

PRESS RELEASE

Documentary about abandoned Filipino children wins 2014 Asia-Pacific Child Rights Award for Television

Macau, 27 October 2014 – ‘Front Row: Orphaned’, a documentary produced and broadcast by GMA Network, has won the 2014 Asia-Pacific Child Rights Award for Television. The programme highlights the plight of vulnerable children in the Philippines, where approximately 1.8 million children are abandoned or neglected.

The Award was established by the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU), CASBAA and UNICEF in 2001. It recognizes the efforts of broadcasters and producers in pursuing high quality children’s television and better coverage of children’s issues, and is given each year to the best programme on children’s rights produced in the Asia-Pacific region. This year’s award was presented at the ABU General Assembly in Macau on 27 October.

The winning documentary follows the daily life of 10-year-old Princess, who has had to take care of three younger siblings since their mother abandoned the children. Princess works at a wet market as a produce washer. She receives five to 20 pesos (0.1 to 0.5 US cents) for her work. After working for the entire morning, Princess then proceeds to her second job, gathering and selling her neighbour’s rubbish. She has to do this every day to feed herself and her siblings.

“I haven’t seen my mom since she left us three years ago,” Princess says. “We started scavenging to get some money and asking around for food. Sometimes we don’t have anything to eat and our stomachs hurt. We sleep on cardboard boxes on the floor. I envy my friends because they go to school but I don’t.”

‘Front Row: Orphaned’ was praised by the jurors for reflecting the vulnerable children’s world through their own eyes. “It was very effective,” they said. “There are many heart breaking moments in this film. The interviews were handled with sensitivity and the three children came across as everyday kids. Their interaction during bath and meal times was very naturalistic, as if the cameras weren’t there. This is a powerful story that really captured the plight of these children.”

The production team described the positive response to the programme from viewers. “Since the documentary aired, one of the children’s relatives has reached out to them. Viewers are now sending two of the children to school and more help is still coming in. But we are hoping for a more permanent and comprehensive solution to address the plight of Filipino orphans, perhaps with better Government facilities to take care of them and their basic needs.”

UNICEF praised the winning entry. “Front Row: Orphaned is a powerful piece of television. It shows the importance of protecting and nurturing children, and the strength and resilience they possess, through the eyes of four abandoned children trying desperately to make the most of their lives,” said Christopher de Bono, Chief of Communications, UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific. “It is also a testimony to the value of powerful television storytelling, by

motivating all of us to meet our responsibilities and address the suffering of children in need.”

Dr Javad Mottaghi, ABU Secretary-General, said: “To know there are documentary makers of this quality working in our region, chronicling the lives of our most vulnerable children and celebrating the triumph of their young spirits over great adversity, must spur us all on to be the best media messengers we possibly can. ‘Front Row: Orphaned’ shows how great documentary-making not only exposes inequality and exploitation but journeys deeper into the human spirit and reminds us that each human being, however young, poor and disadvantaged, carries the light of hope in their soul.”

Christopher Slaughter, CEO of CASBAA, said: “CASBAA congratulates GMA Network for their unflinching look at childhood poverty in ‘Front Row: Orphaned’. Our industry reaches hundreds of millions of people around the world daily. It is heartening to see our medium being used as a platform not just for entertainment, but in the service of such a worthy cause as alleviating the plight of children in need.”

Find out more

For more information about the Award, this year’s finalists, and a Q&A with the winner, please visit: www.childrightsaward.org

The winning documentaries can be viewed here: <http://ow.ly/D8ziH> and the shortlisted documentaries can be viewed here: tinyurl.com/childrights2014

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