

**To IBBY members and friends  
from IBBY President, Patsy Aldana**

Dear Friends,

It is a long time since we met in Copenhagen and I am writing to you today to share news of our activities around the world.

*IBBY worldwide*

As you know the EC and I are very concerned about building up the strength of each national section. So I am very excited to learn that a number of you have been working very hard in this direction, in some cases rebuilding your structures, and in others joining ever more actively in IBBY international activities.

The Dutch and Irish sections are actively twinning with the Uruguayan and Zimbabwean sections respectively. IBBY South Africa has also been supporting the work in Zimbabwe. IBBY Sweden not only nominated the Tamer Institute for the ALMA, which they won, but is also involved in what we hope will soon be a Cambodian section. Other sections have been actively considering twinning and how to get involved in working with another section in a way that can be mutually rewarding. Our US section has continued to generously support the work of a number of other sections. Meanwhile, IBBY Mexico will be hosting a Latin America meeting later this year, and we hope that representatives from all the countries in the region will attend. Looking further into the future, IBBY Mexico has been selected to host the 2014 Congress – an ambitious undertaking for any national section as we know!

During my term as IBBY President I have visited as many of you in your countries as possible. Most recently I have visited our friends in Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Mexico and Turkey. Later on this year I will make a tour of the IBBY sections in Japan, China, Indonesia and Malaysia – a section that is generously hosting our forthcoming EC meeting in September. Following that, I shall be going to the USA and Cuba for their regional congresses and then once more to Mexico.

*Children in Crisis*

Our Children in Crisis programme continues to be one of the activities that is the easiest to promote. This programme is something that people all over the world are excited about and many want to support.

In January this year at the American Library Association annual midwinter meeting in Denver we were able to raise funds for the Children in Crisis programme. A number of authors, including Canadian top author Deborah Ellis, have now assigned royalties or part of the royalties from their books to the Children in Crisis Fund. In Deborah's case this represents a donation of Cdn\$20,000 over a period of two years! Katherine Paterson and the Paterson Family Foundation continue to be huge supporters of the Children in Crisis Fund, in particular with funds towards our project in Gaza..

Our Haitian section is about to begin a project that will use the healing power of storytelling and books to help reduce the trauma brought on by the deadly hurricanes that hit Haiti last year. The country is just about the poorest in the world and then they were further devastated by these series of severe storms; storms that are becoming more and more frequent. The project will help children and young people who lost their homes, families and everything they knew. Books will be translated into their mother tongue of Creole to reach them more directly and training of therapists will take place so that they can continue with the work after the initial IBBY project is finished.

The EC at its meeting in March agreed to renew funding for IBBY Palestine for the two libraries in Gaza. The rebuilding in Gaza has not really begun and the situation there grows more and more dire as the blockade continues to hamper humanitarian and other aid from reaching the people who need it.

In May, Liz Page and I convened a meeting in Turkey of an interesting group of people from the Farsi-speaking countries of Iran, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. We were joined by a member of IBBY Turkey, Ayfer Unal and Basarat Kazim president of IBBY Pakistan, for four days of very intense discussions on what strategies might best be suited to the creation of a reading culture in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Examples of what has been achieved in Iran, Mexico, Pakistan and Brazil were presented. Our colleagues from IBBY Iran expounded the value of quality books and creative education. A full report will soon be available on the website, thanks to the translation of the talks by IBBY Iran. Until then, in brief...

The Afghan participants were a fascinating group – the feminist director of the Noor Education Centre in Kabul who works with the Canadian organization Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (CW4WA); the founder and director of Aschiana, a very successful agency working with over 6,000 street children; a cultural advisor at the Goethe Institute in Kabul; a professor of journalism at Kabul University and advisor to the Ministry of Education; the chief editor of the *Pavaz* magazine for children and eminent Afghan novelist; librarians; publishers; and a reading promoter from Bamiyan. The first and really the most shocking problem we learned of was that, despite the incredible number of NGO's working in Afghanistan and the billions of dollars being spent by the countries fighting there, the concept of childhood itself has no legal or moral status in the country. The Convention for the Rights of the Child has never been signed

by Afghanistan. Only half of the twelve million children in the country go to any kind of school. And half of those who do attend a school are learning in the open air. Apart from the organization *Ainaworld*, an NGO based in Paris and founded by Reza Deghati, a well-known National Geographic photographer, no NGO has put any consistent money into publishing materials for young Afghans. Up to now *Ainaworld* has collected funds for the excellent children's magazine published in Afghanistan: *Parvaz*, that is packed with stories that promote children's rights, the rights of girls, information on health and nutrition, and is wonderfully designed and illustrated with cartoons and photographs. Sadly, this is now published very infrequently because lack of funds from interested donors. Book donations are sent in inappropriate languages, such as in English and Korean, which are of no use at all for child readers. Even the high quality Iranian books written in Farsi, a language that most of the Dari-speaking Afghans have in common, are not accessible to young Afghan because of the differences in vocabulary and usage.

How can one even begin to build a democracy in a country in which there are no readers? And how can there be readers in a country at war, where billions are spent, but no thought is given to what might help the children to become readers and thus have a future? It is all very well to promote higher education, but without the basic, long-term, fundamental work of building a good basic, primary education system with access to decent libraries filled with appropriate local and international books published in the children's daily language, there cannot be any real hope for an Afghan democracy nor for the future of these young people who have suffered so much from the constant wars throughout their lives.

The Afghan participants deplored the fact that their government's priorities are almost entirely driven by the warring countries and the NGO's own agendas rather than by what the Afghan people most desperately need: a decent, free public school system with trained teachers; a network of public libraries and an Afghan publishing industry capable of producing good books and magazines to give Afghan children a love of reading, amongst others. This could take years, a fixed determination, and a properly worked out plan, but there is a strong determination that would make it possible despite the conditions. However, the sad reality is that Afghans are not making the decisions in Afghanistan today. Having met this diverse, magnificent, compassionate, funny, smart and heroic group of people, the rest of us came away determined to spread the word – Afghan children, like all children, are special and are owed a special duty of care. The only hope for Afghanistan lies in educating the next generation – after all, they are the future. They deserve to be given every possible tool so that they can confidently confront the problems they are inheriting.

We came away moved by their courage and determination and committed to help. We hope the fact that all these people met each other will result in some steps being taken. Of course, our dream is that we have brought together the basis for IBBY sections in

Afghanistan and Tajikistan, though this may take some time. In the meanwhile, we will work to find some external support for the reading promotion projects that will emerge from this meeting and beyond, and try to find more outside funding to support an increase in the production of high-quality children's reading materials within and for Afghanistan.

The Colombian Children in Crisis project to establish reading clubs for children is in its second year. In October, there will be a meeting in Colombia where the results of our project will be presented to the people who are concerned with reading, working with children in crisis, and other interested parties in the country. We hope that this meeting will produce a manual to help other sections as they consider how to work in this area.

Finally, following the recent earthquake in Italy our colleagues at IBBY Italia asked us for moral and practical support – mainly ideas about what to do in such a situation. This shows once again that we really need to be able to provide concrete materials for what to do in a crisis. One main area of expertise that IBBY can call upon is its wide network of people who have experience and connect them with those who need advice and support.

#### *IBBY-Yamada workshop programme*

The 2009 IBBY-Yamada programme is moving ahead. The two workshops in Africa, in Zimbabwe and Guinea have taken place and we are waiting for their reports, which we shall share with you on the website. The other projects are being prepared and will take place over the course of the year. These are in South Africa, Mongolia, India, Indonesia and Cuba! The IBBY-Yamada scholarship will support a young Venezuelan as he takes part in the on-line M.A. on books and literature for children and young people. Since the IBBY-Yamada programme began IBBY has supported 26 projects in 20 different countries!

#### *IBBY Partners*

The Children's Libraries Section and the Reading Section of IFLA, have nominated IBBY for the 2010 ALMA. We thank them very much for their support.

We are slowly working on our joint project with IFLA/IRA to create a database for Reading Promotion projects. This is a very broad and ambitious project, but one that we hope will be of great importance and use to everyone working with books and children around the world.

IRA, IFLA and IBBY have agreed to try to work more closely with each other in our representative national sections. Ellis Vance will send out an appeal to our National Sections to reach out to local IRA and IFLA members to join the NS and furthermore, find ways to strengthen your work by expanding the number of people you are working with.

The *V Premio Iberoamericano SM de literatura Infantil y Juvenil* jury will meet this year in Chile. Each year IBBY nominates a member of the jury from the country where the meeting is held. The Fundación SM is also generously supporting our next IBBY Congress: as you all know it will take place in Santiago de Compostela, Spain in September 2010.

*Hans Christian Andersen Award*

Thanks to our wonderful new funding partner, Nami Island Inc., we have been able to reach agreement with an experienced publicity and promotion agency Susan Raab Associates. We plan to more actively promote the Andersen Awards, the winners and the Andersen shortlist and so draw far more attention to the awards that has been possible up to now. We will also promote the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Awards and the other major IBBY activities.

To do this successfully we NEED YOUR HELP! We will be building an international media database where we can send e-mailed press releases directly. Liz Page will be contacting you shortly to ask for your help by providing key media contacts in your countries that are interested in children, children's books, reading, literacy, and who would be likely to cover our awards and other activities. This is a very important first step in increasing the profile of the Andersen award as well as our other activities. The press releases will also be sent out to major wire services and major international television news services, including BBC, TV 5, CNN international and Español, Al Jazeera and any others that you can propose. We need your contact information!

Finally, IBBY Iran has built a very exciting new website that includes a wealth of information about children's literature, activities and IBBY. [www.ketabak.org](http://www.ketabak.org) Our inexhaustible Andersen Chair Zohreh Ghaeni, who was also at the meeting in Turkey, tells me that as she was preparing this site she was generally disappointed by the national sections' websites, especially as many are rarely or never even updated. PLEASE work on your websites and keep them up to date. Consider refreshing them or even redesigning them, and remember to link them with the central IBBY website. In today's world our websites are our face and we need to keep that face as attractive, informative and interesting as possible. Liz and I are working on IBBY's website to make it more interactive, informative, easier to use and interesting. Help us to share our activities!

With all best wishes and affection to all,

Patsy

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