**CALL TO PROVIDE EDUCATION TO EVERY CHILD**

**ISLAMABAD, April 25:** With seven million children aged between 5 and 16 out of schools and over 50 million people (over 10 years of age) never having gone to one, it is our collective responsibility to implement Article 25-A which assures education for every child.

This was stated by participants of an event to mark “Education for All Week”, organized by UNESCO and UNICEF at a local hotel on Thursday.

Representative UNESCO Islamabad Dr Kozue Kay Nagata said, “Teachers, with their hard work and stimulating interaction, can not only transfer knowledge and new skills, but also play a key role in making the learning experience joyful.”

She appreciated that the Islamabad Capital Territory act and Sindh provincial act had been passed based on Article 25-A of constitution Chief Education Section UNICEF, Pilar Angliar, said there would be a shortage of 8million teachers globally by 2015, while the dropout rate of teachers is estimated at 5pc annually. In primary schools, the teaching force is estimated at 400,000, of which 131,000 are female teachers.

“Implementation of Article 25-A will be a challenging task in bringing children from the poorest households, both in rural and urban slums, and from the socially excluded groups,” she said.

The joint secretary of the Ministry of Capital Administration and Development (CAD), Professor Rafique Tahir, presented an action plan for enforcement of Article 25-A (right to free and compulsory education) Act 2012 in Islamabad.

He said although in Pakistan governments’ claim they give priority to education, allocation of funds for education indicate otherwise.

“Some politicians are saying they will impose education emergency but after 25-A, it has become a responsibility to provide education to every child,” he added.

Discussing teachers, he said: “The teacher is leader of education sector. We don’t have shortage of teachers but there is a capacity issue. We have over 19,000 teachers in over 1,100 public sector and private educational institution of the federal capital. As many as 350,000 students have been studying under them.”

Mr Tahir said 135 countries had legislation promising free education, and Pakistan was included in the list. It was not binding to admit every child between 5 and 16 years in school. Principal of
Islamabad College for Girls F-6, Shaista Pirzada said education was imperative to empower society and allow for poverty alleviation.

“Teachers have been working on daily wages, which is insulting for them, since this is equivalent to a labourer’s wages. There are 50 students in each classroom in the federal capital and teachers cannot give an average of one minute to each student,” he said.

Director General National Commission of Human Development Khusro Pervez Khan said he could quote several examples of students that had continuously failed in class I for seven years, indicating flaws within the education system. Secretary Ministry of Education, Qamar Zaman Chaudhry, said educated and professional teachers are mostly concentrated in the cities, but the real challenge was to train those in the rural and remote areas.

An Education Walk was also held in F-9 Park to mark the need for education in connection with the Global Action Week (GAW) organized by Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE).

Addressing the participants of the walk, federal minister for Capital Administration and Development (CAD), Dr Younas Soomro said the education system needed major reforms that could be fruitful if experts, policymakers and civil society representatives consulted each other and came up with a tangible modus operandi based on ground realities.

There were three events planned by PCE in which over 700 students from private and public schools participated.

The PCE organized the “Teachers’ Day Out” in F-9 Fatimah Jinnah Park, in which approximately 400 to 500 students and teachers took part. The day started with a small march by the students, followed by awards for the best students and teachers from various schools. Afterwards, the chief guest gave a speech on the importance of education in Pakistan, and the event culminated with the signing of a banner stating “I vote for education, do you?”

A small painting activity was also held at the PCE premises in F-10, which involved both teachers and students. Almost forty students participated from three schools. The event took place between 10am and 1pm, in which participants were asked to paint their views on the education system.

The third event was co-arranged with the Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP), in which two schools participated and were briefed by the ITP Education officers.

Posters and leaflets regarding the awareness of traffic signs and education were prepared by PCE and were distributed in Saidpur Village and Golra Sharif by the students.