

Pay attention to children with disabilities: UNICEF

Staff Correspondent

THE children with disabilities and their communities would equally benefit if the societies pay attention to what these can achieve, rather than what they cannot do, said UNICEF in its State of the World's Children report released Sunday.

The UNICEF report for 2013 deals with 'Children with Disabilities.'

Societies need to concentrate on the abilities and potential of the children with disabilities to foster their talent, said the UNICEF report.

Speaking at the report launching at a city hotel UNICEF Bangladesh chief Pascal Villeneuve said children with disabilities must be visible, valued and seen as active participants and contributors, rather than beneficiaries of charity.

Speaking at the report launching, two children with disabilities Mafiq Akhter Payel and Rakib, urged the authorities to make all the schools

accessible to children with disabilities.

'We are liable to work for the children with disabilities,' said education minister Nurul Islam Nahid.

He called for changing the society's attitude towards people with disabilities.

Social Welfare ministry secretary Suraiya Begum also spoke.

Bangladesh's mainstream education system does not include children with disabilities, UNICEF communication manager Arifa S Sharmin said.

Social welfare ministry looks after the issue but the education ministry makes no contribution to change the situation, she said.

The UNICEF report urged the education ministry to take over the responsibility of education of children with disabilities from social welfare ministry.

The report urged all the countries to make their schools accessible and friendly to children with disabilities.

In the report UNICEF said that the societies would gain from inclusive education as it broadens the horizon of all children.

The report states that children with disabilities are deprived of health care and education.

They are the most vulnerable to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect, even in schools because of social stigma or the economic cost of raising them.

Girls with disabilities are deprived and discriminated more than the boys with regard to food, healthcare and education, it said.

It called 'discrimination on the ground of disability a form of oppression.' Multiple deprivations lead to even greater exclusion for many children with disabilities, it said.

It regretted non availability of accurate data on the number of children with disabilities and how disabilities affect their lives.

It called it equally regret-

table that not many governments adopted the guidelines for allocating resources to support the cause of children with disabilities and their families.

The report regretted that until now one third of the world's countries did not ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In the report UNICEF appealed to all governments to keep their promises to guarantee equal rights of their citizens - including their most vulnerable and left out children.

UNICEF also made a fervent appeal to fight out all sorts of discrimination arising out of attitudes among the general public, decision-makers as well as schools and health care and other essential service providers.

UNICEF urged international agencies to make sure that the advice and assistance they provide to countries was consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.