

IWSAW in Kuwait

The Children's Literature Project

Under the sponsorship of the Kuwait Society for the Advancement of Arab Children, the Ministry of Education and the Directorate of Libraries in Kuwait, the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World held training sessions and workshops for children's libraries in Kuwait (February 17 - 21, 1986). The Institute launched the Children's Literature Project in 1981 to train librarians, writers, and illustrators of books for children between the ages of 2-12. This project is financed by the Kuwait Society for the Advancement of Arab Children.

Dr. Hassan Ibrahim, President of the Society, opened the session by stating that the project is financed by the Commission of Kuwaiti Banks headed by Ahmad Abd-al-Rahman al-Bakr and the cooperation of the Minister of Education Anwar al-Nouri. Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr, Director of IWSAW, outlined the objectives and endeavours of the "Children's Literature Project". The project aims at promoting quality children's literature in the Arabic language and providing essential base line data about children's literature for writers, illustrators, librarians and educators of Arab children. A comprehensive project combining research and action programmes in this field was undertaken by the Institute. Phase I was comprised of research and Phase II was comprised of promotion and implementation through workshops for writers, illustrators, and librarians to train them to be sensitive to children's development needs and to sharpen their literary and artistic skills to meet their needs. Workshops on writing and illustrating quality books for Arab children were held in Cyprus (August 25 - September 10, 1985 and August 1 - 23, 1986). Librarian workshops were held in Cairo, Jordan, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, and Rabat (see *Al-Raida* Vol. VIII, No. 38 pp. 12-13). In February 1987 a librarian workshop was held in Kuwait in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. The workshops not only included basic



literary skills for organization and administration, but also presented the concept of programming and extension services to promote reading. They resulted in a change of understanding the role of the librarian from the traditional custodian of books to the motivating force for reading promotion. Participants developed an awareness of what constitutes quality in children's books and how to select them. Information used in training is compiled in a guide book which will be published in the Fall of 1987.

Dr. Abu Nasr also mentioned that research was conducted to provide essential base line data about children's literature. Results revealed the scarcity of "quality" literature in Arabic and the abundance of translated books that have no direct bearing on the lives and culture of Arab Children. "Quality" children's literature in Arabic was identified as one of the pressing needs of Arab Children. A team of twenty researchers worked on the study in addition to one-hundred and thirty eight teachers and four thousand children in seventeen schools who volunteered for testing as well as eighteen members of the Lebanese Chapter of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY). The IBBY group assisted in evaluating 875 books available in the Lebanese market and prepared lists of selected books according to age group, a novelty in Arabic Children's books.

Criteria for selecting good literature were also provided.

The methodology of the research involved the following stages: sources for data collection, testing voca-

bulary, testing language structures, and testing children's preferences in books.

Results of the research identified vocabulary comprehended by Arab children in each developmental stage between the ages of 2 and 12. A recommended "word" list of about 5000 words was set-up corresponding to the different age groups.

Recommendations for language structure, sentence length, sentence pattern, morphology, and idiomatic expressions were drawn up as a result of this study.

Arab children's preferences pertaining to content, illustrations, style, calligraphy, book size, binding, and cover were found to be similar to universal children's preferences.

Base line data for writers and illustrators of children's books have been provided. The research findings were incorporated in a manual for writers and illustrators of children's books which will be published in the coming few months.

At the end of the session, five children's books were presented to the Kuwait Society for the Advancement of Arab Children:

- 1 - Reem wa al-Himar (Reem and the Donkey)
- 2 - Antara al-Saghir (Little Antara)
- 3 - Arnab Arnoub (An Alphabet book in rhyme)
- 4 - Abou Hirdabbeh (The Hunched Back)
- 5 - Kabkoub al-Souf (The Ball of Wool)

The Basic Living Skills Programme (BLSP) in Kuwait

Sheikha Latifa al-Fahd Saad al-Sabah opened the training session for "The Basic Living Skills Programme" held in Kuwait (February 22-24, 1986). The sessions were organized by Nadi al-Fatat in coordination with the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations, presided by His Royal Highness Prince Talal Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, an advocate of the need for the integration of women in social development; "There will be no social development and no improvement in the conditions of children and mothers unless women are integrated in social development".

Fatima al-Issa, President of Nadi al-Fatat stressed the need to eradicate all forms of illiteracy in order to enhance the status of Arab women. Dr. Abu Nasr stated that the rationale behind the Basic Living Skills Programme is that social illiteracy in the Arab world, especially among women, is one of the major problems that one should try to solve. The BLSP is a comprehensive programme that has educational material relating to different aspects and needs of the Arab women. BLSP consists of one-hundred-and-forty lessons divided into eight areas, namely: health, environment, nutrition, childcare, family-planning, home management, civic responsibilities and legal rights. The programme includes a guide manual that has detailed information on how to use the programme and how to evaluate its results. (see al-Raida, Vol. VIII. No. 35 p. 12).

"La dépendance amoureuse"
(Amorous Dependence)

This number, (31) of **Les Cahiers du Griff**, a quarterly, magazine published in Paris (Editions Tierce, Rue des Fossés St. Jacques) contains interesting **highbrow** articles on dependence in love and how it may evolve into bondage. Most of the articles are psycho-analytic, written by psychoanalysts like Jacqueline Rousseau-Dujardin, Horacio Amigorena, Marie Claire Boons, Françoise Routheir, and Hannah Creuift.

The numbers which complete this topic are:

no. 26, Jouir (Enjoyment) 1983, 45 Fr. Francs.

no. 28, D'amour et de raison, 1983, 45 Fr. Francs.

no. 32 L'indépendance amoureuse, Dec. 1985, 45 Fr. Francs.

This quarterly is published by French feminists, a group of highly intellectual women.

About subscriptions see p. 2 of the number:

abonnements a 4 numéros: 1200 frs. belges., 185 fr. français.