

UNESCO commemorate the International Day of the Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) today

Islamabad, 3rd December, 2013: United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) together with its partners in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh observed the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

The theme of this year's International Day of persons with Disabilities is "Break Barriers, Open Doors: for an Inclusive Society and Development for All".

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, UNESCO observed the event together with Special Abilities Development Association (SADA) in Lower Dir while in Sindh the event was jointly observed with Nawabshah Disability Forum. UNESCO also participated in a Seminar on 2nd December, 2013 organized by National Institute of Special Education (NISE) working under Directorate General of Special Education, Capital Administration and Development Division, Islamabad.

The major focus of the day was to take practical and concerted actions to include persons with disabilities in social life and development on the basis of equity and equality, highlight progress and obstacles in implementing disability sensitive policies as well as promote public awareness to break barriers and open doors for an inclusive society for all.

The UN General Assembly in the recent years has consistently emphasized that the genuine achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed development goals, requires the inclusion and assurance of the rights, well-being and participation of persons with disabilities in development efforts at national, regional and international levels.

The International Day of the Persons with Disabilities provides an opportunity for participation by all stakeholders – governments, the UN system, civil society and organizations of persons with disabilities – in events and discourse to recognize and deliberate on issues related to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in development, both as beneficiaries and agents. On this day, forums, public discussions and information campaigns are held to help find innovative ways and means by which persons with disabilities and their families can be further integrated into their societies and development plans. This day is also important to plan and organize performances everywhere to showcase and celebrate the contributions made by the persons with disabilities as agents of change and development in their communities.

In a message delivered on behalf of Dr. Kozue Kay Nagata, Director/Representative, UNESCO Islamabad, to the gatherings organized to commemorate the IDPD in Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh it was highlighted that Pakistan had ratified the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2011 which was a significant step forward at that time that has contributed to promoting

inclusive, barrier-free and right-based societies in the country. However, it also pointed to the fact that the process towards monitoring and implementation was rather slow and underscored that there was no national monitoring mechanism established nor was there any anti-discrimination law against disability in line with CRPD formulated as yet. Who was responsible for disability issue which was holistic and comprehensive in its nature, at federal and provincial level was not clarified to date.

The message highlighted that fundamental principle behind CRPD was to change mind-set of the people and society as a whole to accommodate the individual differences, cherish diversity, foster tolerance and ensure rights of persons with disabilities. It stated that there was a need to recognize that the disability of a person did not prevent him or her from being a highly talented agent of social transformation, but unfortunately “medical model” that perceived disability as medical and rehabilitation issue only was still prevailing in Pakistan. The message made a very important final remark that poverty alleviation could not be achieved without empowering disabled people through education, vocational training and employment.

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For further information, please contact,
Riaz Karim Khan
Press Officer
UNESCO
Cell: 0345-5858 956
Email: r.khan@unesco.org