

UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

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Collective statement on behalf of

Indian Confederation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ICITP) and

St. John's Mission, Bijni, Assam, India.



Hon'ble Chairman distinguished Members of Permanent Forum, Government Delegations, UN Agencies and fellow Indigenous representative brothers and sisters from around the world, cordial greetings to you all.

I wish to make a collective sub-regional statement specific to the issue of education in India to compliment the collective Asian Caucus statement already made by sister Stella Tamang. It is needless to say that education plays a vital role in empowering the Indigenous and Tribal communities to combat the problems they are facing. A relevant and right kind of education would be a key to furthering the Indigenous and Tribal cause. Unfortunately despite having realized and having made special provision for protecting the Indigenous and Tribal interests the pace of progress is so slow that even after half a century of these special efforts, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples remain the most illiterate, most poverty stricken and of worst ill health. Educationists all over the world tell us that use of mother language as medium of instruction in the early years facilitates the child's having a quick grasp on the subject matter and thus broadening his mind in gaining confidence in expressing himself/herself.

Unfortunately the government of India does not realize how they are making the Indigenous and Tribal children life long backbenchers devoid of any self-confidence, which is most essential to take care of them selves. We feel there is conspiracy on the part of main stream society in that they know if the mother languages of the Indigenous peoples were made the medium of instruction the teachers' jobs would automatically go the Indigenous peoples themselves and thus depriving them of their livelihood. This is the reason why they would not encourage mother languages of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in the education system. They have successfully blocked the recognition of Indigenous and Tribal languages in the national level despite that several Indigenous and Tribal languages (E.g. Santali, Bodo and others) have number of speakers in millions with significant literacy out put.

Lack of relevant curriculum results in Indigenous and Tribal students failing in the mainstream culture oriented examinations branding them deficient in IQ. This has led to a large-scale dropout among Indigenous and Tribal students particularly among female students. This has rendered the

state slogan "Education for all" very hollow while at the time of application for fund allocation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples are projected as an item of utmost priority.

We therefore recommend to the Permanent Forum to impress upon the government of India and concerned agencies to take urgent steps to address the issues:

1. Recognize the Indigenous and Tribal languages to be medium of instruction in the concerned language areas to accelerate catching up on functional literacy;
2. To ensure and facilitate opportunity to have culturally appropriate education for Indigenous children and youth;
3. To provide Indigenous organization financial and technical support to develop teaching materials in Indigenous languages and cultures;
4. To additionally emphasis education of female children so that they do not Lag behind;
5. Introduction of alien languages (State language, Hindi and English) be gradual so that the child educational roots remain intake;
6. Indigenous cultural input and optional use of mother language be provided in all national and state level competitive examinations and;
7. Education authorities at all levels be sensitized to the educational needs of Indigenous children and youths in order that they do not become stumbling block in the implementation of proactive Indigenous policies.

Thank you Mr. Chairman for your kind attention.

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