

Woman of Purpose

I'm Iano Polog from Woman of Purpose, and NGO working with ethnic minorities in Palisa district, eastern Uganda.

I'd like to talk about educational challenges faced by ethnic minorities particularly the children from the Bakenya ethnic minority in Uganda in the wake of free universal primary education.

This question is most relevant to Draft Recommendations no. 34 and 35.

The Bakenya, a minority tribe living in a dominant community in eastern Uganda. It's characterised by high poverty levels and increasing school dropout rates. Most of the Bakenya children do not go to school due to the lack of scholastic materials. In fact, according to a research conducted by Woman of Purpose in 2010, 9 out of 10 Bakenya children have never stepped in a classroom because of their parents' inability to provide scholastic materials. A fact that has contributed to the problem of high illiteracy rates and thus an ending cycle of poverty and suffering of the Bakenya community.

We appreciate and commend the efforts of the Uganda government in promoting the rights of ethnic minorities particularly the introduction of free universal primary education. However, we would like to note that the high costs supposed to be met by parents through provision of all necessary school requirements such as school uniforms, scholastic materials, lunch at school, top-up of teachers' salaries who are not on payroll, building fund and etc. Have left many children from poor minority communities with no choice but to drop out of school.

Therefore, we call upon this forum to adopt recommendations 34 and 35 and also urge the Uganda Government to create a special fund for ethnic minority children to enable them access to scholastic materials and keep them in school. In addition, the Government should provide funding to minority organizations who understand the issues of their communities and better place to supply mechanisms that would promote the education of minority children.

Thank you Madam Chair.