Fostering the love of reading among children through establishing
A LIBRARY IN EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD

2018
ANNUAL
REPORT
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ABOUT WE LOVE READING

We aim to establish a library in every neighborhood.

We Love Reading is a program that aims to foster the love of reading for pleasure among children, by training local men, women and youth to hold read aloud sessions in public spaces in their neighborhoods where books are routinely read aloud to children. We Love Reading was founded in 2006 by Dr. Rana Dajani in Jordan, and has spread to 46 countries around the world, where thousands of We Love Reading libraries have been established.

○ OUR VISION
To foster the love of reading for pleasure among children.

✈ OUR MISSION
Providing a simple, sustainable, and scalable “read aloud” program to foster the love of reading for pleasure among children in the MENA region and the world, designed to give ownership to local communities through training local volunteers as “We Love Reading Ambassadors”. We believe in empowering and engaging our workforce, creating partnerships with key stakeholders, adopting excellence in our processes, utilizing technology, and ensuring continuous development based on scientific research.

💎 OUR VALUES
Interest of the community, Well-being of our workforce, Quality, Approaching the whole world irrelevant of gender, religion, social status, Integrity, Impacting future generations, Respect, Ownership, Human-centered approach.
OUR LETTER TO THE WORLD

Volunteering is usually for the organization that is offering the opportunity. The We Love Reading concept of volunteers is different. Our concept is about volunteering for yourself and your community. And that is how we are unique. Our volunteers are sustainable because we shifted the focus from the organization to the person. That is why our volunteers are still reading in their neighborhoods five years later in the most dire conditions. When you focus on helping others you feel better because you have a purpose and it makes you happy. Most importantly you are not doing it because you were asked you do it because you want to. We Love Reading focuses on the why.

WLR is a philosophy that is spreading around the world because it is based on people’s ownership and agency. WLR is successful in penetrating different cultures and geographies because it focuses on the feeling of “I can” which is a universal human feeling. Everyone wants to feel they are in charge.

WLR is you and you are WLR... Go out there and be yourself...

Dr. Rana Dajani
Founder
WRAPPING UP A YEAR OF GROWTH

2018

46 Countries
7,403 Trainees

4,372 Ambassadors
447,092 Children read to

152,316 Reading Sessions
261,288 Books Distributed
OUR IMPACT

The model of the program is that We Love Reading ambassadors also train others in their community and read aloud for an average of 20 children where those children also share this experience with their community (family, friends...etc).
WE LOVE READING AROUND THE WORLD

46 Countries

5. Bangladesh 15. Germany 25. Mali
7. Canada 17. Hong Kong 27. Morocco
31. Palestine
32. Qatar
33. Saudi Arabia
34. Sierra Leon
35. Somalia
36. Sudan
37. Syria
38. Thailand
39. Tunisia
40. Turkey
41. U.A.E
42. Uganda
43. U.K
44. U.S.A
45. Vietnam
46. Yemen
Huong said: “Vietnamese children are intelligent and have a thirst for knowledge but nobody shows or guides them how to reach knowledge. I am very interested in developing children’s reading skills and I strongly believe that We Love Reading will bring significant changes for Vietnamese children”. As a former member of the Union Executive of the Faculty of Education at Vietnam National University, Dang has rich experiences in working on projects concerning children and educational volunteering. She will help in measuring the changes with psychometric tools to prove the strong and positive impacts of the project.

It all started with a Skype meeting with Dr. Rana Dajani. A group of Vietnamese psychologists and educators in France expressed their excitement in supporting We Love Reading in Vietnam. Huong Dang, a Vietnamese educator in France, was a teacher and a lecturer in Vietnam for many years.
On Saturday April 21, 2018, we held our first We Love Reading session in the public library of my city. “At first, I was a little bit nervous when children did not show up at the time of the session. As time passed by, children began to come one after the other. My smile started to grow. There were 12 children and we read three stories. With each story we read, excitement and engagement were growing bigger!

The time passed without us noticing, the children and I were enjoying every minute. I loved the time I spent with the children, listening to the children’s thoughts and ideas. Now we have a weekly fun reading time on Saturdays that we can’t wait for.”
Hamzeh took the We Love Reading training but was too busy to read for children even though he always believed in We Love Reading program. When he decided to go for Umrah to Mecca, he had the most brilliant idea of giving the children a spiritual fun memory. When Hamzeh came back from Umrah, he headed to the We Love Reading head office in Amman to tell us the story. Hamzeh said “I took the stories with me from Amman because I wanted to read for children in the Meccan Sanctuary. There are always religious circles there, but I decided to give the children the time of their lives with a We Love Reading circle. When I started, there were two children, but more children kept coming and coming. The most beautiful thing was having children from different backgrounds all together having fun and enjoying a good story. I had three stories with me but the children wanted more and more and I kept on repeating the stories without them getting bored”. About his feelings, Hamzeh said “In the beginning I was hesitant and afraid that the children would not enjoy the reading circle, but after the first book I felt that I’d accomplished something. I felt that I left a memory in their hearts that would last forever and I know they’ll connect this beautiful memory to this great place of worship. This really made me happy when I saw their happiness about something that is missing in their life, Reading”.

Gather the kids around, pick a book from your bag, read out the words, show the drawings and the pictures, spread the happiness everywhere, and little by little you’ll feel the happiness filling you from within drawing the smile on your face, and the children’s faces. Don’t stop! Read wherever you are, at whatever time, just Read. The We Love Reading magical kit contains 25 story that takes you to another world. In this story you’ll find out the beauty that lies behind our program.
As a part of the Pennsylvania Abroad program, a group of students from the University of Pennsylvania visited the We Love Reading head office in Jordan in May 2018. The students met Dr. Rana Dajani, Founder and Director of We Love Reading, where she shared the story of the initiative, the impact of the program on different areas such as early childhood development, women’s empowerment, social entrepreneurship and social emotional learning. The team also learned about WLR’s book development work and looked through the 32 children’s story books that have been published so far.

The students were impressed with the quality of the books and shared their thoughts and questions with Dr. Dajani and the We Love Reading staff. We were happy to see their engagement and excitement towards the We Love Reading idea. Andre Patoski, one of the students from Macedonia, went home during the summer holidays and shared the We Love Reading story with his mother Gabriela. Driven by her strong belief in the importance of reading, Gabriela started We Love Reading in her town. Dr. Dajani was visiting Macedonia for a conference and met with Andre, Gabriela and his friend Christine. Gabriela used to read to her children every night before knowing about the program, that is why she believes in the importance of reading to children. She is an amazing woman full of energy and love of children. She wants We Love Reading to help children get along together and fall in love with reading especially in rural areas. Christine expressed her intentions to spread We Love Reading throughout Macedonia, too.
Klaus Jacobs Award

Rana Dajani received one of ten 2018 Klaus J. Jacobs Awards for social innovation and engagement. Rana plans to upgrade the online training course on how to start We Love Reading in your community by introducing the latest technology and pedagogical tools and offering additional languages. In addition, the mobile application will be upgraded to include multiple languages so that all We Love Reading ambassadors around the world can be connected to share challenges, success stories and resources to ensure sustainability, quality and continuity.

Significant contribution to literacy by an NGO or Charity, the World Literacy Summit in Oxford University

We Love Reading received the award for a (Significant Contributions by a Literacy Organization), on March 26 2018 at the World Literacy Summit in Oxford University. The award was given by her Royal Highness Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands to Dr. Rana Dajani, CEO & founder of We Love Reading. This award acknowledged and profiled the We Love Reading efforts in supporting literacy among children.
RECOGNITION

**Forbes**

Dr. Rana Dajani and We Love Reading were featured in the Forbes magazine in the article *This Entrepreneur Got A Funder To Say: “Here's $1 Million. Do Whatever You Want”*. The article highlighted the scientific approach that We Love Reading has taken in refining its program and approach, and how this has led to receiving significant grants from large donors like UNICEF and USAID.

**The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs**

Swiss photojournalist Saskia Bory Keeley spent 10 days documenting We Love Reading’s work in Jordan. Her article *Photojournalism: Creating Brighter Lives for Syrian Refugee Children* chronicles her two-day visit to Azraq Camp and how the reading sessions are bringing meaning and joy to refugee children. The article was published in The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs, the student-managed foreign policy journal at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, US.
An edited collection that brings together analyses of human rights work from multiple disciplines. Within the academic sphere, this book will garner interest from scholars who are invested in human rights as a field of study, as well as those who research, and are engaged in, the praxis of human rights.
A DISCUSSION WITH WE LOVE READING FOUNDER, DR. RANA DAJANI

Amin Marei, Associate Director of the Middle East Professional Learning Initiative (MEPLI) at Harvard Graduate School of Education, interviewed Dr. Rana Dajani - the founder of We Love Reading- about the importance of reading aloud to children and her work through the We Love Reading program.
OUR EVENTS

Bridging Research and Practices Successfully - August 2018

Under the patronage of Her Excellency the Minister of Social development Mrs. Hala Lattouf, the seminar included scientific talks by Professor Dima Amso from Brown University, Professor Antje Von from NYU Abu Dhabi and Professor Randa Mahsen from Qatar University, as well as a panel discussion constituting HE minister of social development, HE Hamdi Tabbaa representing the private sector, Robert Jenkins from UNICEF Jordan, Professor Dima Amso from Brown University. The seminar was attended by donors, International NGOs, local NGOs, media, policymakers, scientists and others. The seminar discussed and explored the importance of rigorous research to deliver effective and impactful programs to beneficiaries in development and humanitarian contexts. World class neurocognition and behavior scientists from Brown University and NYU as well as local universities presented their research on the impact of the delivery of the We Love Reading program in Jordan. Through the panel discussion the seminar explored the ways to move forward in creating collaborative partnerships between academia and practitioners in the field and presented the challenges as well. A new field guide on how to conduct randomized control trials was launched in Arabic adapted from Jameel Abdel Latif Poverty Action Lab at MIT. The seminar produced a recommendation of good practices to disseminate among stakeholders. The seminar provided an environment to network and build partnerships among attendees.
STORY BOOKS DEVELOPMENT

At We Love Reading, our book development department is specialized in developing illustrated children’s books, designed for readers between the ages of 4 and 10 years old. Books are developed according to set criteria and methodology, and produced in collaboration with local writers, illustrators and designers. Education and language consultants review the book contents to ensure their suitability for respective themes. We implement testing sessions to ensure that our books are enjoyed by children. Today, our books are used in school curricula such as We Love Reading began developing its own children’s books in 2012. In collaboration with the Arabic Book Project and the U.S. Embassy in Jordan, our first initiative worked with a group of Jordanian students from eight different governances to translate “Bridge to Teribithia” and the “Apple Tree,” two popular books from the U.S, into Arabic. Nadine Wickenden, an internationally known illustrator, mentored six Jordanian artists who illustrated the books.

In the following year of the project with the U.S embassy, the book development department began to form at We Love Reading, through a project funded by the USAID (United States Agency for International Development). The department developed ten children’s books aimed at the age ranges of 4-6 and 7-10 years old, themed around environment awareness, with a focus on water and electricity conservation and recycling. By working with Jordanian authors and illustrators, the initiative developed books appropriate to our Arab identities, social realities, traditions, and cultures.

Following the success of these initial projects, the book development team carried out extensive research, to further its expertise in children’s literature. The team acquired knowledge in the development of children’s books according to international standards, and went on to design its own standards specific to Jordanian culture and society.

At WLR, our work is grounded in partnerships with local people, and the book development team has worked to overcome the difficulty of finding Jordanian authors and illustrators focused on children’s literature. While implementing the USAID project, the team met this challenge by accepting drafts of the authors’ and illustrators’ work, and selecting the ten best authors and illustrators according to their newly established standards. A proofreader and an educational consultant also reviewed these books.
Most recently, the book development department worked with Jordanian and Arab authors and illustrators, as well as with the UNICEF, to develop a set of ten children’s books. These books are designed to meet the standards set forth by the department, these books deal with topics such as accepting physical and mental disabilities, social inclusion, and battling the issue of violence. In all stages of development, the department worked closely with consultants and proofreaders to produce high quality products.

**We Love Reading has developed 32 children books that cover the following themes:**

1. Environment: resource conservation, anti-littering
2. Empathy and social cohesion
3. Nonviolence
4. Refugees
5. Gender
6. Disabilities
OUR BOOK SERIES

In addition to the 32 books We Love Reading has published, we have also produced a series of guide books on different topics:

How To Write Children Story Books
How To Do Randomized Control Trials
ONGOING RESEARCH

Evaluate The Positive Changes In Attitudes And Practices Of Children Towards Reading And Evaluate The Willingness Of Children And Their Parents To Attend School.

Assess The Influence Of We Love Reading Program On Children’s Cognitive And Emotional Development During The Critical Preschool Years.

Assess The Positive Behavior Of Children Towards Social Inclusion By Studying Empathy.

Assess The Impact Of We Love Reading On Parent-Child Relationship.
PUBLISHED RESEARCH

Reading Social Stories In The Community: A Promising Intervention For Promoting Children's Environmental Knowledge And Behavior In Jordan.

Reading About People's Feelings Increases Empathic Concern And Generosity In Children.

Final Report: The Impact Of The We Love Reading Pilot Program On The Psychosocial Health Of Participating Children In Zaatari Refugee Camp.

We Love Reading–A Women’s Literacy Program In The Arab World.
OUR PARTNERS
SUPPORT OUR CAUSE

Read to children in your neighborhood

Buy our books or donate to start a library

Make us part of your CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility)

Spread the word!

Contact admin@weloveread.org
LOOKING FORWARD

50 is a milestone, half a century, the atomic number of Tin. The atomic number 50 is a magical number in physics and the largest number of stable isotopes. It is one of the oldest elements discovered more than 3500 BC.

As the founder of We Love Reading, this year will be my 50th birthday. We Love Reading has reached 50 countries. The rate of growth of the program will outstrip mine and grow beyond. We look forward to reaching more neighborhoods and children.

We Love Reading is looking towards spreading the program with governments through various related ministries including the ministry of education, social development, culture and youth targeting various age groups. With the aim that We Love Reading becoming a national priority and movement in Jordan. This is important so that the program becomes institutionalized for future sustainability so that the program can outlive us all and go one forever.

~ Rana Dajani