

## 1.4m disabled Pakistani children have no access to schools

ISLAMABAD: An estimated 1.4 million persons with disabilities in Pakistan were the children of school going age, most of whom do not have access to either inclusive or special schools due to limited capacity in existing facilities, Dr. Kozue Kay Nagata, Director UNESCO Islamabad told Education For All (EFA) National Forum here on Wednesday.



The EFA Forum was organized by UNESCO in collaboration with UNICEF with an aim of stimulating a debate on Article 25-A of the Constitution and education sector financing in Pakistan.

Speaking in her welcome remarks, Dr. Kozue Kay Nagata, Director UNESCO Islamabad emphasized the realization of education for all particularly for persons with disabilities in Pakistan. She said that Pakistan ratified United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 5th July 2011 and Pakistan was among those 145 countries which ratified this Convention and thus its implementation was responsibility of the state and development organizations including disabled peoples organizations.

UNESCO believes that by adopting the following seven (7) strategies the Government of Pakistan will be able to make an accelerated progress towards ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities as Create appropriate legislative frameworks and set out ambitious national plans for inclusion. Provide the capacity, resources and leadership to implement ambitious national plans on inclusion. Improve EMIS to build accountability for results-oriented actions. Refurbish existing schools and classrooms to allow barrier free access to students and teachers. Integrate content and pedagogy related to education of disabled persons in teacher training programs. Launch advocacy campaigns to challenge negative perceptions and attitudes which reinforce and sustain discrimination against persons with disabilities. Create an enabling policy environment for inclusive education, through cross-sectoral interventions.

Speaking on the occasion, UNICEF Education Specialist, John Ekaju said that EFA was a critical priority and government commitment for increasing the education budget allocation would further improve the education for all including the disable children. "UNICEF acknowledged the role of civil society organizations for advancing the agenda of education for all and UNICEF is fully committed to promote equity in education for all especially the most vulnerable children to advance the education agenda in Pakistan", he added. Muhammad Ahsan Raja, Secretary Education of Ministry of Education, Trainings and Standards in Higher Education commended UNESCO and UNICEF for jointly hosting the event on EFA with focus

on disability. He said that the children with disabilities were important part of the society and it was the national obligation for all of us to take care of them by mainstreaming them through inclusive education.

He said that working together with the United Nations and other donor's agencies, the educational status of the children with disabilities can be improved. He said the teachers were playing an important role for building a knowledge society.

**Source:** <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/08-May-2014/1-4m-disabled-pakistani-children-have-no-access-to-schools>