

LITERACY BUILDS HOPE

As a ten year old, Grace Paltuu had to sell corn cakes for a living at a market in Ghana, West Africa. Attending school was no longer an option after her father died and all the family's possessions went to an uncle. She and her mother and sisters were left with nothing. A few years later, she discovered a women's evening literacy class in her mother tongue, Frafra. The classes were run by Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT), an SIL partner.

Joining the class, she quickly learned to read Frafra and then English, Ghana's national language. She returned to formal school, but poverty forced her to end her education in middle school. That poverty, however, drove Ms. Paltuu to make sure other women did not suffer the same fate as her family.



Working with GILLBT, Ms. Paltuu is in charge of women's activities in the Frafra Language Project. She mobilizes rural, illiterate women into groups to learn to read and write Frafra. She initiates programs to help women acquire skills to manage rural micro-economic businesses, raise income, and receive education on public health and environmental hygiene. Over the years, Ms. Paltuu has become a role model for girls and women in her community.

The local Frafra people elected Ms. Paltuu to the District Assembly in The Nabdan Constituency. The first woman ever elected to this position, she served two consecutive two-year terms.

In 2003, she strengthened women's literacy groups and formed four new groups. She also wrote funding proposals for assistance with exporting products from women's cottage industries. Through Ms. Paltuu's

advocacy, the District Assembly is constructing a dam that has the potential of improving the area's agriculture.

Ms. Paltuu is convinced that literacy is the foundation for all sustainable development, thus reducing poverty. She has proven this in her own life and in the lives of women she has taught and has dedicated her life to promoting education for girls and women.

"I would have remained illiterate, ignorant and poor but for my involvement in literacy classes," says Grace Paltuu.

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