

## **IBBY Asahi Reading Promotion award 2016**

Good evening dear friends and colleagues.

It is a great honour and a pleasure for me to present the winners of the 2016 IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award to you this evening.

This Award was founded in 1986 in commemoration of the 20th IBBY Congress in Tokyo, and is made possible by sponsorship by the Asahi Shimbun Japanese newspaper company. For the last 30 years the Award has been presented to outstanding activities by groups or institutions around the world that have been judged to be making a lasting contribution to reading promotion programmes for children and young people.

For the 2016 Award we received 11 submissions from 14 IBBY National Sections: from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, Iran, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark, France and Germany. The Jury, selected from the members of the current IBBY Executive Committee, judge every nominated project very strictly based on the following criteria:

- \* How well does the project support IBBY's Mission Statement?
- \* Is there existing or possible support for the project from other funding sources?
- \* Has the project been in existence for at least two years prior to its nomination? Is the project sustainable? Does it provide a framework for growth?
- \* What is the impact of the project? Does it reach its stated target audience?
- \* Is the project original and innovative?
- \* Can the project provide a model for others? Is it easily replicated? Are any printed materials available and are they of high literary quality?
- \* Can the results of the project be evaluated?

I would like to express my very special gratitude to my colleagues of the 2016 IBBY-ASAHI Reading Promotion Award Jury. Please stand up as I say your name: Evelyn Freeman (USA), Sunji Jamba (Mongolia), Vagn Plenge (Denmark), Serpil Ural (Turkey) and Timotea Vrablova (Slovakia). You worked hard and honestly to make a choice and I am proud to be a member of this fine team with you. Thank you.

This Award is unique, prestigious, independent and the only international award that is supporting concrete projects in the sphere of children's reading promotion.

Today, the world is a very disturbing and changeable place and our children need protection of their rights, including the right to read, as never before. This Award represents the goal and tasks of our organization: the spirit of IBBY, connecting children and books in often very difficult and

different situations, including hot spots of military conflicts and in regions facing a huge influx of refugees.

It was a pleasure for me to announce the winners in April this year at Bologna Children's Book Fair and now it's a very special feeling and a historic moment because the winners are among us and they are waiting for me to invite to the stage and tell you in their own words about their wonderful work.

The 2016 IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award are given to the following two projects:

### **Read With Me, Iran and Big Brother Mouse, Laos**

**Read With Me** was nominated by IBBY Iran and **Big Brother Mouse** was nominated by IBBY Switzerland and endorsed by the IBBY sections of Denmark, France and Germany.

**Read With Me** has the objective of making quality books accessible to disadvantaged children in marginal areas of big cities or those living in remote and deprived areas of Iran. The project, nominated by IBBY Iran, provides books and focuses on reading aloud to create a meaningful experience for children; it introduces related art and craft activities, with an emphasis on role playing and drama as part of reading sessions; it empowers teachers, librarians and volunteers through training workshops and regular mentoring and, as the final phase of the project, it sets up small libraries to ensure sustainability of the work already done.

The target groups for this project are children, both boys and girls, from preschool to 16 year-olds who are generally at risk because of their living environment. These include street or working children, orphans and those living in remote and deprived areas in Iran. The project is designed to be flexible so that it can be implemented at home, at school, at library or any place in the community. The content of the project is socially and culturally adaptable to the needs of different target areas.

Since 2010, **Read with Me** has extended to 13 provinces in Iran, including 15 city centres, 6 marginal areas and 75 remote villages. By 2015 it has reached over 13,000 children in the age group 4-16 and more than 500 teachers, preschool tutors and volunteers have been trained

through this project. The project is funded by donations and mainly run by volunteers. The staff comprises five regular staff and 15 volunteers.

The nomination of **Big Brother Mouse** was submitted by IBBY Switzerland and endorsed by the IBBY sections of Denmark, France and Germany. Traditionally, books have been rare in Laos.

Although the number of children who go to school is slowly but steadily increasing, many children have never read a book outside of school textbooks. Few Lao people think that reading can be fun, can add to their education, or will provide information to improve their quality of life. Indeed, very few books are published in Laos, and they never reach the villages where most people live.

The **Big Brother Mouse** publishing project is changing that. A retired American publisher working with several bright and dedicated Laotian college students started this project and today the staff includes high school students and recent college graduates. **Big Brother Mouse** is based in Luang Prabang and Vientiane and all planning and decisions are made in Laos, based on and often adapting to the conditions that are faced there. All of the paid staff are Lao.

The first books were made in 2006. Some are just in Lao; others are in both Lao and English, making them useful not only for the primary audience – Lao children – but also for people of any age, who speak either English or Lao, and are learning the other language. Many Lao children leave school very early as they are needed to help the family to survive, thus their education is very basic.

The project aims to give books, especially children's books, an important place in Laos as well as make sure that children in rural areas have access to books. They believe that every child should have the possibility to read and enjoy books and that this is important in helping promote reading and fighting against illiteracy, which is still widely spread in Laos.

Warm congratulations to these two winning projects and to all the people who work for them!

Many thanks to the IBBY National Sections for their nominations and I would especially like to thank again the Asahi Shimbun our generous long-time sponsor of this valuable award.

Now I am honoured to invite Ms Fusaka Go, who is the Asahi Shimbun bureau chief in Sydney and representing the Asahi Shimbun here today, to come to the stage and say a few words on behalf of the sponsor before the long-awaited presentation ceremony.

Now it with great pleasure that I would like to invite Zohreh Ghaeni and Nehzat Ghoreishi to come forward to receive the 2016 IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award on behalf of the Read With Me Project. And Kamala Panyasouk and Siphone Wuttisaky to come forward to receive the 2016 IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award on behalf of the Big Brother Mouse Project.

Thank you.

Angela Lebedeva

IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award Jury President 2016

Aotea Theatre, Auckland, New Zealand

Thursday, 16 August 2016