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Providing a platform for future citizens to air their grievances

Bala Sabha meetings identify topics concerning child welfare

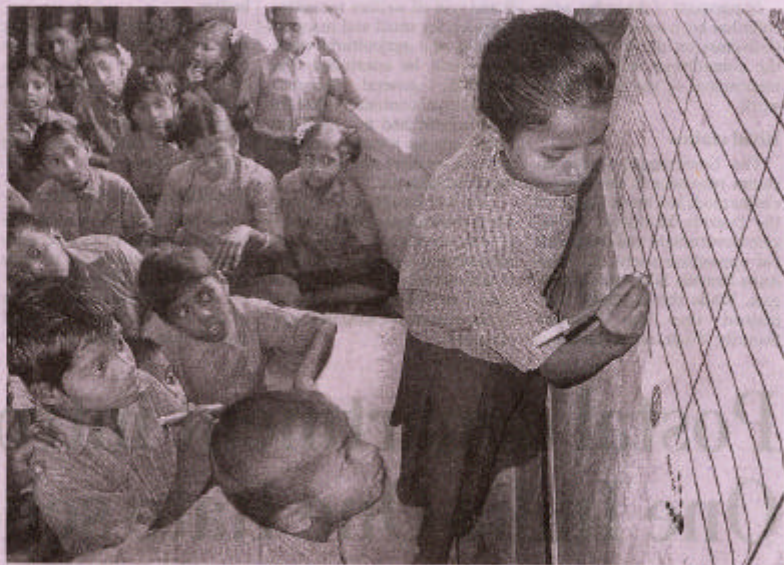
S. Prasad

KRISHNAGIRI: The objective is to listen to their grievances. Officers were the same. But the target group was of a different kind.

For the first time in the country, children in the age group of 8 to 14 years were given a patient hearing. The objective is to identify their priorities and issues, which were presented in the Bala Sabha meetings held in all the 337 panchayats in the district on Monday.

Krishnagiri was selected for this innovative exercise based on the low human development indices with regard to women and children. The content and methodology of the meetings were provided free-of-cost by Chennai-based Nalandaway. Preparatory works for the meetings were held in all the blocks in the district from July 8 to 13. As part of the programme, child representatives were selected from each panchayat.

"Representatives from all the panchayats in a block assembled together. As part of the session, introductory games were conducted to break the ice and to get acquainted with one other. The child representatives discussed and identified issues that hampered the development and welfare of children. This included quality of noon meal, clean toilets, adequate classrooms, lack of computers and domestic vio-



FIRST TIME: A child representative identifies issues at a Bala Sabha meeting held at Agasipalli, near Krishnagiri, on Monday. - PHOTO: N. BASHKARAN

lence due to alcohol consumption," said the founder and CEO of Nalandaway, Sriram V. Ayer.

The 10 issues, which were mostly identified by children, were displayed in a chart. Each child marked three important issues on the chart. It would be prioritised and placed before the

Gram Sabha meetings to be held on Tuesday.

Nalandaway was also involved in a media project for children titled 'Eastside Story'. As part of the project, 15 children from Krishnagiri were given training on photojournalism, theatre and performing arts. They also

brought out a magazine for children titled 'Thappa Rights'. The pilot project had been started in Chennai, Nagapattinam, Cuddalore and Kanchipuram districts from this year. Along with this, more than 100 children would be selected from Krishnagiri for audio blogging, Mr. Sriram added.