A Guide for Planning the Future of Our Languages

A Participatory Approach for Language Development Planning

http://www.sil.org/guide-planning-future-our-language-0

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"Participatory Approach"

Non-participatory	Participatory
Outside experts assess the needs of the community and decide how to assist.	Outside experts dialogue with the community and all parties make the decision of how to work together.

Participatory approaches often involve the use of visual representations of the discussion to encourage group participation.

The Guide explains:

This Guide is meant to be used by minority speech communities around the globe for three purposes:

- To raise awareness of the current situation of their traditional language.

- To raise awareness of how they use all of the other languages at their disposal.

- To help the community come to a decision and a response about what they want to do with their entire language 'repertoire' in the future.

The decisions which are arrived at by using this Guide are meant to be made and owned by each local community itself, rather than by an outside party.

This Guide **will also help interested development and partner organizations** to improve their understanding of the language situation, and plan more strategically as to what kind of help they might be prepared to provide for local communities when asked.

Some reasons for a participatory approach in PNG

- fewer expats available to serve each language community with a language development (LD) need

- increased awareness of the role of orality and massive language shift in the Sepik, therefore the need to find creative ways to do LD

- limited use of many NTs in PNG, and therefore a desire to ensure community interest and ownership in the initial stages of a project

Core values and strategies of the Guide

Value or Strategy	Reality in the Sepik
Participation of all stakeholders in decision-making	Value communal processes, but sometimes expect the outside experts to make decisions
Extensive and repetitive conversations to examine current realities and form future plans	Competing interests and difficulty with going through a complex process

Challenges

- Due to the low vitality, felt needs, existing expectations, low education, low population, time constraints, abstract thought, and false beliefs related to language transfer, it would take way too much effort to guide a language group (of the Sepik) towards a true informed and practical decision (Let alone train someone to do it).

- What is actually accomplished is that they have a clear picture of their language vitality, that the responsibility for language vitality is theirs alone (not dependent on SIL teaching their kids), how to maintain a stable multi-lingual situation (build language use barriers) and what is required in order to keep their language from dying (use vernacular with their kids).

- Even then, the choices they make related to what they want in language development is not based on practicality or reality, but more on social factors of advancement and prestige and subconscious desires/needs/beliefs with little bearing on the truth of those subconscious driving factors.

Language Development (LD) decision-making in PNG

- When SIL came to PNG in 1956, many language communities had little exposure to the outside world

'The Guide'

- A Guide for Planning the Future of Our Languages

The Guide in PNG – early days

Discovery trips, OBS workshops – case study (Sam Smucker)

Advantages of Progressive Engagement

- *Some believe every new language program in the Sepik should begin with OBS, because:*
  - *It clarifies motives.*
  - *It helps them understand SIL and gives them a chance to check us out and how we operate.*
  - *It puts ownership of the program (and if they continue) on the local community.*
  - *It builds excitement for the vernacular.*

People to facilitate the Guide

The Guide – big picture

First trip

- *During training: Draw a language map, with villages, geographical features, etc. Circle dialects. Make a plan to reach all of the villages.*

- *In the village:*
  - *Talk through the map created during training, make corrections*
  - *List all languages spoken in the village*
  - *List the languages kids know in order – 1, 2, 3 (This is the process for deciding which 2 languages go in the 2 circles exercise)*

1ˢᵗ round, cont.

- *2 Circles Activity*
  - *Looks at 1 – language shift, 2 – multilingualism, 3 – what kids learn*
  - *They have people go stand in the circle where you 'belong' – not just hear, but speak. People get moved around by each other. They count people in the following categories: kids before school, grades 1-6, mankis, young marrieds, parents, lapuns, and sometimes women who marry in.*
  - *Ask about when adults were kids, was it the same. Was it the same or different.*

1ˢᵗ round outcomes

- *From the first round, the only information that needs to be reported back is the numbers from the 2 circles, which gives EGIDS score.*

2ⁿᵈ round, with expat

- *Benefits of Tok Pisin & tok ples (vernacular) exercise:*
  - *TP – hospital, outsiders, church*
  - *tp – tok hait, identity, talking to spirits, defines relationships and responsibilities*
  - *Ask who is willing to give up the benefits in these two categories*
  - *Pig metaphor*

2nd round outcomes

- *Understanding of where the community is at*
- *Planning with SIL regarding next steps begun*

A Story about a Pig and a Garden
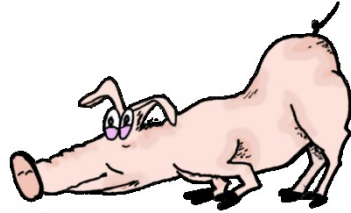
Why it's been adapted

- *Contextual reasons to adjust A Guide:*
  - *Low education, literacy*
  - *Difficulty with abstract thinking and planning*
  - *Egalitarian communities (as opposed to the often hierarchical cultures of Asia, where the Guide was developed)*
  - *Limitations of what SPES/SIL can offer the communities presently*

Mountain metaphor

Things that were cut

- *Nationals-only facilitation of all stages of A Guide*

- *16 diagnostic questions as posed*

- *Possible activities section*

- *Having community members explain the mountain metaphor*

- ***Other?***

Learned along the way

- *Important to take a national with us, because community will ask them if what's being said by the expats is true.*
- *Tell communities SIL are supported by the church, not paid. So whatever the community does, you're not going to get paid by SIL.*
- *Whole end section of Guide with planned activities (deciding which are appropriate) is impossible, too much analytical thinking. They do this in a guided conversation.*
- *Most are going to want to do ADWs. Maybe do phone app or redo their stories.*

So now what?
After A Guide?

- *Literacy – ADW, dictionary, liturgy, music... ensure church support*

- *sustainable identity/ language documentation*

- *Culture Meets Scripture workshop*