

# Asia-Pacific Child Rights Award\*

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**C**HILDREN IN NEARLY NINETY PERCENT OF HOMES in Asia and the Pacific watch two to five hours of television per day. Without a doubt, television plays a significant role in shaping children's social and emotional development.

Broadcasters from the region attending the Asia-Pacific Television Forum on Children and Youth in Seoul in 2001 discussed the role of this influence and pledged to pursue children's programming that was both of good quality and sensitive to children's issues. Because of that industry commitment, the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) and Cable & Satellite Broadcasting Association of Asia (CASBAA) teamed with UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office to launch a Child Rights Award that honors individual broadcasters' follow-through on their pledge.

## **The Award**

The Child Rights Award provides recognition to broadcasters and producers for quality children's programming and children's issues in Asia and the Pacific Region. It is given annually and intended to serve as a vehicle to highlight the need for better children's television and also to encourage broadcasters and producers to give more attention to better programming for and about children.

Programs both *for* children and *about* children are eligible and can cover any child rights issue. Entries can include documentaries that detail the plight of children, dramas that help break down stereotypes and discrimination, or animation that teaches and entertains.

## **Countries Covered by the Award**

The entries for the Award are open to the following eligible countries: Afghanistan, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei,

\*This article is mainly based in the information from the Asia-Pacific Child Rights Award website, [www.childrightsaward.org/](http://www.childrightsaward.org/).

Cambodia, China, Cook Islands, DPR Korea, Fiji, French Polynesia, Federated States of Micronesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Korea, Lao PDR, Macau, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Marshal Islands, Nauru, Nepal, New Zealand, Niue, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Samoa, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Tonga, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, and Viet Nam.

### **Criteria for the Entries**

Entries for the Award can be any program on or about children that addresses or explores child rights issues. Entries can include documentaries that detail the plight of the child, dramas that help break down stereotypes and discrimination or animation that teaches and entertains. The program should cover an aspect of a child's right issue articulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified (given legal force) human rights convention of all time. The program should focus on children and young people under the age of eighteen years old (children) and address one of the issues raised in the fifty-four articles, plus two optional extras (or 'protocols') that outlines a child's right to life and survival (the right to food, health care, shelter, to a name and nationality), to develop (to go to school, to play, to have direct contact with parents and family), to participation (to express themselves, have access to information, share their opinions and be listened to, to freedom of thought, conscious and religion, ) and to protection (to be safe from exploitation, abuse and violence).

The program can demonstrate a problem, highlight a solution or share a story based on experiences related to a child. For specific articles of the convention, please go to [www.unicef.org/crc](http://www.unicef.org/crc).

Entries for the Award are judged according to the following criteria:

- a. Concept: Does the program promote an original, innovative and engaging look at children and their rights, or an issue that affects their lives? Does the subject matter propel the audience to think about child rights issues differently? Does it seek to represent children in a way that fully recognizes their story, opinion and voice?
- b. Execution: Are the sets, the camera work, the lighting, and the sound quality coordinated so as to enhance the presentation? Do the

casting, costuming, writing, directing, editing, etc., convey the idea of the program effectively to the viewer?

c. Scoring: Scoring is an individual decision. The juror alone will assign a point value, following the criteria and suggestions provided, to each program on its own merits, not in comparison to other entries.

Because programs are judged on their individual creative merit and achievement, the same numerical score can be given to more than one program. The highest point score that a program may earn is twenty points (ten for Execution and ten for Concept).

Jurors are not permitted to vote on programs from their own company. In addition, if they have any conflict of interest that does not allow them to make an impartial decision for a program, they should abstain from voting on that particular program. If they enter a score for a program from the company/organization they work for, the score will be considered null and void.

### **Award Announcement and Ceremony**

The announcement and the award ceremony alternates between the Annual General Meeting of the ABU and the Annual CASBAA meeting in Hong Kong both held sometime in October or November.

The hosting partner makes the best effort of using the ceremony to get media attention to the award and the winner. They also share any media materials with all partners for further publicity and placement on the website.

There should also be efforts to allow for segments of the winning production to be used as a video clip on the website to further publicize the content or highlight the issues.

Depending on the copyright, the producer/broadcaster should be encouraged to allow the partners, with full consent, share and publicize the program.

Publicity materials should be provided, where possible by broadcaster or programmer to highlight the winning program.

### **Awardees**

Since 2001, the Child Rights Award has been given annually to TV programs that portray the lives and situations of children who suffer from child rights

violations, and also stories of children trying to overcome their disadvantaged situations.

- 2012: “I-Witness: Piggy Bank,” GMA Network Inc. (Philippines)
- 2011: “Iori and Ibuki – Why We Were Born,” Shizuoka Telecasting (Japan)
- 2010: “Let Them Touch the Sky,” Smile Foundation (India)
- 2009: “All I Need,” by MTV EXIT
- 2008: “I-Witness: Child Beasts of Burden,” GMA Network Inc. (Philippines)
- 2007: “Children Left Behind,” Jade TVB (Hong Kong)
- 2006: “Conquering the Darkness – The Fight Against Memories of Abuse,” Kansai Telecasting Corporation (Japan)
- 2005: “Juvenile Injustice,” ABS-CBN Channel 2 (Philippines)
- 2004: “Hong Kong Connection: Children In Need,” Radio Television Hong Kong
- 2003: “Angels in Prison,” GMA-7 Channel (Philippines)
- 2002: “Child Soldiers,” Radio Television Hong Kong
- 2001: “Children Will Grow,” Mainichi Institute (Japan).

The 2012 Asia-Pacific Child Rights Award went to a TV documentary about a village boy who worked hard to get an education. “I-Witness: Piggy Bank” is a groundbreaking documentary by producer Kara David of GMA Network of the Philippines, a national TV station.<sup>1</sup>

Filmed in a far-flung village in the Philippines, the fifty-minute long film tells the story of twelve-year old Anthony, who works hard every day and night to fulfill his dream of getting an education. From catching fish and washing cars to scouring for sea cucumbers at night, he saves every penny he earns in his piggy bank with the goal of being able to go to school.

In the Philippines, there are over three million children who are not in school because of poverty, the demand for child labor, poor health and nutrition and low preparedness for school. Of every one thousand entrants in Grade One, only seven graduate from Grade Six with sufficient mastery of English, mathematics, and science.

“Poverty, child labour and lack of education are common problems in the Philippines,” said Kara David, the presenter. “Through research, we found out that in Eastern Samar, several minors have little choice but to help their parents earn income—day and night. When Anthony dives and scours

the seabed all night to search for a sea cucumber used in Chinese traditional medicine, every breath he holds when diving for sea cucumbers is worth another penny, which would bring him closer to his dream.”

Kara David is a successful documentary producer and internationally recognized child rights advocate. She is a second-time winner of the Asia-Pacific Child Rights Award. Her documentary entitled “Angels in Prison,” examining the plight of young children born and living with their mothers in prisons in the Philippines, won the Asia-Pacific Child Rights Award in 2003.

David is the founder of “Project Malasakit” (Project Compassion) scholarship program that aims at providing children who do not have the opportunity to go to school with an education.

For Anthony, life has taken a good turn with the filming of the documentary. He was awarded a scholarship by the foundation of the film’s producer, Kara David, and no longer needs to engage in child labor, but can now focus on his education. But for many other children, the situation remains dire.

“All girls and boys must have the opportunity to go to school, regardless of their family’s income, geographic location or ethnicity,” states Mr. Festo Kavishe, MD, UNICEF Deputy Regional Director for East Asia and the Pacific. “Children who attend school not only go on to lead healthier and more productive lives, they also contribute to the development of their communities and strongly advance their countries’ social and economic development. Education is a key opportunity that should be given to every child.”

Mr. Javad Mottaghi, PhD, Secretary General of the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union added that “Piggy Bank was a worthy winner and a fine example of the quality of documentary making in the Asia-Pacific region. The story of a small boy battling to make a better life against enormous odds is told with obvious compassion and fearless honesty.”

### **The 2011 Asia-Pacific Child Rights Award**

The documentary “*Iori and Ibuki – Why We Were Born*” received the 2011 Award.<sup>2</sup> “*Iori and Ibuki – Why We Were Born*” is a documentary from Japan that tracks the lives of two siblings who were each born with a disability.

Older sister Iori is blind and used to be troubled by why she could not see. “I can’t do anything useful. I want to die,” she says early in the film. Her younger brother Ibuki was born both physically and mentally impaired. He

has undergone eleven operations and been admitted to hospital thirty-three times.

Early in the film, his parents confessed they used to wonder if they did a good thing bringing him into the world. The story unfolds a compelling tale of resilience and optimism, as Ibuki's determination ultimately gives his sister and parents a source of strength and an appreciation for their own weaknesses and an understanding that everyone has a reason for being born – including people with disabilities.

The filmmaker and TV journalist, Mariko Hashimoto, talks with UNICEF about the eleven years she spent filming the documentary.

**Q: What inspired you to make this film – how did you find this family?**

**MH:** In 1999, I visited the Shizuoka Prefectural School for the Visually Impaired along the southern coast of central Japan to report on a ceremony to commemorate the school's 100th anniversary. Filming at a school for disabled children starts with checking who can be filmed and who cannot. During that process, a girl ran past my eyes. She was Iori Konagaya, then aged 8. She ran so fast that I initially assumed that she was weak-sighted. I later learned that she is totally blind. I felt a strong desire to talk to her. Although I had interviewed many children as an education news reporter, Iori had a different style of expression. What was the world like to a blind child like her? What kind of environment had she grown up in? I had so many questions to ask her. Iori took me to meet her family, including a blind older sister and a younger brother who was physically and mentally impaired. I thought life must have been hard for her family, but they were cheerful and resilient. Feeling that I might be able to convey something important through this family, I decided to film them.

**Q: How did you develop the idea?**

**MH:** In between periods of reporting other news, I frequently visited Iori's school and the Konagaya family and developed a relationship over eleven years of filming and interviewing them. When filming the same people for a long time, there is the advantage of establishing a rapport with the people being filmed. There is also the risk of becoming unable to view matters with a critical eye. I always tried to keep some distance. As a result, we managed to incorporate into the film universal issues in Japan, such as the increase in bullying, the increase in the number of severely handicapped children, the lack of nurses and facilities,

schools being closed to the public and the economic depression – Mr Konagaya became unemployed during the filming due to restructuring of the company where he had worked. Iori often walks in circles in a room, and I felt that her conflicts were the conflicts of our society.

I was unable to decide when to turn the collected material into a program. Then I found myself at a turning point. Both my parents, who had suffered from cancer, died one after the other. The Konagaya family consoled me. They were my role models. Through the loss of my parents, I came to realize how I wished they had lived longer – despite their constant need for care and their loss of speech. In Japan, more than 30,000 people, including small children, commit suicide every year. That sobering thought made me earnestly desire that all of us should value our precious lives, so I decided to depict the Konagaya family just as I saw them.

**Q: What other difficulties did you encounter in filming this story?**

**MH:** At some point, Iori started being bullied at school. She frequently complained to me, saying, “I have not achieved anything with the piano, studying or swimming. I am useless. It is pointless filming me.” Each time she complained, we talked the matter through. Sometimes I kept a little distance from her, saying, “Don’t behave like a spoiled child”. On such occasions, I had forgotten about Iori’s blindness, and I was afraid of being told to stop filming. At the same time, we encountered an impasse on filming at Iori’s school. She had been accepted at a nationally acclaimed junior high school in Tokyo for the visually impaired. People from all over Japan go to the school. When we applied for permission to film at the school, Iori’s classmates were fiercely opposed to it, saying things like, “How can you dare to enjoy filming people with a visual impairment? It serves no purpose to make a display of our impairment!” And they refused to be filmed. I initially tried to persuade them, but then I thought doing so would likely cause the bullying Iori suffered to worsen.

Although it was regrettable that we could not film Iori taking a step forward in society, we had to put up with it. Today, many adults with acquired visual impairment caused by diabetes or other diseases go to schools for the blind to become masseuses, but most of them dislike being filmed. We had the same situation at the special support school that Ibuki attended. I wish that disabled people could express their thoughts freely in front of the camera. I believe that today’s society, in which disabled people are obliged to live “secretly”, must be changed. I long for a society free from discrimination. I believe that this longing is

due to having seen my father fall victim to a speech disorder caused by sickness and consequently losing his confidence, forcing him to spend his later years in isolation.

**Q: What has been the reaction from audiences after watching it?**

**MH:** We received many comments, from both the young and the old, regardless of whether they were disabled or not, from viewers who put themselves in the shoes of the people being filmed. We had comments such as, “I strongly felt the significance of life and family” or “I began to think about the meaning of my birth”. And, “I am ashamed of myself for brooding over trifle issues”. The film was used for values education in many schools, and we received valuable comments from children.

**Q: After eleven years, it must be odd to not meet the family without a camera. Is this the end of filming the family?**

**MH:** After the program was broadcast, Iori said, “Please continue filming. Please keep making an appeal to people through me so that many handicapped people can live proudly.” Her growth brought tears to my eyes. Ibuki also began to recognize me as “Ms. Hashimoto from TV Shizuoka” by hearing my voice. Kazumi, their mother, said, “Ibuki cannot do anything on his own. I am not sure how much he understands, but he can read minds. I believe that he is showing his gratitude for (your) filming him for a long time”.

A good news story requires a good scoop. I believe that the same applies to documentaries. I believe that the power to find a shining protagonist and a persistent effort to reveal social issues are the sources of newsworthy stories. I am proud that I found this family. I am going to follow this family until the mother’s wish is fulfilled, as expressed in her comment: “After Iori gets married, gives birth to a child who is able to see and the child becomes able to support Iori, I would like to focus my attention on the care of Ibuki”.

**Q: What are your plans in the future to promote the children’s rights?**

**MH:** Japan, as you know, was severely hit by an earthquake. Some children lost their parents instantly when the tsunami struck. Some children cannot go out or even breathe deeply because of the accident at the nuclear reactor. Some children have been bullied because they lived near the nuclear power plant. Some disabled children could not find safety in shelters due to the lack of medical equipment. To help children live happily and free from discrimination, I would like to continue to make programs that help to identify social issues and find solutions.



## **The Partners**

Three partners support the Child Rights Award, namely, the Asia–Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU), Cable & Satellite Broadcasting Association of Asia (CASBAA) and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

ABU is a non-profit, non-governmental, professional association of broadcasting organizations, formed in 1964 to facilitate the development of broadcasting in the Asia–Pacific region. It provides a forum for promoting the collective interests of television and radio broadcasters and engages in activities to encourage regional and international cooperation between broadcasters. It currently has more than two hundred members in fifty-eight countries. It organizes many activities and projects to promote excellence in broadcasting and to improve programming, skills and technologies of its members, including the ABU Children’s TV Programme Item Exchange.<sup>3</sup>

Established in 1991, CASBAA is the Association for digital pay TV, content, platforms, advertising and video delivery across Asia for the past two decades. Spanning seventeen geographic markets, CASBAA and its Members reach over four hundred twenty million connections through a footprint ranging from China to Australasia, Japan to Pakistan. The CASBAA mission is to promote the growth of pay TV and video content through industry information, networking exchanges and events while promoting global best practices.<sup>4</sup>

UNICEF works in more than one hundred ninety countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world’s largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.<sup>5</sup>

## **Final Note**

The Asia-Pacific Child Rights Award was established by the members of the broadcasting industry in the region in order to support what they committed to do in relation to children and youth.

The 2001 Declaration of the Asia–Pacific Television Forum on Children and Youth has called on ABU and CASBAA to<sup>6</sup>

3. Recognize exceptional efforts by Asia-Pacific broadcasters to uphold and promote the rights of children and youth by establishing a special ABU-CASBAA “UNICEF” annual award in the area of news, education and entertainment programming.

5. Support efforts to facilitate the production of high quality and relevant programming for children and youth, such as the ABU’s Working Party for Children.

The call was appropriately responded to with the subsequent establishment of the Asia-Pacific Child Rights Award.

But more importantly, the award is a concrete form of compliance with the “the television industry [commitment] to producing programming for and about children that respects and upholds the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.” And this commitment was originally stated in the “internationally accepted Children’s Television Charter...”, which has been reaffirmed in this region by the Asian Declaration on Child Rights and the Media.<sup>7</sup>

This commitment of the broadcasting industry is expressed well in this report:<sup>8</sup>

“The issue of children's rights is an important one for the Asia-Pacific,” Dr Mottaghi says. “I think the people who produce the programs do it because they are driven by a passion for children's rights, and it is good to recognise excellence in this field and encourage others.”

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“It is always important to celebrate the reason our more than 225 members do what they do,” he says. “That is to make programs that make our world a better place.”

Indeed, the Asia-Pacific Child Rights Award is a step towards making the Asia-Pacific a better place for children.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Text in subsequent paragraphs taken from Philippine Documentary on Education wins 2012 Asia-Pacific Child Rights Award, at [www.childrightsaward.org/](http://www.childrightsaward.org/).

<sup>2</sup> Text based on "Q & A with Mariko Hashimoto, Child Rights Award-winning documentary filmmaker of Iori and Ibuki - Why We Were Born (winner of the Asia-Pacific Child Rights Award 2011)" at [www.childrightsaward.org/interview.html](http://www.childrightsaward.org/interview.html).

<sup>3</sup> For more information on ABU, please visit [www.abu.org.my](http://www.abu.org.my).

<sup>4</sup> For more information on CASBAA, please visit [www.casbaa.com](http://www.casbaa.com).

<sup>5</sup> For more information about UNICEF East Asia and Pacific, visit [www.unicef.org/eapro](http://www.unicef.org/eapro); or for UNICEF South Asia, visit [www.unicef.org/rosa](http://www.unicef.org/rosa).

<sup>6</sup> Declaration of the Asia-Pacific Television Forum on Children and Youth, 7 February 2001, Seoul, Republic of Korea. Full text available at [www.unicef.org/broadcast/tvforum/2001-declaration.html](http://www.unicef.org/broadcast/tvforum/2001-declaration.html).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Preamble.

<sup>8</sup> Awards for children's rights programs to be presented at the ABU General Assembly, [www.abu.org.my/Latest\\_News-@-Awards\\_for\\_childrens\\_rights\\_programs\\_to\\_be\\_presented\\_at\\_the\\_ABU\\_General\\_Assembly.aspx](http://www.abu.org.my/Latest_News-@-Awards_for_childrens_rights_programs_to_be_presented_at_the_ABU_General_Assembly.aspx).