“All children have the right to read quality books”
“Read with Me” (khanak.org/en) is a Reading Promotion project for children in low-income families, deprived children and children in crisis. The objective of this project is to make quality books accessible to this group of children and young adults who may not be able to access quality books in the routine of their lives. The Read with Me project has been implemented since 2010 in different parts of Iran in order to bring its motto into practice: “All children have the right to read quality books”.

The project focuses on basic literacy improvement and reading aloud with children and young adults along with conversation and creative artistic activities related to books. It is aiming to make a deep impression on children through literature and make reading a joyful experience which motivates the aesthetics emotions in children. Based on this objective and approach, in addition to the selection of quality books appropriate for children, the project tries to empower teachers, librarians and volunteers in remote areas through training workshops and regular mentoring. The project is funded by donations and run by volunteers.

Summary
1. Introduction
  1.1. About us
  1.2. Project features
  1.3. Project objectives
  1.4. Course of Action
  1.5. Material produced for the project

2. Background and Expansion
  2.1. How the project came about
  2.2. Expansion of the project
    2.2.1. Schools in deprived areas
    2.2.2. Children in crisis
    2.2.3. Read with Me Libraries
    2.2.4. Reading with Babies and Toddlers

3. Achievements
  3.1. Impact and observations

4. Other Programs and Activities
  4.1. "A Teacher, A Classroom, A Library" Campaign
  4.2. Jabbar Baghtcheban Award
  4.3. Holding Quality Book Exhibitions in Schools
  4.4. When two worlds meet
  4.5. Read-Aloud week in Iran

5. International Recognition & Awards
  5.1. International Recognition
  5.2. Awards
  5.3. Nominations

6. Contact Us

7. Photo Report
Introduction
Comprehending the importance of book reading and reading aloud in the improvement of reading and writing skills, the Institute for Research on the History of Children’s Literature in Iran (IRCHLI) (koodaki.org/en) has designed and implemented “Read with Me” for six years.

The Institute for Research on the History of Children’s Literature in Iran is a non-governmental/non-profit organization officially founded in 2000 to conduct research on the history of children’s literature. After spending years on research and publishing of the 10-volume collection of “The History of Children’s Literature in Iran” the institute has established a reading promotion website (ketabak.org) as a virtual base which supports families, teachers, tutors and librarians by hundreds of essays in the field of children’s literature, reading promotion, introducing successful reading promotion projects around the world, introducing quality books and covering news on these subjects. “Ketabak” website is one of the most seen sites among the similar sites in Iran.

After many years of activity on childhood history and culture and children’s books, IRCHLI believes that reading promotion between children and young adults, especially reading aloud, can unlock mental talents and capabilities of the next generation and change their lives. The implementation of the Read with Me Project is the Institute’s action to bring its motto into practice: “All children have the right to read quality books”.

---

1-1. About us
The project has three main features:

► **It is expandable:** The project has realistic and simple principles that are designed within a user-friendly model. Therefore it is easily adapted and implemented by local organizations or individuals.

► **It is flexible:** The structure is designed in a flexible way so that it can be adjusted to different social and cultural, urban and rural environments, as well as different settings such as preschools, educational centers, hospitals, factories, orphanages, etc.

► **It is sustainable:** Constant supervision and evaluation of the project along with establishing child-centered libraries near schools and small school or shelf libraries inside the classrooms expected to ensure the sustainability of the project.

During the implementation of the project all reading aloud sessions and activities are documented by reports, pictures, and films provided by teachers, tutors, and librarians. Read with Me experts regularly visit the covered regions to monitor the progress, answer the questions and solve the problems.
1-3. Project objectives

- Make quality books accessible to children & young adults in low-income families, deprived children and children in crisis;
- Promote the culture of books and libraries and develop life-long reading habits in deprived areas, at home, school, and in the community;
- Apply Reading Aloud as one of the most effective methods of reading promotion;
- Improve basic literacy and creative education through literature in order to prepare children for reading, writing and math-learning period by story, poem, pictures, and games along with joy and entertainment;
- Improve lingual skills and basic literacy among bilingual children;
- Add creative artistic and literary activities to book reading in order to make a deeper impression on children;
- Expand Living values and skills and environmental values through book reading;
- Design, set up and maintain school libraries and local child-centered libraries with quality books;
- Empower teachers, librarians, and volunteers and enrich their knowledge on children’s literature, reading aloud skills and artistic activities.
There is a “Read with Me” team of trained and experienced experts that carries out the following steps in the project:

- A list of quality books based on the needs and interests of children and the regional conditions is prepared and the books are dispatched to the region;
- Training workshops (primary and advanced) are organized/conducted for teachers, librarians, and volunteers;
- Teachers read the books aloud to help the children associate reading with building a vocabulary, acquire a reading model, and become familiar with different types of literature and new concepts;
- Reading aloud sessions and book-related activities are held in covered centers by teachers, tutors, and librarians;
- Reading aloud sessions are documented regularly with pictures, films, and reports;
- The “Read with Me” team visits covered centers and provides regular monitoring, mentoring, guidance and support to the teachers or volunteers, solves the problems and provides new approaches;

1-4. The Course of Action

Setting up small libraries in schools and classrooms and establishing child-centered libraries keeping them alive and active has been the key to the sustainability of the project;

The team prepares and submits a comprehensive annual report from each region to the sponsors and the Research unit in the IRCHLI.
• **Quality Books:**

The IRCHLI has published quality books for children and adults (reference books) in order to support *Read with Me* project. These books include picture books, stories, novels; written and illustrated by Iranian authors and artists. In order to enrich the project with quality books, the institute has also purchased the copyright of some of the greatest children books based on the needs of children in Iran.

Published books for adults provide the needs of teachers and librarians to acquire children’s literature, reading promotion, children’s rights and modern educational approaches.

• **Read with Me handbooks:**

The IRCHLI has developed and published handbooks and booklets for *Read with Me* project. Every handbook is dedicated to a specific subject in Read with Me workshops to help teachers, tutors, librarians and parents in reading aloud with children:

✓ “How to have a successful reading aloud session”
✓ “Reading aloud with children”
✓ “How to Read with Children: Guidelines for parents”
✓ “The key story elements”
✓ “Learning Sounds and Learning Alphabet”
✓ “How to share a novel with young adults”
✓ “Role-Playing, Facial and Body Expressions: How to use role-playing as a follow-up activity in reading books with children and adolescents”

1-5. Material produced for the project
+ "Learning Literacy through Literature" Packages:

The IRCHLI in cooperation with Chista publishing house has designed and published special packages for creative education through literature. Children covered by Read with Me are provided with these packages.

"Learning Baby Sign" package is the first step of Language acquisition designated for babies and toddlers.

"Learning Sounds" and "Learning Alphabet" packages are aiming better comprehension of Persian phonetics and Alphabet. "Learning Math" is designated to teach the basic concepts of mathematics. These packages teach language and math through literature. Stories help children to learn easily and joyfully.

+ Book + Activity Packages:

Along with training teachers and librarians, the Institute has provided "Book + Activity Packages" to guide them how to share books with children.

In each package, there is a selected quality book, a guiding handbook and sheets or cards designated for book-related activities.
• Cloth Pocket Libraries:

Read with Me provides cloth Pocket libraries for every classroom covered by the project. Teachers hang the libraries on the wall and put the series of reading aloud books inside them. Each Library has the Read with Me logo. Children can see and easily access the books inside these libraries.
**Leaflets:**

"Read with me" leaflets in Persian and English have been published for introducing the project. Also, special leaflets have been produced for some centers and regions to encourage families to join the project.

**Subject Specific Book Bags:**

Subject Specific Book Bags contain some books, guiding handbooks and suggested activities on a specific subject.

1. Living Values Book Bags for 3 age-groups (preschool/primary school/Young Adults);
2. Environment Book Bags for 3 age-groups (preschool/primary school/Young Adults);
3. Reading with Babies and toddlers book bags, these bags are prepared to inform and empower parents to read and talk to their children since birth.
2 Background and Expansion
Based on this reality, the Institute has developed the project “Read with Me” since 2010 aiming to encourage deprived children and young adults to read, to improve their basic literacy and comprehension and help them to learn skills such as critical thinking and creative problem-solving.

Reading literature with the aim of intellectual, emotional and social development of children is not an integral part of the Iranian educational system. This applies more to deprived communities, where children live in poverty; have to work and often their rights are violated.

There are thousands of children working on the streets of Tehran and other big cities in Iran. They work in small workshops or they are seen in all neighborhoods digging into garbage bins for recyclables or selling chewing gum or flowers at the intersections.

Most of them are members of undocumented Afghan families who live in Iran illegally, which means that they are barred from attending school. Some are Iranians whose parents have left their rural homes to try and earn a living in the big city.

Also, many children in remote areas of Iran live in cultural poverty and deprivation and they are excluded from the least facilities to grow their capabilities.

In short, in these deprived communities where these children live, there is no place for books, reading or any other cultural activity to distract them from violence or crime.

2-1. How this project came about
“Read with Me” started as a pilot project in 2010. It was implemented in the Supportive Education Center of Mahmoud Abad, a marginal area of southeast Tehran close to brick kilns and small industries where is mostly occupied by workers’ families.

Since, the project has been successfully expanded to many rural and urban areas in Iran.

Since then, the “Read with Me” project has designed and implemented various projects as well as geographical expansion, in order to meet the needs of children in difficult situations. In addition to schools in deprived areas of Iran, “Read with Me” has promoted book reading for all age groups in certain and sometimes impossible situations.

Now “Read with Me” program is working in the following areas:

- Educational centers in deprived areas
- Children in crisis:
  - Working/ Street children in marginal neighborhoods
  - Nurseries / Orphanages
  - Hospitals
  - Earthquake affected areas
- Child-centered libraries:
  - Local libraries
  - School/ Classroom libraries
  - Small rural libraries and training adolescent librarians
  - Cabin libraries
- Reading with babies and toddler program

2-2. Expansion of the project
* Overall Statistic

By 2019, “Read with Me” covered near 100,000 children & young adults across Iran, boys and girls between the ages of 0 to 16 years old.

- The project was extended to 21 provinces in Iran.
- About 5000 teachers, librarians and volunteers have been trained in this project.

Read with Me hopes to cover more children and regions in the future.

2-2. Expansion of the project
Read with Me project is implemented in the schools and educational centers of Sistan and Baluchestan, South Khorasan, Tehran, Isfahan, Fars, Kerman, Lorestan, Kermanshah, Qazvin, Mazandaran and Gilan in Iran and Mazar-e Sharif in Afghanistan.

Here, you can find a brief explanation of the project in four provinces:
In 2012 “Read with Me” was implemented in 26 villages of South Khorasan province, with the financial support of IBBY/Sharjah Fund and the Yavari Cultural Society. 750 preschool children in 26 preschools participated in this project. The villages are located in remote areas close to Iran /Afghanistan border. In 2014, three other districts in South Khorasan province requested an extension of the project to 5 regions, including overall 2400 of preschoolers and children in grade one (Primary school). In 2015, another district joined the project.

Since 2012 in these 6 regions, about 7000 of 5-12 year-old children in preschools and schools have benefited the quality books provided by the project.

South Khorasan is another successful experience of the Read with Me project, where, by the efforts of compassionate and creative teachers, vast long-lasting effects on children's learning process have been observed, especially among the children in preschools.

In order to expand and sustain the program in the region, a number of elite South Khorasan teachers are selected as “Read with Me” ambassadors and after receiving special training, now they can promote the project and train their colleagues in the region.
Role-playing related to reading aloud and learning sounds and phonemes in a village in South Khorasan
A group of preschool children in South Khorasan is making David McKee's "Elmer the Patchwork Elephant!"
Children are learning phonetics and alphabet by songs, sound, and rhythm.

Basic Literacy Program. Rask, Sistan and Baluchestan

* Sistan and Baluchestan

Read with Me has focused on basic literacy and reading and writing skills improvement of children especially bilingual children in this deprived province through literature and book reading. The project started its activities in this province in three centers in 2015 and by 2016, most parts of the province have been covered by the project.

The project is still going on in this province.

The experts have evaluated the effects of the method on basic literacy improvement during this period "amazing". They believe that the project has improved reading and writing skills, expanded the vocabulary knowledge along with bringing joy and self-confidence to bilingual and nomadic students in the region.
Dark classrooms with no facilities can change to an exciting adventurous place by book reading.

Children are reacting to "Where the Wild Things Are" in a deprived village in ZarAbad, Sistan and Baluchestan.
“Read with Me” began its work in Kerman province in 2012, after the Bam earthquake and covered about 100 children after the crisis.

Since 2015, “Read with Me” is implemented in a number of Sirjan schools in Kerman and more than 5000 children have benefited from the program. Now, establishment of a library as a book distribution center in Sirjan, guarantees the sustainability of the project. The trained teachers can borrow book packages in a timely manner and conduct reading sessions in their classrooms with students.

In 2017, Jiroft and nearly 700 children joined the project. Jiroft’s creative teachers and tutors have had a significant effect on children’s learning and development over a short term. In 2018, second and third grade teachers of the same schools joined the project adding almost another 1400 children to the number of children covered by Read with Me.

Sarcheshmeh, an industrial city in Kerman, joined Read with Me in 2018. The city has well-equipped schools but unfortunately no access to quality books. Now, more than 500 children in this city can benefit quality books and creative education.
A young preschool teacher in a village in Jiroft reads aloud to improve basic literacy in her class.
Since 2014, the children of deprived areas of Kuhdasht, a city of Lorestan Province in Iran, have joined this project.

In 2016, the project was spread into nomadic schools in the area and it was well received by teachers and tutors.

The “Read with Me” program is continued by establishing a child-centered library in Khorramabad, as a base for nomadic and rural teachers.

In 2018, Sepiddasht, another Nomadic region in Lorestan province joined the Read with Me project with about 500 children and 30 teachers.
The Lorestan nomadic children are acting out a story.
The Read with Me project has spread out to regions beyond the borders of Iran in order to bring its motto into practice: “All children have the right to read quality books”. The project is implemented in Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan since 2016, in cooperation with “Future for Afghanistan Children” Organization.

This project is implemented in Mazar-e-Sharif and regions around the city aiming children in preschool and first and second grade of elementary school.

The project covers more than 1000 children, 48 teachers, and tutors in 5 schools in Mazar-e-Sharif.

The illustrations of the book “How to Heal a Broken Wing” have captivated the children’s attention.

Books with the themes of peace and hope can heal children traumatized by war and violence.
* Working/ Street children in marginal neighborhoods

✓ “Read with Me” is implemented in multiple Centers/ Schools & preschools for working/ street children in regional neighborhoods around Tehran, Isfahan, Yazd and Sarawan.

Ten centers in underserved regions of Tehran are covered with Read with Me where many children in danger can develop resilience and learn living values by seeing the world through literature and quality books.
A small library in an impoverished neighborhood in Tehran, where Read Aloud sessions are held every day for children.
In February 2015, an exhibition of activities and crafts made by mothers and children covered by this project was held in this center.

Supportive Education Center of MahmoudAbad

The Supportive Education Center of MahmoudAbad is another successful center of Read with Me in Tehran. In this center, preschoolers benefit creative education, reading aloud sessions and artistic activities.

An important part of the activities in this center is dedicated to preschool training, which is completely based on the “Read with Me” methods. Previously, there was no preschool education in the area, and parents did not have the financial ability to send their children to such centers. The center has been able to provide free education and Emergent Literacy for the children in the neighborhood.

The library also provides children and adolescents with local services and librarians and tutors of this center go to schools or even to the children’s place of residence in brick kilns with book bags and read books for them.

Another special and regular event in this center is “Reading with Babies and Toddlers Sessions”. These sessions are held for mothers with babies from 0 to 3 years old. Many mothers in different groups have been trained in workshops and received books for their babies.
Teachers and tutors from this center, who are trained in the framework of Read with Me, go to brick kilns with book bags to read books for the children of seasonal workers who spend their days in these kilns’ area with no entertainment.
In 2012 “Read with Me” was launched in a place located in a deprived/marginal area of the city of Yazd, where some 300 children and young adults of 4-14 years old and their families joined the program with great enthusiasm, to an extent that some 80 family members, namely mothers, participated in the training workshops and volunteered to carry on the project. Establishing a library and holding reading aloud sessions have made important social, personal and lingual improvements in children.
* Out-of-school Children

Giving the opportunity to gain a basic education through literature to school-aged children out of school is one of the Read with Me goals. In 2018 a group of children in Jahad-abad (Sarawan, Sistan and Baluchestan province) and another group in MalekShahr (Isfahan province) joined the project, learning literacy by “Read with Me Literacy improvement packages”. These children are mostly out of school because of having no birth certificate.
These children have shown unbelievable signs of change in their character and behavior during a very short time. They improve day by day not only in literacy but also in learning living skills.
Earthquake affected children

✓ “Read with Me” helps children in special situations like natural and social catastrophic events in which children need Bibliootherapy and appropriate books.

“Read with Me” project has so far covered children in East Azarbaijan, Bam and Kermanshah after earthquakes in these regions.

The long-term “Read with Me” plan includes sending appropriate books, setting up child-centered libraries, providing continuous and targeted training for local people in the cities and villages to read with children in crisis and, to monitor the implementation of the project.
Kermanshah Province -
After the earthquake

After the catastrophic earthquake in 2017 in Kermanshah, western Iran, Read with Me started its work from the very first days in the area to help children bear the burden of mental stress caused by the crisis.

Regarding the conditions in this region and the presence of local volunteers interested in reading aloud, Read with Me has established several cabin libraries in different earthquake affected regions. These libraries serve as a child-centered library to provide services to local children and families in crisis. They also serve as a center of book distribution for schools and surrounding villages. Accordingly, the local teachers, promoters and volunteers, who have been trained in Read with Me workshops, take quality books to schools and child-related centers and share them with children in cities and villages in remote areas.

By spring 2018, eight cabin libraries have been set up in different zones affected by earthquake.

Local people and children helped the “Read with Me” group step by step to equip and run these libraries.
The library may be the only relaxing place in earthquake-affected regions which can help children to cope with their problems.

The libraries have become a safe haven for children among so many tents in the earthquake-affected areas to read books, perform a play, talk with each other and with the librarian and organize their distressed minds.
2019 floods in West and South-west of Iran

Vast areas of Iran were affected by destructive floods in March and April 2019. Taking its former experiences with children in crisis into account, the “Read with Me” program has introduced two major phases for helping children and families struggling with flooding:

- **Short-term**: dispatching trained volunteers with Book Backpacks and Book Packages to flooded regions during the initial days and weeks of flooding with the purpose of Bibliotherapy through Reading Aloud quality books, having dialogue with children and carrying out various book-related activities, in order to help them cope better with the emotional pressures of this crisis.

- **Long-term**: Continuous training workshops for volunteers, tutors and residents of flooded regions as well as establishing child-centered libraries as lasting education bases for children and their families.
Children in crisis

* Hospitals

- Mahok Hospital for children with cancer from disadvantaged families is a unique location where some 400 children & young adults, ages 4 to 16, participated in the project while receiving treatment in the hospital. Volunteers in the hospital were trained to read with children. The project started in 2013 and is active to date.

- Ali Asghar Hospital for Thalassemia children, located in Sistan and Baluchestan province, one of the most deprived areas in Iran, where some 300 children and young adults, ages 3 to 16 have joined the project. The project started in 2014.

- Since 2016, reading aloud sessions are held for children with cancer in Tabriz by the supports of the Society to Support Children with Cancer In Tabriz (Taskin)
* Nurseries

✓ Ameneh Nursery

In 2013, the Institute’s experts identified some of the shortcomings and basic needs of children living in orphanages in enhancing their listening, speaking and emotional skills and decided to use the “Read with Me” program based on “Learning Sounds” and “Learning Alphabet” packages for the first time in Ameneh Nursery-Tehran. This nursery is a place to take care of zero to seven-year-old orphan and neglected children. A “Read with Me” trainer attends weekly at this center and with continuous follow-up, this expert has been able to make an incredible change in the language, social and emotional development of these children. Now the child-centered library of this nursery has become a popular place for children.

Since October 2015, “Reading with babies and toddlers” program has been officially established in the infant’s section of this nursery. During this period, amazing effects of reading and talking with newborns, have astonished the staff and nursing experts, who initially considered reading books with newborns as vain and has made them a supporter of this program.

✓ Hazrat Roghaieh Nursery

In 2017 and after a successful reading experience with infants, Hazrat Roghaieh Nursery, which is another nursery care center in Tehran, joined the project and about 60 infants are covered by the program.

Go to link below to read more about the effects of this program on orphans children and interviews with experts and psychologists in Ameneh Nursery: https://khanak.org/en/2018/content/how-the-read-with-me-project-changed-the-lives-of-children-in-ameneh-nursery/
The Institute for Research on the History of Children's Literature has launched a new program since 2016, where it enriches libraries with quality books and runs high-quality child-centered libraries.

The main features of these libraries are:

- All of the books in the library are quality books;
- Children from 0 to 16 years old are considered;
- Books are easy to access for children;
- The interest level of children is of high importance;
- Reading aloud sessions and book-related activities are held regularly in the library;
- Surrounding schools are the members of the library and they take book bags to read aloud in the classes;
- Librarians and teachers from schools around the library are trained in Read with Me workshops and their activities are monitored by the Institute’s expert;
- Local children and parents are involved in establishing and running the library. Knowing the library as a part of their community and their belongings, guarantees its sustainability.
Sadr-ol-Vaezin Library, in Khonsar (Isfahan province) is an example of a Read with Me child-centered library.
Quality books and book-related activities are not enclosed inside a Read with Me Child-Centered Library. Schools, preschools, kindergartens, children hospitals or any other children-related center around the library, can register as a library member and borrow books from the library. Special canvas book holders are designed by the Read with Me experts which is easily folded and carried like a bag. Each center can borrow up to 18 books in every visit to the library, take the books to its children, hang the canvas book holder on the wall which serves as a practical pocket library, hold reading aloud sessions and do book-related activities for different periods of time and return the bag to the library and fill it with new books.
Read with Me canvas pocket library on the wall of a nomadic village school in a cabin in Lorestan
* Small rural libraries

The “Read with Me” project has established “Read with Me chain libraries” since summer 2017. These libraries are set up in the schools which have been previously covered by the Read with Me project at the end of school year. Local young adults or the school students will run the libraries during the summer, making quality books accessible to children during the whole year. These adolescent librarians take part in a simple workshop, especially designed for them to learn how to manage a library.

It should be noted that a number of these teenage librarians are girls who are deprived of high school education for various reasons and thus they can maintain their links with books and reading.

So far, 13 chain libraries have been set up in Sistan and Baluchestan province and other libraries are on the way.
The Read with Me mobile library started its work in the rural areas of Qorveh County, Kurdistan Province in January 2019. The Mobile Library provides scheduled service to schools of this area. More than 20 volunteers take books from this library to children in remote villages.
A girl, deprived of high school education, is now a librarian in a Read with Me chain library near Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchestan.

Adolescent librarians are painting the walls in a Read with Me chain library near Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchestan.

A girl, deprived of high school education, is now a librarian in a Read with Me library. She reads aloud for her friends outside the library.
Sazvar Sazeh Azarestan Company

Sazvar Sazeh Azarestan Company, located near Tehran joined this project to get its workers involved in reading books to their children, since 2014.

Now a library for children and adolescents has been established in Sazvar Sazeh Azarestan Company and workers can borrow books in accordance with their children’s age-groups.
The library is equipped with more than 4000 quality books.
“Reading with Babies and Toddlers” is a project designed for babies who are born into poor and deprived Iranian and Afghan refugee families and orphaned and abandoned babies in nurturing and caring centers.

Most of the mothers in poor families are not aware of the importance of speaking and reading books for their babies. Also at nurturing and caring centers, the babies are ignored completely and live in a silent world. It is considered these children cannot speak even by 3 or 4 years old.

This project aims to train the mothers and volunteer caretakers to support the cognitive, language, and behavioral development of their babies through reading rhymes, verses, word games and colorful picture books for them.

“Reading with Babies and Toddlers” is designed to empower/encourage mothers, fathers, volunteers and any person who take care of babies to speak, sing and read books for them through training workshops, handbooks and guidelines.

Since June 2015, this project has been implemented in various centers including two nurseries and three other centers in marginal neighborhoods of Tehran and Isfahan. So far, about 160 mothers with their babies have attended the workshops and near 90 babies have benefited this method in the nurseries.
You can read interviews with two mothers about the effects of “Reading with Babies and Toddlers program” on mothers and their babies in links below:

Achievements
The “Read with Me” team has monitored the Project through especially designed questionnaires, aiming to assess the children’s language, cognitive, personality and social developments. Since 2010 the overall assessment of the project reflects the following achievements:

☑ Children are made aware of the fascinating phenomena of books, reading, and the joy of reading in a group.

☑ The children, who were not interested to read books, have become book lovers.

☑ Children are now eager to borrow books, take them home or read to their siblings and parents.

☑ Children’s concentration has improved; they have learned to listen to the story from the beginning to the end.

☑ They can comprehend and relate the story, remember the highlights and describe the sequence of events.

☑ They have learned many difficult words through reading, their vocabulary and pronunciation have improved.

Bilingual children who couldn’t speak, write or read Persian before, by using “Creative Education through Literature Method”, now have made impressive progress in basic literacy and verbal skills.

☑ Book related drama has improved self-expression, confidence, critical thinking and most importantly, reasoning and finding creative ways of solving problems.

In this remote village near the border of Afghanistan where children have never had a book or one read to them, quality picture books are read aloud to preschoolers, an experience that they enjoy and make them book lovers.
The fine motor skills have developed, namely as a result of artistic activities where the children are engaged during reading sessions such as painting and book-making.

The children’s communication skills, with other children and the teacher, are improved considerably.

By reading stories and discussing them, children have come to a better understanding of living values, friendship, peace, and environment.

The project has equally made an impact on teachers, librarians, and volunteers. The training workshops have motivated the teachers to learn more and improve their knowledge of books and literature as an effective tool to work with disadvantaged children.

Since 2010 when the project was launched, numerous school libraries have been established which help the sustainability of the project. Establishing child-centered libraries near the schools is another step to expand the project, make it more sustainable, make children interested in book reading, and improve the literacy skills in students.

Children suffering from Thalassemia in Sistan and Baluchestan Province are encouraged to read aloud to each other while receiving treatment in hospital regularly.
Other Programs and Activities
“A Teacher, A Classroom, A Library” Campaign

Read with me has started a new Campaign, called “A Teacher, A Classroom, A Library” from February 2019. The main purpose of the campaign is to promote classroom libraries with quality books and train the teachers to share books with the children. Every individual person can adopt a classroom library and support it financially. The library is a 18-pocket wall-mounted book display with quality books, be hanged inside the classroom. During a year the teacher share the books with children and they do the related activities together. The teachers should report periodically and be provided with needed advice and consults.
On 9 May 2016, the 130th anniversary of Jabbar Baghtcheban’s birth, the founder of modern preschool education and also deaf education in Iran, the Institute for Research on the History of Children’s Literature has decided to establish Jabbar Baghtcheban Award for Reading Promoters to honor this prominent educator, promoter and children’s playwright.

The first Jabbar Baghtcheban prize was awarded in the first two-day Read with Me Conference on 10-11 November 2016 and ten distinguished and creative teachers who had outstanding achievements in reading promotion and made remarkable contribution to Read with Me project were praised in this ceremony. The second Jabbar Baghtcheban prize was awarded at the second Read with Me Conference on 15 November 2018 to thirteen selected teachers.

The award consists of a Jabbar Baghtcheban statuette, a sum of money and a plaque.
The Institute holds book fairs at schools for parents and teachers to promote quality children’s books and acquire families with the importance of reading to children and its effects on children’s learning.
Marit Törnqvist the prominent Dutch illustrator is an international supporter of “Read with Me”.

She has been invited to Iran twice by the Institute for Research on the History of Children’s Literature and the Read with Me project. Her continuous collaborations with the “Read with Me” in the past several years have been in various fields. This illustrator is a member of the great family of “Read with Me”.

Parts of this collaboration are described below.
* Educational programs for children and trainers

- Implementation of workshops for children in deprived areas of Iran

  Marit Törnqvist has held several workshops for deprived children and children in crisis in the framework of the “Read with Me” project in marginal areas of Tehran, Isfahan and Kermanshah earthquake-affected zones.

- Training trainers and promoters of “Read with Me”

  In order to promote the work of Read with Me teachers and trainers, this illustrator has specially implemented various workshops to empower them in teaching and doing book-related activities.

  Workshops held for children and teachers are based on three published books of this illustrator in Iran and all of them focus on helping children to survive life difficulties.
* Contributing to the production of quality picture books

Delivering quality books to children, especially deprived children is among the main principles of “Read with Me”. Marit Törnqvist's collaboration with “Read with Me” is a step in the production and translation of quality books for this program. This work is done in two areas:

- Donating the copyright of three books to “Read with Me”
- Collaborating in the Intercultural project for production of quality picture books for “Read with Me” as the art director and group advisor of young and creative Iranian illustrators
In 2018, the Institute for Research on the History of Children’s Literature, regarding its deepest belief in reading aloud as one of the most effective ways of turning children into enthusiastic readers and developing their reading skills, announced 22-28 January as the Read-Aloud week in Iran. In this regard, it invited all the teachers, tutors, parents and every other one to read aloud for at least 15 minutes daily during this week with their children. The moto of the week was “Read aloud! Every time! Everywhere!”

The recall was well received by children, teachers, tutors, parents, librarians and many others interested in children’s literature and about 200 libraries, schools, kindergartens and other child-related centers joined this campaign and sent thousands of pictures and films to the Institute’s social networks. In addition to these groups, many parents, teachers and tutors and other individuals shared their reading aloud experiences in Social Medias.

The event was repeated in 2019 for the second year. This year the theme was: “In the Change between Day and Night, read aloud to change your life.”
5

International Recognition & Awards
• In 2012, the proposal of “Read with Me” in South Khorasan to the IBBY Sharjah Fund (for children in crisis) was granted to cover 500 preschool children in remote areas and villages of South Khorasan near the Afghanistan border.

• The Nederlands Letterenfonds (“Dutch Foundation for Literature”) has supported Read with Me since 2016

• Some well-known illustrators and writers have donated the copyright of their books to the Institute for Research on the History of Children’s Literature in Iran and the Read with Me project:

  ✓ Emma, 2013, donated by the German writer and illustrator: Jutta Bauer (Hans Christian Andersen winner)
  ✓ Red Bird, 2014, donated by the Astrid Lindgren’s family and the illustrator, Marit Törnqvist (Hans Christian Andersen nominee)
  ✓ Bigger than a Dream, 2016, donated by the Belgian writer, Jef Aerts and illustrator, Marit Törnqvist
  ✓ The Conference of the Birds, 2016, donated by Czech writer and illustrator: Peter Sís (Hans Christian Andersen winner)
  ✓ Pikkuhenki, 2018, donated by Dutch writer Toon Tellegen (Hans Christian Andersen Award nominee) and the illustrator Marit Törnqvist
In November 2014, as part of the celebration of the “Iranian Book Week”, the Institute for Research on the History of Children’s Literature in Iran (IRHCLI), was awarded the “Great Achievement Prize” for “Read with Me” Project.

In 2016, Read with Me from Iran and Big Brother Mouse from Luang Prabang City, Laos were the two winning projects of IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award among 11 nominees.
Read with Me program has been nominated for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award (ALMA) four years in a row. The first nomination was in 2017 followed by being nominated for the next three years as well. The Read with Me program has been nominated for ALMA 2020 by Children’s Book Council of Iran, International Literacy Association, Belgium’s International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) and Switzerland’s IBBY.
Contact Us
For more information on the Read with Me project details and its achievements in any of the centers and regions you can visit our website (www.khanak.org).

Films and clips on the experiences and achievements of Read with Me are provided. You can follow these videos on our YouTube channel and on "Read with Me" website.
7

Photo Report
A group of preschool children in a village of South Khorasan fascinated by the book read to them by their teacher.
Children in a school in Rask, Sistan and Baluchestan are listening enthusiastically to a story from the “Learning Alphabet” Book.
Read with Me has made the literacy learning enjoyable by stories, games and role-playing.
Teachers encourage discussion and exchange of views on the story.
South Khorasan teachers at a training workshop performing Michael Rosen's "We are going on a bear hunt"!
After the earthquake in Azerbaijan, the teachers were trained to perform Puppet Theater after reading sessions.
After reading Sendak's "Where the wild things are" the preschool children of a village in South Khorasan are encouraged to play the role of the wild things.
After reading "Red Short-legged Hen", a group of preschool children in a village in South Khorasan is performing a puppet theater.
Young adults in Shoush Center (south of Tehran) are acting out a story
Follow-up activities improve children’s motor skills and facilitate children’s connection with the book in a marginal district near Tehran.
Children in Supportive Education Center of Mahmoudabad are making “Papier Mache” puppets based on characters of the book “The lyrics of Gypsy’s Tar”
In a very deprived region of South Khorasan, the teacher took the preschool children to an open air area to share an action rhyme with them.
A creative teacher in South Khorasan has taken children out to the nature to read aloud a book dealing with environmental theme.
A teacher in Zabol, Sistan and Baluchestan is reading aloud Pat Hutchins's "Rosie's Walk" for children.
In a nomadic school in Zahedan, children are learning Alphabet and phonetics with rhythm, songs, and stories in the basic literacy improvement program.
Children in Chabahar, a port on the coast of the Gulf of Oman, are listening to Astrid Lindgren's "The Red Bird."
Reading aloud of Elmer by David McKee and follow-up activities in a rural school in Sistan and Baluchestan
A classroom has changed to a creative and rich literacy environment.

A teacher in Sistan and Baluchestan has performed different Read with Me activities, role-playing, literacy activities and he has brought color and happiness to his class.
Read with Me, regarding its flexibility, has been able to cover a wide range of children and centers in urban and rural districts. Reading aloud in a nomadic tent, near the borders of Afghanistan, is an example of Read with Me’s flexibility.
Follow-up activities in the nature has integrated learning with joy, playing and pleasure in a village in Chabahar, Sistan and Baluchestan.
Children in Sirjan have made the masks of characters of the book “The Tales of the Wise Rabbit”, taking part in a role-playing after reading aloud.
A volunteer is reading at a hospital located in Sistan and Baluchestan province, one of the most deprived areas in Iran.
Emotional needs of sick children have been considered during book reading. Reading aloud books to children suffering from cancer, Taskin Center, Tabriz.
Child-centered library in Salakh village, Qeshm Island
Children participated actively in the library’s renovation and reopening
Considering the environmental issues is one of the basics of Read with Me. Chairs and bookshelves are made from recyclable materials.

Reading Aloud room for children under seven, Salakh, Qeshm is designed by characters from the book "What & What & What, An Infant"
Child-centered Library in Koosha Kids House is a place for education, reading and playing for street/working children in the neighborhood.
Children’s levels of interest are considered in a Child-centered Library, in book selection, in its environment and in the activities done at the library. In a child-centered library in Chabahar, children are listening enthusiastically to their teacher’s reading-aloud.
Local women help in sewing curtains for their village library in Sistan and Baluchestan.

Children in Salakh Village, Qeshm, helping the Read with Me group in equipping their village library.
A child-centered Library is not only a book storehouse. Children read, talk and do book-related activities in this library.
A Read with Me chain library in a village in Sistan and Baluchestan which constantly welcomes children to read and play.
A mother with her children in “Reading with Babies and Toddlers workshop”, MahmoudAbad, Shahre Rey
An exhibition of the handmade books and toys by mothers.
A local volunteer reads aloud for children after the earthquake in a shelter (Kermanshah, 2017)
Read with Me group paints the outside wall of a cabin in the middle of the ruins after the earthquake in Kermanshah, with pictures from the books.
Children and adolescents participate in arranging the books in a library in the earthquake-affected region of Rijab.
Volunteers, librarians and reading promoters take Read with Me book bags to remote villages after the earthquake (2017, Kermanshah) to share books with children in the area.
Books and the library are children's friends and haven in the hard days after the Kermanshah earthquake.
Numerous children and adolescents were present in the "Red Bird" workshop held by Marit Törnqvist in Rijab.
Marit Törnvist introduces creative methods of sharing books with children with the Read with Me trainers
After reading Bob Graham's “How to Heal a Broken Wing”, the preschoolers in a village in South Khorasan were encouraged to heal the wings of their hand-made crafted birds.