

SHOWBIZ



Children enact a play at the screening of the short films

The story so far...

- I will be a police officer and kill my dad
- I don't want to be harassed by men
- I want to be taught the right way in school

THESE were the voices of children, in the three short-films, who were part of the launch of East Side Story. An initiative of voluntary group Nalanda Way, East Side Story is a network of children auto-

ced to write and film issues that children deem important for the purpose of publication in radio, television and newspapers. The NGO, with the support of UNICEF, launched its operations in Chennai by screening three short-films, *Kalaveetu*, *Mechugusorai*, and *Mag-up Managanava*.

The films are reflections of the disturbances in a child's mind. "The films were completely made by children, from scripting to filming, except the very technical aspects," says Sri-

ram V Ayer, founder, Nalanda Way. Each movie screened had a sad but true reality portrayed. *Kalaveetu* has been peddled by child labourers who are now in a proper school following the NGO's initiative. While *Kalaveetu* is a heartening story, *Mechugusorai* is the story of a young girl who takes on street harassment boldly. *Mag-up Managanava*, on the other hand, is a hilarious yet heart-breaking story of children writing dedicated teachers. "None of the

stories are fictional, the movies are all based on true-life incidents which the child crew members have encountered in their own lives," claims Ayer.

The screening was presided by the country representative of UNICEF, Cecilia Adoma. The crew from Chennai and Krishnagiri, along with their parents in all glories and pride, were there to witness their own personal reflections in the form of a film, asking to be just heard out. "It is pure elation to see the works of young children in the form of a movie which gives out the message loud and clear," says Ayer. "It need not be child sexual abuse or a disabled family. Something as simple as a child being unable to understand what is being taught in class can be voiced out by children from the marginalised communities through this venture," he adds.

The children present were filled with joy and pride, seeing their words reflected in a form that will definitely be heard out. "Movies are the best way to get a message across," says Parel Navagreshan, director of the

short films. "The messages are hard-hitting and reach better through this medium," he adds. The children also agree in unison. "Movies are great sources to learn both good and bad. When we take the good message and leave the bad, it is beneficial," says Jagun, a 17-year-old crew member.

The experience of working on a project like this is way too interesting, vouch the children. "We found this a great way to get across the message to people that we need a life and to just let us be," asserts Sarathya, another crew member. The children hope to have a completely new rein over life through this new venture. "I want to be a software engineer," says one. "I will become a doctor and serve the ill in remote villages that have no facilities," says another. Whatever be the dream, East Side Story, with full support from UNICEF and Nalanda Way has created a platform for children to reflect reality. After all, today's children are tomorrow's leaders.

— Nanditha Suresh

