



FORUM FOR LANGUAGE INITIATIVES

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



“Empowering language communities of northern Pakistan to revitalize their linguistic and cultural heritage through research, training, education and advocacy”

FLI helped migrant communities of northern Pakistan, living in urban areas of the country get together and celebrate their culture



Balti language community, living in Islamabad and Rawalpindi held a festival called Jashan-e-Mayfung



Khawar language community in Islamabad opened Islamabad chapter of Anjuman Taraqqi Khawar, Chitral



Shina language community in Karachi got together to discuss what was needed to plan any cultural event



Dameli language community, living in Peshawar held a musical programme in the city

Executive Director's Message

Assalamo Alaikum and Hello,

2021 was another successful year for FLI as we were able to empower more people in language documentation. We extended our services to two more indigenous languages of the region; Kalkoti and Bateri. We enhanced the aptitudes of Kati people in the same field. We were lucky enough to facilitate a project for Gawarbati which is hoped to drive the language to an advanced level of documentation. We forged relationship with new universities, both at national and international levels which will smoothen the research work on our languages. We reached out to the languages of Gilgit Baltistan with strategies of additional community involvement. We empowered more communities by helping their own designed activities. We started working with migrant communities from our target region, living in the urban areas of the country and helped them come together and celebrate their culture. And we provided our indigenous communities with more published literature. These all happened in the year. I hope this newsletter reflects on our services we could manage to provide to those we have promised to. Do enjoy some of the stories we have presented in these pages. I thank the donors for their constant support and encouragement enabling us to do the needful. I appreciate our partners for their confidence which gives us the freedom to plan and execute our programs. I am proud of my team for the efforts they are putting in to achieve our goals of empowering the ethnolinguistic communities. I hope this journey will continue with the same commitment and consistency in days to come.

Thank you very much,

Fakhruddin
Executive Director



Open University Opens Its Doors for Minority Languages

"We may offer a doctoral program in Language Documentation focusing on lesser known languages spoken in nooks and corners of the country, and I would consider such proposal if submitted while collaborating with FLI." This was said by the Chair of the Linguistic Department in Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Mr. Malik Ajmal Gulzar. The initiative will pave the way for indigenous languages to be studied at the university level, he added. Mr. Gulzar was speaking at the concluding session of a language documentation workshop that FLI organized in Islamabad in November. The five-day workshop was organized in collaboration with University of North Texas (UNT) and Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, exclusively for university faculty and students. Twenty eight people including professors, researchers and students from the linguistic departments of eight universities participated in the workshop. Additionally, some individuals from FLI's partner organizations also attended the workshop.

While addressing the ending session, Dr. Muhammad Kamal, a faculty member of AIOU termed the event a successful activity which he thought was helpful for all the participants, and suggested making the workshop a regular part of the language development program's summer term. Dr. Sadaf who travelled from UNT to facilitate the workshop also spoke on the occasion and pledged to

continue to collaborate with FLI in the future.

The majority of the twenty-eight participants were from Northern Pakistan. The universities represented by these participants included: the Islamic International University, COMSATS and NUML, all located in Islamabad; Baltistan University in Gilgit, Baltistan; Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University in Dir Kohistan; and The University of Chitral and the Degree College of Chitral, both located in Chitral. Sydney University was also represented by one language researcher from Swat. In addition to university students and faculty, there were also representatives of local language development organizations as well as speakers of the recently discovered Mankiyali language in Pakistan and severely endangered Kalkoti language of Dir Kohistan.

The main purpose of the workshop was to orient the participants to the new tools and technologies being used internationally for language documentation purposes. Dr. Sadaf Munshi and Mr. Eric Englert from UNT, Dr. Muhammad Kamal from Open University and Naseem Haider from FLI facilitated the sessions in the workshop. We hope that this event will benefit the languages of Pakistan and cement FLI's relationship with the linguistic departments of both national and international universities for future collaboration.



Literary People Resolve to Work Together for the languages of Gilgit-Baltistan

The culture and language admirers of Gilgit Baltistan (GB) got together for a policy dialogue in Gilgit city on the last day of the year, the 31st of December 2021. More than two dozen people including writers, authors, and poets of five major indigenous language communities as well as people from relevant government bodies, civil service, media and academia participated in the discussion. Together, they pledged to reach a consensus on what needs to be done to protect and promote the languages spoken in the region. The participants discussed and strived to find the answer to the question of what was stopping them from working for the benefit of their languages. The Shina, Balti, Khowar, Burushaski and Wakhi languages were represented in the event by their writers and researchers while the departments of education and tourism were represented by their relevant officials. (Issues of culture in GB are still handled by the tourism department.) Three media workers also participated in the event, highlighting the event's significance in their daily publications the following day. The event also became a story on social media, igniting debate on language preservation and how the communities should be working for their languages, thanks to the vloggers who developed short video clips of the sessions and uploaded them to social media platforms. The civil society members also joined hands with the linguistic community



members in the event and expressed their support to them so that the intangible cultural assets of the region can be more effectively preserved and promoted.

The participants all agreed to work together, particularly to resolve the issues that affect so many individuals within the community. They pledged to come together for broader consultation with other communities and also formed a committee for the coordination of inter-community consultation and interaction. The government officials who were present on the occasion encouraged the community researchers and writers to work together for their languages so that the process of consensus building and agreement over language related initiatives could actually come to cohesive conclusions. These unified conclusions could then more easily drive the policies practices of institutions regarding work on cultures and languages. The participants thanked FLI for organizing the joint event for major stakeholders in the region, and have high hopes that the event will impact language development trends and the related policy-making process in a positive way.



گلیت (دیوردرپورٹ) گلیت بلتستان میں علانی نیا نون کی فروغ کے لئے کوآرڈینییشن کمیٹی قائم کی گئی۔ اس بات کا فیصلہ گلیت میں فورم فار لٹریچر کی تشکیل دے کر یہ اہتمام علانی باوری زبانوں کے تعلقی سیمینار میں کیا گیا۔ سیمینار میں گلیت بلتستان کی علانی زبانوں میں اعلیٰ درجے کی شہسکی، کھوار اور وائی زبان کے نمائندوں نے شرکت کی۔ سیمینار میں گلیت بلتستان میں اعلانی زبانوں کی فروغ اور ترقی کیلئے اب تک جوئے والے اقدامات اور گزشتہ حکومت کے اقدامات پر غور و خوض بھی کیا گیا۔ سیمینار میں تمام اعلانی نمائندوں نے اپنے خیالات کا اظہار کرتے ہوئے اس امر پر زور دیا کہ گلیت بلتستان میں باوری علانی زبانوں کی فروغ کیلئے حکومتی سطح پر اقدامات اٹھانے کی ضرورت ہے۔ سیمینار میں فورم فار لٹریچر کی تشکیل دے کر اس جانب سے سیمینار میں علانی زبانوں کے فروغ کیلئے کوآرڈینییشن کمیٹی قائم کی گئی۔

First Virtual Workshop on Pakistan's Indigenous Languages

The first ever virtual workshop on the indigenous languages of Pakistan took place in October. The main aim of the workshop was to provide a platform to national and international researchers working on the endangered, minority, and indigenous languages of Pakistan. The National Science Foundation, USA, provided funding for the workshop which was attended by more than 40 participants from many countries around the world. The online workshop, which mostly covered the languages spoken in the northern part of Pakistan, was organized by Mr. Qandeel Hussain (University of Toronto, Canada), in association with Jeff Mielke (North Carolina State University, Raleigh, USA), Dr. Muhammad Kamal Khan (Allama Iqbal Open University), and Fakhruddin Akhonzada (Forum for Language Initiatives). FLI collaborated with international institutions like the Department of English at North Carolina State University, USA, Allama Iqbal Open University, and The Phonetic Society of Pakistan (PSP) to organize the event.

The workshop was facilitated by known linguists and anthropologists from Sweden, Australia, Italy and Pakistan. Mr. Henrik Liljegren (Stockholm University, Sweden), shed light on the Languages and Geography in Northern Pakistan; Areal Typology made Practical. The session, Writing Kalasha, a study of variations was facilitated by an Australian independent researcher Mr. Gregory Cooper while Mr. Alberto Cacopardo, an Italian

anthropologist, presented on the topic, the Glottonyms and Ethnonyms in Peristan. Mr. Augusto Cacopardo, also an Italian anthropologist, facilitated the session; Varin, a God of the Southern Kalasha, His Connection to Wine in Mythological Text. Finally, Naseem Haider presented his paper on how FLI has been helping community researchers document their mother tongues in northern Pakistan.

Each session was followed by a question and answer break and then a general discussion allowed other participants to share their views and feedback.

People in FLI's network appreciated Mr. Qandeel Hussain for his efforts to organize a worthy event and hope that the workshop will play a significant role in contributing to work for the languages of Pakistan. Of the 73 languages spoken in Pakistan, the majority are believed to be endangered and many are threatened. Events like this workshop encourage local researchers to discover the strength of their mother tongues while also providing an opportunity to learn from international researchers and their findings.

Stockholm University, Sweden launched an advanced documentation project on Gawarbat language in Chitral



Planning for the Preservation of the Bateri Language Started

FLI held its first intervention for the preservation and promotion of the Bateri language in October. Four people from the community participated in the six day event. The main objective of the event was to develop a plan for how to preserve and promote the language and also to discover the main vulnerabilities in terms of language use so that future events can focus on strengthening these vulnerable areas. The process followed in this event helped participants realize that a lack of documentation of the language was creating challenges for those from the community who want to help their language survive and thrive.

Therefore, as a result of this event, FLI now plans to hold documentation activities for the Bateri language community. Soon, another event will be held to plan for and begin accelerated language documentation activities, and to empower and enable individuals from the Bateri community to carry out this work themselves.

Bateri is a Dardic language spoken in Batera, which is in the southern region of the Kohistan district along the east bank of the Indus River. Community people say that there are 20,000 people in the area who speak the language as their mother tongue.

There are people from the Bateri language community who have participated in mobilizing-centered events FLI has held from time to time, but this event was dedicated specifically to the needs of the Bateri language and how to meet those needs. It's hoped that more activities will be carried out for its preservation and promotion.



Developing a Nooristani Language in Chitral

FLI held a five day activity to support the writing system development of the Kataviri language in Chitral in April. A dozen language researchers who represented all the dialects of the language participated in the event. The participants reached a consensus for developing a spelling guide, spelling rules, characters, etc. to introduce a standardized writing system for the language.

The Kataviri language, which is locally called Shekhani, Bashgaliwar or Nooristani in Chitral, is spoken by a good number of people both in Chitral and Nooristan, Afghanistan. Linguists tend to use the word Shekhani for both the Kataviri and Kamviri languages. However, this event was for speakers of just the Kataviri language. The speakers of this language claim to be the third largest language group in Chitral after Khowar and Palula as first and second, respectively. Its speakers, especially those in Nooristan, have made attempts to produce literature in the language, but they could not follow any standardized way of writing since the standardized orthography for Kataviri was never developed. Many obstacles have blocked the process including that the language has many dialects and the speakers of the language live in scattered villages, many of which are geographically far from each other.

What motivated FLI to initiate working with Kataviri is the strength of its speakers who keep using their language to the maximum extent possible in the spoken realm. They have maintained Buzkashi, a Central Asian sport in Chitral which is played on horses and a calf carcass is scored Goal. Also, the educated folk from the community is desirous of working for their language and culture. In 2019, FLI conducted a survey to find out the strength of the language under the now well-known tool, the Sustainable Use Model (SUM). In this survey, the Kataviri language turned out to be strong on the Identity and Spoken scales but lagged behind on the Literacy scale, which led FLI to plan another activity for language documentation, held in Islamabad during the first quarter of last year. Participants of that workshop included students, teachers, and activists who were

committed to continue learning about language development. FLI was asked by the educated members of the Kataviri community to help them develop the writing system as they wanted to use their language for creative writing, poetry, etc. This Writers' Workshop was comprised of five days of activities and was held in Shekhandeh, in the Bamburet Valley of Chitral. An average of 12 people attended the event each day, including university students, teachers, writers, etc. For the first time in their language, they identified vowels and consonants, discovered unique sounds, chose characters to represent those unique sounds, and developed a spelling guide and a method of how to deal with borrowed and guest words. FLI will keep supporting Kataviri speakers as long as they feel the need to enhance their capacities in language development.

The members of this community migrated in late 19th century to the hilly villages of Gobor, Shekhandeh, Rumbur, Badogar, Urtsun, etc., in Chitral from the nearby Afghan province of Nooristan. The language is typically surrounded by Khowar and sometimes Pashto communities in Chitral, therefore the children of Kataviri communities become bilingual at an early age. However, so far, the community has still maintained their own language and has grown to over ten thousands in number of speakers.



New Books Published in Three Indigenous Languages

Authored by three of its more experienced trainees (including two of its own staff members), FLI published three new books in the Shina, Palula and Indus Kohistani languages this year. The book in the Shina language is a set of folktales and folksongs collected and produced by Amir Haider. The books in Palula and Indus Kohistani were authored by Naseem Haider and Gul Muhammad respectively. Both of these are conversation books aimed at expanding the introduction of their languages to non-speakers by providing routine conversation in the target languages with translations in Urdu and English.

The book in Shina was the first that FLI had the opportunity to publish in that language. Shina, the largest language in the Dardic group, is spoken by over two million people. Shina is a very vital language with a strong heritage of oral literature, including folktales, legends, history, poetry and song. There is increasing interest in reading and writing Shina and preserving their oral heritage in print. FLI has also helped Shina writers with the development of an Android keyboard which is being used by hundreds of Shina speakers on social media.

Palula is related to Shina and is widely used and understood in the communities between Lowari and Drosh in southern Chitral. A written form of the language has been developed and is being used in a small but growing body of local literature and educational materials. The community has a rich heritage in the form of oral history, traditions and sayings.

Indus Kohistani is the major language of the west bank of the Indus River, spoken in villages like Jijal, Pattan, Seo, Kandia, etc. More than 300,000 people speak this language. Literature in the language is being developed by educated community members and oral traditions are also being documented and printed. Like Palula, the Indus Kohistani community has also arranged a

preschool education program that allows children to begin their education in their mother tongue.

FLI has been supporting literature development in local languages in order to strengthen literacy in these languages, and these recent books will hopefully serve that purpose in these three language. FLI makes arrangements for the printing of books which are produced by its trainees to encourage their ongoing research and enhance the literature development work in the languages of Northern Pakistan. FLI congratulates its three trainees for their new publications and assures them of their continued support in the future.



Indus Kohistani-Urdu-English conversation book, FLI published is being presented to the Dy Secretary Elementary Education, KP

First Ever Yadgha Poetry Session Held in Lotkuh, Chitral

Yadgha speakers of the Lotkuh Valley in Chitral arranged a poetry program on Phatak day in the town of Garamchashma in the Lotkuh Valley. A group of Khowar poets from Upper and Lower Chitral joined them in the historic event which was held for the promotion of the Yadgha language and to encourage the Yadgha poets. The event provided the first ever opportunity for Yadgha poets to express their creativity to a wider audience and introduce the participants from other language communities to these new poets from the Yadgha community. Earlier, the poets from the Yadgha community used to present their poems in the Khowar language, but have recently switched to their native language due to increasing awareness in the area regarding the importance of using one's mother tongue thanks to the efforts of Yadgha language researchers and activists. Seven poets from the Yadgha language community presented their work in their language and received appreciation from the audience for their efforts. Later on, Yadgha songs were performed and enjoyed as part of the musical program arranged after the poetry session. These sessions were organized by the Yadgha Development Network, a partner of FLI in the community.

followers of the Pir and reads out his sayings to them. The elders of the community offer well-wishes to each other and offer prayers for the wealth and health of the community. Young people and children enjoy celebrating by spending time outside with friends, and women visit each other's houses. This year, the celebration was made all the richer by the added activity of enjoying Yadgha poetry at the end of the day. More than 50 people from the Yadgha language community attended this first ever poetry session held in their mother tongue.

Phatak, a religious festival, is celebrated on 1st February each year by Yadgha speakers in the valley. Though people in Chitral and Gilgit Baltistan usually celebrate Phatak on 21st March every year, as the first day of the Persian Solar Hijri calendar, people of the Lotkuh Valley choose instead to celebrate Phatak on 1st February to commemorate the work of Pir Nasir Khisro. This eleventh century saint is believed to have come to this region in the mid-11th century to preach the Ismaili sect of Islam. On this day, people in the valley cook traditional food (Shenek) and take it to the Pir's abbacy situated near Garamchashma town, offering the food to the protectors of this revered place. The management of the abbacy (Khanqah) then distributes the sacred food among the



Ministers of Gilgit-Baltistan Appreciate FLI's Services for Indigenous Languages

"FLI has emerged as a heritage savior, and an organization which believes in practical work, not just with the rhetoric." This was said by Mr. Maisum Kazim, the Tourism Minister of Gilgit Baltistan (GB). He said that the protection and promotion of cultural heritage would strengthen our cultural diversity, leading to promoting tourism and widening the horizon of job opportunities in the region. He was addressing the concluding session of a workshop FLI held in November at Baltistan University of GB for Balti language researchers. Mr. Raja Nasir, the Minister for Culture, also spoke on the occasion and praised the services FLI has been rendering to protect and promote the indigenous languages of Pakistan.

FLI held this workshop in Skardu city of Gilgit Baltistan to help Balti language researchers identify writing issues in their language. Twenty eight people, including senior researchers and university students, attended the three day event which also provided the participants with an opportunity to look for solutions to the identified orthography issues.

The workshop also involved learned individuals from the Balti language community to hopefully help the Balti language researchers as they worked to identify and resolve orthography issues. Now that these issues have been identified and discussed, the researchers will be able to continue their debates and research with others in the community until they are able to reach an agreement on each issue raised. FLI hopes that the participants will indeed take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the workshop to start these conversations and will continue working towards the development of

their language, specifically in relation to the standardization of the Balti orthography.

Balti is spoken in the Northern Areas (Gilgit-Baltistan) of Pakistan and adjoining parts of Ladakh, India. It is closely related to languages found in Tibet. Balti has several genres of folk and classical literature. While there are some proverbs and epic stories within the oral tradition, earlier the literature was all poetry however now a days other genres are being developed. The Balti community claims that there are around a million people in Pakistan who speak the language as their mother tongue.



Indus Kohistani Speakers Strengthen Literacy in Their Language

The Indus Kohistani (IK) language community in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa identified four more researchers from the community who are zealous to strengthen the literacy of the community. The young researchers, who attended FLI's "Planning for the Future of My Language" program, developed a plan to maximize the use of their language for reading and writing. This program was organized in Bisham town of Shangla district in September. The participants developed a strategy to enhance reading and writing in their language by motivating young people via social media. They created chat groups and discussion pages and started developing content in their language. They also pledged to try to collect cultural items in written form that can be compiled and published in a book.

The Indus Kohistani language is spoken in the Jijal, Pattan, Seo, and Duber-Kandia Valleys as well as other villages of the Kohistan region. About half a million people speak this language as their mother tongue. The community researchers and researchers are striving hard to develop reading material in the language. The young generation of the community has started using their language for communication on social media. A group of IK

speakers are running a multilingual education program in the area, providing preschoolers the chance to begin their education in their mother tongue despite the incredibly limited amount of published Indus Kohistani materials available to date.

FLI has been and will continue to support all the initiatives the IK community takes to strengthen their language. We are utilizing available resources to include the language in KP schools' curriculum alongside the other four languages of the province. We are working side-by-side with IK community researchers to enhance reading and writing opportunities and abilities in the language community. FLI recently published two books in the Indus Kohistani language to contribute to the strengthening the language. A major breakthrough has recently come in the form of a court judgement of the Peshawar High Court, which has passed an order to include the Indus Kohistani language in the school curriculum of the province. Though the process is lengthy and may take time to implement, this is still a huge achievement by those language activists who pursued the matter in court and were eventually successful.



The Start of Documentation for the Kalkoti Language

FLI began working on its 22nd language of Northern Pakistan, Kalkoti, by first identifying the issues the language is facing as far as documentation is concerned. This was done during a three day workshop, called Issues in Language Development (ILD), which was held in the Kalkot area of Upper Dir district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in June. In total, 13 people from the community attended the activity. The purpose of the workshop was to lay the foundation for development work in the Kalkoti language by identifying the primary issues which may get in the way of its documentation in the future. The participants showed great curiosity to serve their language by taking part in all the sessions and contributed to the successful implementation of the first activity conducted to develop their language. They resolved to preserve and promote their native language and safely pass it on to their younger generations.

Kalkoti, a Dardic language, is spoken by more than 6500 people in Kalkot village of Dir Kohistan. Although currently only used verbally, the language is still vigorous as all age groups of the community use their native language for oral communication. However, due to close proximity, most of the community people are bilingual, using Pashto alongside their mother tongue, which is the largest language of the province and which provides a threat to the language as many linguists fear a language shift to solely using Pashto in the future.

Therefore, by offering its services, FLI has reached out to Kalkoti before it's too late. More interventions will be carried out in the coming months to strengthen the language by involving more community members and providing them with language development training. We hope that the language will soon have its own unique writing system to encourage educated people, including youth, from the community to use their language for both spoken and written communication and publications.

So far, FLI has formally provided various development services to 21 languages spoken in Northern Pakistan, focusing on

enabling community researchers so that they can work for the benefit of their own languages. We are glad that the Kalkoti language finds itself ready to join these communities as the 22nd community to benefit from FLI's assistance in further developing their language. We assure the Kalkoti language researchers of our full cooperation as we work alongside them, providing technical help and linguistic resources in the future.



The Standardization of Khowar Writing Started in Chitral

FLI started the work of standardizing the writing systems of the languages spoken in its target area (Northern Pakistan) by taking the initial steps to standardize the spelling system of the Khowar language. The three-day workshop, jointly held with the Mother Tongue Initiative for Education and Research (MIER) and the Anjuman Taraqqi-i-Khowar (ATK) organizations, was held in Chitral town in June. This workshop introduced spell checking on digital devices for the language. The availability of this spell checker to the writers of the language will further facilitate the writing of the

Khowar language on digital devices, providing consistency in writing methods and a unified orthography. Some known Khowar writers, researchers and activists, including Professor Mumtaz Hussain, Javed Iqbal, Afsar Ali Khan and Farid Ahmad Raza, were among those attending the workshop. FLI was represented at the event by its executive director, Fakhruddin Akhonzada.

The lesser known languages of the region face issues like chaotic spelling systems where the writers find no standardized patterns to follow when writing their manuscripts. This hinders the natural evolution of the writing system by confusing readers and new writers and providing no consistent foundation on which the language can further develop. To make the writing system more natural and consistent, community members need to reach an agreement on a unified writing system. This initiative has been started for this purpose. During this first step of the standardization process, around twenty thousand words of Khowar have been collected from various printed/ published materials which will be standardized to be used in the future on digital devices. Later on, the inflected form of the words will be added and the number of words will be raised to forty thousand. The Khowar Language was first used to write a century ago, and so far, hundreds of books and journals have been published in the language. The Khowar language is also part of the government school curriculum and is taught as a subject up to grade 5 in government schools in the province. More than half a million people speak Khowar as their native language in Chitral, Gilgit-Baltistan and Swat.



Wakhi Speakers in Boroghil Valley Hold First Ever Literary Program

The Wakhi language community of Boroghil Valley in Upper Chitral held a literary program in the summer of 2021, the first ever of its kind in the area. The event was attended by both young and senior poets, writers and singers from the Wakhi community. The event was followed by a musical night. More than 50 people from the community were present for the occasion. The program started with interviews of senior Wakhi poets who inspired young people to use their language for literary activities. These people talked especially about the evolution of the Wakhi language and culture and shared their memories with the youth. An informal poetry session ensued, providing an opportunity for the young poets to express themselves in front of their parents, teachers and community elders. The concluding musical program involved both the youth and elders alike. The participants expressed appreciation to FLI for holding the event and resolved to play their part in strengthening their language.

The Wakhi language is spoken in the sparsely populated upper portions of four of the northernmost valleys in Pakistan: Hunza (Gojal), Ishkoman, Yasin, and Boroghil. The latter is located in

Upper Chitral District while the others are in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). The community youth claim that there are 1500 people in Boroghil who speak Wakhi as their mother tongue. Wakhi in GB is a literary language but a lot of work needs to be done for the language in Chitral. The educated people of the community in Chitral who approached FLI for assistance show commitment to work for the language. FLI will continue to encourage the youth from the Wakhi community and more engagement activities will be held in the future so that the language can be strengthened by involving the community in language development activities.



Writing System of Gawarbatī Strengthened

FLI held a three day workshop for strengthening the writing system of the Gawarbatī language early in 2021. The workshop was held in Arandu village, which is located along the Afghan border in southern Chitral. A total of 12 people, including government school teachers, language researchers and activists, attended the workshop, which was held as part of FLI's Orthography and Writers' Workshop series.

This series was designed by FLI to support their community-based partner organizations that are working for the development and promotion of their respective languages. The idea for this specific workshop came directly from the community as FLI encourages its partners to devise plans for their languages based on felt needs in their communities which they can then share with FLI and receive financial and technical support in implementing them. The event was facilitated by FLI's external facilitators.

Gawarbatī (gwt), a Dardic language, is spoken in the southern part of Chitral Valley. FLI's first intervention for the documentation of this language took place in 2016 which established a writing system for the language as well as trained some researchers from the community in basic language documentation principles. As a result, some initial works were published in the language and ten folktales were recorded with Urdu translations. Since then, those individuals from the Gawarbatī community who received language documentation training from FLI have continued to work for the benefit of their language.

This Writers' Workshop was one of three events FLI designed for its partners in Northern Pakistan based on proposals developed by their community-based partners. The two previous events were held for the Palula Language, also spoken in Chitral, and the Indus Kohistani language.



Anjuman Opens a New Chapter in Islamabad

Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Khowar (ATK), a literary organization in Chitral, established its new chapter, Halqa, in Islamabad. Twenty-two people from the Khowar language community -- mostly language researchers, poets and students -- were present for the grand opening FLI held for the community in Islamabad at the start of the year. Office bearers of ATK from Chitral -- Shahzada Tanvirulmulk, Shahzada Faham Aziz and Zahurulhaq Danish -- were also present for the grand opening. The purpose of establishing the organization's chapter in the capital city was to bring together Khowar speakers living in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad and to organize the work of individuals under the ATK umbrella.

The formation of language development bodies in the major cities that represent minority language communities is very important as it allows migrant people who come from these ethnolinguistic communities of Northern Pakistan to maintain and contribute to their language and culture. The individuals who seek support while producing literature but are unable to find experienced people due to living far from their native place can benefit from the companionship of learned people nearby. This new chapter will keep the migrant Khows in cities united and focused on the promotion of their language. The chapter will also provide opportunities for them to interact with and learn from each other.

Anjuman Taraqqi Khowar, founded by the literary people of Chitral in 1956, is one of the oldest literary organizations of Northern Pakistan. The purpose of the establishment of ATK was to provide a platform to Chitrali poets and men of letters so that they could work for the promotion

of Khowar language and literature. Apart from doing literary work domestically, the ATK has hosted two international conferences in Chitral, the 2nd and 3rd International Hindukush Cultural Conferences, in 1990 and 1995 respectively.



Migrant Communities Work Together for Their Languages

Thousands of community members from the mountainous northern part of the country are living in the major cities of Pakistan. They have come to these urban centers in search of employment, business and education. Many people also move to these lower, flatter urban regions during the winter season to escape the harsh winter weather back in their region. FLI has observed that a large number of Dameli people are working in Peshawar and Karachi, and many Torwali and Balti language speakers now live in Rawalpindi, many of whom have now settled in these cities permanently. Similarly, there are a good number of Khowar speakers in various cities like Peshawar, Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi. The metropolitan city of Karachi plays host to members of almost all the language communities based in Gilgit-Baltistan. These same trends are true of essentially all the language communities of the north, as almost all of them have community members who can be found living and working in the urban areas. Because of this, FLI planned to help these migrant communities come together and work jointly for their languages and cultures. Initially, we motivated them to create links on social media and discuss what they can do for their culture while living away from their birth place. As a result, many young people from these communities began networking together through WhatsApp chat groups, Facebook pages and YouTube Channels. FLI encouraged these groups to also meet in person, initiating conversations about what could be achieved through these gatherings. FLI also pledged to support at least one cultural event for each language community in the big cities.

So far, four of these communities have taken advantage of FLI's offer as they strive to unite their urban-dwelling community members. Balti people who are living in Rawalpindi and Islamabad came together under one platform and organized a cultural event in Islamabad. As described more fully in a previous article, Khowar people established a new chapter of Anjuman Taraqi Khowar (ATK) in Islamabad. ATK is the oldest language organization in the north, dedicated to the promotion of Khowar in Chitral. Dameli people in Peshawar strengthened their already established organization and amended its constitution to better benefit their language development efforts. Burushaski people in Karachi have come together and started working to plan a cultural event, which is scheduled to take place in 2022.



Palula Language Community Enjoys New Events

FLI helped the Palula community to organize a poetry night event in February. A total of twenty Palula community members including local poets attended the event. Poets from the language community were given the unique opportunity to express themselves in their own language and in front of their own people. Community people expressed appreciation for the event and encouragement for their poets. The event was organized in connection with International Mother Language Day. The event was the first of its kind to take place in Biori Valley in Southern Chitral, Northern Pakistan. It was a simple event but one with great impact. Every element of the event was held only in the Palula language including speeches, poetry, songs, and announcements. The first ever poetry book of the Language, published by FLI, was also launched at this event. Children, community leaders, literary people and teachers attended the event. Palula is an offspring language of Shina of Gilgit and a sister language of Souji of the Kunar Valley in Afghanistan. It has an estimated 12 thousands speakers living in the Biori and Ashrait Valleys and the villages of Bodrogal, Kalkatak, Gous and Purigal in Southern Chitral.



New Women Writers for the Palula Community

Palula, a literate language in FLI's network, has moved a step ahead with another achievement of including female speakers in its development efforts. A three-day Writers' Workshop for Women was organized in July in Ashrait. It was the first workshop held specifically for the women of the Palula language community and as such, introduced them to the basic writing system of their mother tongue. The Palula language has had its own writing system for the last 15 years. This writing system has



been used to publish books and has been taught in MLE schools. The writing system is now also becoming more available to women who will also now be able to use the language for written communication. Most of the writers and authors from the community have been men, and they now have a good understanding about the Palula orthography, but the need to also involve women has been intensely felt throughout the language development work. Although a few women, particularly the female teachers, were already familiar with the Palula writing system, this was not the case for the majority of the women from the community. In order to involve women in the language development work, FLI conducted this writer's workshop specifically for the women of the Palula community. 14 women participated in this workshop. Most of the participants were government and public school teachers, though some were students. We join the Palula community in hoping that this event will give new energy to the language development work, as both genders will now be able to contribute to the work.

International Women Day celebrated in Booni, Upper Chitral



Burushaski Researchers Unite Under One Platform

The Burushaski language in Gilgit-Baltistan, like many others in the region, faces some challenges with its writing system. However, the community achieved a great victory recently when they were able to organize representatives from all three dialects of the language to meet together and discuss what obstructs their language development work. This miracle happened when FLI facilitated a half day event for Burushaski language researchers in September in Gilgit. This event was attended by fourteen researchers who represented the major dialects of the language: Yaseen, Hunza and Nagar, and who agreed to work together in harmony. After a thorough discussion, the participants decided to set up a joint interim body for the development and promotion of the Burushaski language named Burusho Marka, and also announced the interim cabinet. The cabinet include three people from each dialect. They also established an interim advisory council comprised of senior writers and created a WhatsApp group for future language related discussions.

This gesture then led to a five-day long basic orthography workshop in November in Gilgit. The five different writing groups of Burushaski from the districts of Hunza, Nagar and Yaseen were all involved in this workshop. The main goal of this workshop was to enable the participants to understand the basic writing system of their language so that they can write in their own language. The 13 male participants in the workshop included teachers, retired government officials and civil society members.



Another Activity in Gilgit town:

A three days Shina writers' workshop was organized in Gilgit in March. Nineteen writers participated who represented different dialects of Shina language



Baltistan University Emerges as a Language Supporter

Meetings were held in October 2021 at the University of Baltistan, Skardu, in order to establish a joint venture between FLI and the university's Department of Languages and Cultural Studies for the publication and preservation of the endangered languages of Baltistan. These meetings led to the two parties signing an MOU. The MOU establishes that UoBS will provide all logistical support and human capacity for the project while FLI will provide funding and publication support. FLI places great importance on working with government bodies and universities to provide sustainability for language development work.

Later in November, a 3-day workshop was held in Skardu, the first workshop with the Balti language group. The main purpose of this workshop was that the participants will learn about obstacles to the promotion of language development activities

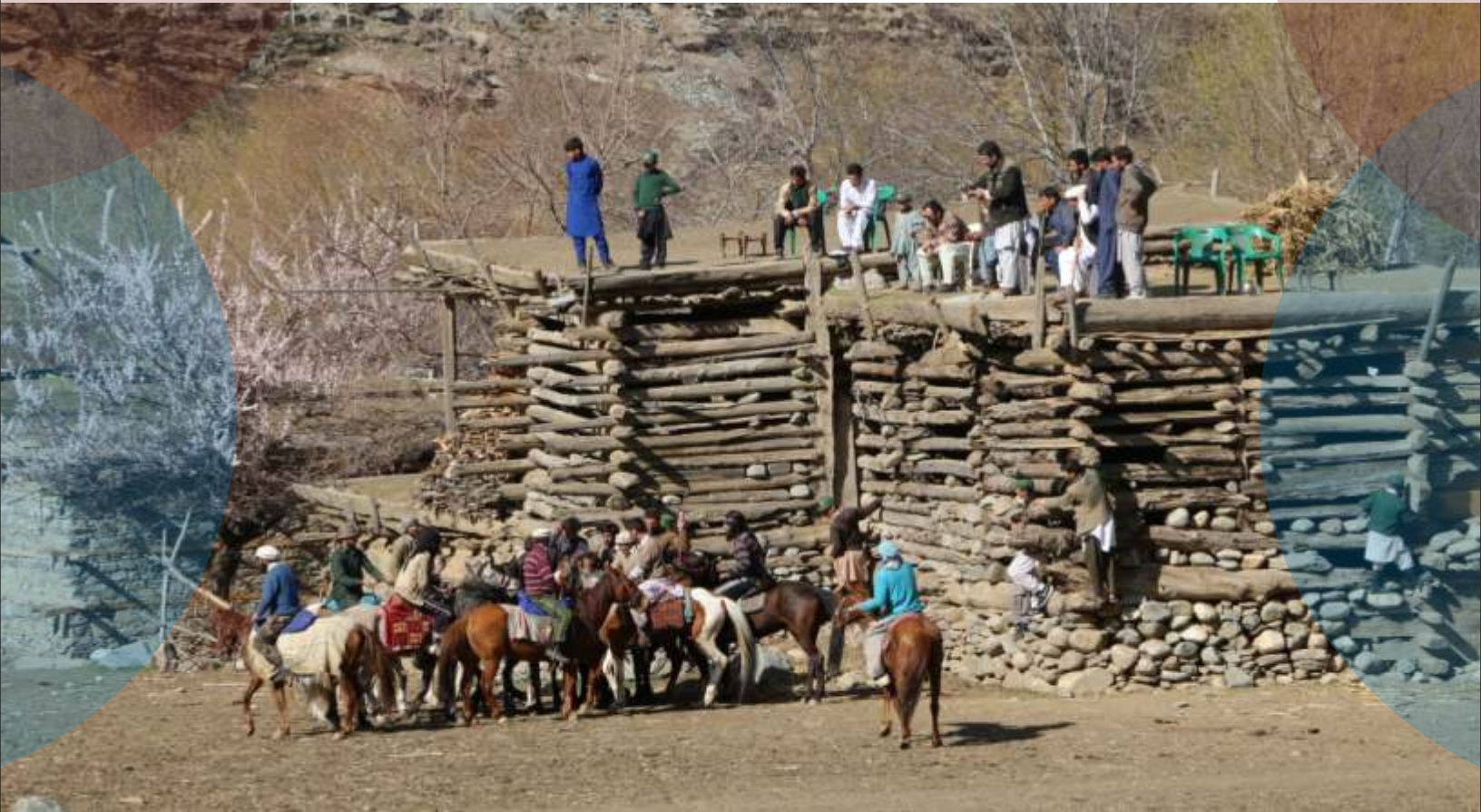
while also learning what assets are available to help them conquer these obstacles. This workshop helped FLI personnel to better understand some of the language development issues in the Balti language. It was also a source of motivation for the trainees to take necessary action to work for the preservation, promotion, and documentation of their language. The participants expressed great concerns regarding the future of the Balti language. This workshop was the first joint endeavor between the University of Baltistan, Skardu, and FLI, with the university leading the sessions and FLI acting in a supporting capacity.

We hope that our collaboration with UoBS will empower language researchers in the region and strengthen their work. FLI is already working with other local universities at the national level which, among others, include the University of Chitral and Karakoram University, Gilgit.



Where is My Language Going?





Forum for Language Initiatives



@forumforlangug



LanguageForum



FLI-Islamabad



+92-51-2250068



info@fli-online.org



fli-online.org