

## **Uncovering the Silent Resources for Sustainable Development**

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Indigenous people are a significant and important portion of humanity. Their heritage, culture, the way they live, their stewardship of this planet and their indigenous belief and knowledge are an invaluable treasure house for us all. But still their diversity and uniqueness is silent, not heard and evaluated in the society.

SIL Bangladesh aims to promote indigenous people's development in a manner which ensures that the development process fosters full respect for the dignity, human rights and uniqueness of Indigenous people for sustainable development. SIL Bangladesh and Food for the Hungry are working in partnership with indigenous communities, promoting sustainable development in a way that respects the dignity, human rights, livelihood systems and the cultural and linguistic uniqueness of indigenous people.

The Rajshahi Ethnodev Family and Community Transformation (RE-FCT) programme is being designed and implemented in a way that fosters full respect for indigenous peoples' cultural uniqueness as defined by the indigenous people without compromising or having to sacrifice their cultural and linguistic identity.

This paper discusses the process of working with the Kol and Koda communities in Northwest Bangladesh in helping them to access opportunities, so that they can decide for themselves the kind of cultural, economic and spiritual development they should have. The paper also considers the importance and role of indigenous peoples' language and culture, social capital, skills, food habits and the incorporation of these into sustainable development activities.