

Women and girls belonging to minorities and the right to education

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We, the Khmers Krom, are happy to participate in the present forum as an autochthonous people living in the South of Vietnam. Our living conditions and especially the access to education of our women and girls are very problematic.

In fact, the factors hampering the schooling of girls are numerous, as you will see below.

1. Poverty is the main obstacle, there are many concrete examples. Girls can no longer go to school because of:

- malnutrition which affects their health and impedes them from moving when going to school
- the lack of money for the purchase of school supplies, clean clothing, or a means of transportation

2. The gap between the language used at home and the one used in school destabilizes the girls, weakening their learning capacity and affecting the quality of their education. Most of them cannot further pursue their studies after primary school.

3. Some higher education scholarships exist, but the Khmers Krom students do not have access to them.

At the moment, less than 10 female Khmers Krom have obtained a university diploma.

4. Girls and women are doubly disadvantaged

We estimate that 80% of the female Khmers Krom are illiterate.

Girls give up on school very early to take care of the members of their families doing housework and to financially help their families by starting to work.

However, the female Khmers Krom only get subordinate jobs, are underpaid and despised because of their lack of education and professional training.

Therefore we would like to propose the following recommendations:

- a) To encourage schooling of girls living in rural areas by offering them transportation to school.
- b) To guarantee the equality of chances to succeed to Khmers Krom girls by allowing them to receive assignments in their maternal language. And if they have the capacity and the desire to pursue higher education, a scholarship should be attributed to them based on their merits without any other consideration. For the others, the opportunity to get a profession should be offered as well.
- c) National education should take into consideration the specificities of this population. The history and geography of Khmer Krom must be integrated in the pedagogical programs and textbooks.
- d) A program to increase literacy for female Khmers Kroms shall be established, together with a campaign to inform them of their rights.

Mr. President,

Thank you.