

## We Love Reading... Behind the Scenes





## **We Love Reading... Behind the Scenes**

Our Team Telling Their Stories... Experiences and Challenges

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## We Love Reading: A Unique Path

Here is where the story began nearly twenty years ago. We Love Reading started in one of the neighborhoods of Jordan, with a single story, one ray of light in the darkness.

The challenge of success lay in conveying the message through the team who joined the program, believing in the power of words, the essence of the mission, and the impact that each reading session could create.

In the field and in the offices, they planned how they would plant the love of reading in every child, in every neighborhood, and within people who had never before held a book. Not only to read a book, but to truly enjoy reading it.

Before We Love Reading, these neighborhoods did not know what it meant to read for pleasure. Reading was one page, copied and imposed by the cultural reality in all its forms, official, educational, and religious. Neither personal opinion had a place, nor had the voices of reading aloud reached the hearts of children. Amid that darkness, the decision came to establish We Love Reading, with faith in its mission and its motto: "A library in every neighborhood."

We succeeded in this goal, through engagement and enthusiasm in trainings and reading circles. But we did not stop there. We turned to science and research, collaborating with leading scientific and academic institutions. The impact proved to be positive and sustainable, in multiple forms and dimensions. We carried this success on the voices of ambassadors, both men and women, and on the voices of children. For them, We Love Reading training was never just a passing experience. But today, we are giving the microphone and the stage to those who worked behind the scenes, the unsung heroes of reading.

When we decided to launch this issue, we knew that the challenge of giving everyone a voice was not an easy mission. And we know very well that each person who worked in the program left a fingerprint, like a butterfly leaving an impact.

In this issue, we tried to cover every department from training, to research, to projects, to book development, to media hoping we could give due credit to every task and every effort.

Former and current WLR staff describe how social work has influenced their lives, and what role reading has played in shaping their personal and professional futures. If reading has nurtured ways of thinking and created change among ambassadors, then what about those who bore the responsibility of carrying out this mission?

We leave you now with the voices of those who answered our questions in this issue of the We Love Reading Magazine.



## Prof. Rana Dajani: The Emergence of the Idea

Founder, We Love Reading Program | Chair of the Board

Dear WLR Family,

WLR is a family. To me, everyone who joins becomes part of that family. Through the We Love Reading training, each person starts learning, understanding, and eventually embodying the WLR philosophy and spirit. WLR is a cause that people join, one that happens to also be a job and a source of livelihood. I expect from every member what you would expect from a family member:

- Critique that comes from care and love
- Caring about the movement as if it were their own
- Trust and a sense of belonging
- Open and transparent relationships

Once a month, we hold our "chaos meeting," where everyone gathers to share reflections, critiques, hopes, and dreams about the program in an open and free environment. We watch movies, listen to talks, discuss ideas, and enjoy good food. It's chaotic, because anyone can say anything. But creativity happens in chaos. Ideas are born, innovative approaches are discovered, and bonds are made, fostered, and nurtured. Even after people leave, they remain forever part of the family. They talk about WLR everywhere they go, at the bank, in a taxi, and beyond.

My approach is that anyone who joins is entrusted as a responsible member, capable of contributing, taking initiative, and getting things done. Together, we come up with ideas, and they figure out how to bring them to life. They learn on the job, motivated from within. This is why they gain skills that prepare them for future opportunities, because they will move on, and the experience they gained at WLR will open new horizons for them. They may not always appreciate being thrown into the deep end, but later they all recognize the value of this approach. Growth comes from being uncomfortable yet internally motivated, this is the best way to learn and evolve. Even when we disagree, it is always a conversation. I expect pushback and healthy discussion because that is how I also grow and learn from them.

WLR is an environment that fosters and nurtures changemakers, within the organization and beyond.

I hope that everyone who has been part of WLR remembers their time with fondness, knowing that their horizons expanded, and that they pushed themselves beyond what they thought possible to become better versions of themselves, so they never accept anything less in the future.

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## Lina Qtaishat: Diving into the World of Research

Research Project Management | Children's Books Development

"The program doesn't evaluate people based on years of experience, but on each individual's real skills and competencies. This approach allowed me to take on a leadership role early and make tangible contributions to research projects, with full recognition of my academic and intellectual rights." Lina Qtaishat>

In 2019, Lina Qtaishat embarked on a new journey with the We Love Reading program. Lina, an architect and researcher specializing in social impact, began her career in the program as a Research Officer.

By 2021, she was promoted to Research Projects Manager, taking on multiple roles that included managing in-person and remote training, overseeing children's book development, and contributing to research management in academic studies.

Lina's journey extended far beyond administrative responsibilities. While working in the book development department, she discovered a new voice within herself, a passion for writing for children, a field she had not explored before joining the program. "The program opened windows for me to discover my abilities. I am particularly proud of the book "The Queen of Balloons" in the field of children's literature," she said.



On both personal and professional levels, Lina developed strong teamwork skills and mastered negotiation techniques she learned directly from Prof. Rana Dajani. "Reading others' ideas before negotiating, advocating for what I need, and understanding team dynamics, these are skills that strengthened my leadership and planning abilities and shaped my professional identity," she explains.

Lina emphasizes that reading is not limited to literary books, but also encompasses articles and research. She credits the program with teaching her the value of deep, thoughtful reading rather than consuming information superficially. This approach now guides her reading of the Qur'an, which she studies with reflection, appreciating the vast worlds it contains.

Regarding her philosophy on social work, Lina believes that quality outweighs quantity, and that true sustainability is reflected in individual success stories. "If you touch one person deeply, that impact naturally extends to others," she notes.

Lina concludes with a vision for the future: "I hope to see Prof. Rana's vision realized, where reading aloud to children becomes a daily habit in society, not tied to the program, but an intrinsic part of every family's life. When that happens, the program will have fully transformed into a societal movement, no longer reliant on organizational frameworks, because the habit of reading itself will be deeply rooted in the community."

**Learn More about Lina's book "The Queen of Balloons".**



## Fares Ahmad: Years in the Cockpit

Chief Operating Officer | Human Resources Manager

“We Love Reading is not just a local program: it is a global model of quality and vision, adaptable to every community and every country. For me, it has been more than a job, it has been a journey of rediscovering myself and uncovering possibilities I never knew I had.” Fares Ahmad.

Fares began his journey with We Love Reading in 2018. “It was my first real experience with a nonprofit organization. What immediately struck me was how closely the program’s operations mirrored the discipline of the private sector: resources were treated as a shared responsibility rather than private property, always directed toward achieving maximum efficiency and impact.”

Born into a multicultural family, with an Arab father and a foreign mother, Fares grew up across Palestine, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Romania. Living in different cultures taught him adaptability and gave him the ability to see the world from multiple perspectives. Over more than fifteen years, Fares built a career in human resources, working in both the private sector and nonprofit organizations, while also completing a Master’s degree in Business Administration.



Reflecting on his journey, he considers his greatest achievement under Professor Dajani’s supervision to participate in guiding the program through its most challenging periods and reshaping it so it could serve communities free of charge without requiring a large staff.

This experience equipped him with the skills to one day build his own project from the ground up, while also teaching him how to collaborate effectively with external stakeholders, donors, ministries, and partner organizations as the program’s liaison with the outside world.

“What I hadn’t anticipated was how profoundly this work would change me personally. When I first joined, I had little interest in reading to children. But the years I spent at We Love Reading, along with my experiences with my own children, changed everything, as bedtime stories became a cherished family ritual. In those small moments, I realized just how much we can nurture a love of reading in a child’s heart.”

One book in particular left a lasting impression on him: *The Peppered Moth*. Its scientific ideas sparked his curiosity and inspired him to explore theories such as natural selection. It showed him how We Love Reading books respect children’s minds and open windows to science and knowledge in fun, engaging ways.

“Combining social impact with a professional career is an indescribable feeling. I am deeply grateful for this opportunity for the supportive environment, for the growth it has given me, and for the inspiring leadership of Dr. Rana Dajani, a globally celebrated figure who also deserves equal recognition here in Jordan.” Fares notes.

## Eman Al-Tarawneh: Work with a Lasting Impact

Children's Literature Development | Project Manager

"Kindness and empathy are the key to any successful relationship, alongside setting high standards and clear expectations. Almost everything can be learned if we have the intention and commitment to do so," she tells us, capturing part of her experience and personal philosophy.

Eman is a specialist in social and sustainable development. Her professional journey spans many years in formal and non-formal education, creative work, media, program management, and training. On a personal level, she is passionate about driving positive change in any context she works in and believes that true change begins from within.

Her journey with We Love Reading ran from 2013 to 2017 and included several phases and roles from serving as Program Manager for projects focused on social entrepreneurship and building the capacities of women and youth through training, to leading the development of more than 20 illustrated children's books addressing critical topics such as refugees, gender equality, celebrating disability, environmental awareness, and other pressing issues.

When asked about these roles, Eman shared that she enjoyed each of them, but the work closest to her heart was empowering and building the capacities of young people, because their passion and drive were both contagious and refreshing. She also took particular joy in leading the process of developing children's books.

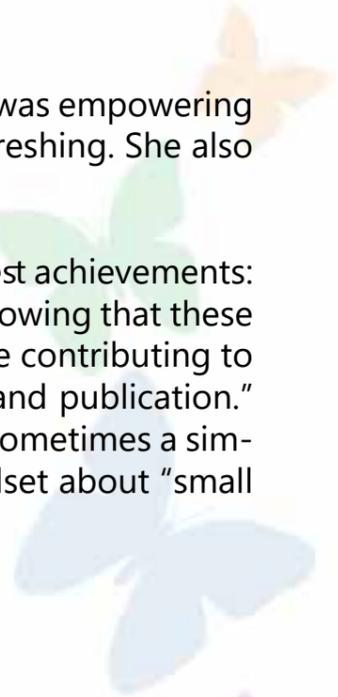
She adds with pride that leading the development of more than 20 children's stories stands among her greatest achievements: "We were able to distribute more than 200,000 printed copies to children in underprivileged communities. Knowing that these stories touched their lives, sparked conversations, and opened minds fills me with gratitude. This is alongside contributing to the Developing Children's Books Guide, where I documented the entire process from concept to printing and publication." she adds: "Without a doubt, WLR showed me that change doesn't have to be massive but to be meaningful. Sometimes a simple act of kindness, or training a mother to read aloud, is enough to spark lasting transformation. This mindset about "small actions, big impact" has stayed with me ever since."



Speaking about the program's philosophy, Eman shares: "WLR approached literacy as a form of social justice, rooted in empowerment from the ground up. It wasn't just about books, it was about shifting narratives and giving voice to the marginalized. That's what made it so different from conventional, top-down programs."

She concludes with gratitude: "I am thankful to Prof. Rana Dajani for giving me the opportunity to lead projects and programs. Working with WLR was not just a job; it was a journey of learning, contribution, and meaning. I will always remain grateful."

**Learn more about the Children's Book Development Guide:**



## Alaa Al-Zghoul: Her Reading... Sharing Life and the Travel Bag Project Management | Training Materials Development

Alaa Al-Zghoul holds a degree in pharmacy. We Love Reading was her first experience in social work, as her previous engagements were in the medical field. However, her passion for reading began much earlier. Alaa is the founder of the initiative “Khair Jalees fi Al-Jami’a” (The Best Companion ) at University, which she launched after realizing that students often read only for exams, while she deeply believed that reading had a far greater value. Through her initiative, she succeeded in attracting students to discuss novels and books beyond their academic majors.

Alaa joined We Love Reading in 2015 and continued her journey for more than three and a half years. She worked as a coordinator for the Read Aloud project for adolescent girls in Zaatari Camp, where she established activities that encouraged them to write their own stories. She describes her experience in the program as being full of opportunities that inspired continuous learning, and she always sought to witness its tangible impact.

Her influence extended globally when she traveled to Uganda with Dr. Rana Dajani to spread the We Love Reading program through a project designed from the perspective of communities.



She was also responsible for delivering training sessions in refugee camps and for developing stories tailored for adolescent girls. Rising through the ranks, she eventually became a Project Manager, leading initiatives that even required her to travel to the United States. One of her proudest achievements was managing a team whose members were younger than her.

Alaa also contributed to the development of We Love Reading training materials. She worked on manuals and training resources, which were all tested, refined, and improved until they reached the best possible version. After her time at We Love Reading, Alaa worked with several international organizations, including the World Health Organization. Currently, she is preparing to pursue a Master’s in Public Health after being awarded an Erasmus scholarship that will allow her to study across multiple European countries.

For Alaa, working alongside a creative leader like Dr. Rana Dajani had a profound impact on sparking her own innovative ideas and engaging with youth and different age groups. She learned how to write grant proposals and dedicate long hours to achieve the best results with the highest quality. She adds that having her ideas heard and discussed at a young age, being given space to make mistakes, and addressing challenges to find solutions were among the key motivators that nurtured her creativity.

Although reading was not new in Alaa’s life, she admits that the program deepened her love for it even more. To this day, a book always rests on her bedside table. She shared with us one of the books she is currently reading, titled “Before We Forget Kindness ”, a story that explores the idea: “If we had the chance to visit the past before our cup of coffee grows cold, what would we change? How might past events perhaps long forgotten still shape our present without us realizing it?”

Alaa concludes by saying that she continues to be a Reading Ambassador within her family. At every Friday family gathering, she brings her reading bag to read to the children some of whom have now grown to read stories back to her.

**To sign in for the We Love Reading online training, scan here:**



## Adnan Al-Hanouti: Just About Fifteen Years Logistics Officer

Adnan joined the We Love Reading Program in 2010 as a Logistics Assistant and Facilitator, supporting trainings, organizing storage, and distributing children's books.

"However, the impact of WLR on me went far beyond these tasks, through the program's environment, I discovered myself more deeply, built meaningful and healthy relationships, and learned what it truly means to work with changemakers." Adnan says.

He explains that the experience changed him personally and reshaped his relationship with reading. "I began reading not only for myself but also for my children something I had never considered before."

Adnan adds that while he cannot recount every story or experience from his long journey, which he takes great pride in, the program strengthened his communication skills through interacting with diverse groups and learning how to recognize and nurture the best in others.

He also notes that WLR instilled in him a deep sense of curiosity, which motivated him to read his first book in English, despite not knowing the language at the time. According to Adnan, the program's environment encouraged continuous learning and taught him that nothing is impossible.



"The impact was not limited to me alone," Adnan narrates. "It extended to my entire family. I became more invested in their education, encouraged their learning, and emphasized the importance of school. I shared with them the value of learning through discussions and dialogues about success stories within WLR both of employees and ambassadors to provide them with living examples that inspire."

Adnan expresses hope that the program will continue encouraging communities to read, emphasizing that reading is a powerful tool that uplifts both adults and children. He also believes in the impact of stories not only on children, but on ambassadors as well, as they stimulate minds and expand horizons beyond limited circles.

"Working with WLR makes me feel that I am not just working for the sake of work," he says. "I am part of a process of creating real change."

## Ghofran Abu Diya: Finding Meaning in Every Action

### We Love Reading Program Trainer

“Any work that is connected to meaning is what gives it endless importance and value to any community, and this is what I found and gained from the We Love Reading program and the mindset of Dr. Rana Dajani.” Ghofran Abu Diya.

As a Research Assistant in 2015 Ghofran joined WLR, working on research projects in collaboration with Yale University. She then took on the role of Project Coordinator and rotated through various departments, including Communications, Monitoring and Evaluation, and the development of training and logistical materials. In addition, Ghofran collaborated with the production team in filming the documentary (The Neighborhood Storyteller), which portrayed the story of WLR Ambassador Asma Al-Rashed.

Today, Ghofran works as a trainer in reading aloud to children, in Jordan but wherever she goes, and in 2023, she delivered a training session on reading aloud to children for a group of women in Egypt, followed by another training this year.

Ghofran holds a Bachelor’s degree in Genetic Engineering and has worked in developmental fields and volunteer work. She is an avid reader who has made We Love Reading an integral part of her life. She values the mindset of “nothing is impossible” that she adopted from Dr. Rana Dajani, both professionally and in all aspects of her life.

Ghofran adds that being given the opportunity to work in multiple departments within the program helped her always be prepared for any challenge. She worked in Monitoring and Evaluation and discovered that she could perform the role with competence beyond many who had worked in it for years, which gave her a sense of mastery and the drive to deliver everything at the highest possible standard. The program also had a significant impact on her personal life, instilling in her a love for children’s literature. She always ensures that children’s books are part of her personal library.



Ghofran believes that children’s stories present complex ideas in a very simple way, which requires philosophy, depth, and precise understanding. She recalls Einstein’s words in this context: “If you can’t explain it to a six-year-old, you don’t understand it yourself.” She also appreciates the Children’s Book Development Team for the high quality of their stories and their meticulous attention to detail, which makes her feel that the effort invested in children’s literature is not just creating simple books, but producing work that offers true value.

Currently, Ghofran is reading the book (I Found My Answers) by the late Basel Al-Araj. She considers it extremely important, as it portrays the reality of the struggle in Palestine, documents massacres, and presents the philosophy of resistance within Palestinian territories. She adds that Basel Al-Araj is an important writer who taught her a lot and left a profound impact on her understanding of national and social issues.

**To attend a reading session led by Ghofran, scan here:**



## Aseel Badran: More Than an Image and Design... One Identity

### Web and Graphic Designer

She played a vital role in visually reflecting WLR's identity, transforming her wide imagination into creative and accessible designs that drew local and global communities to learn more about the program.

Aseel describes her experience working with the program alongside Prof. Rana Dajani and the team, saying: "Working side by side with Prof. Rana and the team, whose vision and enthusiasm were truly contagious, allowed me to see how design and technology can amplify the impact of any movement."

She adds: "During my time at We Love Reading, I had the privilege of working as a web and graphic designer, bringing the program's inspiring message to life through visual storytelling and digital presence. I designed and developed the website and other visual materials to reflect the program's vibrant identity, while ensuring they became welcoming and accessible spaces for people around the world to connect with the message."

Aseel says that the work environment at We Love Reading was collaborative, inspiring, and deeply rooted in the mission. Every project was built on a shared belief that reading can spark change. What she is most proud of is knowing that her designs were not just creative outputs, but tools that helped communities access resources, share stories, and become part of something truly meaningful.

This experience strengthened her belief in using creative skills to make valuable impact and taught her that a single, well-crafted design can carry a powerful message to the world. At We Love Reading, she explains that she was not only a website designer or story editor, but also contributed to building a bridge that connects the mission to the people it serves.

"I am thankful for a time I will never forget."



" Working side by side with Dr. Rana and the team, whose vision and enthusiasm were truly contagious, allowed me to see how design and technology can amplify the impact of any movement."

**Aseel Badran**

## Abdul Raouf Shomout: Technical Operations — The Pulse of Change

Technical Operations Officer | Risk Management

“What distinguished the We Love Reading system was that the work was not merely about tasks, but about a mission, a purpose, and values brought to life: Everyone Matters, Excellence in Work, Creative Thinking, and Absolute Integrity. These were not just slogans on paper, they were reflected in daily practice. Combined with genuine care, they made the program a truly unique place.” Abdelraouf Shamout.

For more than ten years, Abdelraouf Shamout has moved across the fields of operations and content, with a solid background in disaster management and professional training. From technology and telecommunications to creative content and education, his driving force has remained the same: building smoother systems for organizations and helping people learn in ways that leave a lasting impact.

He joined We Love Reading in 2015 as a Quality Manager, building an integrated management system focused on processes, procedures, and data integrity. However, his passion soon led him to a new role managing the Capacity Building Project. For more than 18 months, he designed and implemented training programs, combining structure and organization with the development of individuals and support for their growth.

As Abdelraouf describes it, the program’s environment was more like a community movement than just a workplace. Everyone worked toward one mission: spreading the love of reading. It was a mix of professionalism and creativity, with a collective spirit and a deep belief in the purpose behind the work.

Over his four-and-a-half-year journey in the program, leading the Capacity Building initiative was his proudest achievement. It was not only about managing projects or designing detailed work plans, but also about building a culture that combined his love for structure and organization with his passion for empowering individuals and helping them grow. On a broader scale, Abdelraouf’s perspective on impact transformed. Success was no longer measured by technical indicators or operational data, but by empowering people and building skills that last a lifetime. On a personal level, he carried with him many lessons in patience, empathy, and the value of community.



Yet reading was always at the heart of it all. He says: “I saw how a single story could inspire a child, spark their curiosity, and open up a whole new world for them.”

That is why he continues to read regularly on leadership, communication, and creativity, sharing what he learns with his community.

“Amid all the details, one message remains deepest for him: “Real change begins with a single story.”

**Abdul Raouf Shomout**

## Luma Al-Barghouthi: We Love Reading as a Life Philosophy

### Program Management | Policy Development

"Our work at We Love Reading was never just about achieving numbers, completing task lists, or meeting deadlines. It was about creating real impact, following a clear methodology, ensuring high quality, and delivering tangible results." Luma Al-Barghouthi.

Luma studied law at the University of Jordan. In 2016, she joined We Love Reading as Administrative Manager, later becoming Program Manager. She also worked in institutional development and policy review at Taghyeer, including human resources systems and support operations.

She contributed to the research department by measuring the entrepreneurial spirit of the ambassadors and personally following up with them. The feedback and impact were inspiring: some ambassadors established associations, others became leaders in their communities, and many entered the social work field. Everyone was eager to share their personal experiences with the program, which made Luma realize that once someone joins We Love Reading, they remain a part of it forever. Luma says: "I cannot speak about my professional journey without mentioning what I learned from Dr. Rana Dajani. I always observed her way of thinking, as she designed the program's methodology. Her work was never about numbers or completing task lists or meeting deadlines it was about impact, with a clear methodology, high quality, and tangible results."

She adds: "This approach has left a profound mark on my professional and personal life. It has influenced the way I raise my children, making me think more logically and objectively. In every organization I worked with after the program, I shared this methodology with my colleagues. What matters is not just finishing the work, but the outcomes and the impact it creates."

For her, We Love Reading was more than a workplace, it was a true family. This positive environment deepened her gratitude and inspired her to carry the program's message wherever she goes. She recalls: "I would find We Love Reading books wherever I went, camps like Zaatari and Azraq, the Jordan Hashemite Fund, and every library I visited. I proudly told the team that I had worked with the program and that these books were developed by it. The studies on refugees, mental health, and children's cognitive development impressed everyone with the sustainable impact that reading can create."



We Love Reading accompanied Luma into her personal life as well. She always advises her children: "Don't read just to gain information, read because reading develops analytical and critical thinking skills and transforms a person as a whole."

Luma sees one of the main challenges facing the program as the lack of awareness in some government institutions about the importance of implementing the We Love Reading model. Despite significant efforts, there is still a gap in understanding the need to adapt the program to areas such as refugee support and mental health. She also noted that relying on volunteers, without financial incentives, adds far more value and impact than paid work.

This remains one of the most important lessons she learned from the program and continues to apply in every project she undertakes.

Luma concludes: "My journey with We Love Reading was never just a professional stop, it became a life philosophy that still guides me. I am proud to have been part of a program that started from a simple idea and grew into a global movement creating meaningful change."

## Marwa Al-Fawaier: Volunteer Work That Never Ends

### Training and Communications Manager

Marwa's journey with We Love Reading did not begin when she officially joined the program in 2022 as Communications, Media, and Training Manager; it dates back to 2015, when she first became a Reading Ambassador after receiving the training. She recalls being deeply inspired by Dr. Rana Dajani's story of creating a simple, local solution to a local challenge with lasting impact. That same year, she interviewed Dr. Rana in her podcast "Mirror of Success."

She describes her experience at WLR as a journey filled with challenges and achievements. During her time with the program, she worked on strengthening communication strategies, developing training content, and supporting digital platforms that expanded learning opportunities and amplified the voices of ambassadors and communities.

Among her proudest accomplishments was leading the implementation of the National Reading Campaign, which registered more than 1,200 ambassadors in a short time and organized over 60 public reading sessions at interactive book fairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture. She also led the Bridge 2023 training project, funded by the Korean National Commission for UNESCO. During her time, she met inspiring partners such as Yolanda and her father, Dr. Joan from Mexico, who led the UNESCO CEGE@ Club. Together, they facilitated training for over 25 participants in Mexico.

She also connected with Mr. Houna from Benin, who ran a community center for children. Months after leaving WLR, she continued to support him by building a website to showcase the center's work and help them secure funding despite the language barrier (he speaks only French, while Marwa speaks Arabic and English). For her, this story exemplifies the power of community and networks that WLR fostered.

In conclusion, Marwa shares: " What I learned at WLR is that channeling my skills toward doing good in all its forms is what truly matters. In this critical time our nation is going through, learning and raising awareness are more important than ever. To change the future, we must understand the past, and we must understand ourselves and others.»



## Afnan Amro: We Love Reading — A Window to the World

### Project and Research Manager

Afnan Khaleel Amro is a Research Assistant and Program Manager. “I studied Interior Design and hold a Master’s degree in Business Administration, with more than ten years of experience across the different fields I specialized in. I am a Research Assistant, Project Manager, and Interior Designer areas that reflect both my career path and my enduring passion. I joined the We Love Reading program at the beginning of 2025. I am deeply passionate about education and community engagement, and I believe in the power of reading to inspire minds and create positive change,” Afnan says.

During her work with We Love Reading, her role focused on supporting and implementing the program’s activities, including coordinating trainings with participants, whom the program calls “ambassadors,” and contributing to achieving the program’s goals. She worked side by side with the team to coordinate both online and in-person trainings and to provide support that ensured their smooth delivery locally and globally.

Afnan adds: “What helped me integrate easily into the work was the program’s collaborative, inspiring, and mission-driven environment, which offers a space that values creativity, teamwork, and continuous learning. One of the achievements I am most proud of is contributing to instilling a love of reading in children across different communities, ensuring they had access to engaging storybooks and participated in read-aloud sessions. It was truly wonderful to see children’s enthusiasm for reading grow. On both professional and personal levels, We Love Reading has had a significant impact on me. Personally, it reminded me of the simple yet profound power of a story. Professionally, it enhanced my skills in communication, teamwork, and project coordination, while also deepening my commitment to creating social impact.”

She continues: “My work at We Love Reading also inspired me to become a changemaker in my own community. I now seek opportunities, even in small everyday actions, to encourage children and families around me to read and embrace lifelong learning. In addition, it strengthened my personal relationship with reading by reminding me of its joy and power. Today, I continue to read regularly and share this love with others, seeing reading not only as a personal habit but also as a tool for connection, inspiration, and meaningful change. I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of a community movement that brings people closer together through reading, and for the belief instilled in us that small contributions matter, that reading aloud to a child can indeed spark meaningful change,” Afnan points out.



## Dina Saif: Harnessing Numbers for Change

### Finance Manager

“What I discovered is that even supporting a child’s love for books, or guiding a colleague through a financial process, can spark meaningful change,” Dina Saif .

Dina is a finance professional with extensive experience in nonprofit financial management. She began her journey in the development sector more than a decade ago, working with both local and international organizations. She is passionate about using finance as a tool to promote transparency, accountability, and impact, especially in initiatives that advance education and community empowerment. With We Love Reading, Dina started as a volunteer main accountant from 2013 until 2015. She was later hired as Finance Manager, serving from 2015 until 2019. Two years ago, she rejoined the program as a Board Member and now serves as Treasurer.



Reflecting on her experience, she shares: “While each role was meaningful, I especially identify with my time as Finance Manager, where I was deeply involved in shaping financial strategies that supported the organization’s growth and mission.” For Dina, We Love Reading provides an inspiring, collaborative, and mission-driven environment. “Everyone is passionate about making a difference, and that energy is contagious. It’s a place where your ideas are welcomed, your voice matters, and your work truly contributes to long-term change.”

One of her achievements was streamlining financial systems. She created a structure that enabled more efficient reporting and budget tracking. This not only increased donor confidence but also empowered internal teams to make better financial decisions. “Seeing these systems still in use today is very rewarding,” she adds. In terms of reading, Dina notes that We Love Reading reminded her of the transformative power of books in shaping minds and communities. She now reads regularly, both for her own enrichment and as a shared activity with her son, supporting reading as a lifestyle, not merely a skill.

“I discovered that I thrive when my work aligns with a deeper purpose. What makes WLR special is its community spirit, its inclusiveness, and the way it uplifts both its team and its ambassadores. It’s more than a workplace; it’s a family united by a shared mission,” she says. She concludes: “I’m deeply grateful for my journey with WLR, from volunteering to managing finance, and now contributing at the board level. It’s an organization that grows with you, challenges you, and supports your development. I carry its values with me in every professional step I take.”



## Seba Kakeh: Plato's Allegory and We Love Reading

### Multimedia Content Producer

Plato described a group of prisoners chained at the bottom of a cave who, since birth, had known nothing but the shadows cast on the wall and accepted them as reality until one prisoner freed himself and emerged into the outside world, confronting reality in its full, vivid truth. Seba sees Plato's allegory of the cave as one of the most fitting metaphors for the We Love Reading program. It liberates minds from the confines of their "caves," guiding them toward enlightenment, freeing them from superficial appearances and opinions, and encouraging a pursuit of the essence of things. Once we leave the cave through reading, reality begins to appear with greater clarity and authenticity.

She notes that the program's true value lies not only in empowering its ambassadors, but also in liberating entire generations from the chains of inherited illusions and unexamined beliefs allowing them to shape truth for themselves, starting with the simple act of holding a book. Seba joined We Love Reading as a journalist with a pen. Today, as a Multimedia Content Producer, her work has equipped her to fully wield that pen by reading more, reading widely, and savoring every text.

Reading children's stories now offers her new insight, prompting reflection on details and consequences she had previously overlooked. Being part of the program has also revealed the immense effort the team invests in every children's book. In every story written about an ambassador, there is a unique imprint and a distinct sense of wonder. While the experience of reading is shared, its impact is never the same. One of the earliest lessons she learned was the importance of honoring each individual's unique mark in the work. At We Love Reading, writing reaches audiences across multiple languages from training materials available in ten languages to bilingual media content demonstrating the value of using every skill available to serve the program's mission.

"Professionally and personally, the program fosters connections that extend beyond the workplace, showing genuine care for families, personal lives, and individual growth. Opportunities for such development are rare elsewhere, yet within the program," Seba has worked across training, writing, design, photography, and communications with people from around the world. Her promotion in early 2023 marked a pivotal moment, granting her the opportunity to work closely with Prof. Rana Dajani. Reflecting on this journey, she narrates that while she learned countless lessons, the most enduring one was simple: anything can be learned through reading. Reading encourages inquiry, shapes curious minds, and equips them to accomplish any task.



Reading has always been the foundation of her profession. She still remembers the first books she borrowed from her school library in Aleppo and recalls every stage of her reading journey from deciphering street signs, to skimming magazines, to eventually challenging herself with more complex texts. For her, a writer is someone who compels you to read a hundred books to truly grasp one, someone who pushes you to search for meaning in every word as though discovering a key. This, she believes, is precisely what We Love Reading books do.

She reflects that a writer can even reignite a language studied and loved in youth, offering a new reason to return to it. For her, this moment came through the works of Syrian author Farouk Mardam-Bey, including *Syrie: Le Pays Brûlé* and *Dans la tête de Bachar al-Assad*, which motivated her to revisit French—all for the sake of reading. From this experience, she realized that reading is the ultimate catalyst for curiosity, capable of driving us to learn anything simply for the joy of understanding.

She concludes that "the path to enlightenment is far simpler than we often imagine. Through its guiding motto, 'reading for pleasure,' We Love Reading nurtures transformation and the creation of change. A book that does not inspire transformation is a book not fully enjoyed."

## The Chaos Meetings: A Monthly Tradition of Ideas and Connection

At We Love Reading, creativity and collaboration are more than just principles they are lived experiences. One of the program's most cherished traditions is the Chaos Meetings, held monthly. During these gatherings, team members come together to eat, talk, and share ideas in an informal, inspiring environment. Sometimes, the meetings even include watching movies together, creating a relaxed space where conversations flow naturally and creativity sparks.

In ٢٠١٩, the Chaos Meetings took on a playful and visionary twist. Each employee was invited to write a note on a small piece of paper predicting how many countries We Love Reading would reach in the coming year. The jar quickly filled with ambitions, hopes, and wild ideas. Among the predictions was one particularly bold and humorous note: someone wrote that We Love Reading would not only expand across the globe but would "finish the Earth and even reach the Moon."

This anecdote perfectly captures the spirit of the Chaos Meetings a mix of fun, imagination, and forward-thinking. It's a space where ambitious ideas are celebrated, no dream is too big, and the team is reminded that the work they do has no limits. These monthly gatherings, whether sharing meals, exchanging ideas, or enjoying a movie together, strengthen the sense of community, spark creativity, and keep everyone connected to the heart of the program: spreading the joy of reading to children everywhere.





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