

WE LOVE READING

Zaatari Edition

Inspiring the next
generation through
books!

نحن نحب القراءة
WE LOVE READING

Volume 1, Issue 2, November 2015





“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



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The magic of WLR

WLR empowers people of every age. Women finding a purpose within the chaos of their lives. Young men recreating their dreams and finding a path to achieve them. Children discovering hope and fun.

WLR is about creating an environment through the medium of reading aloud to rebuild bridges of communication between people after the ordeals they have gone through...

It is like sprinkling magic dust and the people's eyes light up... their souls are revived and spirits are raised.. to face a new world with optimism and purpose... taking control of their destiny of their future.....



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-Dr. Rana Dajani



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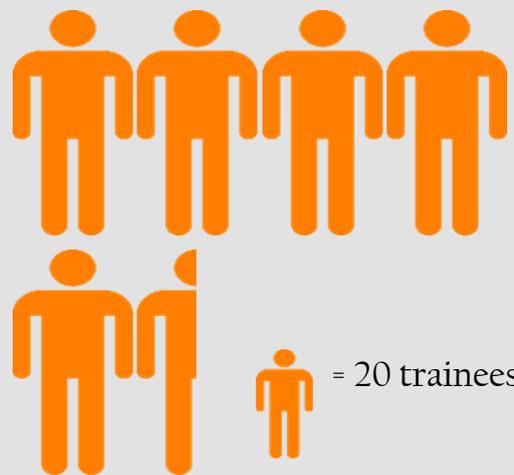
Our WLR libraries and readers in Zaatari

First month in Zaatari...

May 2014

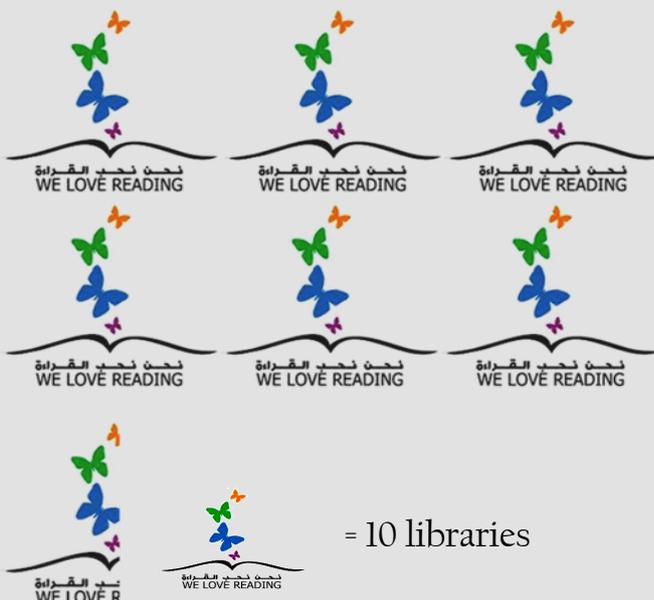


Number of people trained (144)



= 20 trainees

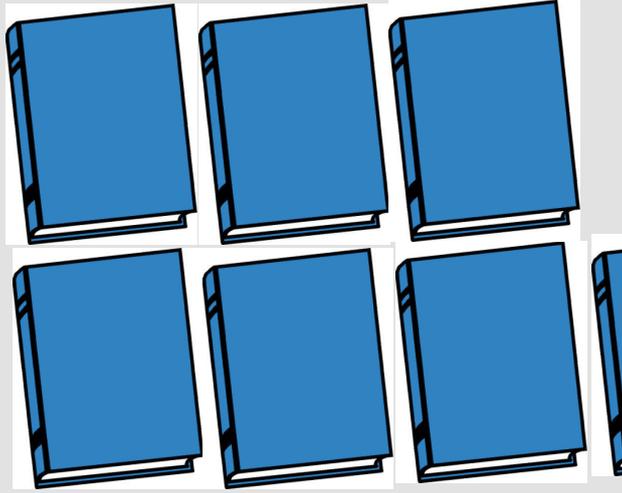
Number of libraries opened (82)



= 10 libraries

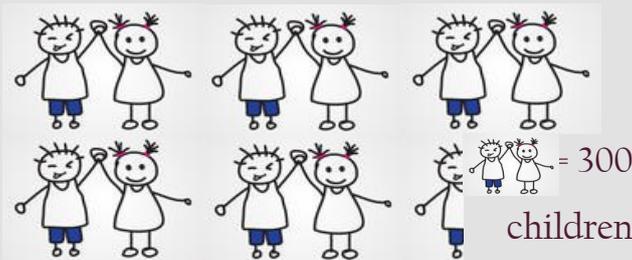


Number of books given out (1550)



= 250 books

Number of children who have been read to since May 2014 (estimate 1640)



open IDEO

The initiative We Love Reading was chosen by OpenIDEO Foundation as one of seven winners of their Refugee Education Challenge; the only initiative from the Middle East and out of a total of 380 ideas globally. The team of WLR were invited to benefit from a training camp in Uganda to be able to develop innovative ideas and to add to the initiative.

OpenIDEO Foundation have been assisting WLR in designing distance training prototypes to help anyone in any place around the world to train and spread the idea of WLR. During a trip to Jordan, the teams developed several prototype training schemes for the application of this remote training, such as the use of videos and voice notes to achieve the same level of training.

The existence of this kind of training will aid the initiative in achieving its aim of establishing a library in every neighborhood in the world.



Asmaa's story—Empowering People

My name is Asmaa. I have been living in Zaatari camp for three years. During my first year as a Syrian refugee I completely lost all hope as I had



no sense of identity or homeland anymore, and could only hope that one day I would return home. I had left Syria carrying only one bag and my daughters—one of whom was 25 days old—not thinking about where we were going or for how long, only of protecting my family. After one year, I began to try and work out how I could possibly help to save the next Syrian generation, and then my life restarted when I heard about the 'We Love Reading' initiative and attended the training.

Nobody advised me to go to the training, particularly as I had just lost a baby and so mentally and physically I was not at my best, but I insisted as I did not want to lose the chance. I have loved reading and writing since I was young, despite not being able

to complete my studies at school and continue writing. Initially, it was not easy gathering children as it was difficult to tempt them away from their jobs (like working a trolley or sifting sand to earn money for their family), or playing with the rubbish, to listen to a story. It was also hard to persuade children who thought that stories could have no value in their life.

I managed to collect an initial group and after I had finished the story, I saw happiness in their eyes. Despite this, I was still worried they would not come back, but I persevered and they returned the next day with their friends, something I will never forget as I was able to inspire more happiness in more children.



WLR were very supportive, supplying me with new books and helping me create new sessions. Dr. Rana was very supportive and asked me to write my own creative stories using the names of the children as the characters, which the children loved to hear. I then began to wonder how I could publish my stories so that 'my' children could become the heroes of others.

One day, I found a flyer which had a number for the magazine Al-Tareek (The Way) who were asking for new material, which encouraged me to message them, despite being scared of them refusing and asking what I was doing?

The Director of the magazine immediately replied and said that she wanted to publish my stories. I told the children, who were overjoyed, and began writing monthly for the magazine and now, whenever I hold a session I



get a new idea for a story. From this point onwards my life has been filled with love – from children and families –

and respect from the community.

This love and respect has not been the only benefit from WLR – it has led to me getting a job with Save the Children at a library in their day care centre as they wanted me to encourage and inspire other children to visit their library, and so I went.

I have not only been personally blessed by WLR but have also noticed a change in the children through their drawings. In the beginning, they were mainly drawing guns, military planes and tanks, however, after just a few stories, their imagination had been rebooted and they began to draw houses and gardens.

My hope now is that I want the Syrian youth to do anything to help the children because we have to stand together, hand in hand, to rebuild our nation – we can all help in this crucial role in building the next generation.

I can't find the words to end this, but I want to thank everyone who has helped me with this initiative.

Fadi - Asmaa's husband's story

For me, the idea of WLR is very beautiful and important. We have to continue with this programme and think about new ideas to help the programme evolve and benefit more children. I think that WLR is an organisation that deserves appreciation as it benefits women and children at the same time. Also, WLR not only offers care to the refugee children, but also encourages them to be a leader which will lead to a better future for our nation.





Basil's story - A Creative Reader

“My name is Basil Al-Ahmad, I am 22 and I am a volunteer with WLR. I started with them 6 months ago when I got my certificate and started working directly on the initiative and holding the reading sessions for the children in Sector 4.

I became particularly involved with the development of different prototypes which WLR was developing with OpenIDEO. My role in the development of one prototype was to train ten people by showing them videos of Dr. Rana leading a training, and then to encourage them to attend reading sessions led by me followed by peer evaluation. As a result of this course which I led, nine new WLR libraries were opened.

I still gather children in my humble home and read stories to them. I try my best to ensure that my delivery of the story is as correct as possible – proper language, pronunciation, facial expressions, voice rhythm – so that the children can learn from all aspects of the story. I hope and am sure I will regularly continue reading into the future.”

Basil is an amazing, creative volunteer with us who always tries to produce new ideas for the initiative. He has been particularly helpful with the development of the prototypes.

We wish him all the best.



Yassin's story...

I'm Yassin Jameel Abu Samra; I'm 26 and am living in Zaatari.

I studied in Syria as an electrical engineer and programmer and now I'm a volunteer in Zaatari with many different organisations like the IRD, FPSE and Syrian youth committee. As part of my role with the youth committee, I led a mobile library. During my time there, the committee decided that I should take the WLR training with Dr. Rana and Ala'a.

I recruited around 35 men and women, between the 4th and 29th of October, 2015, and since then, certificates have been distributed and around 13 new libraries have been signed to be opened.

This was an amazing experience for me, and happily look forward, to working with the WLR team and am ready to do anything to ensure the success of the initiative.



After completing this, I started to read to some children in sector 6. Taking the training was amazing and very beneficial as it improved my ideas and the way I think about reading. After a while of reading to the children, WLR asked me to lead a prototype to try and develop a more efficient way of training new people to read to children.

I train both men and women on how to read aloud and then start their own libraries within a specific prototype model.



Economics to Reading

- Fadi's story

My name is Fadi Adel Al-Wali, I'm 25 years old, married and am living in Zaatari.



Back in Syria, I studied economics and commerce in the accounting department and have two years' experience teaching and taking care of those with special needs. I am also interested in theatre, I was a critic in Damascus, and I have done some training as a psychological counsellor.

In Zaatari, I am a trainer in the UNHCR 'Amani (my safety) campaign' with which we try to condone violence against children and women, and I am also involved with the FPSC, War Child, the IRD, and finally, WLR.

When I met Dr. Rana, she was giving the first WLR training session at Zaatari – which for me was a unique and rewarding experience.

In the beginning of my own library, I saw how much the children loved being read to, how much they were

learning from me and then how the session size grew each time. I decided to make a weekly schedule, in which I would hold two sessions, three days a week. These hour long sessions proved so popular that the number of children grew to around 40-50.

I have also been actively involved in training new librarians for WLR. I have trained ten teenagers, aged between 15-17 years old, on how to recruit and deal with other children, and how to choose books; thus replicating Dr. Rana's training for me. I was also part of WLR's prototype development in which I was given the 'Wild Card' prototype which allowed



me to choose my own method of training. With my own method I trained ten people in the Abd Al-Hadi centre which led to the opening of five libraries opened with two people in each. And finally, when visiting my sister in Al-Azraq camp, I trained a further ten women.

Mohammed Harb: We Love Reading for Everyone



My name is Mohammed Harb, I'm 44 years old and work in Zaatari as the manager of an artistic band which puts on musical concerts and plays, and also as a volunteer of IMC – the International Medical Corps

I was chosen to lead a WLR training session for a group of people on the 14th and 15th of October. My trainees were particularly committed to the training which was one of the reasons why it was so successful. I was particularly pleased that most of the people who I trained signed up to open WLR libraries and so they were given bags and puppets in order to start their own library. These people continue to read stories to children even now which is amazing for spreading the WLR message. This work is really honourable and deserves respect and Dr. Rana and her team deserve similar respect.

This initiative is really valuable and I feel proud and happy to be a part of it

because of what it's giving to the refugees in the camp by taking care of them in all aspects of life; especially for those who are involved with spreading awareness and enlightenment through all levels of society. From this letter I want to ask to spread this initiative because of its importance and value in the community, and also because of its profound impact on peoples' souls – this is how I was affected by the training and I'm praying to God that WLR can continue into the future and will always improve.



Meet some of our young readers!

These children are from different reading groups around Zaatari and have shared with us what they think is so special about the WLR initiative and why they love stories.



Maya - 3

“Will you read stories to children when you’re older?”

“Yes! I want to go to school as well to learn to read a story alone”



Tamara- 6

“I want Mama to read more to the children because we can learn from stories. My favourite story is Cinderella!”



Mohammed Barakat-13

“When they bombed my school and my house I hated everything and my desire to learn had gone. Now, thanks to WLR, I know how important reading is and that we have to put our hands together to spread the message of having a library in every neighbourhood and let the butterflies fly all over the world”



Hisham Barakat-12

“WLR reflects positively on my soul and it fills my free time with a fulfilling activity. Also, I now read in an organised way which will be beneficial to my future.”



Ala'a Zaghoul:

One of my favourite moments at Zaatari

For me, the most rewarding aspect of working with 'We Love Reading' at Zaatari is seeing the happy children during and after each reading aloud session I attend. Each of these sessions has their own starting story and there is one in particular which has stuck with me.

I was sitting in the IRD library in sector 10 of Zaatari camp, preparing for my second interview with one of our WLR volunteers. A young child entered the library and asked to borrow a book that his mother could read to him. The librarian who was sitting there, who is also one of our new volunteers, asked for his age and why he could not read the book himself. The boy responded that he



The librarian with his reading group.

was in the fifth grade and he could not read yet as the teacher in the camp was not teaching him. Because of this, the librarian said that he would start his reading sessions, thus applying the training that he took, the next day for the children and that the boy could attend with his friends. At the same time, a group of girls, who were playing on the only computer in the library, immediately left their game and asked the librarian if they could join the session. He agreed and so his read aloud sessions began. On hearing this, I was elated that the programme had developed throughout the camp and that children, of all genders and ages, were benefiting from the 'We Love Reading' reading sessions.



Our volunteer—Rosa



For me, reading should not be a luxury for a few, but is a necessity for every child, and WLR is the perfect vehicle for introducing and nurturing love for this vital skill which can provide so much joy. I feel very lucky to have been able to work with WLR and hope that through this magazine, you will be able to see the inspiring work that has been taking place in Zaatari to support the children's' parents and community and inspire the future Syrian generation.





نحن نحب القراءة
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