



International Conference on Language, Education and the  
Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

*Challenges in Promoting Language Rights of  
Indigenous Peoples in the Chittagong Hill  
Tracts, Bangladesh*

Bangkok, Thailand  
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# location of bangladesh & chittagong hill tracts



# zero. overview

- PROFILE of CHT
- The STATUS of Language Rights in CHT
- INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS & Language Rights
- NATIONAL LAW & POLICY and Language Rights
- Challenges in IMPLEMENTING Language Rights of Indigenous Peoples in CHT

# one. profile of chittagong hill tracts



PHOTO:  
Subrata Chakma



## one. profile of chittagong hill tracts

### CONSTITUTIONAL & ADMINISTRATIVE BACKGROUND

- **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES** (ethno-linguistic minorities, some with own scripts)
- **BRITISH TRIBUTARY** (1785), **ANNEXATION** (1860) (Tribal Area & Special Area)
- **EROSION OF AUTONOMY, UNREST & CHT** (“peace”) **ACCORD** of 1997
- **Post-1997: PARTIALLY AUTONOMOUS SYSTEM** with (limited) Authority over Primary Education, Land, Health, Agriculture, etc (Traditional, Elective & Bureaucratic Institutions)

one. profile of chittagong hill tracts CONT'D  
MDGs: A CHALLENGE

- Remote Areas Under-Served by State-Supported EDUCATION (community & NGO-run schools fill some gaps)
- POVERTY & HUNGER widespread (worse among certain indigenous groups )
- INFANT & MOTHER MORTALITY among the highest in country (POOR ACCESS to WATER, HEALTHCARE)
- GENDERED PERSONAL LAWS & INADEQUATE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN in Politics & Development
- ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION (affecting ACCESS TO WATER, livelihood security)

## two. education rights status of chittagong hill tracts



two. education rights status of chittagong hill tracts

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- **Below National Average LITERACY RATE**  
(1991 Census; significantly lower for several indigenous peoples; Demands for ethnically disaggregated data in Next Census)
- **56.8% children aged 6 -10 years ENROLLED**  
(less girls than boys; ADB Report, 2001)



Two. education rights status of

chittagong hill tracts



- Only 60% COVERAGE BY NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM (ADB Report, 2001)
- 60% DROP OUT in primary education cycle (Double of national average; ADB, 2001: Language barrier identified as one of the prime causes of Drop Out of Indigenous Children)
- Language of Education BENGALI (Curriculum does not reflect local culture, values and language)

three.

language rights under international  
instruments



Three.

language rights under international  
instruments

- ILO Convention on Indigenous & Tribal Peoples/Populations (Conventions 169, 107)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- International Covenants on Civil & Political Rights & Economic, Social & Cultural Rights (ICCPR & ICESCR)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
- CEDAW
- UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

three. language rights .. international instruments CONT'D

## ILO CONVENTION 107 (INDIGENOUS & TRIBAL POPULATIONS, 1957; ARTICLE 23)

- *“Children belonging to the populations concerned shall be taught to read and write in their mother tongue or, where this is not practicable, in the language most commonly used by the group to which they belong”*



three. language rights .. international instruments CONT'D

## UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (ARTICLE 14)

- 1) *“Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.”*
- (2) *“Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.”*

### three. language rights .. international instruments CONT'D



- *“Indigenous people have the right to quality primary education that is sensitive to their holistic worldviews, languages, traditional knowledge and other aspects of their cultures, which contribute to human dignity and intercultural dialogue”*
- *“Mother-tongue mediated bilingual education is indispensable for effective learning for indigenous children and for the reduction of drop-out rates..”*

## four. language rights under national instruments



four.

language rights under national  
instruments

- **LANGUAGE MARTYRS' DAY** (21 FEB)  
recognized by UNESCO as INTERNATIONAL  
MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

b a n g l a d e s h

- **INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT** (1971)  
drew upon **LANGUAGE MOVEMENT**  
(1952)



## four. language rights under national instruments CONT'D

- **CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS** (on Non-Discrimination & Free & Compulsory Education: but Indigenous Peoples not directly RECOGNIZED)
- **COMPULSORY PRIMARY EDUCATION ACT, 1990, HILL DISTRICT COUNCILS ACT, 1989**
- **CHT (“PEACE”) ACCORD, 1997**

## four. language rights under national instruments CONT'D

- **PRSP** (“Education For All” & “Special Measures for Indigenous Children”)
- **NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY, 2010**
  - Establishment of Schools
  - Employment of Teachers
  - Indigenous Languages
  - Curriculum & Boarding Facilities

## four. language rights under national instruments CONT'D

### RECOMMENDATIONS OF PEDP-II STRATEGY PAPER

- **RECRUIT** community based teachers
- **ORGANIZE** training and orientation courses for teachers
- **INTRODUCE** pre-primary schooling with language education
- **REVIEW CURRICULUM** and textbooks (in consultation with indigenous experts)
- **ESTABLISH** new primary schools
- **Allow FLEXIBILITY** (adjust school calendar according to local traditions, religion, and work. Allow for use of supplementary reading materials in local languages and encourage use of local materials as teaching aids)

# five. challenges





# five. challenges

## GOVERNMENT

- Realizing the POSITIVE ASPECTS of MTB-MLE (e.g., development, stability integration w/o assimilation)
- MAINSTREAMING Indigenous Rights Issues (e.g., revising other sectoral policies & guidelines)
- CAPACITY-RAISING to Coordinating the DIFFERENT ACTORS (Govt Departments, NGOs & Private Sector)
- Providing Multilingual Education in MIXED SETTLEMENTS (curricula, teaching staff, etc)
- DEVOLUTION (e.g., Hill District Councils, CHT)

## five. challenges CONT'd

### DONOR & LENDING AGENCIES

- Implementing INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' POLICIES (in Partnership with Indigenous Peoples, Governments & NGOs)
- Funding CAPACITY-RAISING (Govt Departments, NGOs & Private Sector)
- Streamlining PARIS PRINCIPLES to fit Indigenous Peoples' Education & Development Rights Needs
- Funding Indigenous Rights & Multilingual Education through APPROPRIATE FOCUS (e.g., Supporting Indigenous & Indigenous Issues-Informed Projects)

## five. challenges CONT'd

### UN AGENCIES

- **CAPACITY-RAISING** (Mainstreaming Indigenous Issues)
- **Orientating Interventions around UN POLICIES** on Indigenous Peoples' Rights (UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNDG Guidelines, Resolutions of UNDPFii, EMRIP & UN SRIP)
- **PROMOTION** of Language Issues & IP Rights (Collective Rights of Indigenous Peoples & Individual Rights of Indigenous Children, Women, Men)

## five. challenges CONT'D

### N G O s

- **ACCESSING FUNDS** (e.g., Paris Principles' Negative Impact on Small NGOs)
- **INCLUDING Indigenous Peoples at All Stages of the Project Cycle** (Consultation, Participation & FPIC)
- **Ending DISCRIMINATION by Governmental Agencies** (Incorporation, Foreign Funding clearance & Confusion with Micro-Credit Activities)



## five. challenges CONT'D

### INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

- Promoting Indigenous Peoples' SELF-GOVERNMENT & PARTICIPATORY RIGHTS (e.g., Implementing International & National Standards & CHT Accord Provisions)
- De-Constructing MYTHS & MISINFORMATION {Asserting Equal Education Rights & Promoting Multilingual Education (inc De-Mystification of Equal Rights, CHT Accord & Multilingualism)}
- Forging ALLIANCES (with Govt, UN Agencies, NGOs & Civil Society)

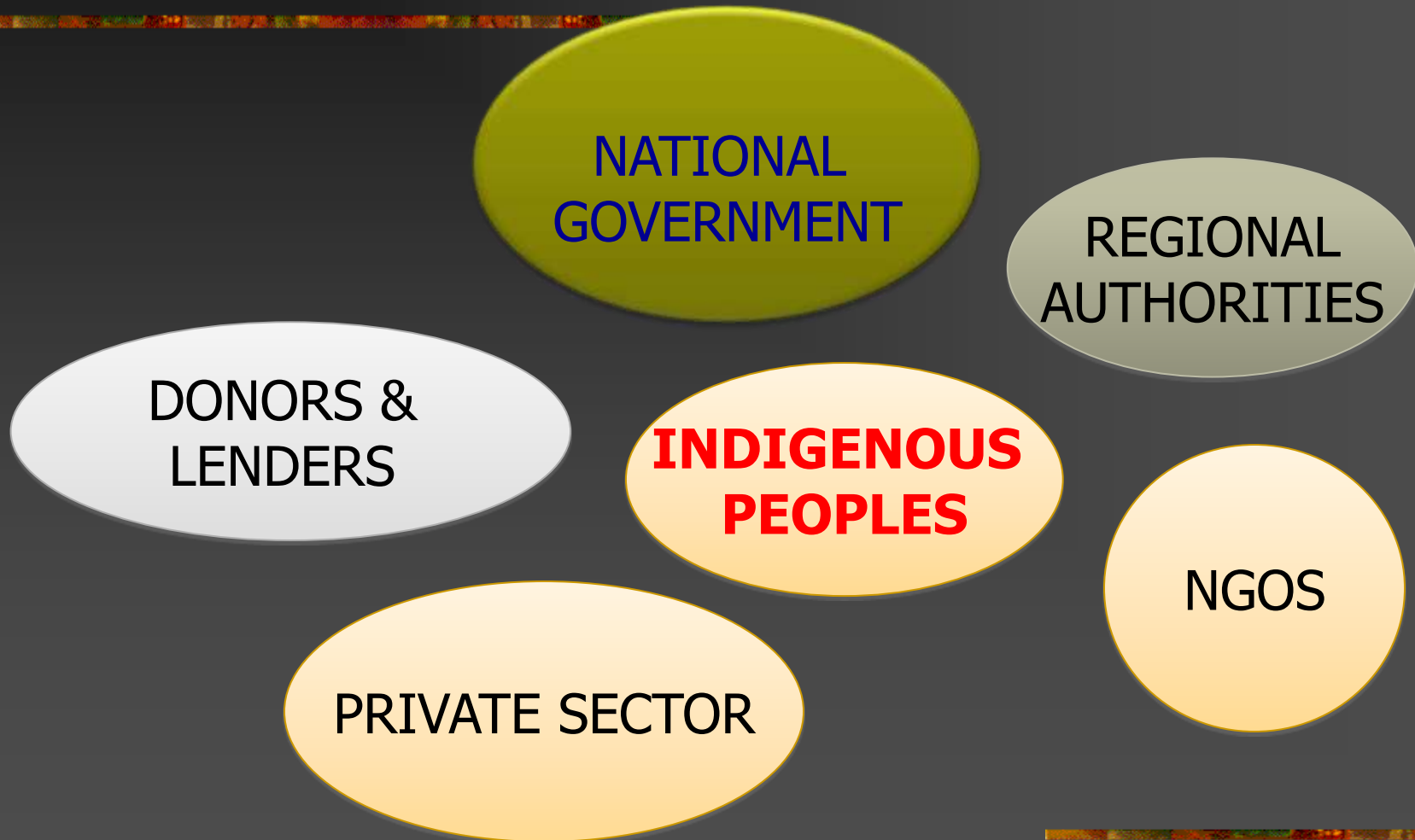
## five. challenges CONT'D

### PRIVATE SECTOR

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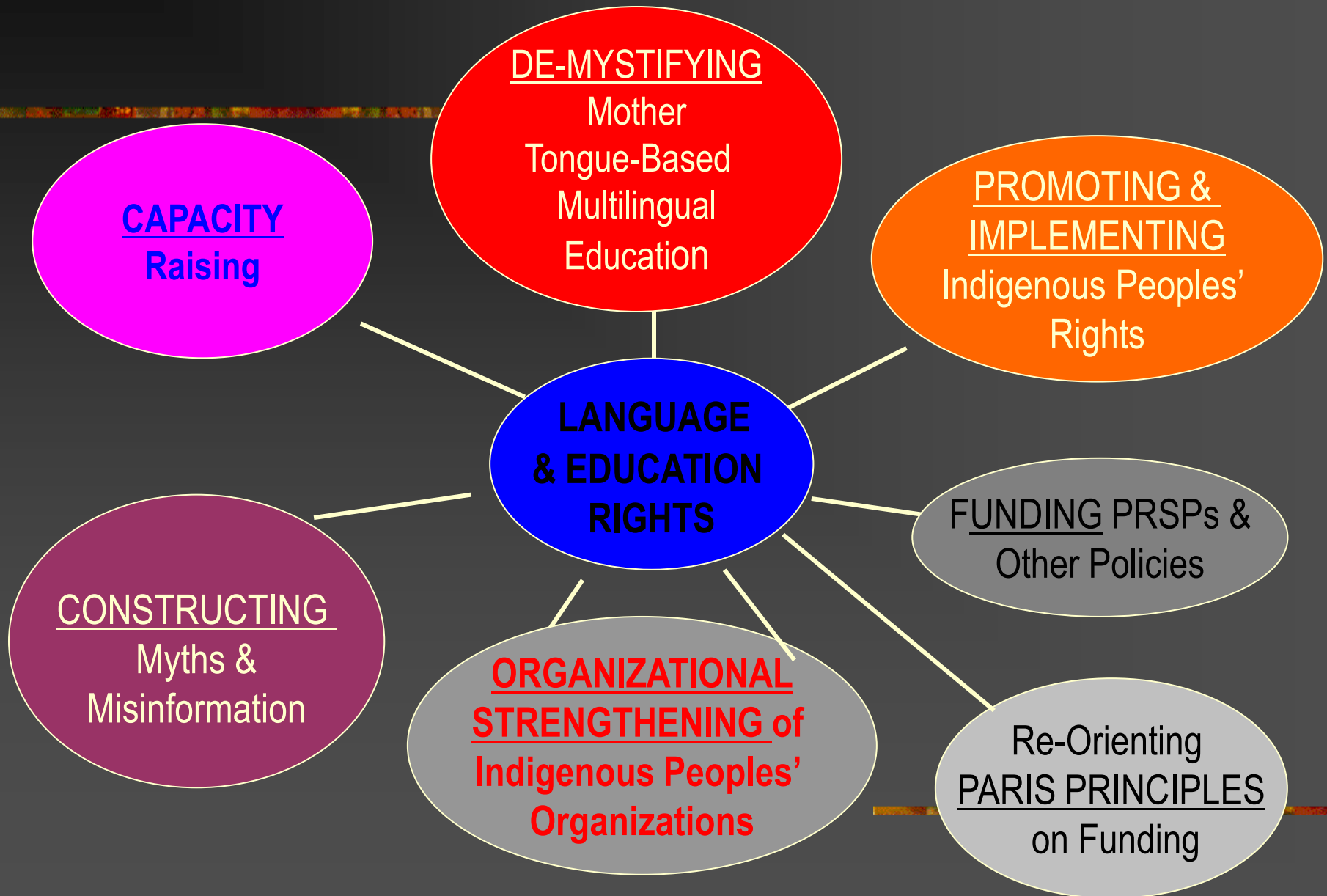
- Supporting Multilingual Education with FPIC of Indigenous Peoples
  - Equitable Filling of Gaps left by Governmental, Non-Governmental & Other Non-Private Sectors
-

five. challenges CONT'D  
THE MAJOR ACTORS



# five. challenges CONT'D

## THE MAJOR CHALLENGES



# Thank you



Rally on International  
Mother Language  
Day:  
21 February, 2006

