



RAWALPINDI: Special children perform on stage during an event organised at Rawalpindi Arts Council to observe International Day of Persons with Disability.—INP

International day of persons with disability observed

# Legislation sought to safeguard rights of the disabled

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OUR STAFF REPORTER  
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The speakers highlighting the challenges faced by the persons with disabilities have demanded legislation in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCPRD), as currently there is no clear legislation at national level for the rights of persons with disabilities.

Aurat Foundation in collaboration with the Directorate General of Special Education organised a policy dialogue titled 'Road Map for Justice and Equality for Persons with Disability (PWD)' on Wednesday, the International Day of Persons with Disability, here at F-9 Park. The event was supported by AUSDFAT, Trocaire and Women Learning Partnership (WLP). The discussants talked about the need for improved awareness among stakeholders, services available for persons with disabilities and current status of legislation on disability.

He said that there was no clear legislation at national level for the rights of persons with disabilities, and hence a strong and effective lobbying was required with relevant stakeholders.

Barrister Usman Ibrahim, state minister for capital administration and development division, said that the government was committed to addressing the challenges faced by the persons with disability. He said that the implementation of recommendations came forward in the policy dialogue would be a priority for the ministry.

Director Coordination Aurat Foundation Prof. Farkhanda Aurangzeb stressed the need to create special opportunities for women with disabilities. Director Advoca-

cacy and Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) for Aurat Foundation Rabeea Hadi demanded Employment quota equal to the percentage of disability existing in the society. She suggested the government to prepare a comprehensive database to identify exact number of persons with disabilities and consider disability aspect while drafting new electoral reforms.

Chief coordinating Officer Aurat Foundation Naeem Mirza demanded legislations according to United Nations Convention on the Rights of PWDs (UNCPRD).

The event was followed by a family fun gala for disabled children, inaugurated by Barrister Usman Ibrahim, State Minister for Capital Administration and Development Division.

The policy dialogue focused on challenges faced by disable community. Major challenges faced by disable community include communication gap among non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working for PWDS and the organisations working for human rights, insufficient quota allocation for persons with disabilities, and 18th amendment and its consequences, highlighted Ammara Anwar, programme specialist Pakistan Foundation Fighting Blindness.

Violent attitudes faced by PWDS in general and women with disabilities in particular, and lack of interest from both government and private sectors for the development of persons with disabilities, are other issues. On the education front, lack of trained teachers and study mechanism specially for persons with mental disorders are the key challenges.

Lack of implementation of quota available for PWDS in employment and other basic services and non-coop-

erative attitude of the colleagues is also discouraging, she said.

Ammara recommended Directorate General of Special education to hire at least 80 per cent persons with disability in their departments and implementation of accessibility codes in all buildings in major cities. The major challenges, Saba Mohsin, Early Intervention Consultant, pointed out was lack of coordination between ordinary schools and special schools, lack of awareness and education within the community, inadequate attention to disability-friendly infrastructure, lack of teachers' training, resource materials and funds to develop the inclusive programmes, and of course the attitudinal barriers of society including parents, educators and policymakers. She stressed the need for sufficient financial resources, adequate support system including sufficient trained and qualified professionals, community participation, and on-going evaluation of established programmes.

M Jawwad Afzal, deputy director Directorate General of Special Education, in his presentation shared that out of total population of 180 million, there are 4 to 8 million persons with disabilities in Pakistan, and 45% of these are children under 18. At least 3 million adults (both genders included) need rehabilitation through some kind of employment.

Elaborating the human rights of persons with disabilities he said that they have right to social, political and economic integration, barrier free access to state resources and services, right to a dignified life as citizen, and that they must not be labelled as handicap but be accommodated as human diversity.