Changing mindsets through reading to
NURTURE CHANGEMAKERS

2023
ANNUAL
REPORT

WE LOVE READING
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ABOUT WE LOVE READING

OUR VISION
Changing mindsets through reading to nurture changemakers

OUR MISSION
Achieving sustainable development goals by 2030 is a complex situation because most solutions are just bandaids we want to address the root cause of catalyzing system change.
We believe we can do that because every human being has the mindset of I can and feels responsible to solve locally to do that we came up with a simple approach we train youth, women and men volunteers to read aloud in their native language to the children in their neighborhood on a regular basis. This is the “We Love Reading” program.

The outcomes of the program are: first that the children fall in love with reading and therefore become lifelong readers and learners. Second, the adults discover their voices literally and figuratively being empowered to become changemakers themselves and in their community, because the mindset of I can.

OUR VALUES
WLR values
Integrity, collaboration, Trust, Creativity, Wisdom.
Dear World

This year reminds us what is life.
What does it mean to be human.
What really matters.
These questions are important and we must reflect upon them.
The values we stand by have been tested and not everyone has passed the test.
But we have all learned deep lessons that have shaken the core of our humanity and made us look in the mirror to ask ourselves:
Who am I?
What do I stand for?
Am I willing to stand for my values?
What does it take?

Sometimes little things are enough to wake us up. Otherwise there is no meaning, no purpose.
Life is short, we either live it to the full or it has no meaning.
Reading about others to be inspired is great but are we ready to be the heroes we read about?

At We Love Reading we believe that we can and we should and we will. Each in their own way at their own pace. We must come together, trust each other, hold each other in our complexity, messiness and humanity. To save ourselves and humanity for future generations.

Be the butterflies of change
Be the guardians
It’s tough and it’s difficult, but the people of Gaza have held the torch high, lighting the path of how to do it, teaching all of us what it means to be human and what it means to be true to our values, morals and integrity.

I am in awe
Miracles do happen!
Gaza is a miracle!
A wake up call to the world!!
Reminding us of what really matters.
Giving us a moral compass to navigate our lives in this complicated world.
It’s really very simple if we are sincere and true to ourselves.
We would give anything to bring our loved ones back to stop in every way what happened to them.
Today we are witnesses to a genocide committed by Israel and we have the power to stop it.
We just need to speak up, to call out to the world to demand cease fire and hold the perpetrators accountable. As Albert Einstein once said, “The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.”

And for those who are not sure what to do or are confused. It is simple any human being would stop the killing of a child there is no excuse. And for those who are scared, let them remember if we are truly sincere in wanting to achieve a better world for humanity we need to uphold justice for all equally and not some more than others. I am reminded of what Martin Luther King said in 1963:

“First, I must confess that over the last few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro’s great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen’s Council-er or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to “order” than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says “I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can’t agree with your methods of direct action;” who paternalistically feels he can set the timetable for another man’s freedom; who lives by the myth of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a “more convenient season.”

Shallow understanding from people of goodwill is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.” Martin Luther King Junior 16 April 1963
So what do we do in 2024?

Continue working...
Continue reading...
"Read" Quran [96:1]
Continue writing...
Continue speaking...
Continue listening and hearing...
Continue asking..
Continue being curious...
"Thus Allah makes clear to you the natural phenomenon that you might give thought." Quran [2:219]

Continue being confident...
YOU matter
YOU are important
YOU are special
YOU are a guardian
"Everyone of you is a guardian" Prophet Mohammad

Chaos theory when a butterfly flutters its wings it moves the air a centimeter that results in change in time and space beyond what we can imagine.

"Do not belittle any small deed" Prophet Mohammad

"We are not responsible for the results, only for trying
Be the butterflies of change...
Rana Dajani
“They lied to the world that they kill the fighters, but they kill the people of Gaza, their dreams and their future. Kids of Gaza run out of their hopes and wants. The occupation is starving us. We don’t find water, food, and we drink from the unusable water. We come now to shout and invite you to protect us. We want to live, we want peace, we want to judge the killers of children, We want medicine, food, and education. We want to live as the other children live.”

- Children of Al-Shifa Hospital, Nov 7, 2023
WE LOVE READING AND SYSTEMS CHANGE

Catalyst 2030 (a global network of social entrepreneurs) defines systems change as confronting root causes of issues rather than symptoms by transforming structures, customs, mindsets, power dynamics and policies by strengthening collective power through the active collaboration of diverse people and organizations.

WLR is systems change.
WLR is an organic program that evolved from grassroots. That is why it does not subscribe to existing systems and paradigms. That is why WLR is a disrupter. WLR challenges existing frameworks and paradigms in the way it solves local problems.

WLR simultaneously forges and offers new frameworks and paradigms to fit its approach. This approach is not new it harks to our evolutionary history and to nature. We are humans hence we need systems that are closer to nature ie biological. The existing systems we have adopted are mechanical and pertain to the inanimate. That is why they don’t work in the long run.

In a machine approach, we focus on training. In a biological approach, we focus on practice (reading aloud).
In a machine approach, we focus on static measurement. In a biological approach, we focus on the dynamics of systems (storytelling).
Humans are the same ancient social creatures evolved over millennia. Current systems are artificial WLR is bottom up. Not theory driven. WLR is based on the concept of rediscovering the autonomy not giving autonomy. Therefore WLR avoids hegemony.
Each WLR Ambassador is a systems changer.
Similar ideas pop up everywhere.
Find the ideas and create a community of learning.
Create a movement force to change education around the world.

**Systems sensing instead of system assessment**

WLR does not fit into the existing frameworks just like a circle cannot fit into a square. WLR developed its own frameworks.
In leadership instead of a top down hierarchal framework, WLR is based on a decentralized horizontal, bottom up approach that is based on trust and that every human knows what is best for them.
In measurement instead of counting numbers as a reflection of impact, WLR uses storytelling to showcase real change that is intergenerational because it shows the deep change within that is sustainable. As we attempt to measure how do we make sure we don’t destroy what are we measuring? If behaviour is so complex any measurement is a reduction and only touches the surface. What is the use of measuring. More importantly it could be misleading because it is reductionist.
Should not we then not measure and only observe and give space to allow things to grow. This is not typical and very disruptive to the concept of measurement itself but isn’t systems change about disrupting the system so one would assume you would need a new way of measurement. If we compare this concept to nature and Quantum mechanics (Fixed versus dynamic) once you fix a particle certain qualities are lost WLR Ambassadors are free once you tie them down to requirements you lose autonomy and creativity.

In scaling instead of aiming to establish an entity in every country/region etc, WLR talks of spreading mindsets not programs through humans to create a movement, not a franchise. WLR aims to impact everyone not only a few.

Programs should be able to balance the universal while celebrating diversity similar to the properties of DNA.

In marketing instead of creating a splash and publicity WLR is low profile. It seeks to disappear and seize to be needed. The concept of degrowth not growth.

**New frameworks require new terminology that is based on nature not mechanistic.**

Hence, WLR does not use the term beneficial

**New framework also require new approaches:**
Not human centered design but evolution

WLR is a ship in the making or more adequate an organism that is evolving continuously.
That is what system change is about.
WE LOVE READING

WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT

We strongly believe that creating an ecosystem that fosters lifelong learning and motivates individuals to read, explore and contribute through volunteering is crucial. That’s why we decided to team up with the Jordanian government on a variety of exciting projects. After all, bringing such an ecosystem to life demands the dedicated efforts of all stakeholders, including civil society institutions, government bodies, and the private sector. Without further ado, let’s dive into the main areas where we worked hand-in-hand with the Jordanian government:

1- National Reading Campaign

In May 2022, the We Love Reading program, in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, launched the National Reading Campaign that set the whole of Jordan alight. The campaign featured an innovative digital platform that aimed to instill a love of reading in children and young people through fun and interactive means. To make it a success, local volunteers were trained to read aloud to the children and spread the word in their communities. The Minister of Culture, Haifa’a Al-Najjar, couldn’t hide her enthusiasm, stating, “We are thrilled and honored to launch the We Love Reading platform. This outstanding program has created a remarkable partnership that aims to touch the hearts and souls of all our people.” This year the campaign continued where ambassadors from all corners of Jordan rose to the challenge, holding lively reading-aloud sessions for children in their neighborhoods. More than 15000 children were positively impacted, with over 2500 reading-aloud sessions held to make reading a beloved part of their daily routine. What an incredible achievement!
2- National Reading Day

In conjunction with “We Love Reading” efforts to promote reading culture by launching the National Reading Campaign, the Prime Minister, his Excellency Bishr Al-Khasawneh approved the 29th of September to become the National Reading Day in Jordan. National Reading Day comes as an affirmation of the critical role reading plays in raising awareness and enriching knowledge, and it aims to promote a reading culture and make it a daily habit. On this occasion, We Love Reading carried out several face-to-face and digital activities, with the aim of encouraging the culture of reading, such as launching event for its latest book Queen of Ballons that addresses climate change.

In addition, many reading Ambassadors held reading aloud. Furthermore, We Love Reading celebrated reading week by promoting reading activities done by ambassadors on social media platforms.
3- Working with Government to Foster Social Entrepreneurship

We Love Reading organized a session titled “Working with Government to Foster Social Entrepreneurship” during Catalyst Change Week 2023. During this session, the Minister of Culture in Jordan Her Excellency Haifa Al-Najjar and We Love Reading Founder Prof. Rana Dajani along with We Love Reading Ambassadors Jameeleh Abu Melhem and Tamam Hiary discussed the critical role that effective collaboration between the government and civil society plays in enhancing social leadership.

The session delved into the national reading campaign initiated by “We Love Reading” in partnership with the Jordanian Ministry of Culture, proudly under the patronage of Her Excellency Minister of Culture Haifa Al-Najjar.

During the event, Minister of Culture Haifa Al-Najjar shared her insights, stating, “I Believe in research and learning by avoiding rote methods, and in the necessity of liberating children from grades and labels in education, recognizing that they are greater than the label and that they are agents of change.”
4- Tales Box Program in Cooperation with Jordanian TV

We collaborated with Jordanian television and the French Media Development Agency CFI to create reading sessions, which were broadcasted on Jordanian television. The program, which comprised of two seasons, received excellent feedback.

This program was part of the Qudra 2 program, a regional initiative co-funded by the European Union, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID).

The first season was launched last year and it continued this year to its second season with more episodes and bigger inspiration.
The Online Training

We Love Reading program has developed throughout the years and the demand for the program has increased. WLR receives requests from individuals all over the world asking to become WLR ambassadors. WLR Online Training has been out for free for individuals who want to become Ambassadors but cannot attend a WLR Ambassadors’ Training (Face-to-Face).

The We Love Reading Program is about local volunteers reading aloud to children in their neighborhoods in the COVID-19 context at home. As schools are shutting and children are at home, the “We Love Reading” program is an online program for parents and community members to learn to read aloud to their children in a fun way and keep them engaged with learning.

The training included learning the importance of reading aloud for fun to change mindsets to create change-makers for both adults and children. The program trains you on how to read aloud for fun and how to start read-aloud sessions in your local neighborhoods on a regular basis. Reading to children should be in the mother tongue language of the child. To increase the reach of the program, we have partnered with Greater Translogic Advisory Services from South Africa to host our online training for free and for unlimited users.
In collaboration with volunteers from around the world, We Love Reading Online Training is being translated into ten languages besides Arabic and English!

French. Amal Khaleefah

Hindi. Khyatt Desai

Persian. Farzaneh Shahartash

Urdu. Amna Hassan Kazmi

Vietnamese. Bich Hang

Italian. Francesca Fedeli

Luganda. Dr. Saudah Namyalo

Chinese. Geyu Chen

Spanish. Jesus Gonzales

Mangolian. Temy Temuulen
We Love Reading has collaborated with the Ministry of Culture to Launch the National Reading Campaign in order to change mindsets through reading to nurture change makers. One of the essential components of the campaign is the National Reading Campaign platform. The platform allows We Love Reading ambassadors to share their reading sessions with others, it helps them as well to become partners in developing the WLR program. Due to this platform, we were able to collect and analyze data about reading sessions (locations, feedback, children’s gender, most active ambassadors, etc). Further to this it was the cornerstone of building the WLR digital community.

Visit the website
www.welovereading.jo
The We Love Reading Virtual Community Platform

The We Love Reading program launched the virtual community platform in July, in the presence of a group of WLR ambassadors who shared their journey at We Love Reading over the years. The virtual community platform aims to create an interactive digital community for the ambassadors that allows them to share achievements, initiatives, and reading session information and to allow them to help each other in facing any challenges that they might have. In addition, the platform is a place where they can document their journey as WLR ambassadors, as well as exchange different opportunities (volunteering opportunities, jobs, etc). The platform was designed to include different digital tools to ensure the best user experience.

"The goal of the virtual community is to communicate and exchange ideas, by doing so, we may hope to inspire others to come up with new ideas that can be implemented so I urge everyone to join the virtual community." WLR Ambassador Mayasah Al-Oqaili

Furthermore, We Love Reading collaborated with local institutions and some ambassadors to invite more ambassadors to the platform. One of these institutions is the "I Learn" Foundation, led by Saddam Sayyaleh, a social entrepreneur and consultant. Many ambassadors have registered on the platform through this collaboration. Additionally, there is a collaboration with the SEP Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, where more than 40 women received We Love Reading digital training through the virtual community platform.

Visit the website
In 2006 when Prof. Rana Dajani started reading to children in her neighborhood, she had no idea how far the program would go and how many children it would affect and help to fall in love with reading and learning for good.

Prof. Rana Dajani said: “When I started reading aloud to the children in my neighborhood, it was the eyes of the children that were food to my soul that kept me going. It was their eagerness and enthusiasm and excitement that was a testimonial that reading aloud can make a difference.

Their eyes would light up and have a strange sparkle. The reading aloud was planting a seed in their souls that took root and flourished changing their mindsets to become who they are today.”

We tracked a group of children who attended reading-aloud sessions to know the impact the We Love Reading program has had on their lives:

“When I started reading aloud to the children in my neighborhood, it was the eyes of the children that were food to my soul that kept me going.”

Prof. Rana Dajani
Meet Layan, One of the Children who Grew up with We Love Reading

Layan Mahmoud (23 years old), one of the children who attended the reading sessions back in 2006 said: “Whenever I felt the need to escape the woes of the outside world or to simply view life from a different perspective, I would always find comfort when I immerse myself between the pages of a book. It provided utter bliss and joy for me to forget who I was for a bit and live as someone else; a wandering adventurer, a professional assassin, or even as another angsty teenager who may be facing bigger issues than I thought I had.

But all of that wouldn’t have been possible had those small sparks of interest in reading not been ignited into a blaze of passion, and all that started in a small neighborhood mosque; where We Love Reading ambassador (Rana), wearing colorful outfits and a hat, decided to show a group of skeptical yet intrigued looking kids what it’s like to read for fun and to find comfort in a book.

It wasn’t just reading that we gained from it, after all, it was the feeling of accomplishment every time we finished a story, the new friendships we made, and the sense of responsibility when we were handed our next story to borrow and return in the same shape for others to be able to read too. For that, and forever more, I was and will forever be grateful to be a part of this delightful experience.”

“It wasn’t just reading that we gained from it, after all, it was the feeling of accomplishment!”

Layan Mahmoud
Morad Aldan (18 years old), young man who used to attend the reading-aloud sessions held by We Love Reading ambassador Nabeela Najim (57 years old) took the WLR back in 2013. Reading aloud sessions had a powerful impact on Morad on different levels. Now he is a distinguished student who is engaged in multiple activities. He was also one of the top achievers in high school and scored 94.75 on the Tawjihi exam which is the university entrance exam in Jordan. It is noteworthy Nabeela was one of the first reading ambassadors she started reading to her grandchildren and since then she is holding reading sessions in her neighborhood.

“It may seem as if We Love Reading is now this big world-renowned organization that went on to do great things, but to us then, it was our most awaited circle of bliss on an otherwise wasted Saturday and with another adventure to explore”

Rawan Albtoush (17 years old) who used to attend reading aloud sessions in her childhood.
IMPACT IN NUMBERS

WRAPPING UP A YEAR OF GROWTH 2023

69 Countries.

8,603 Ambassadors.

576,689 Children read to.

176,346 Reading Sessions

283,306 Books Distributed.
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).
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how they began implementing it in their countries, and how the program has impacted ambassadors, children, and communities.

Dr. Joan Quintero and Yolanda Quintero from Mexico from our partner organization Club UNESCO Cege@ shared their experience with We Love Reading and did a presentation on their organization’s activities to promote literacy in their community.

Mr. Hounga WLR ambassador in Benin said: “Leading is our duty and the reason we are doing this program, I look to spread this program in all West Africa”.

In addition, Dr. Clarie Odhiambo, a presentative from the Siaya Community Library talked about how reading helps children to have better futures and better jobs in Kenya and how they started a reading club after taking the WLR training and she said that they start to do reading sessions every Friday.
We Love Reading and UNESCO Cege@ Club jointly conducted a workshop in Guanajuato, Mexico

In July We Love Reading and UNESCO Cege@ Club jointly conducted a workshop at the “José Rojas” Reading Center in Guanajuato, Mexico. The workshop aimed to guide the participants to register on the We Love Reading online training platform in order to become Reading Ambassadors.

The workshop was held, under the patronage of Mr. Julio César Prieto Gallardo, Municipal President; and Mr. Eugenia Leonor Martínez Carrillo, President of the System for Comprehensive Development of the Municipal Family (DIF), and his wife, and was hosted by Juan Rubén Rodríguez Vázquez.

During the event, Prof. Rana Dajani the founder of We Love Reading expressed her happiness in organizing this workshop which is the first of its kind to be held in Mexico. After this workshop “Reading Hearts” was created in Salamanca, Guanajuato which is a space for children and people of all ages and all backgrounds where they can enjoy reading and listening to books.

This valuable partnership comes as a part of the We Love Reading vision to change mindsets through reading to nurture change-makers. Marwa Alfawair the Communication and Training Manager at We Love Reading thanked the UNESCO Cege@ Club team and Yolanda Quintero Mora, the Coordinator of the “We Love Reading” Program in Mexico for her tremendous effort in organizing this event and helping participants in creating accounts, register to the WLR platform. Yolanda and Dr. Juan are such extraordinary partners to We Love Reading, they work toward spreading the love of reading and learning in communities and toward improving the quality of lives for people in Guanajuato.
Meet our Youngest Ambassador from India

Rachel 8 years old, hails from India and currently residing in Dubai. She dedicates her mornings to inspiring children by conducting reading sessions at the Indian Academy in Dubai. Recently, Rachel also hosted her first nursery reading session and collaborated with a local library to spread the magic of books. Driven by her passion for reading, she established the Rachel Foundation, allowing her to implement educational programs for underprivileged children across borders.

In addition to her role as an Ambassador for We Love Reading, Rachel is a reading and spelling champion and a budding author.

In December, Rachel aspires to kickstart her “We Love Reading” project in Goa, India, furthering her mission to enhance reading skills and cultivate a love for reading. Rachel’s journey is a genuine source of inspiration, and we are excited to support her in this fantastic endeavor.
We Love Reading Conducts Training in Egypt

During Ghofran Abu Daya’s visit, a We Love Reading trainer, to Egypt in September last year, she visited villages around Minya Governorate with the Together Foundation.

The foundation works on activating the role of communities in innovating solutions to their problems and supports the concept of social entrepreneurship. Ghofran said: “After sitting with the children, I found their curiosity about the world to be significant, and there are significant obstacles related to education, their ability to access different knowledge, and information.” She consulted with the Ma’an Foundation team and Prof. Rana to donate We Love Reading training to the women in that village, aiming to open the doors of lifelong learning for children.

Indeed, the training for women in the village took place at a lady’s house over two consecutive days, with the attendance of 25 women. The awareness of mothers regarding the role and importance of reading for children since childhood in developing their skills, abilities, enhancing their creative ideas and talents, and building confidence in themselves has increased.

After the training, mothers started attending the Ma’an Development and Environment Foundation’s headquarters in Bargaia daily to borrow diverse stories, read them to their children, and return them to take other stories.
In Gaza, where there are NO Children Left to Read to!!

In talks full of grief and painful, We Love Reading ambassador Adala Abu Medien shares her story and children’s stories from the Gaza war. We Love Reading ambassador Adala Abu Medien (18) years old, since 2018, She has led reading sessions for children with Down syndrome and in marginalized areas of Gaza. She said, “I deliberately read for the children in the marginalized areas because I feel happy with them and that I know very well the importance of reading to culture them as well as that reading is the weapon which the civilian protect in it, the civilian who stranded such as Gaza’s people, but in the same time the invasion targeted the children in these areas and martyred many of them.” who stranded such as Gaza’s people, but in the same time the invasion targeted the children in these areas and martyred many of them.”

Dr. Sharif Al-Saoufi, Chairman of the Palestine Libraries Forum in Gaza which has a cooperation with the We Love Reading program said: “The Forum’s building was completely destroyed and turned to ashes, and many people there have been martyred. In this circumstance, the Forum donated its entire budget allocated for the Forum’s activities to the displaced people in shelter centers and schools, providing humanitarian aid for those who were damaged.
We Love Reading Books Reached Brazil

During her visit to Brazil, Prof. Rana Dajani the WLR founder met with a group of social entrepreneurs in Sao Paulo, Brazil. She also visited the impoverished “Favelas,” where residents face daily struggles due to limited infrastructure and poverty.

It’s noteworthy that Brazil was the last country in the Western world to abolish slavery, and a significant portion of the population has African origins, with many tracing their roots back to a history marked by the unfortunate period of slavery.

Despite these challenges, the city is adorned with a lot of graffiti, much of which was created by children and brightens up otherwise dull walls. It also features a library and the Favela's museum, where Prof. Rana generously donated the latest books from the We Love Reading program to the library. This act aims to support the locals in their fight for equality and their aspirations to bring about positive change in their nation. Putting books in the hands of children, who serve as the initial conduits for change, is a key aspect of this effort.
FOSTERING A CULTURE OF READING ACROSS ALL PROFESSIONS TO CATALYZE CHANGE

Reading Aloud Sessions can Happen Everywhere even at the Dentist

“I work as an orthodontist, and I’ve been conducting reading sessions in my clinic for years. The patient’s journey with the orthodontist lasts a long time so use reading to alleviate the fear of children from the clinic by giving them the book and asking them about their favorite quotes and beloved characters in the book on the next visit.”

Our Ambassador Dr. Nora Odeh
Mathematics has never been more Fun to Learn!

“WLR training and Prof. Rana Dajani inspired me to figure out solutions for the challenges I faced as a teacher, most notably the children’s inability to understand arithmetic operations, perceiving them as complex tasks due to the inclusion of numbers within a narrative requiring analysis. However, that challenge disappeared after I guided the children toward reading and the task became much easier because the students were able to understand the narration and pronounce the words through the books. Additionally, the illustrations instilled in the children the love of reading both inside and outside of the classroom.”

Our Ambassador Ayat Assaf a mother of four and a mathematics teacher at Al-Sarab School in Al-Shubak City Ayat said:
Empowering Women through Reading

Meet Shadia Al-Rousan, our ambassador in Aqaba, a dedicated women’s rights activist serving as the Head of the Coastal Women’s Association and contributing to various women’s rights organizations. A mother of seven, her journey with We Love Reading began just before the Covid-19 era when she underwent WLR training.

Shadia Al-Rousan is not only a loving mother but also an inspirational figure fostering a passion for reading within her own family. Recognizing the profound impact of books as companions, she extends this enthusiasm to empower other women through the Coastal Women’s Association. Al-Rousan’s vision includes introducing the joy of reading to every woman she encounters, and she aspires to establish a mobile library in Aqaba, aligning with We Love Reading’s broader mission of having “a library in every neighborhood” to address the scarcity of libraries in the area.
It Only Takes One Person to Create Change

Zahoor Dughaimat, our dedicated ambassador in Karak, has proven that one person can indeed catalyze change within a community. Her journey with ‘We Love Reading’ began unexpectedly during a volunteering activity, leading to transformative training and consecutive successes. Through her main initiative, ‘Today’s Reader is Tomorrow’s Leader’, Zahoor initiated impactful sub-programs like “I Read with Mom,” encouraging mothers to read bedtime stories, “Reading Family,” promoting library visits, “Me and My Grandma,” celebrating grandmothers as storytellers.

Zohoor shared: “At this stage of developing my initiatives, I feel that I have achieved political and social empowerment. I have become a member of the Educational Development Council and a social activist in volunteering work. Additionally, I launched a series of initiatives focusing on less fortunate children, such as the ‘Gift a Smile.’

She adds: “Reading has opened many doors for me to serve the children in my community and serve my region, which faces economic and geographic challenges. Despite my health condition, which I have been dealing with for several years, reading has helped improve my mental health. I continue to strive, despite all challenges, to revitalize and activate school libraries in the service of the community.”

Aruba Al-Shmaileh, Director of Culture in Karak, highlighted Zahoor Dughaimat’s impactful initiatives in a Petra News Agency interview. Zahoor was featured in a youth creativity segment, emphasizing her purposeful awareness campaigns on the significance of books and reading in individual lives and society.
NEW PARTNERS AND FUNDERS

Since its creation in 1945, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) mission has been to contribute to the building of peace, poverty eradication, lasting development and intercultural dialogue. UNESCO has partnered with We Love Reading Program to strengthen activities for development cooperation, and to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Korean National Commission for UNESCO - KNCU - was established on 30 January 1954, following the Republic of Korea’s admission to UNESCO in 1950. The Chairperson of KNCU is The Minister of Education of Korea. As the first agency of United Nations to define and develop specific programs for young people. The Korean National Commission for UNESCO through the Bridge Program has funded We Love Reading to conduct 8 WLR trainings and evaluate the impact of the program on women and children engaged in the Program in a randomized control longitudinal study.

The Big Heart Foundation (TBHF), a philanthropic foundation officially established in May 2015, proceeded by various initiatives and campaigns launched by Her Highness Sheikha Jawaher Bint Mohammed Al Qasimi, wife of His Highness the Ruler of Sharjah and Chairperson of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. The Foundation’s mandate is to protect and empower vulnerable children and their families in vulnerable situations across the world. Since then, TBHF has provided health, education and emergency aid services -among others- to almost 4 million people in need more than 25 countries. TBHF is partnered with We Love Reading and Home storytellers to create a documentary on We Love Reading refugee ambassadors in Zaatri camp, in addition to developing a children’s book about refugees and women empowerment.
We Love Reading is a partner in the Rights for Time research network funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF). GCRF is a £1.5 billion fund by the UK Government to address complex global development challenges and support collaborative research that will improve the economic prosperity, welfare and quality of life of people in Low and Middle Income Countries- LMIC

Rights for Time is a research network comprised of interdisciplinary research taking place in multiple countries that is bringing the hidden legacies of conflict directly into humanitarian protection, human rights policy and practice and is working for the benefit particularly vulnerable groups, such as refugees, women, children, and other marginalized communities.

GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) is a German government-owned organization dedicated to international development. Established in 2011, GIZ works globally to promote sustainable economic development, social inclusion, and environmental protection through collaborative projects with diverse partners. The organization focuses on key sectors to contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

GIZ has funded We Love Reading to conduct 4 WLR trainings and evaluate the impact of the program.
Yale University

Yale University, founded in 1701, stands as a prestigious Ivy League institution celebrated for its academic excellence and commitment to liberal arts education. Located in New Haven, Connecticut, Yale’s historic campus, with iconic structures like Sterling Memorial Library, provides a vibrant academic environment. The university’s distinguished faculty, strong research focus, and tradition of producing leaders across diverse fields contribute to its status as a symbol of intellectual distinction in the United States. We Love Reading has collaborated with Yale in multiple research projects.

French Media Development Agency

CFI is a public sector operator funded primarily by the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs. It was founded in 1989 by the Ministry of Cooperation with a ‘cultural assistance mission’ to supply overseas television stations with French television programmes free of charge.

Microsoft

Microsoft is a multinational technology company renowned for its development of software, hardware, and services, playing a prominent role in the global tech industry. “We Love Reading” was a part of Microsoft’s collaboration with the Schwab Foundation, earning the Schwab Award last year. This partnership, driven by Microsoft’s Entrepreneurship for Positive Impact, actively contributes to the sector’s digital transformation, demonstrating the organization’s commitment to positive change through reading initiatives.
OUR EVENTS

The Journey of Change Makers-We Love Reading Seminar

“We Love Reading” program held a seminar entitled: “The Journey of Change Makers – We Love Reading” under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, in the presence of the Director of the National Library, His Excellency Nidal Ayasrah, and the Representative and a head of the UNESCO office in Jordan, Ms. Min Jeong Kim, on March 11 at the Royal Cultural Center- Amman. This seminar came to celebrate the unique journey of the We Love Reading ambassadors to become change makers, where each of them has a different path, some are evident to others and some are personal. Nevertheless, they are all remarkable, very important, and worthy of celebration. Researchers from several international and local universities also shared the findings of the latest collaborative research project; “Theory of change and social impact measurement of We Love Reading program impact on women’s leadership, empowerment, wellbeing, life satisfaction and social networks.”

The findings showed that the reading intervention for children created an opportunity and an environment for relations to be developed between the WLR Ambassadors and the children. Additionally, the life satisfaction and psychological well-being of women increased in the We Love Reading group from baseline to endline. Preliminary analyses of the endline results show that volunteering work diversified women’s personal networks outside the home. On the other hand, mothers of children who took part in WLR in 2021 continue to report higher levels of child attitudes toward reading a year later than mothers of children who didn’t join the program.

The Director of the National Library Nidal Ayasrah who was representing the Ministry of Culture, and attended on behalf of the minister of culture her excellency Haifa Al-Najjar, said: It’s heartening to witness initiatives dedicated to nurturing a love for reading among children, like the ‘We Love Reading’ program, which empowers female reading ambassadors to develop leadership qualities through their involvement.
We Love Reading Participates in the UNESCO Literacy Day Conference

We Love Reading, represented by its Founder Prof. Rana Dajani, participated in the UNESCO Literacy Day conference where the winners of the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize and The UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy were announced.

During the event, Prof. Dajani shared her top recommendations for this year’s winners and also served as a jury member. It is worth noting that We Love Reading received the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize in 2017 under the theme of literacy in a digital world.

This year’s theme was ‘Promoting literacy for a world in transition: Building the foundation for sustainable and peaceful societies.’ International Literacy Day 2023 provided an opportunity to unite efforts in accelerating progress toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) on education and lifelong learning and to reflect on the role of literacy in building more inclusive, peaceful, just, and sustainable societies.
Represented by the Research Project Manager Miss. Lina Qtaishat, We Love Reading has participated in the workshop organized by the Korean National Committee for UNESCO in Seoul, titled ‘The Bridge’. The workshop brought together partners of the Bridge program from Africa, Asia, and Europe, with Jordan represented as the only participant from the Middle East, through the We Love Reading program.

The workshop aimed to exchange experiences among partners regarding lifelong learning and education programs in different regions, as well as discuss future collaboration opportunities. On the first day, Ms. Lina presented the best practices implemented by the program in its projects during the year 2022, specifically focusing on scientific research and studying the impact of the We Love Reading program on the ‘Reading Ambassadors’ and children participating in loud reading sessions. She also highlighted the program’s latest achievements. This was followed by a brief workshop on program planning, implementation, and the use of digital tools for reporting, provided by the KNCU team.

On the second day, Ms. Lina engaged in individual meetings on behalf of Prof. Rana Dajani, the program’s founder, with the KNCU team to discuss the potential sustainability of collaboration and the upcoming updates on the “We Love Reading” projects.
We Love Reading Participates in the Microsoft Global Hackathon

We Love Reading was thrilled to have been an active participant in the Microsoft Global Hackathon, known as “Hack for Positive Impact 2023.” This global event brought together talented volunteers from around the world who were eager to collaborate with entrepreneurs and drive meaningful change.

This year’s Hack for Positive Impact Executive Challenge harnessed the latest advancements in AI technology to empower entrepreneurs in amplifying their positive influence. The hackathon spanned one week, starting on September 11th. Throughout that week, Microsoft volunteers collaborated closely with the We Love Reading team to devise innovative solutions for enhancing the We Love Reading virtual community.
We Love Reading Participates in the Impact Summit 2023

We Love Reading has participated in the Impact Summit 2023, where the Founder of We Love Reading Prof. Rana Dajani took part in a session titled: “Building Diverse and dynamic nonprofit teams to drive impact”.

The session was focused on the importance of diversity in nonprofit teams where diverse nonprofit teams are shown to be more effective. However, for many organizations, building a diverse pipeline of qualified candidates can be a challenge when time and resources are tight especially for roles that require highly specific skill sets.

During the session, the speakers discussed how leveraging the employer brand to connect with candidates.

In addition to that, they discussed how to engage candidates with nontraditional backgrounds and focusing on skills.

During the session Prof. Rana said: “You have something to give to the world; and if somebody says who do you think you are? You are just a drop in the water; tell them: but what is the ocean except for millions of drops!”

Impact Summit 2023 is a virtual event where participants gain insights from nonprofit leaders and experts about how purpose fuels their work and enables progress.
Catalyzing Change Week is the world’s largest event led by social innovators and entrepreneurs to share knowledge, exchange ideas, and accelerate collaborative systems change during more than 250 sessions and activities in a dedicated annual week. Organized by Catalyst 2030, Catalysing Change Week 2023 built on the success of CCW2021, and CCW2022, bringing together social entrepreneurs, representatives from the private sector, governments, funders, and others involved in systems change, to inspire change in support of achieving the SDGs. These models of best practice are in keeping with the recent findings of the Embracing Complexity and New Allies reports. The week served as an opportunity to engage, advocate and stimulate learning across the entire social entrepreneurship ecosystem. This year We Love Reading took a part in the Catalyzing Change Week by organizing, and participating in multiple virtual and face-to-face events as follows:

- Working with the government to foster social entrepreneurship
- The impact of We Love Reading on social networks, empowerment, and wellbeing
- Social justice index
- Reimagining social entrepreneurship from a cultural lens
- Highlights from Jordan social entrepreneurs’ ecosystem
- Becoming a social entrepreneur
- Longlastng ripple effect of empowering underprivileged communities with reading
- Global minds university
- Academic hub – MENA
- Transforming education: From principles to policy
- Partnerships for change: University presidents & provosts panel
We Love Reading Participates in the World Education Summit

We Love Reading participated in the ‘Pathways to Transforming Education from Social Entrepreneurs’ session during the World Education Summit 2023, held on March 22, 2023. The session focused on discussing how education can be transformed to meet modern needs and how the experiences of social entrepreneurs can be utilized to create lifelong learning systems. This transformation recognizes that learning is increasingly taking place beyond traditional classroom settings, including in the workplace, community, family, and virtually, among other non-formal and informal spaces.

The characteristics and evolving needs of youth and adult learners, such as flexibility, proximity, ease of access, and relevance to the labor market, serve as guiding factors for the transformation of literacy learning spaces.

The vision of the World Education Summit is to support the education world in keeping learning central through high-quality professional learning inputs, debates, tools, and videos. Embracing and applying these approaches will lead to high expectations, improved teaching, learner agency, and enhanced outcomes.
Children and Families Reflect on the Impact of Reading for Fun

We Love Reading organized a virtual panel entitled “Children and Families Reflect on the Impact of Reading for Fun” as part of the Learning Planet Festival, which focused on the impact of reading for fun on children’s skills and imagination. The event took place on January 24th, coinciding with the International Day of Education.

During the panel, a group of talented children and their family members discussed how reading for fun has affected their lives. The first group of guests included Amal Rahman, a 7-year-old author who has written, illustrated, and published two books; her aunt, Dr. Yasmin Kader, Professor at the University of Leeds, who has been supporting her throughout her journey; and Amal’s sister, Arrisa, who shared her own experiences with reading. Another child author, “Saif,” from Jordan, also participated. Saif wrote his first book at the age of 6, with encouragement from his teacher, the WLR Ambassador Ala’a Badareen. The third group of guests consisted of Dr. Rasha Istaiteyeh and her 11-year-old daughter, Yumna, who creates cardboard houses and sketches.

During the event, the guests discussed the origins of their passion for reading, the influence of reading on their personalities, their path to becoming authors, and the role of family in nurturing children’s talents.
Since its release, the documentary film “The Neighborhood Storyteller,” centered around the life of our ambassador Asmaa Al-Rashed, has garnered numerous international awards. In 2023, it received the Women’s Voices Film Festival Award, adding to its collection of 11 awards, including the Toronto Wom-en’s Film Festival Award, Best Short Documentary Award at Amsterdam Short Film Festival, Excellence Award from Docs Without Borders Festival, and Hague International Film Festival Award. Film director Alejandra Alcala was also honored with the Women in Film Award from the International Mountain Film Festival. Additionally, it was selected as a highly recommended film at the Orion International Film Festival in 2023 and the finalist at Arctic film festival 2023, and official selection at The Women’s Vocies Now Online Film Festival 2023.

The documentary, produced in 2021 and submitted by the Big Heart Foundation, was directed by Alejandra Alcala and produced by Home Storytellers, a non-profit organization dedicated to showcasing sustainable solutions to the refugee crisis through character-driven short documentary films. The film narrates Asmaa Al-Rashed’s journey, forced to flee Syria due to war, and her transformation into the neighborhood storyteller after participating in We Love Reading training at Zaatari Camp. Asmaa uses reading aloud to children as a means to address critical issues in her new community in Jordan’s Zaatari refugee camp.

Six years later, inspired by her firstborn daughter reaching adolescence, Asmaa initiates a new read-aloud project to empower teenage girls. Despite her refugee status and the community’s conservative mindset, Asmaa is resolute in nurturing a conscious generation of successful women.
Some Stories Deserve to be Told!

The Neighborhood Storyteller delves into themes of human resilience, the transition from childhood to adulthood, and the ability to turn hardships into opportunities for self-growth.

Another children's book titled “Mama's Magic” based on Asma Rashed's life, is available in both Arabic and English languages.

This year We Love Reading participated in the World Literacy Summit in April during a session titled: 'The Long-Lasting Ripple Effect of Empowering Underprivileged Communities through Reading.' The film director, Alejandra Alcala, along with Prof. Rana Dajani and Asmaa Rashed, the protagonist of the film, shared their insights on the transformative power of reading, emphasizing its role in fostering enduring positive change within underprivileged communities.

In addition, Q & A session about the documentary was held at Yale University in the United States. Where Prof. Catherine Panter-brick, Professor of Anthropology, Health, and Global Affairs at Yale University, moderated the discussion where they discussed the film making journey.

Furthermore on the International Day of the Girl, We Love Reading, in collaboration with Home Storytellers, organized a special online screening of the film. Some of We Love Reading Ambassadors shared their reviews during this event.
This special screening aligns with the shared vision of both We Love Reading and Home Storytellers to inspire and empower girls and women worldwide, fostering a future that is just and provides equal opportunities for everyone. The event also addressed the grief in Palestine and Gaza city due to the ongoing genocide.

During the event, Prof. Rana Dajani highlighted the importance of establishing a generation that loves reading and seeks change. She emphasized the habit of reading for fun as a means to change the future. The event was attended by Prof. Rana Dajani, director Alejandra Alcala, We Love Reading Ambassador and film’s protagonist Asmaa Al-Rashed, and a group of We Love Reading Ambassadors.

Asmaa Al-Rashid discussed the societal issues portrayed in the movie and the transformative impact of the We Love Reading Program on her life. We Love Reading Ambassador Bilal Al-Araj who’s a teacher noted the film is so good and he would like to share it with his student, to raise awareness about displacement and how an individual can overcome difficulties to succeed, and Ambassador of Reading Rasheed Abu Filat highlighted that the film discusses the idea of resilience and overcoming the compelling conditions of wars and displacement, emphasizing the belief that nothing is impossible in front of our strength. He also shed light on the psychological condition of every refugee outside their home country.

The film’s Director, Alejandra Alcala, shared why they chose Asma’s story in particular, emphasizing its inspiring nature and their search for an initiative being implemented in conjunction with filming the documentary.
OUR RESEARCH

1- Theory of Change and Social Impact Measurement of We Love Reading

Main question: Does We Love Reading Program impact relational importance with children and motivation to lead?

Background:
We Love Reading (WLR) is a community-based intervention that combines intellectual stimulation and relational interaction with children through reading aloud to them. The role of a WLR ambassador can be a form of leadership in influencing children. Therefore, these WLR ambassadors can undergo an intensive change-maker journey that gives them an opportunity to develop their «possible self as a leader» internalizing a leader identity driven by motivation to lead. To assess this, we used a randomized controlled trial, where almost half of the participating women took WLR ambassadors training and the other half didn't.

How the research was done?
215 Syrian and Jordanian women living in Amman took part in the study. We collected data at two time-points immediately before the intervention (T1), after 4 months (T2).

Key findings: We Love Reading and relational importance
In the following Figure, at Time 2, participants in the treatment group (WLR Ambassadors) had higher perceived relational importance with children than the participants in the control group. The findings showed that the reading intervention for children created an opportunity and an environment for relations to be developed between the WLR Ambassadors and the children.

Key findings: Relational importance and motivation to lead (MTL)
The Figure below shows that motivation to lead (MTLS) completely mediated the relationship between relational importance and leader Identity. The mediation effect indicates that the reading ambassadors' self-perceived sense of motivation to lead was the driving force behind their leadership identification. This finding is significant as it sheds light on the leadership development of non-prototypical leaders.

Implications:
The development of a higher sense of relational importance among WLR Ambassadors aligns with the mentoring literature, which suggests that positive human relations can be fostered through mentoring programs (Lyons & Perrewe, 2014; Lund et al., 2019). Individuals who play supportive roles, contribute to the growth of others and witness this growth may develop a sense of leadership,
positive relationships, and a further motivation to intensify their supporting role to other individuals. Lund et al. (2019) discussed how developing a relational schema can influence social cognition, ultimately intensifying motivation to lead in supporting and developing the growth of others.

Researchers:
Rana Dajani: The Hashemite University
Susanna Chui: The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

2- Long-term Evaluation of “We Love Reading” Program on Syrian Children:

Main question: Does We Love Reading improve children’s literacy and attitudes toward reading?

Background:
Community-led, shared book-reading interventions have been shown to improve early childhood development and reduce inequity. There is limited research on their impact on refugees, but shared book-reading programs may be helpful in addressing some of the many educational challenges that Syrian refugee children in Jordan face.

How the research was conducted?
To assess this, we evaluated We Love Reading, a locally developed and implemented program in Jordan. We used a randomized controlled trial, where half of the participants took part in We Love Reading sessions for 12 weeks, and the other half did not. 322 Syrian refugee mothers and their 4-8-year-old children living in Amman and Za’atari camp took part in the study. We collected data at three time-points immediately before the intervention (T1), after 4 months (T2) and one year later (T3).

Key findings: We Love Reading and attitudes towards reading.
As seen in the figure below, and using the measure (PPCATR), children who took part in We Love Reading had more positive attitudes toward reading at T2.
At T3 (One-year long-term evaluation) mothers of children who took part in WLR in 2021 continue to report higher levels of child attitudes toward reading a year later than mothers of kids in the control group.

Implications
Literacy levels among participating children are very low. Literacy is important to many aspects of children’s development and functioning; it is critical to address these low literacy rates, to enable the prosperity and
future positive functioning of Syrian refugees in Jordan. We Love Reading shows promise in improving children’s attitudes toward reading. Better attitudes toward reading may have many positive knock-on effects on children.

Researchers:
Rana Dajani: The Hashemite University
Amal Alkharouf: University of Jordan
Kristin Hadfield: Trinity College Dublin
Isabelle: Mareschal, Queen Mary University of London
Julia Michalek: Queen Mary University of London
Lina Qtaishat: Taghyeer Association
Sophie von Stumm: University of York

3- Social Networks, Empowerment, and Wellbeing: An Intervention Study with Syrian Refugee and Jordanian Women

Main question: Are social networks associated with measures of empowerment, leadership, life satisfaction, and wellbeing? Does We Love Reading improve these outcomes for women?

Background:
Social networks characterize a set of interactions and relationships between people. They are often crucial to socioeconomic advancement. However, intervention research has not rigorously tested whether they matter to women’s psychological empowerment and life satisfaction, especially in low-resource Middle-Eastern communities.

How the research was conducted?
In 2022-2023 we documented the social networks of 215 women in Amman (106 Syrian refugees, 109 Jordanians), using mixed methods we conducted a randomized controlled trial, in which half the women participated in a single day of We Love Reading training, while the other half did not. We collected data before (baseline) and after (endline) the WLR training.

Key findings at baseline
Women listed between 0 and 13 close peers. Networks were, on average, smaller for Syrians (3.72 peers) than Jordanians (4.98 peers). They were homogeneous by nationality; the peers of Syrians were 89% Syrian; those of Jordanians were 94% Jordanian. Network size was positively associated with measures of psychological empowerment, motivation to lead, and perceived social support. Women drew upon volunteer work to potentially diversify personal networks outside the home. They felt less empowered with smaller and predominantly kin-based networks.
Key findings at endline:

Preliminary analyses show that women’s sense of life satisfaction increased for women with larger net-work sizes (as shown in the graph below). Levels of life satisfaction and leadership motivation were both higher for women with more highly-educated peers.

With respect to the intervention, the life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing of women showed an increase in the We Love Reading group, from baseline to endline.

Preliminary analyses at the endline results show that volunteering work diversified women’s personal networks outside the home.

Implications:

The We Love Reading program shows promise to improve life satisfaction and wellbeing among women. We are continuing to study social networks, life satisfaction, and We Love Reading impacts with a 3rd round of data collection.

This study shows that building opportunities for women to socially interact and expand social ties helps to enhance their life satisfaction. This evidence matters to development initiatives seeking to foster women’s empowerment, wellbeing, and social inclusion.

Also, expanding opportunities for volunteer work is one way of empowering poor women to work, learn, and socially interact.

Researchers:
Catherine Panter-Brick: Yale University
Rana Dajani: The Hashemite University
Jannik Eggerman: Yale University
Praveen Kumar: Boston College

4-Facial Emotion Recognition in Refugee Children with a History of War Trauma

Main question:
How does exposure to war-related trauma and displacement during early development impact the socioemotional development, specifically the facial emotion recognition, in refugee children?

Background:
Over 36 million children are currently displaced due to war, yet we know little about how these experiences of war and displacement affect their socioemotional development—notably how they perceive facial expressions.
How the research was conducted?
The research conducted three experiments to investigate the effects of war trauma exposure on facial emotion recognition in Syrian refugee and Jordanian nonrefugee children living in Jordan.

Across three different experiments, we investigated the effects of war trauma exposure on facial emotion recognition in 130 Syrian refugee children with medium age 9.3 years, where 63 of them were females) and (148 Jordanian nonrefugee children with medium age 9.4 years where 66 of them were females). Both groups were living in Jordan when the data was collected back in (2019-2020)

Children in the two groups differed in trauma exposure, but not on any of our measures of mental health. In experiment 1, we measured children’s biases to perceive an emotion using morphed facial expressions and found no evidence that biases differed between refugees and nonrefugees. In experiment 2, we adapted a novel perceptual scaling task that bypasses semantic knowledge, and again found no differences between the two group’s discrimination of facial expressions. Finally, in experiment 3, we recorded children’s eye movements as they identified Middle Eastern actors’ facial expressions, and again found no differences between the groups in either their identification accuracies or scanning strategies.

Key findings:
Taken together, the results of the three experiments, our results suggest that exposure to war-related trauma and displacement during early development, when reported by the caregiver but not always recollected by the child, does not appear to alter emotion recognition of facial expressions.

Researchers:
Julia Michalek: Queen Mary University of London
Matteo Lisi: Royal Holloway University of London,
Rana Dajani: Hashemite University, MIT Massachusetts Institute of Technology,
Kristin Hadfield: Trinity College Dublin, International School for Advanced Studies
Isabelle Mareschal: Queen Mary University of London

5- Executive Functions in Jordanian Children: What Can the Hearts and Flowers Task Tell us about Development in a Non-Western Context

Main Question:
The main question of the research is whether the Hearts and Flowers (HF) task, commonly used to assess executive functions (EFs) in Western populations, is valuable for evaluating EFs development in non-Western contexts, particularly in Jordanian children.

Background:
The background of the research emphasizes the importance of understanding
the development of executive functions (EFs) in the broader context of global developmental science. The study addresses recent calls for more inclusive and equitable developmental science, highlighting the potential limitations of tasks and questionnaires developed using only a subset of the population for EFs measurement in global contexts unless explicitly tested.

**How the research was conducted:**
The research involved an examination of the Hearts and Flowers (HF) task which is commonly used to assess executive functions (EFs) in Western populations, assessing its suitability for measuring EFs development in a non-Western sample of Jordanian children aged 5.5–8.5 years. The study explored whether task performance on the HF task was associated with socioeconomic variables and parent-reported measures of academic achievement, internalizing, and externalizing behaviors using the Arabic Child Behavior Checklist. The data were collected from a sample of 93 Jordanian children.

Local research assistants fluent in Arabic were involved in recruiting participants for a study conducted in three schools in Al-Salt and greater Amman, Jordan. The recruitment process included reviewing consent documents with parents and distributing Arabic materials to caregivers. Once consent was obtained, parents provided demographic information and completed assessments, including the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), while their children participated in a cognitive battery of tasks. The overarching study aimed to explore the impact of the We Love Reading program on cognitive and literacy development in Jordanian children. The tasks encompassed the Hearts and Flowers (H&F) task, a literacy assessment, a Face Go/NoGo task, and a recognition memory task.

**Key findings:**
The research found that the Hearts and Flowers (HF) task to be valuable for distinguishing performance among EFs constructs (working memory, inhibitory control, cognitive flexibility) in this cohort. However, there were no age differences in EFs performance, nor any EFs-specific relationship to any of the parent-report measures of EFs-related constructs. Instead, EFs were related to paternal education and location of residence (Jordanian governorate).

**Implications:**
The discussion highlights the need for considering measurement and generalizability biases in investigations involving human subjects, particularly in the context of the expansion of developmental science into global settings. The study notes a significant gap in executive functions (EFs) assessment studies, with only 17.9% conducted in Middle Eastern populations, emphasizing the importance of addressing this imbalance. The authors propose future research should explore adapting EF tasks, such as the Hearts and Flowers (H&F) task, to culturally appropriate testing contexts. Alternatively, they suggest starting with qualitative assessments of children’s lived experiences in both home and school environments.

**Researcher:**
Jazlyn Nketia: Brown University  
Alya Al Sager: Harvard University  
Rana Dajani: The Hashemite University  
Diego Placido University of California  
Dima Amso: Columbia University.
Ongoing Research:

1- (FIERCE) Syrian Refugee Fathers Study:

This study aims to assess, in a cohort of Syrian families living as refugees in Jordan, the extent to which fathers engage with their families, contribute to family cohesiveness, and assess family-level impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In doing so, it offers both a humanistic and social lens on Syrian refugee fathers and their roles across generations.

Researchers:
Catherine Panter-Brick: Yale University
Zaid Alkayed: University of Jordan
Majd Al-Soleiti: Yale University
Isabelle Mareschal: Queen Mary University
Kristín Hadfield: Trinity College Dublin
Rana Dajani: The Hashemite University
Lama Sawalha: University of Jordan

2- How We Love Reading Volunteers go on to Become Social Entrepreneurs:

We Love Reading’s social entrepreneurship program follows the philosophy: “If I can open a library, what else can I do?” This research analyses to what extent the We Love Reading voluntary experience fosters intentions to start their own social entrepreneurship project afterward.

Researchers:
Farah Al Taji: Brunel University London
Rawan AlHeresh: Harvard university
Zeina Muqbel: Harvard university
Rama Kummitha: Northumbria university

3- Let’s Read and Talk:

The goal of this study is to explore how a parent-child book reading intervention impacts both parent and child outcomes. This study also aims to test intervention effects on children’s school readiness (primary outcome), and parents’ engagement in book reading with their child (secondary outcome), and to explore mechanisms and processes underlying the intervention effects on school readiness and parenting behaviors and practices. The study uses cutting-edge technology to explore how stress influences parent-child interaction, including epigenetic sampling, heart rate data, and cortisol samples.

Researchers:
Antje von Suchodoletz: New York University Abu Dhabi
Rana Dajani: Hashemite University
4- Decolonizing concepts of empowerment and life satisfaction using fuzzy cognitive mapping

This study aims to decolonize and localize concepts of empowerment and life satisfaction perceived by Jordanian and Syrian women as well as identifying the influencing factors and drivers of change including volunteering activities represented by WLR program using Fuzzy Cognitive Mapping which an innovative semi-quantitative participatory approach that visualizes and analyzes mental models and systems of change.

Researchers:
Praveen Kumar: Boston College
Rana Dajani: The Hashemite University
Lina Qteishat: Ta'ghyeer Association
Catherine Panter-Brick: Yale University

4- Changing Emirati Women’s Mindsets Through Reading to Foster Agency and Intrinsic Motivation

This project, is led by Dr. Dina Tbaishat in collaboration with the We Love Reading (WLR) program-Ta’ghyeer organization and funded by the Institute for Social and Economic Research at Zayed University.
This project invites Emirati women to become catalysts for change in their communities and aims to empower women by becoming WLR Ambassadors, who will lead read-aloud sessions for children in their communities. By participating in quantitative and qualitative data collection on two time-points, the study will assess the impact of undertaking WLR’s online training, and conducting weekly read-aloud sessions for three months, on women’s intrinsic motivation, leadership, agency and self-efficacy while nurturing changemakers among children through the transformative power of storytelling.

Researchers:
Dina Tbaishat Zayed University
Rana Dajani: The Hashemite University
PUBLISHED RESEARCH

Social networks, empowerment, and wellbeing among Syrian refugee and Jordanian women: Implications for development and social inclusion

Facial emotion recognition in refugee children with a history of war trauma

Executive Functions in Jordanian Children: What Can the Hearts and Flowers Task Tell Us About Development in a Non-Western Context
HIGHLIGHTS ON OUR BOOK DEVELOPMENT

We Love Reading has a specialized department for book development. WLR aims to develop books that are fun, creative, and unleash the children’s imaginations. Books are developed according to set criteria and methodology, taking into account factors such as theme, relevancy to the children’s culture and background, language, and age-appropriateness. In creating the books, WLR collaborates with local writers, illustrators, designers, and publishers. All content is reviewed by education consultants as well as consultants within the respective content themes. Thus far, WLR has created 332 children’s books covering a variety of themes, including environmental awareness, empathy, gender, non-violence, disabilities, and refugees. As of 2023, WLR has distributed more than 283,306 books all over Jordan.

We Love Reading has developed 37 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 story books catalogue is available on our website:

In addition to the 37 books We Love Reading has published, we have also produced a series of guide books on different topics:

How To Write Children Story Books

61
NEWLY ADDED TO OUR BOOK COLLECTION

QUEEN OF BALLOONS

“In a quest to become the Queen of Balloons in her neighborhood, Ayah discovers Uncle Omar’s shop for magical solutions. At first, she believes she has unlocked the secret to winning each balloon game. But Ayah ends up learning a much more valuable secret”. That is what you will be discovering in the latest We Love Reading book written by author Lina Qtaishat and illustrated by Ali. Al-Zaini.

The global challenge of water scarcity and climate change is a pressing issue, offering numerous opportunities for solutions and awareness. The We Love Reading program addresses this in the book ”The Queen of Balloons”, inspired by Jordanian scientist Omar Munis Yaghi’s technology to extract water from the air.

Book review:

“What caught my attention is that children aged 4 and 5 showed interest in the balloon game in the story, while children aged 10 and 11 focused on the plot and the scientific aspect of the story. They wondered how balloons could be filled with water without someone filling them. As a teacher, I appreciated the interactive idea introduced by the story. Additionally, the story enriches language skills in children and enhances their problem-solving abilities.”

Our Ambassador Huda Abu Al-Khair
THE PEPPERED MOTH

“Salma is very curious. Salma wants to know what is happening to the peppered moths on the trees in her garden.” Join Salma in her fun adventure in nature in our latest book the “The Peppered Moth” the first children’s book by Prof. Rana Dajani the Founder of We Love Reading, illustrated by Ali Al-Zaini, translating and translate to Arabic Language by Nada Abu Al-Zahab. This book “The Peppered Moth” is a dream that I wasn’t able to pursue due to circumstances, and now is the time to highlight the importance of understanding organisms and their natural diversity, as well as the process of evolution and coexistence with other organisms. Prof. Rana Dajani

Book review:

“Students engaged positively with "The Peppered Moth" story, which skillfully tackles environmental pollution through an enjoyable narrative, employing investigative storytelling and problem-solving techniques. This fosters critical thinking, creativity, social intelligence, and linguistic skills in children.”

Our Ambassador Tamam Hiary
PUBLICATIONS AND MEDIA

Our latest book “We Love Reading – An Introduction” is now available.
The book highlights the philosophy and the experience of “We Love Reading” as following:

**Part One: Our Philosophy**
1. Why Reading for Pleasure is Important.
2. Reading Levels Remain Low.
3. Why Don’t Children Read for Pleasure?.
4. We Love Reading as a Solution.
5. How to Reading Aloud.
7. Studying We Love Reading’s Impact.

**Part Two: Our Experience**
1. We Love Reading: A Short History.
2. We Love Reading as a Social Movement.
3. We Love Reading in Refugee Camps.
4. Conclusion.

**Reviews on the Book:**
“For refugee children, reading helps heal trauma”
-New York Times, April 17, 2019

“We should believe that nothing is impossible,” writes Rana Dajani, who has made a life and a career out of proving that everything is and can be possible. The story of her journey in building We Love Reading is profoundly inspirational, for it is the story of a woman’s heart and a women’s leadership. It is the story of what reading can do to change lives and especially what reading to children can do for one child and for the entire community Professor Dajani shows us that one act of love-the act of reading aloud can create dynamic change in the lives and minds of young people and in the entire community that surrounds them. Professor Dajani lays out a unique and replicable blueprint for nurturing and empowering societal change, story by story, and child by child.”

-Pam Allyn, Founder of Lit World, Author of What to Read When.

**Book author:**
Prof. Rana Dajani,
Founder of We Love Reading.

Order the book:
The Jordanian reading initiative shaping young minds around the world

Read the article:

From Readers to Changemakers: Reading Aloud to Develop Learners who Love to Read

Read the article:

We Love Reading Interview with the World Bank Group’s Spring Meeting.

Watch the interview

Beyond the Borders Podcast: Journey in Global Innovation and Literacy

Bridge Workshop Final Report
Sustainable Development Goals (SDG):

The 193 United Nations Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, under the title: “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and 169 strategies, which are an urgent call for action by all countries -developed and developing- in a global partnership. The Goals and targets will stimulate action over the next fifteen years in the following areas of critical importance: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership.

WLR focuses on the following SDGs:
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!

Buy our books:

Donate:
Meet our Ambassador Amal Al-Akhras. Amal held over 365 reading sessions for children and read to over 3,178 children in her governorate, which is one of the highest number of reading sessions for children in the history of We Love Reading in such a short period of time. She described the We Love Reading program as the most wonderful thing that ever happened to her and she added: “My dream is to establish a huge library for all the children and to become a reading Ambassador worldwide.”