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For immediate release

IBBY Announces Winners of the 2026 IBBY-iRead Outstanding Reading Promoter Award

Elisabetta Lippolis and Jane O'Hanlon, Chairs of the IBBY Reading Promotion Award Jury announced the winners of the 2026 IBBY-iRead Outstanding Reading Promoter Award on 13 April 2026 at 14:00 at the IBBY Annual Press Conference held at the Bologna Children's Book Fair. The International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) is grateful for the generous support of the Shenzhen iRead Foundation from China.

The 2026 winners are: **Kirsten Boie**, from Hamburg, Germany, nominated by IBBY Germany, and **Namita Jacob**, from Tamil Nadu, India, nominated by IBBY India.

Kirsten Boie: Kirsten Boie is a tireless advocate for children's right to read, merging her renown as an author with decades of sustainable reading promotion. Her interdisciplinary approach redefines literature as a vehicle for social awareness, combining storytelling, education, and activism to foster inclusion and diversity. By establishing foundations and long-term partnerships, she has created resilient structures that influence public reading policy and perception. Boie champions equal access to education as a path to self-realization, mobilizing vast networks in Germany and internationally, notably in Eswatini. Her strength lies in contextual adaptability—employing technology where possible and inventive alternatives where resources are scarce—ensuring her models are both impactful and replicable. Generous in sharing her methods, Boie inspires generations of teachers and readers. Her undisputed standing and ability to mobilize institutions guarantee that her legacy of cultural advocacy will endure, securing a future where reading serves as a tool for social transformation.

Namita Jacob: With over 35 years of experience, Namita Jacob is a leading expert in disability inclusion, focusing on the visual needs of children who are blind, deaf, or deafblind. Through the Chetana Trust, she has developed sustainable, evidence-based solutions like the Accessible Reading Materials Library, which promotes inclusive content created by the community. Jacob's philosophy centres on investing in people rather than capital, believing that human potential is the greatest resource for sustainability. By training young tactile book creators and fostering a powerful network of volunteers, she has built an ecosystem where initiatives thrive independently of any single leader. Her work extends from local communities to international platforms in Scotland and Singapore, transforming literacy ecosystems through cross-sectoral alliances. The jury recognizes Jacob's exceptional ability to build robust systems and collaborative networks, ensuring her impact on accessible education will continue to grow through the dedicated collaborators she has empowered.

IBBY congratulates the winners. At the 40th IBBY World Congress (Ottawa, Canada, 6-9 August 2026), the two winners will each receive a trophy and a diploma, 200,000 Chinese RMB and, in addition, 150,000 Chinese RMB will be given to a non-profit children's reading promotion project of their choice.

The 2026 IBBY Reading Promotion Award Jury comprised: Elisabetta Lippolis (Co-Chair, Italy), Jane O'Hanlon (Co-Chair, Ireland), Tobeckukwu Anyachebelu (Nigeria), Charalambos Demetriou (Cyprus), Hazel Hernández (Costa Rica), Luis Zendrera (Spain), and Wen Li from China, in representation of the iRead foundation.

Nine other nominees were considered for the award. These include: Verónica Parodi, nominated by IBBY Argentina; Nianzu Li, nominated by IBBY China; Despina Heracleous, nominated by IBBY Cyprus; Murti Bunanta, nominated by IBBY Indonesia; Ali Asghar Seidabadi, nominated by IBBY Iran; Maria Consuelo Doble, nominated by IBBY Philippines; Maurício Corrêa Leite, nominated by IBBY Portugal, Slavko Pregl, nominated by IBBY Slovenia; and Zulfiya Seytniyazova, nominated by IBBY Uzbekistan.

About the IBBY-iRead Outstanding Reading Promoter Award

The IBBY-iRead Outstanding Reading Promoter Award was first given in 2020 by the Shenzhen iRead Foundation and IBBY to encourage a real commitment to the cause of reading promotion in the hope of spreading this dedication to others around the globe. The Award aims to encourage further investment by individuals, organizations and governments in the promotion of children's reading and will stimulate educational innovation, give much greater access to children's books and an enhanced profile for children's reading promotion—key tools in global, social, economic and cultural development – all in the context of Article 17(C) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The iRead Foundation has pledged 1,200,000 Chinese RMB biennially for twenty years for this important award.

About IBBY

The International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), established in 1953, is a non-profit organization that represents an international network of people from all over the world who are committed to bringing books and children together.

Contact

For more information, about IBBY and the iRead Outstanding Reading Promoter Award, please visit www.ibby.org or write to Executive Director Carolina Ballester at carolina.ballester@ibby.org.