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Item (4c) Health

Girl-Child Education in Torit County, Eastern Equatoria, South Sudan

Susan Oduho

Concern Women Action for Peace - Sudan (CWAPS)

I am Susan Oduho, Presenting the following collective statements on behalf of Concern Women Action for Peace-Sudan, Indigenous Information Network- Kenya and Masai Women Development-Tanzania.

Health concerns among the Indigenous Peoples of Africa have reached high proportions. For the last 20 years or so, South Sudan has had no proper healthcare services for the population due to the war. The few working health institutions have no medicines and medical staff to cater for the sick. Many diseases that were once non-existent are now being noticed affecting people. Such was the case of the yellow fever epidemic that killed many children and the elderly in August 2003, in parts of eastern Equatoria. All this is happening, because of the lack of good governance in the area.

Mr. Chairman, we are worried about the spread of STDs and the HIV/AIDS, as it sweeps across Sub-Saharan Africa. Poverty, ignorance, unsafe sexual practices and other negative cultural and traditional practices, such as wife inheritance, are at the root of the problem. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS cases in most of our countries are unknown due to the on-going conflict, which has made it impossible to carry out meaningful surveys and obtain credible data. In Sudan, there is already concern that the number of HIV/AIDS cases is large and is increasing at a tremendous rate, since the country borders countries with high rates of HIV/AIDS infection, such as Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia.

We therefore, recommend the following;

- UN Agencies such as WHO, UNAIDS and UNICEF work closely with Indigenous women in the fight against HIV/AIDS by funding activities on:
 - Training for health workers to upgrade the knowledge and skills of those already working in the health institutions.
 - Ensure that Indigenous Peoples, especially women have access to health information relating to their medical situations and treatment.
 - Ensure legislature and policy protection from polluted environment, clean water and sanitation.
 - Urge that, UNICEF, WHO and UNAIDS, develop in conjunction with Indigenous women health workers, and provide programs to inform and sensitize Indigenous women, girls and men about cultural practices that negatively impact on their health.
 - Control and immunize against all water born diseases and malaria.

Thank you,
Mr. Chairman.