

## Children's Book Council Asahi 2012 nomination :

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### Presentation and overview of the candidate's activities:

The Children's Book Council of Iran is very pleased to have introduced during the past 40 years as the Iranian IBBY National Section, many Iranian writers, illustrators and translators to the International Community. For the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award 2012, CBC has decided to nominate a Promoting Institution, for its contributions to both the qualitative and quantitative development of young children in Iran. It is therefore with great pleasure that we nominate the promoting activities of the Children's Research Institute known as "**Donya**", under the following six sections.

1. The first note worthy decision taken by **Donya** is its concentration on promotion work and reading for young children. **Donya** believes that reading should be provided from birth and its target group is from that age to the beginning of schooling, it also pays attention to the role of families both in the transmission of oral and printed literature. **Donya** has undertaken different educative means to acquaint parents and instructors with literary and information resources for children, their reading needs and promotion methods for its target age group. The following projects can be noted:  
"reading with the new born", conducted in 40 workshops in Tehran and other cities of Iran, training of more than 30 instructors, creation of groups to support mother-readers for the newly born in various part of the country, conducting 140 sessions for the introduction of children's literature in Tehran, other cities and villages, 60 sessions for reading, storytelling and book making, paying particular attention to enable families and teachers to create books related to their own cultural environment and local needs.  
On the other hand and in view of the fact that **Donya** is faced with the great lack of literary and information resources for its target group, particularly for infant publications, it set out to publish these books with the necessary literary and artistic characteristics. The creation/translation and publication of cloth books, the creation of Iranian folktales in a cloth book series, the compilation of a collection called "Night Stories", and the compilation and publication of *Badbadak* as the first Iranian magazine addressing small and pre-school children, are notable among its publication activities.
2. The second achievement is the broadening of the boundaries of children's literature and reading to the national level. In view of the fact that **Donya** has a functioning network in 90% of the provinces through its nationwide 3700 members, representatives, related associations, branches, etc. it has widely promoted children's literature and reading, taking into consideration the local needs and investing the collaboration of governmental, non-governmental and international bodies. The following projects may be noted:  
Creation of libraries in rural kindergartens, by supporting 1845 such institutions, the distribution of more than 60,000 books to the kindergartens libraries, conducting 4 training programs to introduce books and reading skills to about 100 trainees from all over the country, creation of kindergartens in the urban marginalized areas of cities by providing support to 120 such institutions in the highly deprived areas of the city of Zahedan and 50 other towns, the distribution of 45000 books among the libraries of urban marginalized kindergartens.  
Organizing more than 50 storytelling programs, training more than 200 storytellers, organizing storytelling programs in various parts of the country, gathering local stories and folktales from different regions, identification of local storytellers and the publication of a book entitled *storytelling* in 200,000 copies for wide national distribution, are some of **Donya's** achievements this respect.

3. The next set of achievements contain a wide range of creative experiences in promoting literature and reading, carried out in different region all over Iran, taking into consideration the particular cultural, social and climatic needs. These experiences can be well used as promotion models both at the national and international level. The following activities may be noted: The project of Mobile trainers conducting storytelling, reading, games, creative drama, etc. : with programs affecting about 7000 children in Tehran and 12000 in deprived province of Zahedan, training of at least 500 trainees to work with children, introduction of the book basket to make books available to children in deprived areas, starting the mobile storytellers programs with 50 programs in cities and rural areas of 4 provinces with the participation of a minimum of 2000 children, and the "Traveling Book Project" by selecting 2000 books and their distribution in different locations, so that they may travel through their readers as a feature of civic participation, are some of the audacious and successful programs of carried out by **Donya**.

4. The forth achievement is the use of literature in the educative process. **Donya** believes that literature is a powerful tool which can be used for the improvement of lives, and educational programs. Since in the educational system of Iran the role of libraries is not well defined and teachers know very little about the different aspect of children's literature and its use, and have little knowledge of the reading needs of children and consider school text books as the only source for the transmission of information, **Donya's** innovative point of view in this respect and the fact that it strongly stresses the use of literary, artistic and information sources as a creative venue to develop the freedom of education is both influential and important.

As an example **Donya** is carrying out a project in the form of establishing a school "Madreseye Mosharekati" (Participatory School), in which the students do not use preselected text books, but rather use the information available in children's literature in relation to the various objects of the curriculum. The PS school library has a collection of 15000 book and non book materials to serve its preschool up to the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Another example can be seen in the series called "Reference Books for Preschool Education", in which children's literature/information has been creatively used in teaching various concepts. Through this collection **Donya** has been able to introduce change in the traditional method of education, direct teaching methods have been replaced by indirect ones such as the use of nonfiction and fiction, reading sessions, storytelling, games, poetry, drama, etc.

5. The fifth contribution of **Donya** is the attention paid to the promotion of literature for children with special needs. **Donya** believes that storytelling and literature are one of the most important means that contribute to child mental health, especially for children in crisis and with special needs. As an example after the devastating earthquake in Bam (2003), **Donya** carried out a storytelling and reading project for the traumatized children, by training 500 kindergarten instructors, conducting storytelling programs organizing festive occasions, and the distribution of more than 17000 books among the children. Work with refugee children both Afghan and Iraqi were carried out in camps and in towns with large important population through storytelling, Afghan storytellers were trained in 10 special workshops, more than 360 Afghan women and girls were trained as kindergarten instructors, and more than 15000 books were distributed to about 10 kindergartens either in tents or camps, and 70 home run kindergartens hosting Afghan and Iraqi children in different parts of the country.

Promotion of literature for sick children was taken up by organizing 4 training programs for health and medical personnel, organizing storytelling programs, games and drama in 5 hospitals in Tehran and the distribution of 3000 books among the hospitalized children. Visually impaired children have been able to benefit from 10 tactile books created at **Donya**. Children with other disabilities have been able to use

**Donya's** other cloth collection as well. Workshops are regularly held on how to create tactile books, exhibitions of books for disabled children have been held in Tehran and five other cities, and several issues of *Badbadak* and one issue of "Morabi Koodak (Child Instructor)" have been devoted to the subject of disability. Promoting the inclusive concept in education and equal rights for all children, are among **Donya's** important achievements.

6. The sixth achievement by **Donya** is the influence it has been able to exert on the views and attitudes of legislators, planners, implementers, and administrators; this can also be noted among librarians, publishers and all those involved in the creation of children's books and hoping to introduce change in the quality of education, promotion of reading, creation and publication of books with literary and artistic qualities and its spread and diversity at the national level. Looking through the above collective achievements pursued by Donya since 1994 to date, in collaboration with other influential institutions in children's literature and education, it can be clearly perceived that Donya has worked within the frame work of the declaration of *The Rights of Children*, and has fully recognized their right to have free and easy access to information and other resources in order to help develop their personality, talent, physical, psychological, mental and social capabilities.

It is also clear that Donya has endeavored through these years to provide equal opportunities for creative literary, cultural and artistic activities for all small children and these opportunities have in turn increased the demands by children, families, instructors, librarians and society at large for an improved infrastructure to provide more quality books, better libraries and more creative promotion methods.

The Children's Book Council (CBC) believes that the remarkable achievements, in often difficult circumstances carried out by **Donya** Children's Research Institute will be viewed with great interest by the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award Jury.

Respectfully submitted

Massoud Naseri

CBC Nominating Group Coordinator

May 2011, Tehran