My name is Rana Dajani and I am an assistant professor at the Hashemite University in Jordan. The long journey to the We Love Reading organization of today began when my husband and I realized that not only are there very few libraries in Jordan that we could take our children to, but also that there is an epidemic of not reading in Arab culture. Reading is essential to development of children's personality, imagination, and cognitive skills, but the average number of pages read for pleasure in the Middle East when my husband and I noticed this trend, we took it upon ourselves to do something about it. We developed a project with a long term goal of “a library in every neighborhood.” Our project started with a pilot project in our own neighborhood. We first needed a place, and we figured that because every neighborhood had a mosque, it would be the perfect location. Then we received some charity money and went around the bookstores looking for books in Arabic for children that were appealing in terms of context, illustrations and language. Receiving gracious discounts from the bookstores, we went ahead and bought around 100 books. We announced in the Friday's prayers that there will be a storytelling session the following day on Saturday for one hour in the morning for children (both genders) from 4 to 9 years old (no need for adult supervision). I had obtained a number of costumes (clown, old woman, etc.) and a number of puppets. Around 25 children showed up the next day. We read 3 stories using animations and acting and had a really great time. Then we handed out all the books we had bought. The children were supposed to take the books home and read them every night or be read to by a parent every night until the next storytelling session, which was once every two weeks (to keep the suspense).

The whole objective of our project is to promote the love of reading in children. As research has proven, the best time to plant that seed is before 9 years of age. If children develop the love to read, we will have given them the best tool for success, because now they can learn and develop whatever they want on their
We Love Reading Since 2006

- The launch of We Love Reading training workshops
- Start of developing children stories
- WLR was chosen as a best practice in the Library of Congress Literacy Awards
- WLR launch in refugee camps
- Establishment over 600 Libraries
- We Love Reading Social movement
- WLR Mobile Application
- The Stars Impact Award
- Launch of WLR online training
- Qatar Foundation- WISE Award
- WLR selected as an UNESCO Effective Literary Programme
- Synergos Arab World Social Innovator Award
- Clinton Global Initiative Award
- Taghyeer establishment as We Love Reading umbrella
- Establishment over than 400 Libraries
- IDEO.org Award
- King Hussein Medal of Honor
- We Love Reading Initiative Launch
- We Love Reading since 2006
- Launch
The source of We Love Reading is a concept begun in the mind of a single person who recognized the absence of a culture of reading in Jordanian society and the potential that is and has been lost because of that fact. This stream of ideas and hopes swelled with the incorporation of tributaries of new research and success in the small neighborhood of Tabarbour, Amman where this one woman decided to begin reading to children at the local mosque -- and was greeted each time with an ever-increasing number of participants.

After acceptance from the community and consistently positive reception of her idea, Dr. Rana Dajani turned her personal project into an organization. In spite of having few employees and limited resources, the nascent We Love Reading began to pick up speed and gain momentum. Grant applications were drafted and fundraising was carried out to support We Love Reading's initiatives. Training programs designed to teach women the art of reading aloud to children began to empower women to take leadership in their communities. Children’s books were written, illustrated, and published. The path of We Love Reading strengthened and continued to develop as new partnerships were made and new support systems were formed.

The breadth of its progress continued to increase alongside the growing numbers of employees, volunteers, and libraries that transformed We Love Reading into a network. Outlets and offshoots extended in an increasing number of directions as the organization reached communities in 27 different countries, as well as throughout Jordan and many of its refugee camps.

We Love Reading has matured and grown based on a model that does not simply deliver a product or service to a community and leave the community dependent on receiving more aid, it enables and empowers people in those neighborhoods to be the change in their own lives and in their places. What began as one individual in a mosque has become a social movement, self-sustaining and widespread.
We have trained more than 1,000 volunteers around the

100 = متدرب

We opened more than 500 libraries.

100 = مكتبة

Our libraries impact more than 11,000 children.

1000 = طفل

We have distributed more than 35,000 copies of our stories. Different stories were designed for appropriate age groups.

5000 = كتاب
“When a butterfly flaps its wings in one part of the world it can cause a hurricane in another part of the world.”

The Chaos Theory
We Love Reading Ambassadors

People with special needs

Refugees

Women

Senior Citizens

Men

Youth

Retired military or civil servants
Based on extensive research and consideration, the WLR methodology was developed and designed to encompass numerous different strategies of outreach in order to create the biggest impact. These strategies include face to face (on the ground/in the field), facilitated trainings, and online programming.

The face to face trainings involved WLR-run sessions for volunteers. The programming for these incorporates lessons from experts on skills necessary to operate a “living library” and hold successful reading sessions for children in local communities. The key element for this type of outreach is that WLR is able to have direct access to the trainees and their learning process.

WLR also holds facilitated trainings that are designed to teach other organizations techniques for training volunteers. Being able to partner with other organizations allows for indirect training sessions, sessions not run by WLR but instead by those that it has trained, and gives WLR the opportunity to reach more people and therefore have an exponentially greater impact.

Online training takes outreach to the next level, enabling WLR to train volunteers from different countries all over the world. By creating educational videos and online curriculum, “living libraries” and reading sessions are possible anywhere, no matter how far from Jordan.
WLR study concluded that children who attended the read aloud sessions -where the volunteers read our book about environment - exhibit positive attitudes towards energy conservation, water conservation, and anti-littering.

WLR study showed that the WLR model empowers women to take leadership roles in their communities. By giving them direction and the opportunity to make a difference, WLR enables them to take respected positions and contribute in a meaningful way to the development of children.

WLR has conducted a research that was designed by the Department of Psychology at the University of Chicago to assess the WLR model’s ability to increase empathy in children. Study has shown positive results.

WLR and in collaboration with Yale university conducted a Psychosocial study - which has been designed by Department of Anthropology at Yale University -on the storytellers and children who attended the read aloud sessions at Za’atari. The results have shown that reading for children in Za’atari has made them eager to go back to school (there is a high rate of school dropouts in Za’atari for many reasons), they got to love reading and they learned to think for themselves.
Our core belief is that reading is the best way to change and enrich thinking. Because of our belief in the ability of reading to change behavior, as well as a lack of Arabic content in libraries that are in line with our Arab identity and traditions, we have developed 10 stories for children for ages 4-6 and 7-10. These stories are based on topics of the environment, saving electricity and water, and waste management, and they have received great responses among the children.

Now we are developing a new, high quality children’s stories and working with talented Jordanian writers, illustrators, designers, editors, and education consultants in collaboration with USAID and UNICEF. All of these stories are about physical and mental disabilities, refugees, gender equality, anti-violence, and social cohesion.

Doha’s Experience with Al Sunbour Al Maftouh Story

I am a former teacher from one of the major schools in Amman. My colleagues and I had to search for a source that could stimulate our students’ minds while at the same time being fun and avoiding the subtle dangers of technology. I remember that once I was inside the darb al marifa library and there was a selection of stories written by We Love Reading that talked about the environment and how to save it, which were quite engaging and would pique a child’s interest. One of these stories was Al Sunbour Al Maftouh. This story is about a child who uses water irresponsibly. During the course of the book, the child begins to realize that wasting water is wrong and he hoped that the people around him using too much water would realize their mistake as well. After reading the story with my class we had some activities related to the International Baccalaureate system.
The model of the initiative focuses that each trained volunteer librarian also trains some people from his/her community and read aloud for an average of 20 children, where those children also share this experience with their community (family, friends, etc.), knowing each other and showing love and empathy with others.

We Love Reading Impact

WLR Ambassador Librarian

Ambassador Librarian's Community

WLR Children

Children's Community