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United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Fourth session, New York, 16-27 May 2005

Agenda item 3(B), Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education.

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With this statement I bring warm greetings to all of you from the indigenous peoples of Manipur, India.

Madam. Chairperson, Indigenous sisters and brothers!

The MDG goal, 2 Target for 2015: Ensure that all boys and girls complete primary school.

As many as 113 million children do not attend school, but the target is within reach. India, for example, should have 95 percent of its children in school by 2005.

Educational status of the Lamkang community:

Out of the 32 Lamkang villages, there is a middle school in Leingangching village, while the two other schools at Paraolon and Leingangching villages were burnt down during the Nag Kuki conflict. There are no school buildings or teachers in most of the villages, as allocated teachers tend to come from non-indigenous communities and are therefore often unwilling to stay in such remote areas.

As displaced people, they now face many problems (as discussed above), lack of access to the mainstream education system. The reasons for this are multi-dimensional and include:-

- a) Lack of support by the families. As most parents are uneducated, they do not give importance to education.
- b) Geographical remoteness. Lack of proper roads and communication facilities.
- c) In the few villages where schools exist, there are often no teachers. This is because most are not all, teachers are from outside the village and are unwilling to stay in such remote areas to teach.
- d) The situation of conflict has exacerbated this problem. Teachers are not prepared to put their life in danger, especially in the absence of security measures to facilitate travelling through forest areas to reach the village.
- e) The few existing schools lack physical infrastructure and teachers, yet there has been no committed action from the governmental departments to rebuild or take action regarding absent teachers.

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- f) Official complaints have been made by some regarding the absence of teachers and poor condition of schools, however corrupt deals between teachers and district officials mean that such complaints are usually unanimously ignored.

Many children who previously attended school have been unable to continue because of poverty and displacement. Many are forced to work in hotels and restaurants or as domestic child labourers in return for food and shelter. In this situation of abject poverty and struggle for survival, sending their children to school is not a priority for most families.

In addition, most of the government schools in the area, which were often only half functioning prior to the conflict, have now come to a complete stand-still. For other families, schools are too far away and continued security concerns prevent them from allowing their children to travel longer distances to school. On the other hand, although some good private schools do exist, the fees are high and out of the reach of most parents. In terms of addressing this problem, most people from the Lamkang community are not aware of their rights and do not know how to negotiate with the Government to ensure proper functioning of the schools.

In addition, as a minority indigenous community, their inability to raise their concerns is hampered by their lack of political representation in district and state level processes. Information about government plans and commitments regarding tribal development in Manipur, and India as a whole (such as the Government's commitments to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including the right to education) is not readily available to the community.

Recommendations:

- As per the MDGS target, the state needs to make education facilities available to Lamkang indigenous population by constructions of schools in close proximity where their children can attend the schools within its available resources or with International cooperation.
- Teaching be provided in indigenous language.
- Making teaching at lower primary school in Lamkang language for the Lamkang people.
- Article 13(2)(a).ICESCR, Provision of Primary education be compulsory and available free to all; (b) Secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational secondary education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education;
(c) Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education;

Thank you, Madam Chairperson for your kind attention.