"To champion the rights of the underprivileged children"

By Muneera Parbeen

A Package Programme was aired on BTV recently which made the audience sit up and take notice of it. It was dealing with a topic that is widely known and yet not-much-talked about or discussed amongst many. Child Labour, is something almost everyone among the common citizens are familiar with. It can be framed and titled in various ways — "Hazardous Child Labour", or perhaps "Lack of Children's Rights", or "Awareness of Child Rights" etc. Yet the facts remain the same. There is a lot of "unawareness" among us about the existence of Children's Rights and implementation of it, as there is the existence of hazardous labour by children in the country. Save the Children and Centre for Development Communication jointly has produced this short documentary, which is actually a series of 6 episodes that will be aired on BTV. The programme is directed and produced by Md Jahangir, who is also the Executive Director of Centre for Development Communication (CDC).

A discussion meeting was arranged by CDC recently to evaluate this TV programme. Quite a big number of well known names in the circle were invited to discuss the programme as well as to present their suggestions or views to make the upcoming episodes more effective. There was Fauzal Karim (Ex-executive director of Dainik Bangla), Titu Rahman, Golam Rabbani (from Maitri Parishad) Tania (from Dharitri) etc. There were also two child labourers Saiful and Ismail who sell chocolates at the Parliament House in the city.

There was no lack of enthusiasm on the part of the participants who, after the initial screening of the said episode, launched into a hearty discussion of the programme. Needless to say, criticism was a significant portion of the discussion at first, but gradually the main topic was clear to everyone. There has been no significant coverage on the national television on child labour and therefore the expectations of the proportion of people who are more aware of the situation, is almost sky high! The discussion therefore moved on to a more positive line, on how to make the coming episodes more attractive and effective to make the common viewers sit up and take notice; not to mention that they remember it afterwards so that they start working on it.



Still from BTV's package programme 'Shishu'

I actually did not have much of an idea as to what I could expect from such a gathering. But the discussion was informal enough to put everyone on their case and make them participate. Once the discussion was underway, it was also clear that a lot of different heads can indeed come up with innovative ideas. The journalists present were putting an emphasis on the script and presentation, the filmmaker could talk with more experience on the technical points involved in making such a documentary, the NGO workers were fiercely defensive of the underprivileged childrens rights. Some also expressed their views from the point of view of a common viewer and explained how he would respond to such a production.

All in all, the two and more hours set aside for this discussion were not entirely wasted. A lot of points were discussed here which will help the producers of the documentary to make their future episodes more attractive and of course, effective. The director of the documentary, Md Jahangir, himself spoke at the very end. It would perhaps have been much better had he spoken right at the beginning, to give us a briefing on his own targets in the documentations. It would have helped to guide the discussion in a swifter manner. Yet, what made everyone happy was the fact that so many people were aware of the situation and eager to help the situation. If an effective series of documentation can help create more enthusiasm among the common public to start making contributions, it would be easier to help the cause. The underprivileged children would then indeed start to see the dawn of a better life for themselves.

Its a pleasure that CDC is taking the steps to create that awareness among the public. ■