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We Love Reading Program

is an independent nonprofit organization that aims to foster the love of reading for pleasure among children, by implementing the We Love Reading program which constitutes training local men, women and youth to hold read aloud sessions in public spaces in their neighborhoods wherebooks are routinely read aloud to children. We Love Reading was founded in 2006 by Dr. Rana Dajani in Jordan, and has spread to 33 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

To provide a complete, sustainable, accessible, cost efficient, grassroots, flexible, “Read Aloud Program” to foster love of reading among children, empowering communities through activism of local volunteers from the Middle East, Africa and the rest of the developing world. We will realize this goal by engaging our workforce, creating partnerships, optimizing our program and model, utilizing technology, and continuous 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

We Love Reading is a total solution.

As we enter 2018, reflecting back over 13 years of an exciting, inspiring and challenging journey, we can only feel proud of what we have achieved thus far. Acknowledging, that the journey ahead is long and challenging.

To date we have trained 3460 women and men established 1570 We Love Reading libraries all over Jordan and enriched the lives of over 50,000 children. We Love Reading has spread to 35 countries around the world. Our latest member is Vietnam...

We have proudly visited We Love Reading libraries that are over three years old and still reading in different parts of Jordan and within refugee camps.

A true testimonial to the sustainability of the We Love Reading model and its philosophy of ownership.

We are proud of our We Love Reading ambassadors whose special needs have made the journey evermore relevant and important as role models in their neighborhoods.

We salute you! You are our heroes!

We have proudly created 20 new children books that focus on gender, disabilities, non violence, refugees and social inclusion of the highest quality, most moving and fun texts and the most beautiful illustrations. We have printed 200,000 books that we are distributing among children all over Jordan to instill values and morals that we know through research will stay with the children as they grow into independent, responsible adults who will be more empathetic, positive and resilient.

We are harnessing technology to reach everyone through our new online training platform and our mobile application that offers a virtual community for the We Love Reading ambassadors to connect, share and grow together. For which we won the UNESCO International Literacy Prize 2017.

The We Love Reading team headed by our new CEO has been working relentlessly day and night to achieve our goals and dreams... They are the doers... who never take no for an answer...Seeking excellence to serve humanity...

Together we have come to realize that We Love Reading is a family, a tribe, an academy...a way of life...

DR. RANA DAJANI
FOUNDER
2017 Wrapping up a Year of Growth

41 Countries

7000 Trainees

4,000 Ambassadors

440,000 Children

140,000 Reading Sessions

250,000 Distributed Books
Our Mission
To foster the love of reading for pleasure among children.

2010
249  We Love Reading Trainees
104  Reading Ambassadors
2080 Children Read to
2600 Distributed Books
2496 Reading Session

2015
283  We Love Reading Trainees
179  Reading Ambassadors
3580 Children Read to
4475 Distributed Books
4296 Reading Session

2016
2423  We Love Reading Trainees
1010  Reading Ambassadors
172741 Children Read to
25250 Distributed Books
24240 Reading Session

2017
3452  We Love Reading Trainees
2343  Reading Ambassadors
254971 Children Read to
250,000 Distributed Books
142820 Reading Session
We Love Reading Around the World

1. ALGERIA
2. ARGENTINA
3. AUSTRALIA
4. AZERBAIJAN
5. BANGLADESH
6. BOLIVIA
7. CANADA
8. CENTRAL AFRICA
9. CONGO
10. CYPRUS
11. EGYPT
12. ETHIOPIA
13. FRANCE
14. GERMANY
15. GREECE
16. HONG KONG
17. INDONESIA
18. IRAQ
19. JORDAN
20. KENYA
21. LEBANON
22. MALAYSIA
23. MALI
24. MEXICO
25. MOROCCO
26. OMAN
Reading
around the World

| 27. PAKISTAN | 32. SYRIA | 37. UGANDA |
| 28. PALESTINE | 33. THAILAND | 38. U.K. |
| 29. QATAR | 34. TUNISIA | 39. U.S.A |
| 30. SAUDI ARABIA | 35. TURKEY | 40. VIETNAM |
| 31. SOMALIA | 36. U.A.E | 41. YEMEN |
Early Childhood Development

We Love Reading’s philosophy is built on careful research about early childhood development. Early childhood is the most important phase in a child’s development, and reading to children at a young age is fundamental in the development of a stronger, healthier mind. The WLR program targets children ages 4 to 10 building on the fact that the earlier you start reading the better. We Love Reading has partnered with international academic institutions including Yale and the University of Chicago and local universities to conduct studies monitoring the effects of the WLR program on young children. Such studies have included research on how the WLR program affects levels of empathy in children and on the psycho social well-being of children in Jordan’s Za’atari Camp.

“I am Hanan Oreiqat from Ajloun. I have four beautiful girls, three of them are deaf. The youngest has no speech problems, but she was always using the sign language and refused to talk.

One day, I heard about a We Love Reading Training being held in Ajloun. I got excited about the idea that I will read for children in my area including my kids, and thought: ‘maybe this could help my daughter to express herself better!’

I took the training and started reading aloud right away. After a few sessions, I noticed a big change in my girl’s behaviour. She stopped using sign language to communicate, and no longer refused to talk. She expresses herself clearly and sometimes creates her own stories.

Whenever we go to a stationary store, she buys a coloring book, colors the characters and names them to make a story out of that coloring book. Becoming a We Love Reading ambassador has changed my daughter’s life!”
Our Impact

Social Emotional Learning

Reading aloud to children provides a tool for building resilience and improving social emotional well-being in children and adults. We Love Reading (WLR) is a community-based grassroots program, a model and philosophy for inspiring resilience among adults, youth and children. By training volunteer adults to read-aloud to children fun stories in their native language we give them a medium through which they communicate with parents and caregivers building a cycle of change. WLR is an evidence-based model developed in a human centered design fashion in Jordan by local people that is cost-efficient and sustainable. WLR is scalable through an innovative partnering model allowing scaling of psychosocial support programming at the first level of need providing preventive support early on in a simple flexible approach.

“I am Raoudah and I am from Tunisia. I’m a very passionate reader and teacher. I was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease 30 years ago, which severely diminished the amount of reading I could do as I could no longer hold the energetic classes that I used to hold. But this diagnosis did not stop me. Passion makes you unstoppable. I heard about We Love Reading through my sister. I contacted Dr. Rana on how I could become a part of the initiative, and the children were immediately excited to come to my reading aloud club as they had not had the experience before. I now hold reading aloud sessions twice a week and then an extra session to coordinate a book exchange. I always try to inspire my pupils. I encourage them to read as much as they can in order to improve their imagination. I will go on doing things that benefit the children as long as I have energy to do so, and luckily for me, I find reading to the children to be a remedy for me.”

ROUDHA MAHJOOB
TUNISIA
Our Impact

Women Empowerment

Here at We Love Reading, one of our core values is women empowerment. We aspire to support a gradual and natural development of women leadership within the community. We challenge them to critically examine their environment, identify problems and come up with solutions. We train women reading ambassadors and encourage them to make an impact in their community. They develop social entrepreneurship skills by opening libraries.

“I have always wanted to become a teacher, but I have never had the chance to complete my education. I heard about a training on reading aloud for children and thought “this could be a great chance for me to be closer to children!” I took the We Love Reading training and after a few weeks of holding reading sessions, I felt the difference. I felt how much these reading sessions have affected me and the children in my area! Even the mothers are happy now!

One of the girls named Yara said: “I love reading sessions, because Linda make us read sometimes, and unlike the teacher she does not reprove me when I make a mistake while reading.” She added: “My friends always buy stories but I never had enough money to buy a story. I really feel thankful because Linda reads to us and make us exchange stories without paying money! When I grow up I will build an orphanage so I can read to orphans and help them.”

Becoming a We Love Reading ambassador have made me feel that I have achieved my aim of becoming a teacher!”

LINDA MUJAHED
AMMAN, JORDAN
Our Impact

Social Entrepreneurship

WLR’s social entrepreneurship program encourages volunteers give back to their communities. Volunteers become leaders in the community by starting their own social initiatives, creating positive change, and fostering creativity, optimism, and perseverance, among many other leadership skills. WLR’s social entrepreneurship program runs on the philosophy, “If I can open a library, what else can I do?”

Many years before I had an incident I would not forget, I was shot in the spine and became an invalid person. A friend gave me a book about the most famous disabled people in the world, the book made a new breakthrough in my life, so I decided to complete my studies and become a librarian. But I did not know how to begin and how to make my students love reading, because I believe reading is the key to change in light of this vicious circle which we live in.

I saw a report about Dr. Rana Dajani, and how she was honored for having the initiative to encourage reading in the Kingdom. After that, I decided to search for her and I sent her a letter on 11/1/2011 she was very encouraging, not only encouraged but sent a collection of books which my students desperately needed. Now, I read in the library weekly. I’m happy about the noticeable difference I saw in my students.

ABDULLAH HAMAIIDA
AL-MAFRAQ, JORDAN
At We Love Reading, one of our core values is girl’s empowerment. We aspire to support a gradual development of women leadership within the community. We have also developed a series of programs to empower young girls. The “Be You” Project helps girls improve their writing skills and express themselves better. The “A Story of a Picture” project in Za’atari Camp empowers refugee girls to tell their own stories and to heal from traumatic war memories. The “Empower Her” project aims to create a generation of females that love, respect and believe in themselves by training girls how to identify their challenges and develop practical solutions for them in order to become change makers.

Leila Jamal, a participant of the Be You Project, talks about her experience: “I am in 10th grade, my participation in Be You Project was amazing. I met new people and one of my dreams became true, which is meeting a professional writer. I learned how to talk properly, and during other sessions I learned and improved my drawing and writing skills. I became capable of drawing better and writing without having to change my ideas.”
Our core belief is the ability of reading to change behavior and develop critical thinking skills. We are also aware of the lack of Arabic content in books that are in line with our Arab identity and traditions. We have developed a new, high-quality series of children's books and worked with talented Jordanian writers, illustrators, designers and editors. All content is reviewed by education consultants as well as consultants within the respective content themes. Thus far, WLR has created 32 children’s books covering a variety of themes, including environmental awareness, empathy, gender, non-violence, disabilities, and refugees. In 2017, WLR has distributed 30,000 books all over Jordan and is intending to distribute another 200,000 books to benefit children across Jordan's refugees camps, rural areas and cities.

“I want to buy the license for We Love Reading books. I can’t believe these are made in Jordan by Jordanians. The quality is amazing.”
Carol Sakoin
Vice President, Scholastic Books
Research

We Love Reading, in collaboration with other institutions, actively conducts research on the topics of early childhood development as well as women empowerment.

Our Published Research

**Reading social stories in the community: A promising intervention for promoting children’s environmental knowledge and behavior in Jordan.**


**Summary:** This study reports findings from the We Love Reading Program that utilizes the reading of social stories in various Jordanian communities on the topic of environmental problems. Results indicated the effectiveness of this informal educational intervention, showing an increase in children’s knowledge of environmental issues and a positive change in their behaviors.

**We Love Reading-A Women Literacy Program in the Arab World.**


**Summary:** The highly interactive We Love Reading training program covers a wide range of aspects from leadership and entrepreneurship to communication and building confidence. The program aims to empower women as leaders in their community to implement positive changes.

**Reading about people’ feelings increases empathic concern and generosity in children, , University of Chicago.**

Decety, J; Cowell, J; Dajani, R (2014)

**Summary:** The empathic intervention specifically raised children’s generosity by nearly 100%, as well as increasing the amount of empathic concern they felt for another child. Importantly, the intervention did not affect what we call “emotional empathy” or sensitivity for pain.

These changes were not present in the control group. Altogether, these results show that the emotional reading intervention causes an increase in empathic concern for another as well as greater pro-social behavior.
The Impact of the We Love Reading Pilot Program on the Psycho-social Health of Participating Children in Za'atari Refugee Camp.

Summary: We Love Reading was introduced in Za’atari camp for Syrian refugees through a pilot project in the summer of 2014. A psycho-social study designed by Department of Anthropology at Yale University was conducted on the storytellers and children who attended the read aloud sessions at Za’atari.

The results in the test of resilience taken by children in Za’atari are close to the results shown by children in the US who took the same test. Reading for children in Za’atari has strengthened their eagerness to return to school (there is a high rate of school dropouts in Za’atari for a variety of reasons). In addition, children learned to love reading and to think independently.

Our Ongoing Research

UNICEF

Evaluate the positive changes in attitudes and practices of children towards reading and evaluate the willingness of children and their parents to attend school

BROWN UNIVERSITY

Assess the influence of We Love Reading program on children’s cognitive and emotional development during the critical preschool years.

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Assess the positive behavior of children towards social inclusion by studying empathy

HARVARD UNIVERSITY AND NYU

Assess the impact of We Love Reading on parent-child relationship
Private Companies Support

Shams Ma'an helped us conduct training on reading aloud at Prince Hussein Cultural Center in Ma'an for two days for 47 women from the local community in Ma'an.

License Program

As part of our licensing program, interested NGOs or private companies can purchase an annually renewable license to implement our program. This year, Plan International and the UN Refugee Agency purchased our license and brought our program to Africa.

Impact Assessment

This year, Integrated International conducted an impact assessment of We Love Reading. Here are some key findings and recommendations:

Relevance: WLR is aligned with its mission, fills the needs of children, volunteers, and communities in fostering reading culture. But we need a document that clearly outlines the thinking behind our model.

Effectiveness: WLR is very effective in cultivating the love of reading among children as well as delivering cost-effective training program. In order to improve organizational performance, WLR should consider a review of the organizational structure to increase communication, staff empowerment, and delegation of responsibilities.

Sustainability: The WLR model is sustainable to the extent that it is human-centered, community-based, and is relatively cost-free. The challenges to sustainability includes: finding locations, additional reading material, and dealing with children’s behaviors.

Monitoring and Evaluation: WLR is developing a Quality Management System, but this system is not yet organized into an overarching M&E framework, reflecting a need to align current M&E processes with strategic planning objectives to capture change and measure impact.
WLR is working on creating a network for communication among the volunteers for:
Sustainability
Tracking performance
Improvement and development.
Reporting
We aim to provide targeted information to volunteers using technology to ensure a well-established and functioning virtual community of WLR ambassadors.
The community allows for capacity building, collecting data and documentation in addition to sharing and exchange of best practices in reading aloud sessions.

Our Online Training

We Love Reading offers a remote Online Training Program for volunteers who would like to become We Love Reading Ambassadors, but are unable to attend a WLR training in-person.

The online training program trains volunteers how to create their own We Love Reading Library, including units on finding an appropriate location for WLR read-aloud sessions, how to choose appropriate reading materials, other ambassador experience and tips for reading aloud, among others.
We Love Reading has been chosen as the recipient of the 2017 UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize under the theme of ‘literacy in a digital world.’ The prize, consisting of a sum of US $20,000, a medal, and a certificate, honors outstanding contributions made to literacy, with special consideration given to the use and dissemination of mother-tongue languages.

The prize have been presented at an official ceremony at UNESCO’s Headquarters in Paris on 8 September, International Literacy Day where Dr. Rana gave a speech about the importance of reading.
We Love Reading is honored to be featured in the Stanford Social Innovation Review’s Fall 2017 issue. The article is titled 1,001 Story Times, written by Corey Binns, and highlights We Love Reading’s mission to bring the love of reading to children across the world.

The article was published in SSIR’s Field Report section, which profiles innovative work around the world. It calls the initiative “beautifully simple and replicable,” and cites IDEO.org’s Rob Gradoville, saying, “The magic is in the details that Dajani and her team provide to each volunteer, training them so they can host reading circles in a way that has been scientifically proven to engender empathy and improve learning outcomes in children.” The article calls attention to WLR’s programs with refugees and its success in inspiring dedication from its volunteers, as well as its efforts at expansion and scaling.
We Love Reading Wins UNHCR “Protecting Urban Refugee Children” Challenge

We Love Reading has been chosen as one of the winners of the “Protecting Urban Refugee Children: An Innovation Challenge,” organized by the UNHCR Child Protection Unit and Innovation Team.

WLR will now have the opportunity to present our idea to UNHCR staff and partners and discuss how it might be implemented in different contexts.

The “Protecting Urban Refugee Children” Innovation Challenge was created by UNHCR to answer the question, “How might we better protect refugee children in cities?” WLR was one of 125 ideas submitted for the challenge. Submitted ideas received direct feedback from UNHCR staff and refugee youth, and winning ideas may be eligible for possible funding up to $50,000.
Looking Forward!

Our new vision for 2018 includes two themes:

- **We Love Reading for Early childhood.**

Our resolution is based on our recent study funded by UNICEF that showed the largest impact of We Love Reading is on children under 5 who don’t go to school.

We Love Reading addresses not only literacy but social emotional growth and development of a child. “Kids don’t come in pieces” as one researcher commented. Parents are involved in their children’s education and social emotional growth by becoming We Love Reading ambassadors themselves, leading reading aloud sessions in their neighborhoods. This results in the parents own social emotional growth and development, and improved mental health.

The We Love Reading ambassadors are also youth from the community, who through their involvement in the program, build resilience, well-being and a positive mindset in addition to social entrepreneurship skills. Therefore, our second theme for 2018 is

- **We Love Reading a Social Emotional Support Program**

Our goal is to plant the love of reading in every child, and build resilience, well-being and mindfulness in neighborhoods all over the world.

By creating partnerships, sharing responsibilities, building on each other’s expertise, capability and capacity, we aim to achieve our goal.

Whether individuals or organizations; local or international; each has something unique to offer that adds value and enriches our journey together.

These partnerships not only bring us closer to our goal but allow us to learn and grow in the process itself, because life is all about the journey... and what a fulfilling fun journey it is.

"IT DOES NOT MATTER IF WE REACH THE END OF OUR JOURNEY, WHAT MATTERS IS THAT WE TRIED... OUR PERSPECTIVE IS SEEING AN OCEAN IN A DROP OF WATER... SOME SAY: WHAT IS A DROP IN THE OCEAN, WE SAY: WHAT IS THE OCEAN BUT A MULTITUDE OF DROPS. TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!"
WLR
Ambassadors
"I HAVE BEEN READING TO SYRIAN AND JORDANIAN CHILDREN, I FOUND THAT READING HELPED THEM GET ALONG WITH EACH OTHER, AND DISCOVERED WHAT THEY HAVE IN COMMON.”

Faten Tahan
We Love Reading Ambassador
Za’atari Camp
Jordan
Book Distribution

We Love Reading Distributed

250,000 Children Stories
Awards

UNESCO Literacy Prize
Amplify Refugee Education Challenge
King Hussein Medal of Honor

WISE Award
Stars Impact Award
Library of Congress Literacy Awards

Ahel Al-himmeh Award
Clinton Global Initiative
Synergos Arab World Social Innovator Award
Support Our Cause

10 $ Buy a book for a child
100 $ Train a volunteer to become a reading ambassador
1000 $ Sponsor the opening of a new library
Or any amount you like!

Donate Books for our Libraries!

Start Reading for Children
Contact Us!

Spread The Word!

Buy Our Books

WWW.WELOVEREADING.ORG | ADMIN@WELOVEREADING.ORG