

10th Session of Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Item 8: Intersessional activities and follow up to thematic studies and advice on the rights to cultural
heritage and health
Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation
Speaker: Conduct Hang

Mr. Chairperson,

Thank you for allowing me to speak on the behalf of the Khmer Krom people of the Mekong River Delta. Health is extremely important for maintaining our indigenous communities, which in turn affects culture and our indigenous way of living. Health is a fundamental right. Health is essential for peace and even social and economic wealth.

On the study *Right to Health and Indigenous Peoples*, article 23 of UNDRIP states the right “to determine and to develop priorities and strategies for exercising the right to development; in particular, to be actively involved in developing and determining health programmes affecting them, and to administer such programmes through their own institutions where possible.” As the Khmers Kampuchea Krom Federation is advocating for resources such as education and better access to health, we see various issues that the Khmer Krom people face in the Asian region. The most primitive sanitary conditions do not exist in the villages and rural areas of the Khmer Krom communities. There is no public water system that provides a sewer system or plumbing. Therefore, the Mekong delta serves the as our water supply as well as a human waste disposal. This is also crucial in the UN SDGs 3 and 6.

Article 29(2) of the UNDRIP “requires States to take effective measures to ensure no storage or disposal of hazardous materials on Indigenous lands or territories occurs without their free, prior and informed consent”. The use of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers by Vietnamese agribusinesses damages the environment and endangers the health of the Khmer Krom. These industries are placed in our villages and rural areas further damaging the environment and endangering the health of the Khmer Krom population.

Another dire issue is that there are currently over three thousand Khmer Krom farmers, including women and young children who are mysteriously blind. There has been no assistance or effort to understand the source of the disease from the government. The HRC in the July 2016 intersessional seminar on the protection of family emphasized the role of the family in support of protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. Vietnam as a current member of the HRC supports the adoption of the 32/23 resolution, however this issue in our indigenous community goes unnoticed.

We agree with the study as it states that is not only important, but a priority for member states to recognize the status of indigenous peoples as stated as a challenge in improving overall health of indigenous peoples.

Here are the following recommendations:

- Establish public health services in the community level that provides resources such as vaccinations and hygienic practices while promoting the SDGs #3
- Training programs or workshops that promote public health and allow indigenous peoples to learn and volunteer to disseminate information including the UN DRIP and UN Global Goals so people know rights and can work to achieve ends of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Thank you