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### Third Permanent Forum



My name is Matthew McDaniel, I am with the Akha Heritage Foundation and Land is life.

I am married to an Akha woman and have lived and worked with the Akha people of Northern Thailand for 13 years.

I hope that many Akha will be able to attend this Forum next year.

There are approximately 70,000 Akha in Northern Thailand, with a population of 400,000 total in 4 countries.

In the interest of improved educational opportunities for the Akha people of northern Thailand we respectfully propose the following recommendations:

1. That **UNESCO** support and fund community based education in the 320 Akha villages of Thailand in Akha language, with Akha control, and help supply Akha language educational materials.
2. That **UNESCO** request that the Thai government make exceptions in the mandatory schooling laws to allow Akha children to be educated in village based Akha language schools that work in accordance with traditional knowledge they gain at the hand of their mothers. This would allow the children to learn critical farming skills and attend evening classes in Akha language.
2. That **UNESCO** and **UNICEF** make special effort to establish nutrition aid to women and children in the Akha villages as it is well know that people who are starving, are not well prepared to learn. Starvation conditions have been imposed on the Akha due to massive rice land seizures on the part of the Royal Thai Forestry Department.
4. That the **ILO** publish a handbook about the ILO Convention 169 in the Akha language with supporting aids in video using Akha actors.
5. In the interest that Akha traditional education is protected for Akha girls we ask that **UNICEF** urgently investigate the removal of Akha children, particularly girls, from Akha villages by American based missionaries using coercive means and taking advantage of the poverty found in these communities. These removals are used to control these children and make them members of a different group, directly violating Geneva conventions.
6. That **UNICEF** urgently investigate numerous substantial claims of sexual abuse of Akha girls and boys within missionary boarding schools in northern Thailand and take action to protect the rights of the Akha children to education within the environment of their own communities, culture, language and religion.

We request that a report to the Fourth Session be made on the progress of these interventions on the behalf of the education of Akha women and children.