

Statement to the 14th Session on the
United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
12 to 16 July, 2021
Joint Statement of Maleya Foundation, BIPNet, Maleya Youth Group,
Bangladesh

Thank you for giving me the floor.

Respected chair and the members of the EMRIP, distinguished representatives from the States and indigenous brothers and sisters.

I am speaking on behalf of Maleya Foundation and....am pleased to briefly present the situation of the indigenous children in Bangladesh.

We indigenous children are among most vulnerable sectors of society, deprived of many of the rights that other children have access to.

In Bangladesh indigenous peoples are not recognised in the Constitution, inadequate acts, policies and practices result in discrimination and exclusion.

In many places there are no schools and NO access to formal education, let alone good education.

The government policy documents including the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord 1997, PEDPII & III, PRSP and National Education Policy 2010 commit and pledge to provide education in the mother tongue of indigenous peoples. But the present educational system of the country fails to address the right to education, including the provision of education in mother tongue recognizing the specific contexts of the indigenous peoples for indigenous children.”

We indigenous children are also left behind in accessing health care with health clinics usually centred in towns and cities far from indigenous communities

locations. Lack of access to safe sources drinking water is evident in many hilly areas of CHT and preventative health care means children are vulnerable to outbreaks of diseases and last year in Chittagong Hill Tracts, in an outbreak of measles nine children died and many more were seriously ill. (Source: <https://unpo.org/article/21799>).

Due to climate change indigenous farmers especially the Jum farmers face the adverse impacts including both floods and droughts resulting in food production deficits and shortages. . Consequently, indigenous children go hungry, lack access to adequate nutritious food and are susceptible to waterborne diseases all barriers to both good health and cognitive development.

The ongoing COVID19 pandemic have added new obstacles to the life of indigenous children. Schools are closed and , access to online classes are not accessible to we indigenous children since few of us have access to smart phones or the internet. of.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts experienced a long 25 years armed conflict and is still experiencing negative peace. There is an urgent need to establish peace, justice and strong institutions as per stated in the goal 16 of the SDG 2030.

Effective implementation of the SDGs is aggravated by a total absence of disaggregated data along ethnic lines consequently the disadvantaged situation and needs of indigenous children in Bangladesh .

We, would like to highlight the following recommendations for EMRIP to encourage the Government of Bangladesh to take urgent action;

1. To recognise the status of indigenous peoples and children and respect their rights in accordance with the national and international standards to which the government is committed.
2. To fully implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Accord of 1997.
3. To ensure that customary held land by indigenous communities is recognised and respected enabling food security and nutritious food for indigenous children for their cognitive development can be achieved;
4. To ensure primary education is accessible to indigenous children in their mother tongue and that access to preventative and curative health services are available to all children,
5. To ensure that the population census to be conducted from October 2021 encompasses disaggregated data for indigenous children and peoples.;
6. To close the gaps between the pronounced policies/standards and the implementation of practices on the ground.

I thank you for your patience listening.