

Gawri Literacy Initiatives:

*An Indigenous Community in
Northern Pakistan Mobilises to Promote
Mother Tongue-based Education*

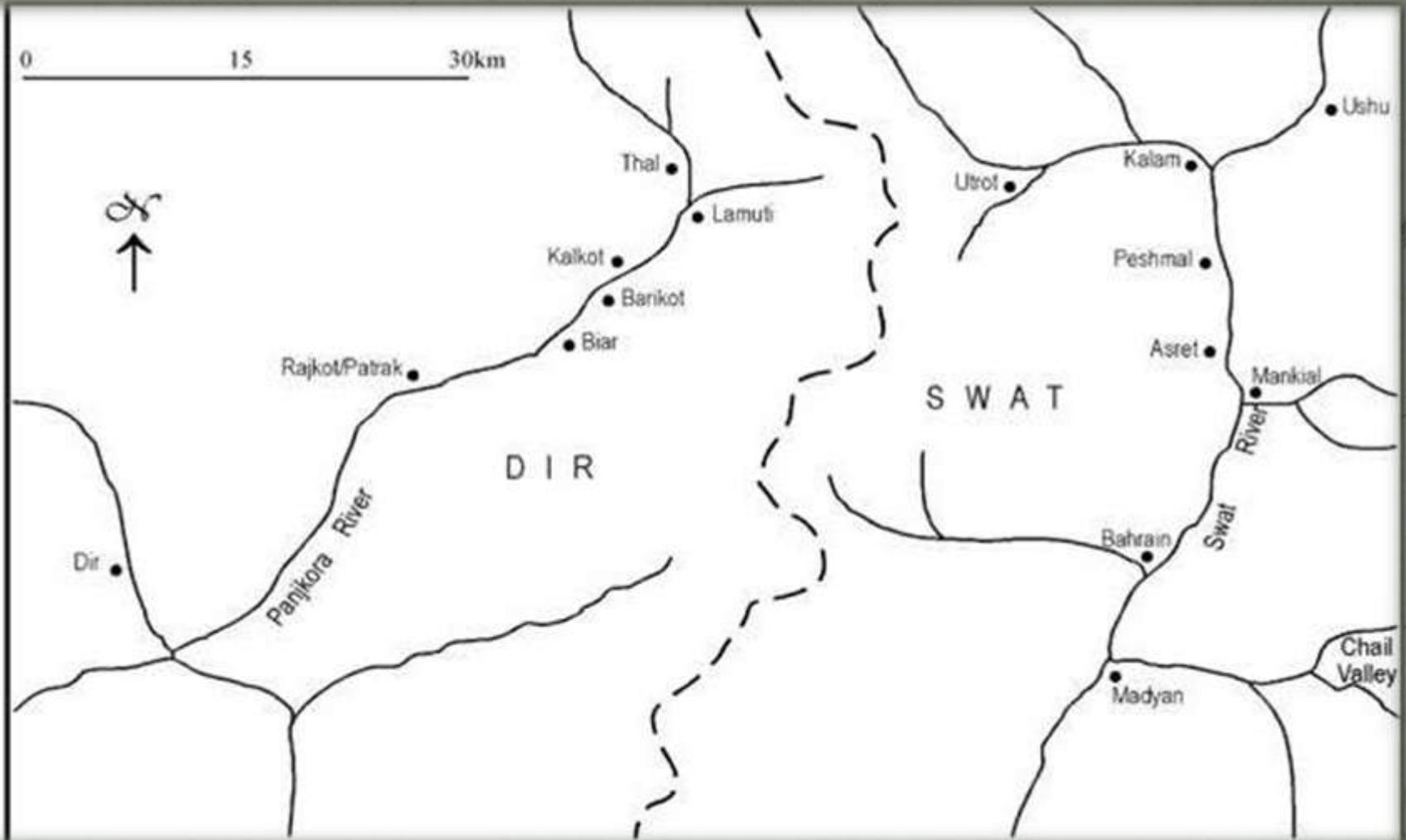


by Muhammad Zaman Sagar

Gawri speaking area in Pakistan



District Swat and Upper Dir



Map 2: Upper Panjkora and Swat valleys.

Names of the language and population

- Gawri (gwc), Bashkarik, Kalami, Kalam Kohistani, Dir, Dirwali, Garwi etc.
- Population 100,000



Language and its relation

- 69 languages spoken in Pakistan
- 25 languages in KPK province
- Gawri is a Dardic language of Indo-Aryan family in Dardic group it comes under the Kohistani sub-branch

Indo-European

Indo-Iranian

Dardic

Kohistani

Gawri

Language research

- 1992: Dr. Joan Baart starts research in Kalam
- 1994: Spelling committee established; later Kalam Cultural Society (KCS)
- 2007: name changed to Gawri Cultural Society (GCS)
- 2008: Gawri Community Development Programme (GCDP) officially registered



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Writers workshops in the community

- 2001: GCS conducted the first Writers Workshop in Dir Kohistan
- More workshops organised in Kalam, Dir Kohistan, and other cities
- More than 300 writers trained
- Generated awareness towards mother tongue in the Gawri community



Language & Culture Documentation

- Forum for Language Initiatives (FLI) is a resource centre in Islamabad
- Established in 2003: originally, the name was Frontier Language Institute
- FLI train people of lesser-known languages in the field of linguistics, culture and literacy
- 2003-04: four Gawri men trained
- 2005: first time we hear about MLE



Issues in the community

- Poverty
- Low level of education
- Lack of official support towards education
- Gender discrimination
- Language of instruction in the schools
- Terrorism



Poverty

- 22.3% of Pakistan's population live under poverty line (Asian Development Bank survey)
- Majority has no access to good jobs
- Farmers do not have enough cultivable land
- Almost 60% migration in the winter; some never return



Education system

- Non-supportive official system, especially for female education
- Few girls schools built in mountain areas
- Teachers hired from other communities do not teach regularly
- Ghost schools very common



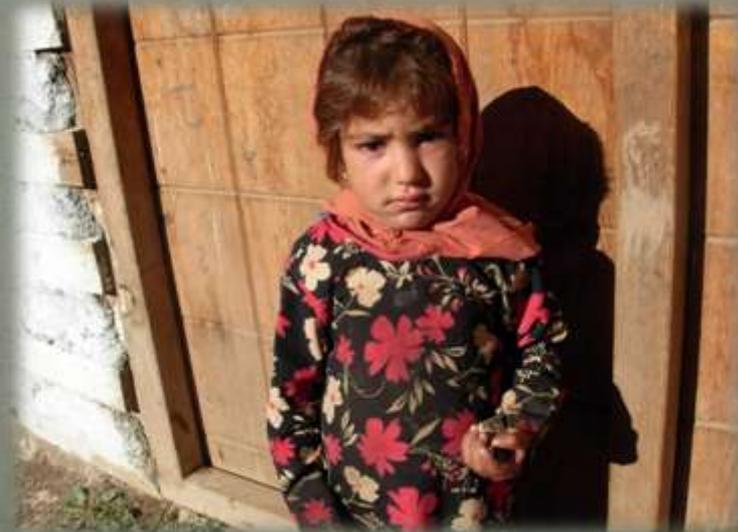
Language of instruction

- Public and private schools use Urdu, English, and Pashto
- Language is the first major challenge children and teachers face when children enter school
- Lower performance of children from minority communities in classroom as compared to native speakers of Pashto
- Mother tongue and cultural heritage not respected



Dropout rate in schools of Kalam

- Data obtained from 4 government primary schools in the vicinity
- In the beginning of school year the total enrollment was 1,107
- By the end of the year only 878 remained
- The average shows 20.7% drop-out of school



Extremism and terrorism

- A major issue worldwide; in our area we also are a target
- 230 schools were torched in Swat in 2009
- Half of them are female schools
- Children were banned from going to school
- Many families moved permanently to safer places



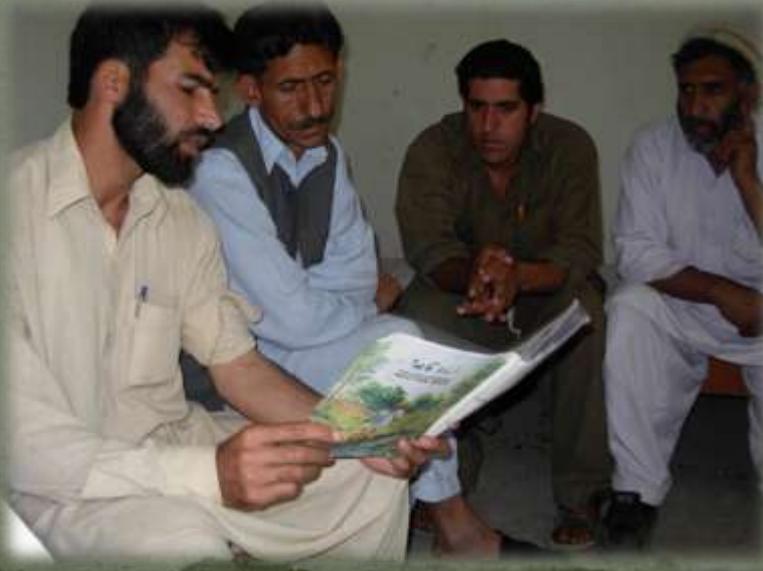
Community mobilisation

- 2005: Drs. Susan and Dennis Malone visit FLI and share about MLE programmes
- FLI arranged meetings with 3 communities, including Gawri
- Literacy surveys were conducted in 2005 in 3 villages
- Most people in the survey favoured mother tongue-based MLE programmes



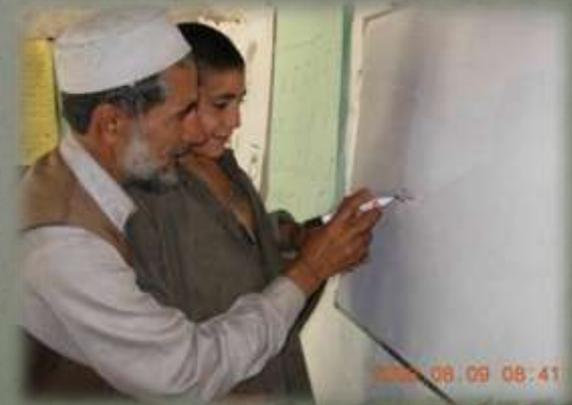
Community mobilisation (cont'd)

- GCDP arranged many promotional presentations among the community
- Strong communication with the community
- Gawri monthly newsletter; good vehicle of information
- Mobilisation among the educated youth on the rise
- Great demand from women for adult literacy classes



Approach and framework

- In Gawri MLE schools we use whole language approach for both L1 and L2
- In first 18 months L1 primer for accuracy and stories for comprehension
- Curriculum development work started in 2006 with the help of FLI and SIL
- Local people's knowledge/experience being used in setting curriculum content and context



Approach and framework (cont'd)

- 2008: Two pilot MLE schools opened in the Kalam valley
- 2010: 31 children successfully completed 2-year of preschooling in July
- Two new schools opened and two new teachers trained locally in April
- Ongoing plans to open two schools each year



Multilingual Education Committee

- 2005: MLE committee formed
- Committee serves as board for the MLE project
- 10 members chosen from different clans and walks of life
- Committee meetings on a monthly basis



School Management Committee (SMC)

- One parent/teacher committee formed in each village where MLE schools operate
- Responsible for finding suitable teachers and solving issues
- Also responsible to find free of cost classroom and administer enrollment processes



Outcome to date

- Good results in annual exams based on comprehension and accuracy goals
- A survey was recently conducted in 3 villages; 85% of households were accessed.
- 25.2% out of 2,933 people with access to some degree of education
- Female average participation lower as compared to males': 11.1% vs. 34.6%
- 895 children under age 7 attending school

Outcome to date (cont'd)

- Current enrollment: 88 children in 4 schools
- Goal to educate 500 by 2015
- Plans to start adult literacy in 2012
- Children are role models for adults and older children
- Children and adults like Gawri MLE schools



Challenges

- Terrorism: our schools had to close for several weeks
- Devastating floods in July 2010 created additional problems for the locals
- Many of our students lost homes, farms
- One MLE school washed away
- Took on leadership for relief work. Distribution of basic items and gifts among our students



What next?

- Language development work is not officially supported in Pakistan, so NGO's and community organisations have to do it
- We have the vision and mission to educate people through MLE schools
- All children, especially girls, gain access to primary and higher education
- MLE programmes supported in every forum by government and other agencies

Thank you!