



Update on Room to Read's Work in Jordan

March 2021



Room to Read is pleased to share the following update on our literacy expansion work in Jordan. We have been able to develop, adapt and digitize storybooks in Arabic for children across Jordan, providing children with tools that blend the science of learning to read with the magic of loving to read.

Room to Read's projects and programs not only teach the educational skills and tools necessary to succeed in school, but also provide motivation and encouragement for students to thrive outside of school. We hope that the children we serve become active members of their communities, so cycles of poverty are broken, and future generations have greater support and more opportunities.

Please enjoy the following report on project activities in 2020, as well as a brief history of our work in Jordan to-date.

ROOM TO READ'S WORK IN JORDAN

With support from Dubai Cares in 2017, Room to Read's first project in Jordan was focused on building the capacity of local partners to develop high quality storybooks in Arabic. As a result, more than **600,000 copies** of **20 new storybooks** were distributed across the country to Jordanian children, as well as to young refugee girls and boys. Working with the Ministry of Education and local and international NGOs, copies of the books were distributed to all government primary schools, informal schools, refugee camps and community centers.

Room to Read worked closely with the Jordanian publishers Dar Al Yasmine, Jabal Amman and Majdalawi Masterpieces to increase their capacity to publish high quality children's books. The publishers participated in and facilitated portions of the Room to Read's workshops for authors and illustrators in Amman over the course of 2017. They worked closely with Room to Read during the book editing process, building their skills and understanding of best practices in book design. Books were distributed widely throughout the country.

This initial project in Jordan allowed us to leverage our expertise from other regions of the world, bringing our model to a new geography, and dramatically increasing Room to Read's ability to serve more communities, schools and children – particularly those who are in greatest need of access to safe and quality education.



2020 EXPANSION PROJECT

Our success at Room to Read has come, in part, through our ability to implement programs or train implementing partners to launch projects in resource-constrained and underserved communities. Since developing Arabic language titles, we have been eager to reach more children with these and other storybooks. Our strategic plan for the next five years includes deepening our impact in Jordan by collaborating with strong organizations and expanding our reach in the Middle East. With the support of partners, including the Queen Rania Foundation, we were able to make strides in book adaptation and digitization in Jordan during 2020. Details are below.

Scope of Project

In 2020, we were able to pursue our goal of expanding our work in Jordan by forming a partnership with the Queen Rania Foundation. Through our partnership, we adapted children's books into Arabic and trained local stakeholders on our Ideal Book Collection process in anticipation of also implementing libraries when additional funding is secured. Details are as follows:

Ideal Book Collection: Room to Read developed an Ideal Book Collection (IBC) tool to help determine the minimum number of books and type of books to promote a habit of reading in a school. Developing an IBC begins with an in-depth discussion of children's book development needs in the local context with key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education and local educators, as well as a comprehensive review of a large sample of children's books available in the local market. The tool then identifies where gaps in children's storybooks exist in the marketplace in terms of genres and reading skill level. This information is essential to publishers and to governments for targeting the development of new storybooks titles to address gaps in the market, and to schools when requesting book donations or procuring new books for a school library.



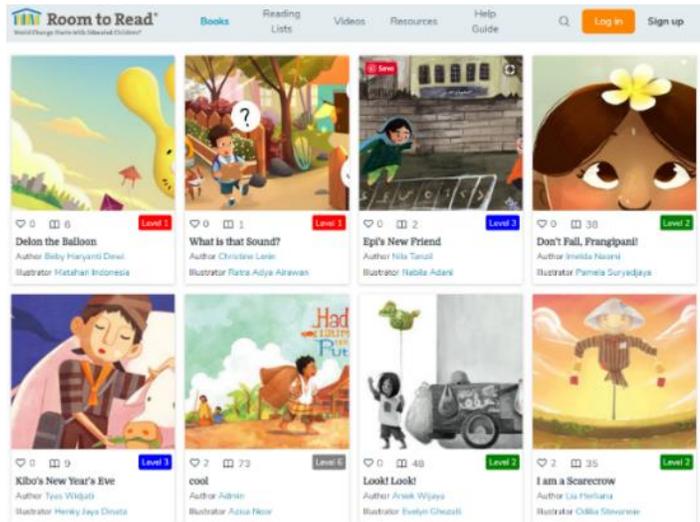
Storybook adaptations: Working in collaboration with the Queen Rania Foundation, local translators, editors and illustrators and the Ministry of Education, Room to Read facilitated a process to select and adapt books from the global Room to Read book collection. Through a section committee, 40 books were chosen that met local children's book standards and address some of the gaps identified through the IBC process. The text and illustrations in the books were adapted into the Arabic language, locally designed and made ready for print.

Training: As part of this project, Room to Read trained the Queen Rania Foundation and participants from the government as well as local publishers on our IBC process. This process included reviewing a large sample of Arabic books, identifying gaps in terms of availability of book genres and levels in Jordan, and using the gap analysis to guide selection of titles from Room to Read’s collection, and adapting those titles into Arabic. In addition, the Queen Rania foundation, local translators, editors and illustrators were trained on the book adaptation process, including book selection, adapting story text to be locally relevant and adjusting illustrations to be culturally appropriate.

Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic had 1.6 billion children out of school across the world. However, now more than ever, Room to Read’s work is critical. In 2020, we prioritized work that could be done in Jordan using virtual workshops and virtual training with Queen Rania Foundation. We felt it was critical for us to use the time to train our partner in Jordan and finding ways to benefit children by adapting our storybooks in the local context.

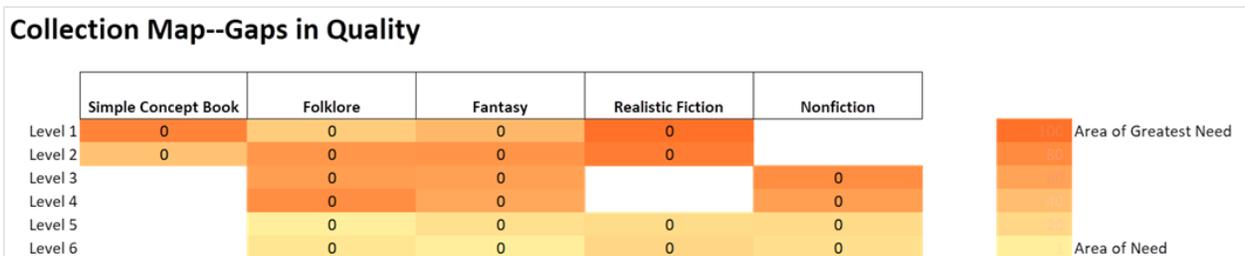
Our first 20 books developed in Arabic in 2017 were also digitized, so children could access them throughout Jordan and other countries in the Middle East regardless of location. These books have been added to our online platform [Literacy Cloud](#) so children could access them throughout Jordan and other countries in the Middle East regardless of location.



Progress to Date

We are pleased to share the following activities which took place in 2020:

- **Ideal Book Collection:** 900 children’s book titles were reviewed by local stakeholders and tentative gaps in quality were identified, as seen by the figure below. Now, we are awaiting final input from the Ministry of Education to finalize the ideal book list and confirm quality gaps.



- **Stakeholder orientation:** At the end of 2020, a stakeholder orientation was organized for selected personnel from government education institutes, academic institutes, the publishing industry and education practitioners to seek their collaboration on project activities. As part of this, an IBC training was conducted for book reviewers who represented different areas of expertise.

- **Children’s book adaptations:** In 2020 we completed the review and adaptation of **40 Room to Read children’s books** into Arabic, training the Queen Rania Foundation and translators on the book adaptation process.; Printing is currently underway with distribution to schools to be carried out in the second quarter of 2021 by the Ministry of Education.



أحياناً، يُخرب آخرون بيتنا لذلك ننقل إلى بيت جديد،
 نبتعد عننا الخطر والأذى والضجيج حين ننام.

- **Digitization of storybooks:** We created an Arabic version of our Literacy Cloud interface, which is now fully translated and in the final phase of testing. This site will go live in the first half of 2021 with the 40 digital versions of Room to Read’s children’s books in Arabic.

Looking Ahead

In partnership with Queen Rania Foundation, Room to Read aims to utilize our technical assistance model to establish libraries in approximately 30+ Madrasati primary schools and to cultivate a habit of reading among children in Jordan. Room to Read’s training model is a cascade model, where Room to Read would train our implementing partner, Queen Rania Foundation, who would then train Madrasati and the school staff. Those teachers would become ambassadors at their schools, training other teachers to use our model to engage with books in the libraries, creating a reading culture. With Room to Read’s train-the-trainer model in place, after the close of this project, the Queen Rania Foundation could reach additional young learners with child-friendly environments and engaging storybooks in additional schools in the future.



We also hope to work with Queen Rania Foundation to engage communities in setting up a school library committee in each school, which each include a principal, a teacher and

parents. This aspect of the project ensures continuity and accountability towards the success of the library among stakeholders within the school. This funding will allow us to tailor our materials to the local context, provide a comprehensive training program for teachers, librarians, and local partners, as well as support partners to establish and manage primary school libraries, and monitor and support the work.

This project will benefit children by building and supporting a culture of reading through the provision of school libraries with appropriate and engaging reading materials, and trained teachers and librarians. This project, which will build the capacity of Queen Rania Foundation, will lay the foundation for expansion to more government primary schools during the following five years and accelerate our partner's ability to establish libraries based on the Room to Read model, directly benefiting thousands of primary school-aged children.

CONCLUSION

We are so grateful for our partners who have enabled us to bring Arabic stories and content to children across Jordan. This project will build the capacity of our local partners and the government to lay the foundation for future scale of school libraries across hundreds of additional schools in Jordan. We look forward to updating you as our work continues to progress in 2021.

