

The Way it Evolved ...

No title could have been more suitable for IWSAW's quarterly publication than *Al-Raida* (The Pioneer), since IWSAW was the first institute dedicated to women's issues in the Arab world. After its establishment in 1973, the Institute's directorship was entrusted to Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr who, from 1973 to 1997, succeeded in maintaining its pioneering role, thanks to her long-term vision and relentless efforts.

It was three years after its foundation that the Institute decided to publish, both in English and Arabic, an eight-page newsletter. The first issue, which was stenciled, appeared in May 1976; its editor was Rose Ghurayyib, who remained in this post until 1983, and continued to contribute to *Al-Raida* until 1993.

With time, *Al-Raida* has developed in content, size, and appearance. Between 1976 and 1983, its table of contents included profiles of women, interviews, conference reports, summaries of studies, articles, as well as book reviews. In the mid-1980's, it started publishing research-based articles in addition to the previous sections. In the late 1980's, due to censorship, the limited number of subscribers in the Arab world, and financial constraints, the Institute stopped publishing the Arabic version of *Al-Raida*.

In 1994, another significant change took place: *Al-Raida* started featuring a file focusing on a specific pressing theme, with its usual sections also revolving around it.

In addition, the eight-page newsletter has expanded into issues that vary between 48 and 100 pages, depending on the material in hand. A deliberate effort was also put into improving its layout and appearance.

Another major development occurred in the early 1990's: an *Al-Raida* advisory board was established. It consists at present of eight members from various disciplines and kinds of institution (academic, NGOs, UN agencies). Its contributors come from a wide range of nationalities, specializations and backgrounds.

It is worth noting that *Al-Raida's* subscribers are mainly Western university libraries, women's studies centers, NGOs, and individual researchers. Furthermore, since 2002, it has become available on-line in both English and Arabic, serving researchers and various international organizations.

IWSAW's next objective is to make *Al-Raida* into a refereed journal. Although this objective will require a tremendous effort, we at the Institute are confident that we will be able to meet this new challenge.

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