

**Statement by Community Action and Research for Development (CARD)
6th Session of UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
United Nations Headquarters, New York, May 14th - 25th, 2007**

Agenda Item 4(D) Education

Presented by Ms.Sumshot Khular, President, CARD, Manipur, India,
Greetings from the Lamkang indigenous peoples of Manipur, India.

Respected Madam Chairperson, Indigenous Sister and Brothers!

The right to education is a key instrument for achieving equitable development and respect for cultural diversity. Education is an investment in the future, a means to reduce poverty and counter discrimination. Any efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goal 2 are likely to fail if impartial and effective implementation of culturally sensitive educational programmes, curricula and actions addressing the needs of indigenous peoples are not undertaken. Education can be also a tool for combating prejudices and discriminations which ignores the cultures, histories and values of indigenous peoples.

The right to education encompasses the right to free and compulsory primary education, and increasing access to secondary, technical, vocational and higher education. It cuts across the false divide between human rights, as it has civil, cultural, education, political and social elements.

Today, in the hills of Manipur, we are faced with various obstacles in attaining education conflicts in the state in 1990s still having its impact on education, irregularities of teachers, absenteeism, and non existence of schools¹ the distance to schools, differences in lifestyle, discrimination, violence, extreme poverty and exclusions. Kidnapping and killings of minor school going children have recently become very common and this is a threat to education itself. The occupation of schools buildings and villages areas by armies and the undergrounds/militants along the borders in Chandel district in Manipur had a great impact on the indigenous peoples there. The present mainstream education needs to be redefined and transform for indigenous peoples since the present systems is only a means to destroy and assimilate our language, culture, values and knowledge.

The failure of the present education is manifested in high drop out rate², and this tells us that the free and compulsory education for all children is just a slogan to the Lamkang indigenous peoples of Manipur.

¹ Out of 34 Lamkang villages, 12 villages have primary school, out of which 3 schools are run with the help of the villagers, and rests have no buildings or teachers as per the study conducted by CARD,

² *ibid*, As per the study findings,

Recommendation:

- ☞ States should reform the educational systems, such that it reflects the views and values of indigenous peoples, promotes respect, tolerance and acceptance of cultural differences. Education should become a conduit for cultural survival. Education should help strengthen the community by instilling pride and generating a shared commitment to improve our situation,
- ☞ Indigenous peoples should participate in all decisions regarding education of their children and education be given in mother tongue as first learning language and national language as second language,
- ☞ States should review the current curricula that are discriminatory to women and indigenous peoples
- ☞ Urge the state parties to ICESR to work towards fulfilling their obligations in achieving the universal primary education for all girls and boys in all remote rural areas where the indigenous live,
- ☞ Immediate withdrawal of all undergrounds/army bases in the borders, and facilitate the proper survival and functioning of existing schools and built new schools where there are no schools providing with adequate infrastructures.

Thank you, Chairperson for your kind attention.