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Children the world over facing discrimination

V. Shankar Ganesh

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - There is never a good reason for denying a child freedom and opportunity and yet throughout the world, children face discrimination in various forms.

According to Global Movement for Children, discrimination can be due to their skin colour, gender or because of the traditions their parents passed on to them.

To combat discrimination and other problems that affect children, the National Unity and Social Development Ministry will launch a campaign called "Say Yes for Children" on Sept 1.

To be launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the campaign will look at ways to create a conducive and enabling environment for children to grow up.

The campaign is built on 10 imperative actions and responsibilities.

The campaign is part of the movement's broad-based efforts to ensure greater action for children and to hold governments accountable in the run-up to and after the United Nations Special Session on Children, to be held from Sept 18 to 24, in New York.

The Global Movement for Children is a group of people and organisations around the world dedicated to promoting the rights of the child.

The movement is about participation, action and accountability involving everyone.

It calls for people throughout the world to take action and protect the rights of children and to remind everyone including leaders and citizens, public and private organisations, children and young people that they each have a role to play.

The action plan Leave No Child Out calls for the end of all forms of discrimination and exclusion against children because every girl and boy is born free and equal in dignity and rights.

According to the movement, because of discrimination, children are often left out and are unable to live up to their potential.

Discrimination takes on many forms.

In some cases, it is intolerance, hatred and even violence.

In other cases, it is more subtle. When a girl is made to feel inferior in school or when she is kept out of school to take care of the house only because she is a girl, that is discrimination.

When no effort is made to allow disabled children equal access to opportunity, that too is discrimination.

Whenever a child, anywhere, is made to feel that he or she is inferior to other children, that is discrimination, and the campaign aims to end this.

Discrimination is also denial of that which we believe to be self-evident: that all children are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Human rights talks should start with the rights of children as they hold the greatest potential and yet are also the most vulnerable.

The campaign also reminds adults that the children who suffer discrimination have no choice but they can make things change.

It calls on adults to teach children to be tolerant and live without fear or hate or prejudice.

The movement also emphasises on action as words alone will not be enough to address the issues. This can be achieved by ensuring every child the freedom and dignity he or she deserves.

