

Word from the Editor-in-Chief

Dima Dabbous-Sensenig

Faithful readers of *Al-Raida* (The Pioneer in English) will notice that this issue (118-119) looks different from the previous ones, both in content and form. This is not surprising in itself, knowing that *Al-Raida* underwent considerable changes in the last 30 years, since it first appeared in May 1976, 3 years after the founding of the first institute for women's studies in the Arab world (i.e. IWSAW).

Indeed, anyone who has read *Al-Raida* since it first came out will remember how this pioneering publication in the Arab world started off as a thin newsletter consisting of a dozen stenciled pages, with the modest and limited purpose of reporting on the activities of the Institute. With time, however, *Al-Raida* grew in size and scope – a development which was also gradually reflected in its appearance. Whereas initially it consisted mostly of profiles of women, conference reports, and summaries of studies, by the mid 1980s an important addition was made – research-based articles – thus marking a qualitative and quantitative leap in terms of its content and mandate. By 1994, *Al-Raida* reached a new level of maturity with the introduction of a specialized section or “file” which focuses on cutting edge topics and often controversial issues related to women in the Arab world. The most recent development came about in 2002, in line with the technological advances that swept the publishing world in the last decade, when the Institute made *Al-Raida* available online in both English and Arabic, thus allowing researchers and activists worldwide to have easy and instantaneous access to it.

Nearly three decades after its first appearance, *Al-Raida* is ready, once again, to take another qualitative leap forward. Slightly smaller in size, and with some newly introduced sections (e.g. “young scholars” and an original “book reviews” section), it seeks to go further by offering a tighter selection of research articles and pieces relevant to understanding the condition of women in the Arab world. By giving prominence to quality research over summaries, profiles, reports, and the activities of the Institute, and by practically reversing the priorities exhibited in its initial newsletter format (which was basically meant to highlight the activities of IWSAW), we hope that the message behind the improved *Al-Raida* is made clear: i.e. that the best way to highlight and promote the work of IWSAW and help it achieve its objective of empowering women is, first and foremost, to promote and prioritize quality research about women in the Arab world. The new section dedicated to research by young scholars is perhaps the best expression of the conviction that IWSAW's objective cannot be fully achieved without investing in the future: i.e. believing in the intellectual capacity of our youth and encouraging them to join the struggle to create a better world for all of us, men and women.

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