The government should ratify the Convention against Discrimination in Education to ensure that stateless children get a proper education, say child rights advocates.

Surapong Kongchantuek, head of the Lawyers Council’s human rights subcommittee on ethnic minorities, the stateless, migrant workers and displaced persons, said many stateless children, especially those in border areas, still have no access to education.

That's despite the fact that several regulations had been put in place to guarantee their right to schooling.

"Some are allowed to study but no certificates are granted to them after graduation," he told a meeting of child rights activists and legal experts held in Bangkok recently.

The participants agreed that the government’s ratification of the Convention against Discrimination in Education, which 98 countries have now joined, would help improve the situation.

"The government’s policy [on education for stateless children] is fine, but the problem is that it has not been turned into action," Mr Surapong said.

"Some teachers or people involved in education do not even know that unregistered children are allowed to have schooling.

"The convention might help tackle the problem."

He called on the Education Ministry to be the focal point in studying the ratification proposal and in submitting the study for cabinet consideration.

Johan Lindeberg, a specialist on education at the Regional Bureau of Education for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco), said the convention’s purposes were the elimination and prevention of discrimination and equality of opportunity.

Ratifying the convention might not end discrimination in education against stateless children, but would give the government directions and guidelines over what steps they should take to tackle it, he said.