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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Akshar Foundation, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 August 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Rapid Development in the North Eastern Region of India

The North Eastern Region of India is considered among the most ethnically diverse areas of the world. Home to approximately 200 distinct indigenous Tribes, it is a region rich with myriad languages and distinct cultural traditions.⁽¹⁾ Although, in the past, people in this border region complained of long neglect from the central government in Delhi, in the last decade, we at Akshar Foundation — based in the North Eastern state of Assam — have witnessed an enormous increase in development and attention paid to the remote North East Region by the Central Government of India. To symbolize this change: “As Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has visited the Northeast around 60 times in 9 years, which could be more than the total number of visits by all his predecessors put together.” ⁽²⁾ As an NGO based in the North East dedicated to the eradication of poverty, we highly commend the Government of India for these much needed investments.

The central government has invested heavily in North East’s schools, airports, hospitals, universities, medical colleges, roads, bridges, communication infrastructure, and more, whereas in the first several decades of India’s existence, these states were far more neglected. The Government has opened a branch of the world-class colleges of engineering, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) - Guwahati, in the state of Assam. IIT Guwahati graduates go on to lucrative careers around the world. The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) - Shillong and All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Guwahati (AIIMS) are also world-class centers build in the North East which have raised the aspirational standard for students pursuing higher learning. The Central Government has formed multiple agencies and funding schemes specifically targeting development in the North East, like the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North Eastern Region.

The diverse indigenous tribes and ethnicities of North East India have long experienced neglect from the center. But in the last decade, that has started to change. Frequently, the Prime Minister delivers televised addresses dressed in the traditional garb of various tribes of the North East. Such symbolic and highly visible gestures also go a long way towards cultivating a shared sense of belonging and nationhood for the long neglected tribal communities. As a result of these symbolic acts, combined with concrete heavy investments in development, the frequent anti-government, separatist violence that used to grip the city of Guwahati in Assam in decades past has vanished, and people are more hopeful about the future. As Guwahati is the location of the headquarters of Akshar Foundation, we strongly commend the Government of India for these important steps.

1. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353417080_Traditional_Tuber_Crops_Food_of_North-Eastern_India#pf7

2. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/pm-narendra-modi-inaugurates-northeast-first-aiims-in-guwahati-three-new-medical-colleges-in-assam/articleshow/99488153.cms?from=mdr>

3. <https://www.indiatoday.in/elections/photo/the-different-avatars-of-narendra-modi-372191-2014-05-13/6>