

Shaping childhood and its socio-economic contexts: Five Films being screened at IFFI 54 in a specially curated section in partnership with UNICEF

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A collection of five notable films presented in collaboration with UNICEF - IFFI's Cause Partner- are being screened at various festival venues during the 54th International Film Festival of India. The films reflect on the dynamic forces which shape childhood and examines its socio-economic contexts.

This year, UNICEF and National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) have partnered to focus attention of the film industry and audiences on children's rights. The partnership draws attention on portrayal of violence against children, adolescents, and women in films. The partnership is also part of the efforts to bring to focus relevant issues that affect the civil society.

"UNICEF is pleased to be a cause partner of NFDC for a second year in IFFI, with a curated package of films that we expect will steer a positive discourse on recognizing child rights in popular films", expressed Zafrin Chowdhury, Chief of Communications, Advocacy and Partnerships, UNICEF India. She appreciated the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting for its leadership in promoting and including exemplary films centered on and about children. She further said that IFFI is an enabling platform for UNICEF to reach filmmakers, people from art and culture, critics, and audiences, broadly on children's rights, while focusing on making violence socially unacceptable to prevent its dire impact on children and young people.

The following films are included in the specially curated section:



Damu: Directed by Raja Sen, this National Award winning film Bengali film is about an orphan boy, sheltered and raised by a kind man. He strikes a friendship with the man's granddaughter Runku and once, carelessly, he promises her an elephant ride through the village. When that does not materialize, Runku is disappointed. Ashamed at failing his promise, Damu sets out in search of an elephant. He finally comes across a circus but the manager refuses to see him. Damu's dejection turns to alarm when he stumbles upon a plot to rob the circus. Can little Damu save the circus and

fulfil his promise to Runku in? You will have to watch the movie to know that.



For the Sake of Ava: The debut feature of an Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Seraji, this Persian film is about an Iranian theatre group that faces a passport issue when their lead actress, Ava, lacks proper documentation due to her mixed heritage. Determined to help Ava, the group resorts to a series of unconventional and risky actions, including bribery and human trafficking, to secure her passport and participate in a prestigious festival abroad.



Gandhi & Co.: Awarded Golden Lotus Award - Best Children's Film, National Film Awards, 2023, this Gujarati film, directed by Manish Saini is about two mischievous boys. The boys look up to an elder who embodies Gandhi's teachings. One of the boys decides to imitate Gandhi but still hangs on to his mischievous ways.



Peacock Lament: Awarded as Best Artistic Contribution Award at Tokyo IFF 2022, this Sinhalese film directed by Sanjeewa Pushpakumara, is about Amila, a young man from Sri Lanka, facing the daunting task of raising \$15,000 for his sister Inoka's life-saving heart surgery. Desperate, he becomes involved in a child trafficking operation. As tensions rise, Amila must make difficult choices to secure his sister's future and escape the criminal world.



Singo: Directed by Alireza Mohammadi Rouzbahany, this Persian film is about a little girl named Shafa. The film shows Islanders going to sell four horseshoe crabs that a fisherman caught. These are of precious value. A little girl decides to save them from being sold. This makes her family the target of the islanders' anger: they decide to expel the family. Now, Shafa must choose between the welfare of her family and the lives of the crabs.

In 1989, world leaders made a historic commitment to the world's children by adopting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – an international agreement on childhood. It's become the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history and has helped transform children's lives around the world. But still not every child gets to enjoy a full childhood. Still, too many childhoods are cut short.

UNICEF believes that it is up to our generation to demand that all stakeholders work in unison to fulfil the commitments and take action for child rights. NFDC's partnership with UNICEF at 54th International Film Festival of India underscore the efforts to create more awareness on the issues

and generate wider discourses on the topic.

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