



Fossils performs at a show for AIDS victims on Saturday.

## All for a cause

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Kolkata:** Dola is a "negative" child of an HIV-positive mother. But, the world has not spared her for a mistake which was never hers. She was forced to take a transfer from the school.

She is a child without any HIV infection but suffers the stigma everyday. Simply because her mother Nisha is an HIV+ patient.

Samir Biswas has endured the virus for 17 years. "The doctor who detected it suggested I commit suicide to escape the ordeal," said Biswas.

In India, about 5.3 million people are effected with the virus and more than a lakh are AIDS victims. Nearly 40% of victims are in the 15-20 years age bracket. It's they who face the brunt of the stig-

ma. Youngsters turned up in the programme Reach Out, Reach Out for Us organised at Nazrul Manch by Sukriti Foundation and co-sponsored by *The Times of India*.

Though several AIDS awareness programmes have been organised, this is perhaps the first instance where victims interacted with the audience directly. Bangla band Fossils also presented a special song titled *Eka Nauo* for the cause. Music is a method to reach out to people and create a bond between HIV+ patients and the rest of the society," said Ruppam, lead singer for the band.

Julekha Bibi, Farzana Begum and many others had similar experiences to recount. There were 14 HIV+ participants who took turns narrating moments from their lives to hearty applause.