian in the 1970s, recently translated into English by Dr. Joan Baart, a Dutch linguist who worked in Pakistan for many years.

Palula Vocabulary, developed jointly by Dr. Henrik Liljegren, a Swedish linguist, and Naseem Haider, Training Coordinator of FLI and Palula MLE Coordinator.

Contact Us

For Questions and Information, please contact FLI at:

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