



# IBBY and IBBY's Fund for Children in Crisis – An introduction

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## IBBY History

IBBY's founder, Jella Lepman, believed that books could build bridges of understanding and peace between people. Because of this strongly held belief, she created IBBY as an international organization that would bring children together by means of books. She did this because she was convinced that the German children she saw after World War II needed not only food, medicine, clothes and shelter, but also books. Good books, literature, and especially books from around the world. They needed to know what all good readers know: you are not alone; others have experiences, feelings, and needs just like you do, and there is a whole world out there you know nothing about. And that world is not what you imagined. You will find out a lot about the world and its children in these wonderful books.

## IBBY Today

Today, nearly 60 years later, IBBY has seventy-two National Sections with an international secretariat employing two full-time staff in Basel, Switzerland, all paid for by the annual membership dues of the national sections. IBBY's newest members come from Guatemala, Haiti, Serbia, the United Arab Emirates, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In its second half century IBBY continues with many of its historically important projects: the Hans Christian Andersen Awards, the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award, the IBBY Honour List, the Documentation Centre of Books for Young People with Disabilities, and the International Children's Book Day. In addition to these traditional activities, IBBY has supported and led many grass-root projects to encourage the development of reading cultures throughout the world.

## The Right of Every Child to Become a Reader

The framework for these new projects is the **Right of Every Child to Become a Reader**. By this IBBY believes that every child everywhere in the world must have access to books and the opportunity to become a reader in the fullest sense. IBBY sees this as a fundamental right and the doorway to empowerment for every child. But this is not simply a matter of literacy. This principle entails becoming a life-long reader, one who can think critically, participate actively in society, resist demagoguery, understand the world, know him or herself, and know others.



# IBBY's Children in Crisis Programme

Further to the mission of ensuring that every child has the right to become a reader and influenced by the experiences of the *Banco del Libro* in Venezuela and the projects that arose following the Tsunami disaster in South East Asia, IBBY launched the **IBBY Fund for Children in Crisis**.

This work represents a circling back to Jella Lepman and her basic tenets. It is really an updated version of what Jella Lepman invented for the children she found in crisis after World War II. This work is now known around the world as *Bibliotherapy*.

IBBY believes that children who are suffering from natural disaster, displacement, war and its aftermath, desperately need books and stories as well as food, shelter, clothing and medicines. These are necessities and are not mutually exclusive.

Today, projects within the **IBBY Children in Crisis programme** are operating around the world, and others are in different stages of development. Its short-term purpose is to help relieve trauma through use of bibliotherapy and/or to replace damaged or destroyed book-related infrastructure such as libraries or reading centres. Its long-term purpose is to leave a legacy of improved or renewed infrastructure, to train adults in the use of books in trauma relief and in reading promotion, and to strengthen IBBY's National Sections through their delivery of this aid. A further long-term benefit is the provision of books in children's mother tongue.

Because of its flexible and relatively non-bureaucratic organization IBBY is able to respond to crises as they arise. IBBY's network provides invaluable support to local organizers who are responding to traumatic events in the lives of children in their countries. As IBBY members' practice of bibliotherapy and IBBY's expertise in this area grows, the organization is becoming ever more useful in working with children who have experienced long-term trauma as a result of war and other forms of civil disturbance.



Colombia – reading clubs for displaced children



Lebanon – conflict resolution training for schools

In conclusion, IBBY's work with children in crisis draws upon deeply held convictions that books and stories can change lives, bring understanding, and empower the powerless and that reading and books can save lives. They can change lives. They can give children in the most desperate circumstances a way to begin to live again and to understand what has happened to them. **IBBY believes that every child, rich or poor, safe or in danger, with a home or without, has the right to become a reader.** This is IBBY's continuous message. IBBY and its seventy-two National Sections are uniquely suited to working concretely to bring children and the very best books together around the world.

# Projects: completed and ongoing

**Croatia** – reading to children in bomb shelters during the Balkan War

**Indonesia, India, Thailand, Maldives** – Tsunami projects using storytelling, reading and books

**Pakistan** – storytelling and theatre following a massive earthquake in the Northwest mountainous region

**Iran** – reading promotion, bibliotherapy with children in jail, refugees and street children

**Lebanon** – reading to children in bomb shelters during the first Lebanon war

**Venezuela** – developed bibliotherapy practices following catastrophic landslides

**Afghanistan** – strategic planning for the establishment of a reading culture

**China** – post earthquake relief through the donation of thousands of books

**Colombia** – reading clubs for displaced children

**Gaza** – community centres including bibliotherapy projects before and after the recent Gaza War and blockade

**Haiti** – bibliotherapy following the destructive hurricanes and subsequent flooding

**Indonesia** – post earthquake relief donations of book boxes and using storytelling

**Lebanon** – conflict resolution training for schools after the recent war in South Lebanon

**Pakistan** – reading promotion activities for peace and tolerance after Bhutto's assassination

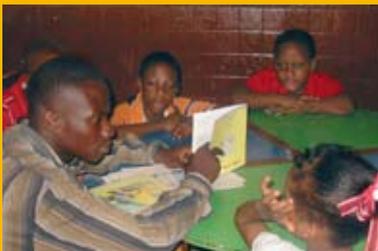
**Peru** – post earthquake relief using books and stories, and providing safe places for the children and their mothers



Indonesia, India, Thailand, Maldives: Tsunami projects



Colombia: reading clubs for displaced children Peru: post earthquake relief



Haiti: bibliotherapy following the destructive hurricanes and subsequent flooding



Gaza: community centres including bibliotherapy projects

## Fundraising

This is carried out for specific projects as well as for the general **Children in Crisis Fund**. IBBY however, does have structures for accountability that ensure that projects are truly useful and beneficial and fulfil IBBY's overall goals.

Until now IBBY has relied upon spontaneous giving in response to a crisis. In addition we have generously received funds annually from the Paterson Family Foundation in the USA. When the **Children in Crisis Fund** was first established, IBBY was able fund projects thanks to a CHF 100,000 anonymous donation.



# Future of the IBBY Children in Crisis programme

IBBY is seeking the capacity to respond as crises arise as well as have the capability to fund certain projects in extremely difficult, intractable situations, such as currently found in Gaza and Afghanistan.

We have the capacity of our National Sections in many countries to respond effectively, quickly and appropriately in crisis situations. In addition we would like to be able to offer on-the-spot training where our members do not have this capacity. For example, following the Italian earthquake this spring IBBY was contacted by its Italian National Section, asking for advice about what they could do. If we had had enough funds available a trainer could have brought in and made a practical and effective response almost immediately. In this case capacity and expertise were crucial for an immediate response.

We need to be able to respond quickly and effectively whenever there is a major natural disaster or conflict situation: this is a continuous necessity.

Further to these, we would like to develop and provide initial funding to smaller scale projects that would deal with children in crisis situations such as:

- **Hospitalization**
- **Children isolated by mental illness**
- **Poverty, i.e. living in favelas or communities where daily violence makes their ability to learn, grow and study almost impossible**
- **Children in long-term refugee camps**
- **Children living in post-conflict situations**

Our members around the world are asking for training to deal with such situations, which are more endemic. Currently we only have funds for major crises, however much these smaller and more intimate projects deserve support.

Children in Haiti prior to the devastating earthquake of January 2010



## IBBY needs your support!

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