

# East side story debuts

RENUKA NADKARNI |  
CHENNAI

Films have always fascinated children, and it is this interest that UNICEF and Nalandaway, an NGO, have capitalised on to educate children from Krishnagiri district, Tamil Nadu. Their project titled 'East Side Story' is a network of news bureaus where children from marginalised communities make films on issues that are important to them. The three films, *Kalvettu*, *Mezhuguvathe* and *Mug-up Mangamma*, that were made by these children were screened on Friday, at Harrisons Hotel. The event began with a play *Matter idhuthan*, which was staged by the children of this district.

"These children are taken through the entire process of making a film. First, children between the ages of 12 to 17 are selected from the villages, and then they are given training in theatre, film making and journalism. After this, a group of adults, all professionals, guide them through the process of production. These films are broadcasted to the community and government," said Sriram V. Ayer, founder, Nalandaway Foundation.

Apart from making films, these children also bring out a magazine titled '*Thappa Rightta*,' through which they



Children from Krishnagiri district performing a play titled *Matter idhuthan*.  
Photograph by JAISON.G

illustrate the various problems that they face.

According to the officials, 'East Side Story' is a project that aims at the development of children from backward societies. And Krishnagiri was identified as the district suitable for this project, after researching social and economic background. "This project will be taken to Chennai, Cuddalore and Nagapattinam in its second phase," revealed Thomas George, Officer in-charge of Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

"Through these films, we can see how confident and empowered the children have become, and this is an example for the others to look up

to," said Cecilo Adorno, UNICEF Incharge, India, while commending the children's efforts.

Each of the films that were screened was met with a thunderous applause and the children received a standing ovation at the end of the evening.

"I never thought that this moment would come true. I am very happy that others have liked our work," gushed Sandhya.

"After we got such a huge applause, I am inspired. I want to do something that will make a difference to mine and to the lives of others," said a visibly thrilled Krishna.