We Love Reading is an organic grassroots program that is a sustainable solution for a worldwide challenge because it addresses the very essence of what makes us human..
We do not know how much our kids love reading until we read aloud to them.

– We Love Reading ambassador
In this issue you will read:

About our reading ambassadors inside refugee camps, who did not stop reading even when the odds were against them. You will read some of their stories that inspired our ambassadors around the world.

Even If I Do Not Have Books

We Love Reading Inside The Camps

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It Feels Like I am The Child Not Them

Whatever were the odds..

Our Ambassador in Ethiopia

Our New Readers in Ethiopia
Our very first reading ambassadors

We have trained reading ambassadors inside Zataari camp since 2014, some of them are still reading till the moment. Some of them:

Asmaa Arrashed
Mohammad Khair
Fadi Al-Wali
Yusuf Hmadi
Emad Al-Hariri

3488

Number of Children Being Read to*

218

Number of Reading Ambassadors Inside the camps

*number of children was measured based on the estimated average 16 kid per ambassador
We Love Reading Inside Refugee Camps

-Ghufran Abudayyeh

One of our outstanding achievement in 2016 is that “We Love Reading program has entered all Syrian refugee camps in Jordan and one of the refugee camp in Ethiopia/Gambela. In this issue of “We love Reading” magazine you will read more about our reading ambassadors’ success stories.

We have started our trainings inside Syrian refugee camps (Azraq and EJC) since May 2016 through NRC. Refugee camps circumstances differ from one camp to another. Where the access to the basic needs in the Emirati camp (EJC) is easier than other camps. Refugees in Azraq camp are suffering from hard living conditions, in terms of water scarcity, lack of access to electricity and poor housing which is not commensurate with the surrounding environment (the desert), which posed a new challenge to our initiative and raised question about the feasibility of “We Love Reading” program in such new circumstances.

The success of the program was questioned because of the conditions inside Azraq camp. Also, refugees inside cannot think about anything other than providing the basic needs for their children, we were told that they will never think about entertaining them or read a story to them. Besides, many parents do not send their children to school as they do not believe in education to improve their situation. As a consequence, there is a high percentage of illiterate children inside the camp.

We took all what we were told in consideration, and it encouraged us more to implement “We Love Reading” trainings inside that camp, and the results were impressive.

At the end of 2016 “We Love Reading” trainings reached the Sudani refugee camp in Ethiopia –Gambela in collaboration with UNHCR and Plan international organization. The program had a great impact on the refugees inside the camp, as they were enthusiastic to read feeling the importance of this program in their communities. At then end of this issue, you will read more about our new reading ambassadors and their wonderful stories.
Even If I do Not Have Books

– Saleh Said Alkhello, Azraq camp

I have only attended the first day of reading aloud training and did not get We Love Reading kit. However, I borrow stories from other reading ambassadors in the camp then I read to children in my neighborhood.

In summer days we read anywhere outside the caravan, but in winter I stop reading due to the difficult conditions inside the camp. I started reading for 4 children. The number has increased with time to 25 children where the majority of them do not read and 4 of them are blind.

At the beginning, children did not pay attention to the story, but they had changed their attitude with the continuation of reading. Once I take a book, they sit-down waiting for the adventure to begin. Every time I read, the children pay attention to every single detail in the story.

All these encourage me to continue reading. They also read to each other. Sometimes after the reading session, blind children ask me unusual questions that I cannot answer, for example, what is the color of water? I try not to answer them and to let them use their imagination, but by reading, I can make them imagine the world as if they can see it.
I have two daughters, five and four years old. They have not entered school yet. I began reading to my daughters because I wanted them to be excellent and special when they enter school. With time, my reading circle expanded to 10 children. Children’s interest and motivation to listen to stories caught my attention. Honestly, I did not expect it. Before reading session children had spent most of their time playing in streets, but now they ask me to read to them in their free time. Even adults enjoyed the reading session, including my wife. I am glad to see children coming to my caravan, even when I am not there, they just take a story and read it.

Even Adults Joined To Listen To Stories

–Bedaewi Yunes Athiab, EJC
The Impact of Reading...

–Medien Ahmad AlNajem

I am reading for seven months now for seven children in my caravan. Before every reading session, children ask me about the Syrian war. It saddens me that no day passes on them without thinking of their country and what had happened.

By reading, I try to distract them from the bad war news and ideas that does not suit their ages. One beautiful thing out of many I have noticed, that children learned to speak stander Arabic and they sometimes use it more than colloquial. Stories have helped children who suffer from speech problem or reading weakness to improve their levels. These great results and children’s enthusiasm encouraged me to continue.

The Youngest Reading Ambassador

–Noor Al-Huda Abu Jeish

My name is Noor AL Huda, I am the youngest reading ambassadors in Za’atri camp, I am 12 years old and I usually in the backyard of my caravan, 20 children attend my session in aged between 4–12 y/o. I did not attend a “We Love Reading” training but Asma Alrashed, a “We Love Reading” ambassador, has trained me. At the beginning, I was scared to stand up and read in front of children, but this did not stop me from trying and becoming better at what I am doing.

Children’s favorite story is “Why Electricity Has Escaped “because electricity always goes off in the camp for hours. They thought that power goes off due to overuse, so they started reducing power consumption in their caravans.
What If I Forgot The Stories?!
-Mohammad Khalaf, Zaatari Camp

I have been reading for a year now, the number of children who attends the session varies from session to another depending on the circumstances, sometimes 7 children attend sometimes 15.

I am in my twenties, and was deprived of many things when I was a kid, I do not want other kids to be deprived of these things. This is what encourages me to volunteer and to continue reading to children. One day, I was on my way to a reading session, my colleague and I forgot our stories bag in a taxi. We thought about the children who were waiting for the stories and how much they would be disappointed. So we wrote a story from our daily life then read to children our invented story.

Children’s hankering for the sessions makes them come early, and this is enough for me to keep reading for them, no matter what happens.

A New Entertainment in Azraq Camp
-Nisreen Hasan, Azraq Camp

I read to children in my caravan, they are around 15 kids. Children love gathering, the lack of electricity makes their gathering the only entertainment they have. They come in the morning before school or at noon after school. Reading stories has a positive impact on us; I can see the happiness in their eyes waiting for the session to begin and I am glad to be a part of their daily life’s routine and to be their new entertainment inside the camp. Through reading, I relieve the life stresses and make them forget the war memories.

Some illiterate children memorize the story and take it to their houses to read for their brothers and sisters using the illustrations. Also, some parents come and take stories to read them to their kids.
Read! I Love You An Insightful Reader..

–Majd Qasha’m & Ahmad Alabdullah, Azraq camp

After the end of “We Love Reading “first day training, I asked the trainees if my wife Majd could also attend the second day of training, because I knew that Majd has been distinguished in declamation since she was in school. We took the training together and held our first reading session right after we took the kits.

Majd: I am Majd, Ahmad’s wife. I have always dreamed of becoming an ambassador. Now, after WLR training, I am a reading ambassador in the camp. I sent to my father, who was stuck on the Turkish borders, that My husband and I are now reading ambassadors. He sent me right away a poem he wrote:

Read! I love an insightful reader

Ignorance disappear, thoughts enlightens

The book is a path for life appreciators

A good friend that will not leave or betray

A book is a way to live up to superiority

So choose the benevolent path

Ahmad: what I have noticed through continuous reading is that kids like stories about animals and farms, because these stories remind them of their life in Syria before war. Some other stories scare them off, so I do not read them again.
Majd: once I have started implementing the reading session, children responded positively; they memorize the story after reading, and they take the story to read it to their friends even those who do not know how to read well.

Ahmad: I love it when children start to imitate the voices of animals or characters in the story.

Majd: At school I gather girls to read to them in their free time, other girls who have sport class come to listen to the story, leaving their favorite class just because the story attracted them.

The only thing that makes us continue reading is the hope for Allah reward, as we know the good impact of stories on children in the camp. The man always lives resisting hard living conditions not only by seeking for the basic needs but also by thinking about a better future and seeking for the wisdom and goodness.
It Feels Like I am The child Not them!

-Shawq Alshahadat, EJC

I read in my caravan to almost 15 children. When I read to them, It feels like I am the child not them. I enjoy the story more than they do. What encourages me to go on reading is children’s happiness and enthusiasm to listen more and more. Parents in my neighborhood ask me to read to their children and sometimes they borrow stories.

What caught my attention that when I mentioned a story title, children start telling each other about story’s plot and characters. My little sister is two years old, she interacts with stories and after the session she takes the story and starts imitating me.

Whatever were the odds..

-Issa Mohammad, EJC

In the camp, each 110 caravans is called a hall and in the middle of the hall there is a central caravan to provide other caravans with water and bread. I am responsible of providing water to the central caravan, and at night, about 17 kids gather around me to listen to a new story after I finish my job. After I took the security permission to start my reading sessions, all my worries gone away. At first, children did not commit to the session trying to miss it but with time they liked the stories and talk to their parents about it. I love children and I feel they love me too. Every day they come to my caravan with passion to listen to a story that spark their imagination. I will never stop reading stories whatever the circumstances may be.
New Readers from Ethiopia shared their ideas after WLR training:

- Tabsiti: “Reading for children makes us forget the difficulties that we face. We will continue reading whatever the circumstances may be. “

- A priest: “we want to read stories from our culture to conserve our history and identity. “

- Nikra: “Reading makes one’s happy and it helps children and parents to overcome difficulties. “

- Kor: “Reading sessions gather children in one place, and make them love to go to school. We will not make this training stop here, we will train other people in our society.”

Champol and other new volunteers shared their ideas and thoughts about “We Love Reading” training. We trained 40 from Ethiopia and Mohammad Ameen from Addis Ababa trained Sada and Aisha who also shared her experience and said: “now our children have the reading habit.”

Our Reading ambassador in Ethiopia

You can see in the picture, our reading ambassador from Ethiopia during a reading session at her cottage yard. Before that, she used to read to her sons and daughters, and their friends inside the cottage. With time, her cottage become smaller as the children’s number got bigger. So she started reading at the yard under the shade of a tree as she informed us. One session while she was reading aloud, children who were playing football joined the session and left the ball behind. What children enjoy the most is the illustrations of books. She asked us to train more people to help increase the spread of the idea.
“We read for ourselves, our children, our community, our future”

This is what we hear again and again from every refugee where We Love Reading is implemented, whether in...Zaatri in Jordan or Kule in Ethiopia.

We Love Reading provides a purpose, gives agency and empowers refugees to take control of their lives. Contrary to traditional international development programs who unintentionally promote dependency.

Through reading aloud to children on a regular basis; adults find a practical simple purpose to focus on rather than wandering aimlessly, distressed and feeling useless, for children it provides hope and a love of reading and fills the gap to avoid the lost generation plague until proper education systems are put into place, for parents reading aloud becomes the medium for communication between parent and child to heal the trauma inflicted by war.

The impact is that WLR becomes a tool for alleviating mental stress, increasing wellbeing and resilience.

The collective impact of the creation of the WLR library is creating a community that encourages and supports reading for fun—changing the culture from the ground up to create change makers who can make a difference.

We Love Reading is an organic grassroots program that is a sustainable solution for a worldwide challenge because it addresses the very essence of what makes us human...

“I can make a difference... I only have to try...”

– Rana Dajani

Reading is more than a way to learn

In “We Love Reading” I discovered new meanings of reading. For example, the volunteer reads to children to entertain them instead of wasting their time on watching TV or playing. Thus, both of the reader and listener will benefit. “We Love Reading” initiative introduced me to reading world –especially in refugee camp – I hope this magazine shows you a part of “We Love Reading” world, as it showed me.

Abdu-Alaziz Hiary – “We Love Reading “ intern