



مراهقون أون لاين

Ado On-Line: an Electronic Newsletter on Arab Adolescents: An Interactive Space for Interested Journalists on Adolescents' Issues in the Arab World

As part of CAWTAR's regional programme on Arab adolescents which includes research, training, networking and production of advocacy tools, the center has started in January 2005 the publication of Ado On-Line: an electronic newsletter on Arab adolescents.

The newsletter stands as a link to disseminate information about CAWTAR's various activities and a space to share views and experiences with Center's regional partners and the members of its Adolescents Network, a spin-off network of CAWTAR's Arab Network for Gender and Development (ANGED). It is an information bulletin which provides data, statistics and successful experiences in the adolescence field in the Arab world, and a mirror reflecting the findings and recommendations of CAWTAR's report's on Arab Adolescent Girl findings, and the views of ANGED member journalists.

Thirteen issues of this newsletter have been published; nine of which focused on Adolescents boys and girls in Palestine, Bahrain, Morocco, Lebanon, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Libya and Sudan. As for the first issue, it was a comprehensive one and tackled specific subjects: "Adolescents, War and Peace" and "Adolescents in Difficult Situations"... The experience started with a four-page issue and a simple technical approach and today has witnessed a considerable progress in terms of contents, thanks to the efforts of the devoted ANGED media members.

The first contributions in the elaboration of the different issues of ado-on-line came from journalists who were interested in CAWTAR's programs in general and its activities in the adolescence field in particular. In this respect, CAWTAR's ANGED's media members have been committed and they are: Houaida Salim, a Sudanese journalist elaborated the second issue. Bassam Icha Information and Training Consultant from Libya prepared the third, eleventh and twelfth ones; Nachwan Al Semiri communication officer from Yemen supervised the elaboration of the seventh issue, and Monia Bel Afia journalist from Morocco supervised the eighth issue.

CAWTAR has not limited this bulletin to the members of its network. It has also opened the door to other contributions. Imen Hamdi, a Tunisian journalist, supervised the elaboration of the fourth issue. Nahed Bachtah Saudi communication officer with Women's Information Centre supervised the production of the fifth issue; Rabab Naimi a journalist with the Women's Future Association in Bahrain has made a request for the elaboration of one of the newsletters under the supervision of a journalist from its work team.

The most exceptional contribution was the thirteen issue of ado-online which was prepared by Nihad Taouil, a finalist student in the information and journalist studies, the Palestinian university Najah. Seeing that the editor of this issue was born in 1985 and he is almost close to the age group of adolescents. This in fact is demonstrated in his insights in addressing the examined adolescents' issues. Nihad may also have benefited from this experience and the space provided to him by "CAWTAR" to write in a field on which he had never written before. The success of this experience of "CAWTAR" opened other prospects of co-operation with finalist students in journalism and information colleges and universities in the Arab world which contributed to the creation of a new generation of young journalists interested in adolescents.

One of the advantages of Ado-Online is that it allowed journalists to write about both adolescent girls and boys in their respective countries. Indeed, paying due regard to this category and its conditions is a catalyst for the expression of their concerns, needs, interests and for understanding their own problems and looking at future in a positive way.

Indeed, Monia Bel Afia issue on Moroccan adolescents was exceptional. It drew upon the behavioural and cultural characteristics of adolescents in Morocco and the extent to which children

upbringing impact on their different tracks of life. The issue also demonstrated the complexity of adolescents' characteristics: they live in a culturally diverse country, while intellectually motivated they are influenced by the prevalent social hierarchy...

The special issue on adolescents in Saudi Arabia is unique due the deepened understanding of the editor of the reality and challenges facing adolescents in Saudi Arabia. For example, in relation to the well know phenomenon of "Misyar clandestine marriage" which is widespread in Saudi Arabia. Most of the people ignore that this phenomenon has become common among school-girls and it has taken new forms, despite the controversy around it. The marriage mediators have financially exploited young girls.

Lebanese Rula Mikhail also tackled the conditions of her country's adolescents who lived through many wars that negatively impacted on them. She considered that these conditions are not particular to her country but touch upon other adolescents in several Arab countries, like Iraq and Palestine... For this reason, the editorial of the issue entitled "May Adolescents Stop Being Silent" came to underline that the Arab generation is living today amid unstable political conditions resulting from the Arab region's situation and the pains of Al Quds and Iraq... which in turn led to a crisis of identity and of self-perception and a lack of confidence in the future. The issue also included different paragraphs notably "Diary of adolescent girls and adolescents from Lebanon" which highlighted the private world of adolescents as well as their ideas and views on life. The article also presented testimonies of some Lebanese adolescents of both sexes on how they spend their day.

It was very difficult if not impossible to prepare an issue on adolescents in Sudan which includes fieldworks. That would not have been

possible without the efforts of the Sudanese journalist Houaida Salim who conducted a comprehensive reconnaissance survey of studies and sites to assess the conditions of adolescents in Sudan. She noted the scarcity of such research, and the widespread of harsh socio-economic conditions among adolescents including homelessness, street children and school drop-outs.

The interview of the present issue was made with a leading expert on youth and adolescents in Sudan. It was an attempt to expose the reality of relevant research in Sudan and the strategies and programmes related to adolescents in the state's policies.

Bahrain, Tunisia, Lebanon, Morocco and Yemen were countries that were covered by "CAWTAR" 's report on Arab Adolescents Girl: Reality and Prospects" in addition to Algeria and Egypt, to which CAWTAR had devoted one issue of ado-on-line to enrich the research approach with information that will benefit approaching further adolescents' issues through programs and activities and set up specific strategies for them which serve their interests and are at the heart of their concerns and meet their aspirations.

There are other countries which were not covered by the report but which "CAWTAR" had devoted some of its newsletters to shed light on the conditions of their adolescents such as Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Libya and Sudan. This was a contribution from CAWTAR and its collaborators among media people and others to provide some

data on adolescents of both sexes in these countries to those who are interested be they individuals or institutions.

The second issue of ado-online included testimonies of adolescents in Libya. They spoke about: their relationship with their family and the school, their interaction with their society their expectations of adulthood, work and the relationship between girls and boys... This issue also included statistics on the demographic composition of the Libyan society and the rates of children and adolescents of both sexes, in addition to a press kit that covered what the Libyan journals and press said about adolescents and youth... "CAWTAR" to dedicate several issues of this newsletter to each of the 22 Arab countries.

CAWTAR is exerting a great effort in order to improve this newsletter. It is also seeking to make it a space that can be used by the center and its partner institutions who are active in the field of

adolescence, childhood and youth to make their programmes known as well as to share their future ones... The newsletter will equally be a tool to enhance the communication skills of adolescents to write about their own issues. This is an

outcome of the realization that the institutional and media landscape in the Arab world still lacks the necessary mechanisms to cover adolescents' issues in an adequate manner.

Salwa Ghazouani



Ado- online as seen by experts and operators in the field of adolescence

CAWTAR had not ignored the suggestions of the readers of the newsletter and their evaluation forms enclosed in the newsletter. One of the recurrent suggestions highlighted the need to involve researchers, experts and trainers in the field of adolescence to write about their lessons learnt in this field. CAWTAR should adopt this in the forthcoming issues of ado-online. It also endeavours in the present stage to mobilise several researchers and trainers to contribute by their writings, suggest subjects that might be tackled and provide information and data...

"The newsletter of ado- online is an important source of data as part of our project..." "It would be better to enlarge the scope of the newsletter in order to cover adolescents issues in the Arab world."

*Bana Mushtaq, assistant coordinator of Arab youth empowerment programme,
population policies and emigration department/Arab League*

"It would be better to address the positive aspects of adolescence and adopt a flexible and open style rather than a binding pedagogical and executive one..."

Dr. Nahound Al Qadri, expert in information and researcher, Lebanese Rally of Women Researchers.

Draft the newsletter in a way that is closer to adolescents through their direct participation... and attempt to present possible solutions to the problems of the concerned adolescents based on their daily lives and how they experience their relations with their families, teachers and the local community...

Dr. Faiza Ben Hadid /United Nations' Population Fund/Jordan office

"I insist on continuing the publication of this newsletter"

Imen Bahieddine, Arab Youth and Development Council

"I thank you for your fruitful efforts to ensure the success of this newsletter and for sharing it with us. I believe that the efforts were successful, valuable and condiserable."

Samar Abdou, University professor University of Birzeit