“If you have the feeling that something is wrong, don’t be afraid to speak up.” This is the quote by Fred Korematsu is the spirit behind this annual thought provoking and inspiring initiative of NalandaWay Foundation – The YOUth SPEAK SUMMIT. The main aim of the Summit is to create safe sharing platforms for socially engaged experts and young people to discuss on socially relevant topics.

This year the YOUth SPEAK SUMMIT 2020 was a collaborative initiative of UNICEF-Chennai and NalandaWay Foundation. The topic for the year was “Building voices of adolescents and young people against Child Marriage”. The half-day conference brought together around 250 young people and subject experts from various spheres, onto one platform to share and inspire change. The summit took place on March 6th, 2020 at the Madras School of Social Work, Egmore, Chennai, a premium institution in creating social leaders among the young in Chennai.
1. The main program consisting of the Panel Discussion and the Changemakers’ section
2. Simultaneously we had the “Wellness Café” being conducted by trained counselors
3. We had a temporary wall constructed in the middle of the grounds of the College, a day earlier, and plenty of art material was kept available for the students of MSSW to make posters on the topic of the Summit – “Against child marriage and violence against children”
4. The #Marriagecanwait Selfie Booth was set up at a picturesque spot to enable the youngsters to create their statement on the topic of child marriage for Social Media posts.
The take-away from this year’s Summit was that knowledge and education for all, is the only way to create the right atmosphere for eradicating social imbalance, which is the root cause of all social evils. Further, it has to be a combined raised voice of the young only which can achieve the change in societal attitudes. The young just need a platform to vent out the emotions that they feel so strongly. The messages that came through were scathing and were a loud shout out against old belief systems, which have done so much damage to the dignity and self-worth of the majority.

NalandaWay Foundation has always worked towards creating joy, hope and to dispel fear from the hearts of all the lives that they touch with their various programs. The YOUth SPEAK SUMMIT 2020 was one such platform conducted by NalandaWay partnering with UNICEF.