

**The Statement of Malla K. Sundar, President Newa Day Daboo (Newars' National Organisation, Nepal at UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 19 May 2005 , United Nations Headquarters, New York, USA .**

**Topic: Achieving Universal Primary Education**

Honorable Chair Person, Respected panellist, Distinguished Indigenous delegates from all over the world and other friends!

Hello and Jojolapa !

This is Malla K. Sundar from Nepal, representing a national organization of Newar community of Nepal, the Newa Day Daboo. First of all, let me extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Chair and organizing committee for permitting me to take the floor to share ideas with this august gathering on "Achieving Universal Primary Education" – a MDG goal in my country, the kingdom of Nepal.

As you know that Nepal is a tiny landlocked country by its size and shape. But, it is being a highly complex society in terms of indigenous, linguistic, religious and cultural diversity. For last two hundred thirty five years the ethno-centric Hindu dominant group, who are in the power, has had imposed non-inclusive state policy, which has forced entire indigenous community of Nepal to live in poverty and illiteracy. According to latest census figures among 59 indigenous groups of the country most of them have the lowest literacy rate ranging below to 14 percent ( Chepang – an indigenous group of Nepal). Where as average national literacy percentage is higher than 40.

Since, indigenous communities in Nepal are been badly affected by inequalities and injustices in political representation, socio-economic sector and education from very beginning of modern political history of the state, they are highly marginalized in every sphere of life, mainly in education. So, such kind of ongoing social inequalities of Nepalese society makes the task of Education for All in Nepal incredibly complex.

In Nepalese context, the concept of Education for All/ Universalizing of Education is not new. In principle, the idea of Universalizing Education up to secondary level was committed as a state policy by the late king Birendra, on the occasion of his coronation in 1984. In spite of legal obligations to take care of all financial burdens of public schools by the state, students are forced to cover their tuition fees and other expenses themselves. Unfortunately, the king's promise for Universalizing Education was never translated into a practice. On the contrary to it, immediately after restoration of multi-party system in 1990, His Majesty's

Government of Nepal shifted its policy to privatization of education. After a change in Education Policy for last one decade the tendency of commercialization of educational institute is badly intensified and education has become a new sector for profit making business and grabbing money in Nepal. Eventually, it has made an access to education for entire indigenous peoples, who are living below poverty line, as a luxurious stuff. Besides, it has also promoted two different educational systems for private and public schools in the country which has ultimately created a new gap between haves and have not in Nepal. A Right to education in mother tongue is still not in priority agenda of Government of Nepal. So, till to-date not a signal penny has allocated for bilingual or mother tongue education from the state budget.

In one hand, the Government of Nepal makes its commitment in international arena to meet MDG and Education for All by 2015, but, in national level the state party is almost ignoring its prime obligation to implement program. It is fifth year of MDG program implementation but His Majesty's Government of Nepal is still in consultation and drafting policies and program regarding EFA. So, at present, in Nepal, EFA has become rather an Utopian notion. Apart from that on going Maoist insurgency in Nepal has also badly disrupted educational sector for last one decade. Rights to education often deprived in different manner from conflicting parties. In most of insurgency affected areas of nation schools are been locked up for years. Students and teachers are often forced to join insurgent's activities. Incident of abduction of students to recruit in Maoist guerilla force has become a normal phenomenon. Teachers and students in remote areas are normally been suspected as supporter of insurgents and usually harassed by the security forces. Similarly, insecurity has forced teachers and students to leave their native lands. Indefinite strikes of educational institute called by insurgents and other political forces have also violated rights to education. Schools in remote area are illegally occupied by the security force and turned into army barracks. The insurgents are digging trenches and bunkers in schools as a security build up in their areas. The most pathetic thing is that the state party is diverting huge portion of national budget for education to security build up, at present.

Thank you !