



# Read with Me

“All children have the right to read quality books”



## About Us

*Read with Me* is a project designed and implemented by the Institute for Research on the History of Children's Literature (IRHCL), to promote reading for/with disadvantaged children who are generally at risk. "The Institute for Research on the History of Children's Literature" (IRHCL) ([koodaki.org/en](http://koodaki.org/en)) is a non-governmental/ non-profit organization founded in 2000 to conduct research on the history of children's literature. A major achievement of the Institute is the publication of 10 volumes of the history of children's literature in Iran.

After spending years on research, the institute established a reading promotion website ([ketabak.org](http://ketabak.org)) as a virtual base to support 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, and introducing quality books.

Reaching out to disadvantaged children who are deprived of cultural activities, especially books and reading, has been a major concern for the institute.

In 2010, the Institute developed a new project called *Read with Me*. 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."



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# 1

## Introduction

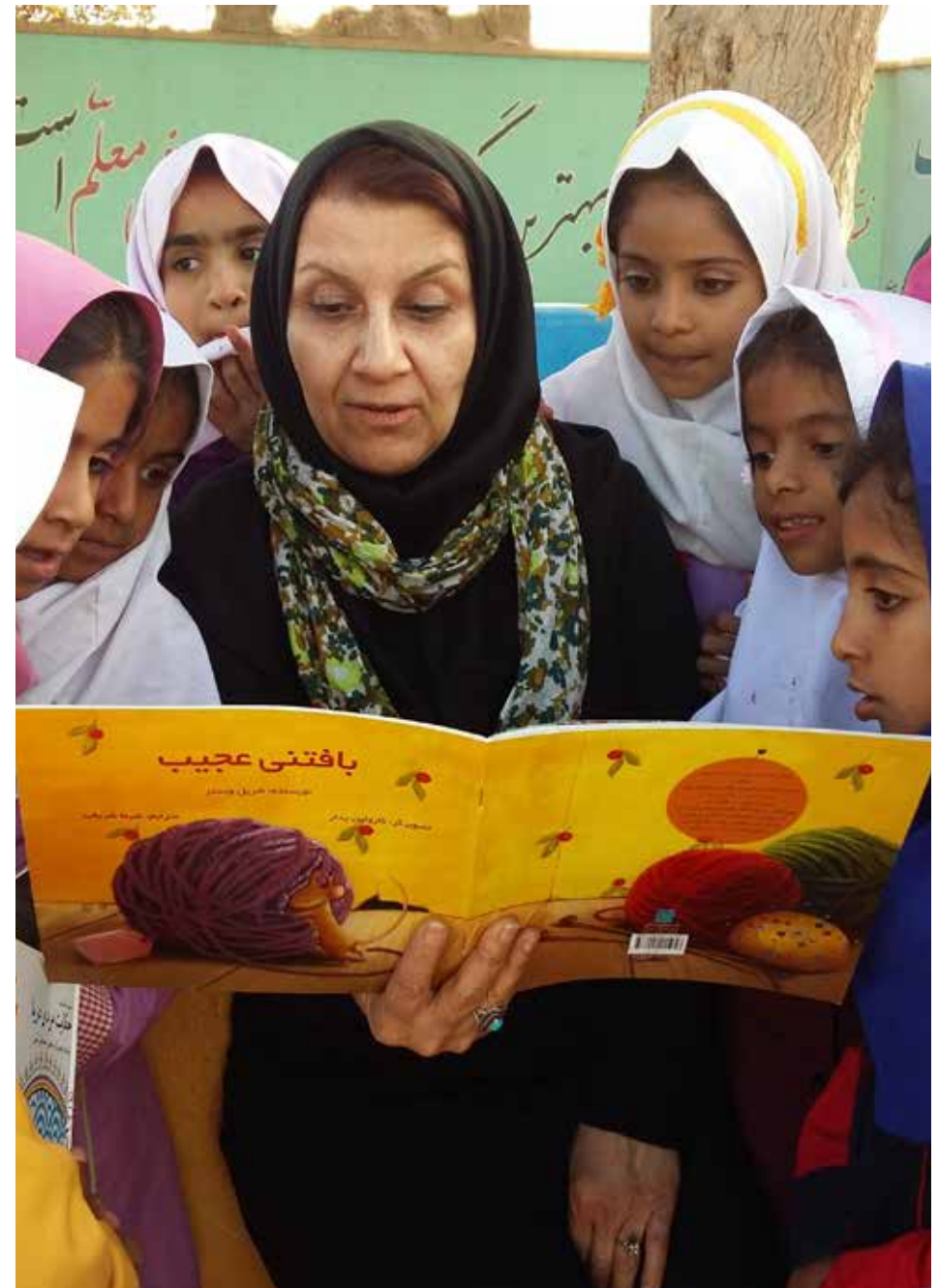
- *Read with Me* at one glance!
- What makes *Read with Me* so URGENT?
- Missions
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### ***Read with Me at one glance!***

*Read with Me* is a project for literacy acquisition through literature and reading promotion for deprived children and children in crisis.

The *Read with Me* project has been developed based on vast research for more than twenty years on children's literature and creative education in the Institute for Research on the History of Children's Literature in Iran. The project has been implemented for more than ten years in wide areas of Iran (mostly deprived parts of the country), among children at risk, refugee children from Afghanistan, Pakistani immigrant families, and also in some Farsi speaking regions of Afghanistan. Now, the project can offer a comprehensive and effective program to improve literacy skills and promote reading which is expandable, flexible and sustainable in hard or even impossible situations. The project has realistic and simple principles. So, it is easily adapted and implemented by local organizations or individuals. Due to its flexibility, it has achieved various situation-compatible implementation methods and covered diverse groups of children: children in schools in deprived areas, out-of-school children, sick children, working/street children, children in nurseries, and even children of workers in a factory.

Constant supervision and evaluation of the project, along with the establishment of local child-centered libraries near schools and small school libraries or shelf libraries inside the classrooms, ensure the sustainability of the project.





### What makes *Read with Me* so URGENT?

Iran's formal education system in recent four decades has not been successful in using creative methods in teaching the literacy skills effectively. Considering the economic problems in recent years in Iran, each year, more and more children miss the opportunity to attend schools. And as a result of this inefficiency, children in troubled families, cannot gain the skills they need to get them out of the cycle of poverty and deficiency.

Children's reading of literature with the aim of intellectual, emotional and social development is not an integral part of the Iranian education system. This problem is bolder in deprived communities, where children have to live in poverty; work and often experience their rights being violated. There are thousands of children working in Tehran and other big cities of 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.

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

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

Based on this reality, the Institute has developed the *Read with Me* project aiming to encourage deprived children and young adults to read and improve their basic literacy and comprehension and to help them to improve critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills.



## Missions

- ❑ Promote the culture of reading and develop life-long interest in reading and literature in deprived areas, at home, school, and in the community by supplying quality books for children and their families, caregivers, teachers and librarians;
- ❑ Empower oppressed and neglected women in deprived areas, who are mostly not well educated and aware of their abilities, to get positive attitudes towards themselves: at home, school and community to change their children's lives through literacy activities ([\*Here you can find about women involved in the Read with Me project\*](#));
- ❑ Promote the concept of emergent literacy in the society by publishing books and guidelines, and holding workshops for parents, kindergarten, preschool and school teachers, and librarians
- ❑ Expand children and young adults' libraries as rich literacy environments and compatible with children's rights;
- ❑ Improve basic literacy and language skills among bilingual children;
- ❑ Expand Living values and skills and environmental values through book reading.





## Methods and Tools

The primary approach of project implementation focuses on empowering teachers, early childhood educators, children's librarians, parents, caregivers, reading promoters and all individuals working with children in the field of children's literature and literacy improvement. Annually, numerous learners participate in both online and in-person workshops. The *Read with Me* Content Creation Team consistently develops new workshops or updates existing ones.

The workshops offered by *Read with Me* include the following:

### ☐ Literacy Category

- Creative Literacy Education
- Emergent Literacy
- Phonological & Phonemic Awareness Skills
- Numeracy & Math through Literature
- Persian Learning
- *Read with Me* Curriculum
- Monitoring & Assessment within Curriculum
- Maternal Functional Literacy

### ☐ Children's Literature Category

- Children's Literature and Picture Books
- Quality Books and Reading Aloud
- Book-related Dramatic Arts
- Reading in Families

### ☐ Librarianship

- Children and Young Adults Librarianship
- Librarianships for Aoung Adults





## **Read with Me Curriculum**

In 2023, after years of extensive efforts in literacy education and reading promotion within schools and educational centers, *Read with Me* has developed its comprehensive curriculum. This curriculum is now being presented to educators, teachers and school authorities interested in implementing it within their respective centers.

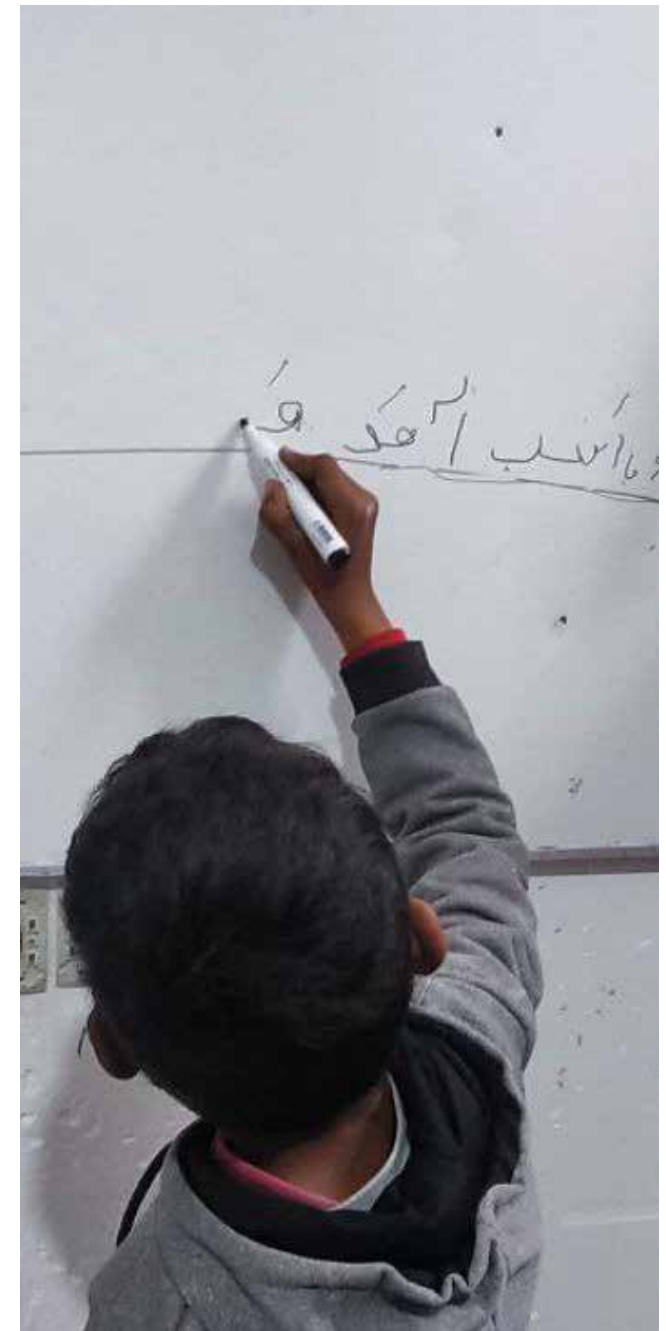
*Read with Me* curriculum is grounded in the Creative Education through Literature approach. It is inspired from theories of renowned educators such as Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner and Paulo Freire. Designed as a partial curriculum, the *Read with Me* curriculum focuses on preschool and early school years. It follows an Integrated Curriculum framework, incorporating a holistic approach to learning.

Unfortunately, Iran's formal education system lacks a coherent and effective curriculum that aligns with needs and cognitive development of children. *Read with Me* has tried to provide teachers and educators with an up-to-date and progressive curriculum. Through workshops, the curriculum's components including goals, methods, materials and assessment techniques are imparted to teachers.

*Read with Me* experts closely monitor the implementation of the curriculum and teachers are trained to design lesson plans tailored to their specific classroom instruction needs so that children are engaged in diverse learning contexts such as literature, play, investigations, real-life situations and more, across various learning areas. Teachers acquire the skills to monitor children's progress along their learning path. This allows for a more accurate evaluation of the instructional process and the teacher's own role in facilitating learning experiences.

Special learning packages have been designed to align with the curriculum. Furthermore, a carefully curated selection of books has been compiled, taking into consideration their subjects, functions, and relevance to the various learning areas.

*Read with Me* approach is not compatible with rigidly structured curriculums. Instead, it implements a dynamic and democratic curriculum by collaborating with teachers and educators.



### Project's Materials

#### Quality Books

The IRCHLI publishes quality books for children and adults (about children's literature and education) in order to support *Read with Me* project. These books include picture books, stories, novels; written and illustrated by Iranian authors and artists. Also, in order to enrich the project with quality books, the institute has purchased the copyright of some of the greatest children books based on the needs of children in Iran. Some writers and illustrators have donated the copyright of their works to the project.



#### Literacy Learning Packages

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



#### 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.





## Amoozak, the *Read with Me* Learning platform

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, similar to other educational systems, Read with Me had to shift from traditional face-to-face training methods to online workshops and remote learning. This transition created new opportunities for learners residing in remote areas to access workshops. Consequently, workshops were developed and aligned with online-learning standards, accessible through the [lms.amoozak.org](https://lms.amoozak.org) platform.

Following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, a blended learning model replaced the previous online learning methods, combining in-person workshops, asynchronous learning elements and virtual conference sessions. This new model aimed to ensure quality education for teachers, promoters and librarians.

Additionally, since last year, the Amoozak platform has introduced learning paths for various approaches within the Read with Me project. The objective is to empower teachers, librarians, promoters, and all project members to navigate their learning journey independently, enabling them to effectively implement the project. The ultimate vision is to provide comprehensive content and resources that empowers every volunteer to independently execute the project.

The screenshot shows the Amoozak platform interface. At the top, there is a header with the logo and name 'هورزاد عطاری' (Hozad Attari) and the tagline 'عضو «با من بخوان»' (Member of 'Read with Me'). The main content area displays a list of courses under the heading 'آشنایی با موسسه پژوهشی تاریخ ادبیات کودکان و برنامه‌ی با من بخوان' (Introduction to the Children's Literature Research Institute and the 'Read with Me' program). The list includes:

- آشنایی با موسسه پژوهشی تاریخ ادبیات کودکان
- آشنایی با کتابخانه‌های کودک محور «با من بخوان»
- سند راهبردی کتابخانه‌های «با من بخوان»
- رهنمودهای خدمات کتابخانه‌ای برای کودکان و نوجوانان ایفلا
- از خودتان بگویید...
- تصاویری از کتابخانه‌ی شما

At the bottom right, there is a button labeled 'کارگاه‌ها، آموزشب' (Workshops, Amoozeshab). On the right side, there is a sidebar menu titled 'روند همکاری کتابداران' (Librarian Collaboration Process) with the following items:

- شرکت کنندگان
- شایستگی‌ها
- عمومی
- آشنایی با موسسه پژوهشی تاریخ ادبیات کودکان و برنامه‌ی با من بخوان
- کارگاه‌های آموزشی
- مراحل راه‌اندازی

The screenshot shows the Amoozak platform interface displaying a grid of course cards. At the top, there is a header with the logo and name 'هورزاد عطاری' (Hozad Attari) and the tagline 'عضو «با من بخوان»' (Member of 'Read with Me'). The main content area displays a grid of course cards under the heading 'نمای کلی درس' (Course Overview). The grid includes:

- فضا سازی و کتابخانه‌ها: کارگاه برنامه‌ریزی در کتابخانه‌های «با من بخوان»
- روندهای کاری در «با من بخوان»: روند همکاری کتابداران (0% کامل شده)
- روندهای کاری در «با من بخوان»: روند همکاری آموزگاران سواد پایه (21% کامل شده)
- نشست‌های برنامه «با من بخوان»: درس‌گفتارهای ادبیات کودک و ترویج خواندن

At the bottom right, there is a button labeled 'راهنمای شرکت در نشست آنلاین هم‌زمان' (Simultaneous Online Meeting Guide).

## History and achievements

As a pilot study, *Read with Me* was successfully implemented in the MahmoudAbad Children's House, a marginal area of southeast Tehran, close to brick kilns and small industries where is mostly inhabited by workers' families. Afterwards, the project has been expanded to many rural and urban areas in Iran.

Over the last decade, focused on children at risk and looking for sustainable solutions to address their problems, *Read with Me* has come to this conclusion that women's contributions, as mothers, caretakers, librarians and teachers, is pivotal in improving the lives of children.

The project has been implemented mostly by supports of women: *Read with Me* trainers, teachers, librarians, volunteers and mothers. By their cooperation, the project has so far made remarkable progress:

- It has been implemented in 28 provinces of Iran, in schools, libraries and local communities;
- It has covered more than 300,000 at risk and underserved children.
- It has trained near 8,000 teachers, librarians, and volunteers;
- Hundreds of mothers with their babies and toddlers have participated in *Read with Me* workshops in marginal neighborhoods of large cities;
- More than 100 libraries have been set up with rich literacy environments, defending children's rights especially the right to read and learn;
- Many girls in small villages without a chance to study after the elementary school, are working as librarians in their village libraries;

- It has worked in vast various fields: schools, nurseries, hospitals, factories, in natural and social crisis, in Iran or Afghanistan, for newborn children to young adults.







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# Project's Expansion

- Fields of Activities

## Fields of Activities

Now, the **Read with Me** project is working in the following areas:

- Educational centers in deprived areas
- Children in crisis
- Child-centered libraries
- Reading with babies and toddlers program
- Reading in Families
- Maternal Functional Literacy
- One Promoter, One Book Package Campaign





## Schools in Deprived Areas



*Read with Me* project is implemented in the schools and educational centers of many parts of Iran, mostly in deprived provinces of the country such as South Khorasan, Sistan and Baluchestan, Lorestan, Khuzestan as well as some schools in Afghanistan.

Here, you can find a brief report of the project in some example regions. You can find the full reports and latest news of the project all over Iran, on our [website](#).



South Khorasan



Kerman



Sistan and Baluchestan



Lorestan



Afghanistan



## Schools in Deprived Areas

### South Khorasan

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. 800 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 expansion of the project to 5 regions, including overall 2400 of preschoolers and children in first grade of elementary school. In 2015, another district joined the project.

Since 2012 in these 6 regions, about 7000 children aged 5-12 years old in preschools and schools have benefited from 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.





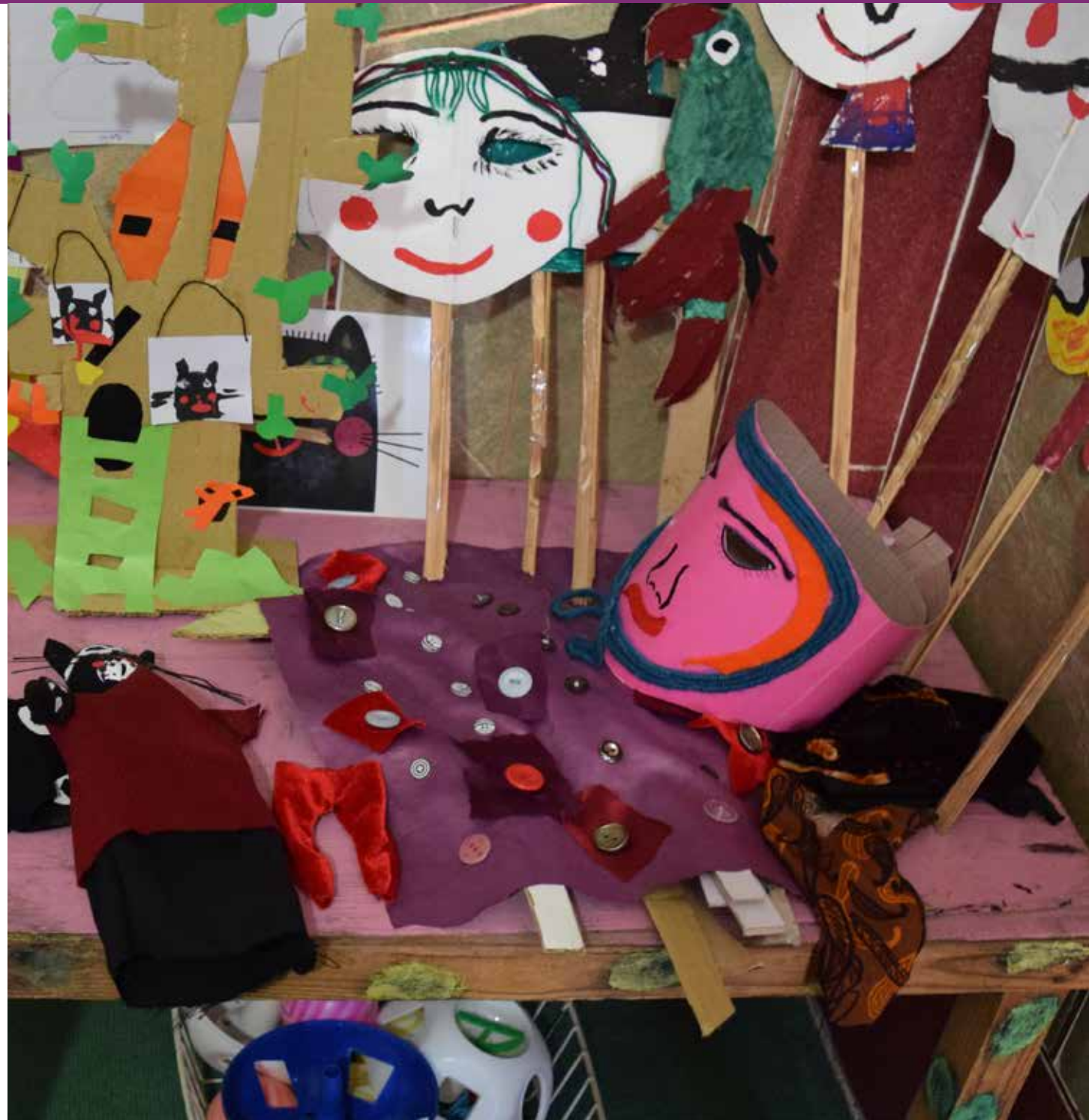
## Schools in Deprived Areas

### Kerman

*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 schools in Kerman and until now many schools in urban and rural areas of Sirjan, Jiroft, Kahnooj and Sarcheshmeh have been covered by the project. As of 2020, more than 9000 children have benefited from the project.

Sirjan's child-centered library functions as a base for reading promotion in the area and together with some small rural child-centered libraries, they guarantee the project's sustainability in the region. Teachers and trained ambassadors can borrow books from the library and hold reading aloud sessions in their classes.





## Schools in Deprived Areas

### 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 such as Zahedan, Zabol, Iranshahr, Saravan, Konarak and Sarbaz have been covered by the project.

*Read with Me* experts have evaluated the effects of basic literacy improvement method during this period as “amazing”. They believe that the project has improved reading and writing skills, expanded the vocabulary knowledge and brought joy and self-confidence to bilingual and nomadic students in the region.

After years of training, *Read with Me* ambassadors of this province can pass on the project's standards, promote reading and improve literacy foundation in their region.





## Schools in Deprived Areas

### Lorestan

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.

*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.

In 2020, after the floods in Lorestan province, a number of deprived kindergartens in Pol-e Dokhtar, Mamulan, Dorud and KhoramAbad were also covered by the project.





## Schools in Deprived Areas

### Afghanistan

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 was implemented in Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan, in 2016, in cooperation with "Future for Afghanistan Children" Organization, covering more than 1000 children, 48 teachers, and tutors in 5 schools.

In summer 2019, *Read with Me* workshops were held in Kabul in collaboration with Aschiana Foundation.

In 2020, Parande Library in Panjshir joined the *Read with Me* project, receiving quality books and library resources. You can read the library's opening report on [this link](#).

In 2023, a group of young adult girls from Tardid Educational Center in Kabul participated in *Read with Me* online workshops. Books and Learning packages were sent to the center, and these young girls conduct reading aloud and literacy learning sessions for preschoolers and elementary school students.





## Children in crisis



Children in Marginal Neighborhoods



Working/ Street children



Refugee Children



Hospitals & Nurseries



Natural Disasters

## Children in crisis

### Children in marginal neighborhoods

*Read with Me* is implemented in multiple Centers/ Schools & preschools for children in marginal neighborhoods around Tehran, Isfahan, Yazd and Sarawan.

More than ten centers in underserved regions of Tehran are covered by *Read with Me* where many children at risk can develop resilience and learn living values by seeing the world through literature and quality books. Here, you can see four examples of these centers.

### Yazd

In 2012 *Read with Me* was launched in a center 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.





## Children in crisis

### Shokoufan Supportive Education Association

This center, located in a village in south-east of Tehran, receives children of families who mostly work in brick kilns in this village. In this center, preschoolers benefit from creative education, reading aloud sessions and artistic activities, in an environment where no other preschools are available and parents cannot afford any training before school. The center has been able to provide free education and Emergent Literacy skills improvement for children in the neighborhood.

The center's library provides children and adolescents with quality books, and librarians and tutors of this center go to schools or even to children in brick kilns with book bags and read books for them.

The "Reading with Babies and Toddlers" program is also implemented in this center for mothers with babies from 0 to 3 years old.





## Children in crisis

### Neday-e-Mandegar Empowerment Center

This center is located in Darvazeh-Ghar neighborhood in the middle of Tehran. This neighborhood faces many problems such as addiction, poverty and unemployment. The center is established to help single mothers, girls and women in female-headed households to become literate and skillful, empowering them with social and job skills.

*Read with Me* started collaborating with this center since 2015 and in addition to establishing a child-centered library, the "Basic Literacy Improvement through Literature" program has been implemented for children aged 3 to 6 years old. Mothers working in this center, or other mothers living in the neighborhood, with children aged 0 to 3 years old, also attend the "Reading with babies and toddlers" program. Reading aloud sessions are also held for women and mothers working in the center, helping them to get acquainted with literature and books.





## Children in crisis

### 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.

### Shirabad (Zahedan)

Since 2019, children in Kousha Center, in Shirabad, a marginalized district in Zahedan (Sistan and Balouchestan), have been provided with quality education through the Basic Literacy improvement approach by the *Read with Me* project. Since then, more than 1000 children have benefitted the quality books and learning packages provided in the framework of the project. You can read a detailed report of the project on [\\_](#).





## Children in crisis

### The Association for the Protection of Child Labourers

The Association for the Protection of Child Labourers educates working children in five centers in Tehran and one center in Bam (Kerman province). The children attending these centers are primarily involved in street work or employed in small sweatshops. They experience poverty and violence on a daily basis and often lack a supportive family environment.

Since 2020, the Read with Me project has partnered with the association to provide basic literacy education to these children. Due to their extensive work hours, these children have limited time to attend regular school classes, thus requiring special schedules and lesson plans.





## Children in crisis

### Arfak

Arfak is a non-governmental organization, active since 2016, in supporting, educating, and empowering vulnerable and disadvantaged children, especially working children, in the Darvazeh Ghar neighborhood of Tehran. Over the past years, Arfak has managed to empower approximately 3,000 children and 1,000 mothers across the country in terms of academic, educational, technical, health, and personal skills.

As part of its literacy education program, Arfak directly educates over 200 underprivileged or school dropout students, from 7 to 17 years old. Since 2017, Arfak has started its collaboration with the "Read with Me" project and, in line with that, established the child-centered Anahita library.

The literacy program at this center has also been implementing the "Read with Me" curriculum since 2023.





## Children in crisis

### Immigrant and Refugee Children in *Read with Me* Project

*Read with Me* project emphasizes on the promotion of reading and literacy among immigrant and refugee children. For various reasons such as poverty, social inequalities and legal problems, many of these children are deprived of educational services or cannot easily enter schools in Iran.

The pilot plan of *Read with Me* started in Pooyesh Center in the suburbs of Tehran. Children from Afghanistani immigrant families are the largest group of children covered by this center. So far, several educational and empowerment centers which cover Afghanistani children and mothers in marginal and deprived regions of Tehran, such as Nedaye Mandegar Institute, Shokoufan Association and Navid Zendegi Koosha Center are implementing the *Read with Me* project. Also, in a number of centers in the marginal areas of Isfahan, *Read with Me* have covered many Afghanistani families.





## Children in crisis

A very active library among many *Read with Me* libraries, which promotes reading among Afghanistani children and adolescents in immigrant-inhabited areas of Tehran is located in Farhang School (literally meaning school of culture) managed by Nader Mousavi, who was nominated by Children's Book Council for IBBY-iRead Award in 2022. The teachers and librarians of Farhang School have participated in *Read with Me* workshops and make use of the methods of the project in their classes and reading sessions.

From the year 2021, with the new wave of immigration of Afghanistani families to Iran after the domination of Taliban on Afghanistan for the second time, *Read with Me* covered a number of schools and self-governing educational centers dedicated to Afghanistani immigrant and refugee children.



## Children in crisis

Allameh Balkhi School in the city of Pishva and Jamal-od-Din Afghani School in Hassan-Abad Fashafuyeh, both in Tehran province, joined the *Read with Me* project in 2021. Pishva and Hassan-Abad Fashafuyeh and thier suburbs host a large number of immigrant children. Thesw schools have more than 250 children from pre-school to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. By enriching the classes with small class libraries and training the teachers, *Read with Me* has attempted to improve the educational atmosphere of the schools and help the children to adapt with the new environment. A large library is planned to be established in Allameh Balkhi school in the near future to function as a base for Afghanistani children of the region.

In the spring of 2022, three self-governing schools for Afghanistani children in Alborz province (neighboring province of Tehran) with more than 170 children joined *Read with Me* project. These children are now on a suitable educational track by the use of small class libraries and educational packages of basic literacy improvement through literature.





## Children in crisis

### Nurseries and Care Centers for Neglected Children

In 2013, the Institute's experts identified some of the shortcomings and basic needs of children living in Ameneh Nursery in enhancing their listening, speaking and emotional skills and suggested the implementation of "Learning Sounds" and "Learning Alphabet" packages in this center. This nursery is for zero to seven-year-old orphan and neglected children. For more than seven years a *Read with Me* trainer attended weekly at this center and has been able to make an incredible change in the language, social and emotional development of the children.

The program has since expanded to include care centers for neglected children and adolescents in different parts of the country.

Four nurseries and six care centers for neglected children have joined the *Read with Me* project so far.



Go to [this link](#) to read more about the effects of this program on orphans and interviews with experts and psychologists in Ameneh Nursery.



## Children in crisis

### Hospitals

- Mahak 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.
- 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)
- Since summer 2019, some *Read with Me* volunteers read books aloud for hospitalized children in Tehran.





## Children in crisis

### Children after Natural Disasters

*Read with Me* helps children in special situations like natural and social catastrophic events in which children need Bibliotherapy and appropriate books.

*Read with Me* project has so far covered children in East Azarbaijan, Bam, Kermanshah, Khouzestan, and Lorestan after earthquakes and floods.

As the first actions after a catastrophic event, *Read with Me* sends groups of volunteers to the region along with book bags and book packages to read books with children, help them to talk and express their feelings, and do different book-related activities. 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.





## Children in crisis

### 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 child-centered libraries 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.

After the earthquake, ten cabin libraries were set up in different zones affected by earthquake. Up to now, most of these cabin libraries have been transferred to permanent places.

Local people and children helped the *Read with Me* group step by step to equip and run these libraries.





## Children in crisis

### 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, *Read with Me* program has introduced two major phases for helping children and families struggling with floods.

- Short-term: dispatching trained volunteers with Book Backpacks to flooded regions during the initial days and weeks of flooding.
- Long-term: with the financial support of IBBY Children in Crisis Fund, *Read with Me* has designed three long-term projects in flooded regions in west and south-west of Iran:
  - Implementation of the “Creative Education through Children’s Literature” learning literacy program in underserved kindergartens in cities and villages in Lorestan Province covering about 50 kindergarten teachers and principals and more than 1400 children aged 3 to 6 years old.
  - Establishing a *Read with Me* child-centered library in Gourieh, Khuzestan Province and implementing the “Creative Education through Children’s Literature” learning literacy program for local volunteers. The project focused on training girls and women so they can promote reading among children and young adults in their villages.
  - Establishing a *Read with Me* child-centered school library in Poldokhtar, Lorestan Province and reading promotion in schools





## Children in crisis

### 2023 earthquakes in North-west of Iran

On the evening of 28 January 2023, an earthquake with a magnitude of 5.9 on the Richter scale shook the city of Khoy in northwestern Iran, leaving many families homeless in the cold winter months. Based on previous experiences of being present in areas affected by natural disasters, Read with Me first sent promoters with book packages to the region to read books with children, and then set up a cabin-library to promote literature and reading with these children for a more sustainable and deeper impact.





## Read with Me Libraries



### ***Read with Me Libraries***

Since 2016 *Read with Me* has focused on expansion and enrichment of libraries in order to make quality books accessible to larger groups of children and young adults. *Read with Me* libraries have great impact on the project's sustainability and keep children and their families connected to books. You can read more about *Read with Me* libraries on our [website](#).



Local Libraries



School Libraries



Classroom Libraries



Libraries Network



Young Adult Librarians



## Read with Me Libraries

### The Strategic Document of *Read with Me Libraries*

In 2022, after years of effort and gaining experience, the committee of the *Read with Me* library released a strategic document that outlines the models and standards for establishing and managing *Read with Me* libraries. The aim of this document is to educate individuals on the extent and techniques of providing library services for children based on their reading and literacy requirements and children's rights. The target audience for this document includes librarians, advocates, administrators of kindergartens and schools, organizations that plan to set up libraries for children and young adults, Library and Information Studies students, and anyone who is interested in promoting reading and literacy among children. The complete version of the document can be accessed through [this link](#).

Furthermore, the committee has provided a translation of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) handbook for library services for children, which was initially published in 2003 and updated in 2018.





## Read with Me Libraries

### Local libraries

*Read with Me* local libraries vary widely depending on conditions in every region. There are grand libraries with thousands of books, covering a vast area, and there are also libraries in a small room in a remote village covering about 30-40 children in the village. Being flexible, the *Read with Me* project tries to find a proper solution for each situation, whether it is in a factory, in a car, or in cabins after the earthquake.





## Read with Me Libraries

### Read with Me mobile library

*Read with Me* mobile library started its work in the rural areas of Qorveh County, Kurdistan Province in January 2019. This Mobile Library, with more than 1000 quality books, provides scheduled service to schools of this area. In 2023, a similar van started its activity covering nomad children in Kerman and Fars Province.



### Sazvar Sazeh Azarestan Company

Sazvar Sazeh Azarestan Company, located near Tehran joined the project to get its workers involved in reading books with their children, since 2014. Now a library for children and adolescents has been established in Sazvar Sazeh Azarestan Factory and workers can borrow books for their children based on their age-groups.

By the support of the company's CEO, *Read with Me* holds different cultural events for the workers' families to make them interested in books and reading.





## Read with Me Libraries

### *Read with Me* School Libraries

School libraries are the best means to make books accessible to children and young adults. About 50% of *Read with Me* libraries are in schools and a very important criteria for local libraries is being close to schools in the neighborhood. Since a vast part of the *Read with Me* project is implemented in schools and in cooperation with the Education Office in each region, setting up school libraries assure that children can have access to quality books to gain knowledge and skills for literary and personal improvement.



### Cloth Pocket Libraries

*Read with Me* provides cloth Pocket libraries for every classroom covered by the project. Teachers hang the book display on the wall and put the reading aloud books inside them. Children can see and easily access the books inside these libraries.

By now thousands of classroom libraries have been set up all over the country.







## Read with Me Libraries

### Libraries' Networks

Following the expansion of the "[One Promoter, One Book Package](#)" campaign and the participation of numerous promoters, *Read with Me* libraries found a more significant role as a source of books for these promoters. Additionally, the content of educational Read-Aloud and Children's Literature workshops has been simplified and shared with some librarians to equip them with the necessary knowledge to educate promoters on reading books with children.

In Kermanshah province, a network of over 100 promoters is actively reaching out to children in remote villages and centers around the libraries.

There are also other promoters operating in Chaharmahal Bakhtiari, Markazi, Kerman, and Fars Provinces.



## Read with Me Libraries

### *Read with Me Green Libraries Strategic Document*

*Read with Me* believes that commitment to environmental values and sustainability is a key responsibility for every individual, and children's libraries are an ideal place to foster this perspective.

Since its early days, *Read with Me* has consistently emphasized the importance of environmental protection. Environmental books have always held a special place on the list of books distributed to classrooms, libraries, and other centers. Additionally, book-related events coinciding with environmental occasions have been regularly organized in libraries and schools.

To address the existing shortcomings in *Read with Me* libraries, such as waste reduction, waste segregation, the use of eco-friendly materials and tools, optimal energy consumption, the expansion of internal and surrounding green spaces, and increasing children's and adolescents' knowledge of their ecosystem and methods to preserve it, the "Read with Me Green Libraries Strategic Document" has been developed and published.

This document assists librarians in defining their visions based on the regional environment, assessing opportunities, threats, strengths, and weaknesses within their libraries, and devising strategies to achieve short-term and long-term performance indicators. Chaharmahal Bakhtiari, Markazi, Kerman, and Fars Provinces.





## Read with Me Libraries

In some libraries in remote villages, librarians are young adult girls who do not have the chance to continue their studies after the elementary school. Being in the libraries keeps them connected to the world of books and knowledge and other children in their villages, and also is a great motivation for them to continue their studies in non-attending schools. They can totally change their destinies earning the self-confidence and other skills in these libraries.



A girl, deprived of high school education, is now a librarian in a *Read with Me* library. She reads aloud for younger children in the school library



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

## Reading with Babies and toddlers

"Reading with Babies and Toddlers" is a project designed for 0- to 3-year-old babies. Today, it is proven that reading affects children since their birth or even before. Hence, *Read with Me* has dedicated parts of its activities to inform and empower parents, especially in more deprived and poor families, to read and talk to children since birth.

This program aims to train mothers and volunteer caregivers to support the cognitive, language, and behavioral development of their babies through reading rhymes, verses, word games and colorful picture books for them every day. In this program, parents receive books proper for their child every three months.

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.

You can read interviews with two mothers about the effects of "Reading with Babies and Toddlers" program on themselves and their babies, in links below:

- [\*A mother describes how reading books has influenced her life and her children\*](#)
- [\*I had no idea how to communicate with the baby in the womb\*](#)



Photo Gallery



## Reading in Families

“Reading in Families” is a novel project that follows the same framework and guidelines of the *Read with Me* program. The project’s principal goal is to take book reading and literacy into the homes of educationally disadvantaged families and bring about a rich academic environment. Circumstances are designed where children from birth are exposed to learning activities and practicing literacy skills before entering primary school. Simultaneously, older children in the family will strengthen their reading competence. Family means all the family members are involved in the reading and learning activities – parents, siblings, and grandparents. This program is implemented in deprived regions; its primary purpose is to cater to families who cannot even buy books for their children and are also unaware of their influence on their education.



## Maternal Functional Literacy

Years of experience have shown us that the relationship between parents and their children improves and expands if they can introduce their children to literature and accompany them on the path of language and literacy learning. Therefore, education for families, especially for mothers, has become more prominent in the *Read with Me* project so that they can share quality books with their children.

Functional literacy, teaches literacy to mothers based on their needs in daily life. The program consists of weekly sessions where mothers learn basic literacy skills and are provided with books to read and share with their children. The sessions also include discussions on child development, health, and well-being. The program aims to create a supportive and empowering environment for mothers to learn and grow.

The long-term goal of this program is to apply the intergenerational literacy in practice and empower mothers to take an active role in sharing books with their children and also their children's education and development.

Read the full report of the project implementation in [this link](#).



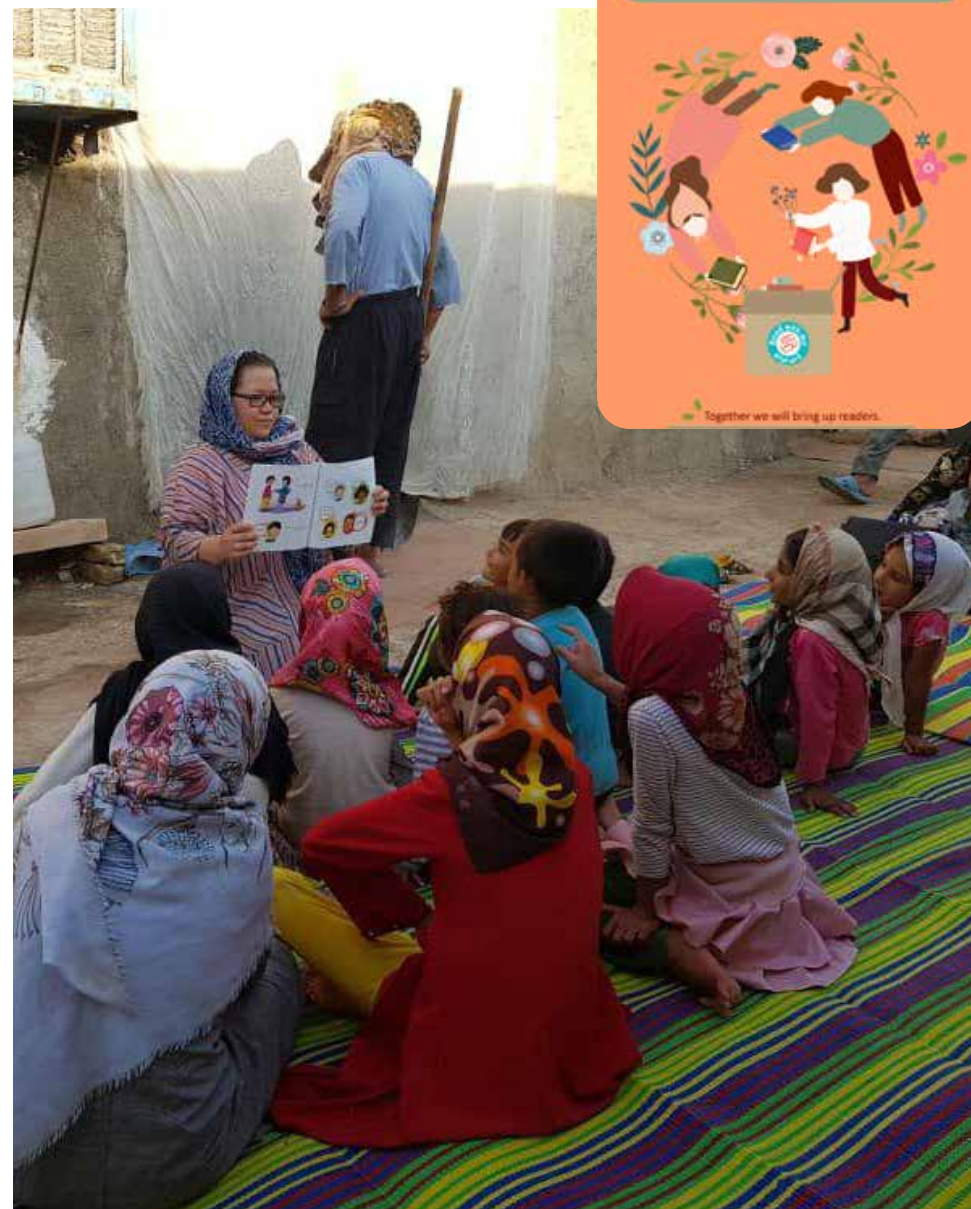


## “One Promoter, One Book Package” Campaign

“One Promoter, One Book Package” campaign is a subset of the *Read with Me* program which is implemented with the help and support of “*Read with Me* Fan Club”. The purpose of this campaign is to ensure that a larger number of children, tutors, teachers and reading promoters all across Iran, have access to *Read with Me* services.

In March 2019, *Read with Me* started a campaign under the name of “One Teacher, One Class, One Library” with the goal of providing the teachers with books and wall-mounted cloth book holders. Teachers were provided with quality books and book holders. Additionally, they attended different workshops to learn how to share books with children and how to use different techniques of reading aloud.

As the campaign grew and more people started to join, it was decided to provide not only the teachers, but also promoters and children librarians who do not have access to quality books, with the services that the campaign offers. By changing the approach, many promoters and children librarians joined the campaign and attended the workshops. Therefore the campaign got itself a new name and it started to be called: “One Promoter, One Book Package”. In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the activities of this campaign were transformed. You can read a full report on the activities of this campaign during COVID-19 pandemic in [this link](#).





3

**Evaluation**



The *Read with Me* team has monitored the project through especially designed questionnaires and continuous visits to regions covered by the program, 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.
- ☑ Children who were not interested in reading 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 stories from the beginning to the end.
- ☑ They can comprehend and relate to the stories, remember the highlights and describe the sequence of events afterwards.
- ☑ Their lexical acquisition and linguistic competence have improved dramatically.
- ☑ Bilingual children who were not able to speak, write or read in Persian have now made an impressive progress in basic literacy and verbal skills by the use of "Creative Education through Literature" method.





- ❑ Book related drama has improved self-expression, confidence, critical thinking and most importantly, reasoning and finding creative ways of solving problems.
- ❑ 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.
- ❑ *Read with Me* has trained teachers and promoters in most of the covered areas to become *Read with Me* ambassadors. These ambassadors can educate more and more people and promoters in their regions.





- Since 2010, numerous school libraries have been set up, which help the sustainability of the project. Establishing child-centered local libraries near the schools is another action to expand the project, make it more sustainable, make children interested in book reading, and improve the literacy skills in students. The fact that these libraries remain active even after the project has ended in a certain area, proves that the project has lasting impacts, not only in the field of books but also on cultural aspects of the society.
- *Read with Me* has been well-known and acknowledged among groups and individuals interested in children's education and reading promotion. Hence, there is now a network of promoters and volunteers trying to get involved with the program's standards. *Read with Me* is also trying to expand this network by training these volunteers and supplying quality books for children.
- Evaluating the results of *Read with Me* activities after crisis (especially in regions affected by floods or earthquakes) shows that the project has left permanent impacts on children's improvement through crisis. These impacts are now visible in children's skills and abilities.





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## Other Activities

- Jabbar Baghtcheban Award
- Quality Book Exhibitions in schools
- During the Coronavirus Pandemic
- Read-Aloud Week in Iran



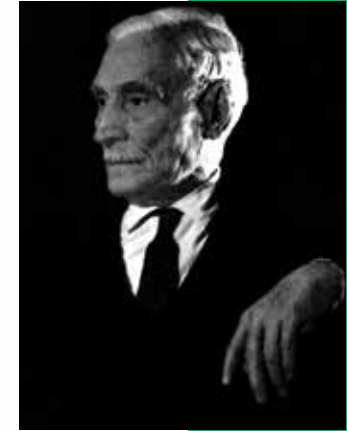
## Jabbar Baghtcheban Award

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 decided to establish Jabbar Baghtcheban Award for Reading Promotion, 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 had 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. At the moment, these teachers are *Read with Me* ambassadors and play an important role in expanding the project in their own regions.

In 2020 and consequently in 2022, the *Read with Me* conference was not held due to the situation in Iran but the Jabbar Baghtcheban Award was announced as regular.

Omran Azarestan Construction Company financially supports this award.



## Book Exhibitions in Schools



The Institute holds book fairs and festivals at schools for parents and teachers to promote quality children's books and get families acquainted with the importance of reading to children and its effects on children's learning.

Parents, teachers and students attend these exhibitions and *Read with Me* experts guide them to how choose the right books and how to read-aloud and share quality books with children and do the follow-up book-related activities.



## During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Since late February 2020, as the Coronavirus Pandemic was getting worse, kindergartens and schools all over Iran were closed. As a result, children and teachers in the schools covered by the *Read with Me* project, lost their direct contact and the read-aloud sessions had to come to an end; also those classes working on literacy improvement through literature had to put those activities to rest for a while. On the other hand, *Read with Me* libraries and children supporting centers were also closed. In long term, this incident can have extreme effects on children's mental health and development.

The problem is milder in privileged families who can support quality time and education for their children at home, but children covered by *Read with Me*, are mostly children in deprived regions of the country, and are seriously vulnerable to such situations due to lack of literate parents or siblings at home who can provide a supportive environment for them during this time.

Therefore, from the very first moments, *Read with Me* experts tried to find ways to reconnect to children during this harsh time so they can reduce the trauma caused by the situation. The most important activities were via the social media, focusing on mothers, helping them to work with their children at home.

In [this link](#), you can find a short report of these activities.



## Read-Aloud Week in Iran

Since 2018, the Institute for Research on the History of Children's Literature has named 22<sup>nd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> of January, as "Read-Aloud Week" in Iran. The main reason behind naming a week as "Read-Aloud Week", is to emphasize on the importance of reading-aloud, as the best way to improve reading skills and dialogic communication.

Each year the *Read with Me* program chooses an inspiring motto for this week and invites parents, teachers, librarians and anyone who have an interest in working in fields related to children, to read aloud to children and young adults during this week and post their experience on Social Media.

The call is well received by children, teachers, tutors, parents, librarians and many others interested in children's literature and numerous libraries, schools, kindergartens and other child-related centers join this campaign and send thousands of pictures and films on Social Media, every year.

*Read with Me* project hopes that "Read-Aloud week" advances to become a national event related to books and reading promotion.







5

**International  
Recognition &  
Awards**

## Awards

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, 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)** by different organizations nine years in a row. The first nomination was in 2017.



The **IBBY-iRead Outstanding Reading Promoter Award** has been established by the Shenzhen iRead Foundation and IBBY to encourage a real commitment to the cause of reading promotion in the hope of spreading this dedication to others around the globe. Part of the award goes to the selected promoter or individual, and part of it goes to an organization that the winners announce.

Marit Törnqvist, one of the 2020 iRead winners, selected the *Read with Me* program which led to iRead interview with Zohreh Ghaeni, founder of *Read with Me*. You can read the full interview on [this link](#).

In 2022, Zohreh Ghaeni, the head of the *Read with Me* project and the co-founder and director of the Institute for Research on the History of Children’s Literature in Iran, was one of the laureates of the IBBY-iRead Outstanding Reading Promoter Award. She was nominated for the award by the IBBY sections in Canada and Iran. You can read the interview with Zohreh Ghaeni after winning the award in [this link](#).



## International Recognition

International Artists, intellectuals and academicians who support *Read with Me* project



**Sylvia M. Vardell**  
Children's Literature  
Professor



**Miriam Martinez**  
Literacy & Children's  
Literature Professor



**Astrid Lindgren's  
Family**  
Swedish Writer



**Junko Yokota**  
Language & Reading  
Professor



**Jeff Aerts**  
Belgian Author



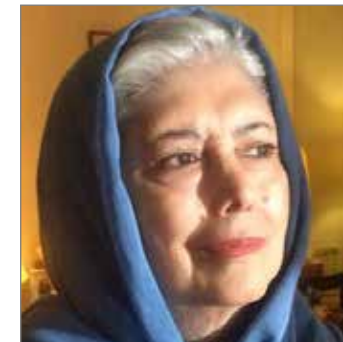
**Marit Törnqvist**  
Swedish-Dutch  
writer & Illustrator



**MohammadHadi  
Mohammadi**  
Iranian Author & Scholar



**the late  
William Herbert Teale**  
Literacy Theorist



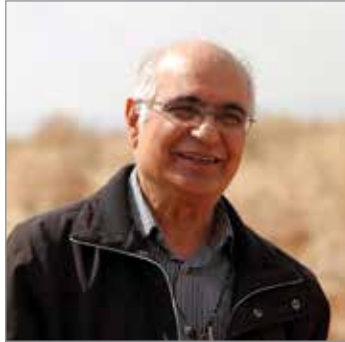
**the late  
Soraya Ghezal Ayagh**  
Children's Literature  
Professor



**Farhad Hasanzadeh**  
Iranian Author

## International Recognition

International Artists, intellectuals and academicians who support *Read with Me* project



**Houshang Moradi**  
Kermani  
Iranian writer



**Peter Sís**  
Czech writer &  
illustrator



**Jutta Bauer**  
German Illustrator



**Edward van de Vendel**  
Dutch Writer



**Toon Tellegen**  
Dutch writer & poet



**Anna Höglund**  
Swedish writer &  
Illustrator



**Katherine Paterson**  
American Writer



**Patricia Aldana**  
Former IBBY  
President



**Bob Graham**  
Australian author &  
illustrator



**Hans Monique Hagen**  
Dutch poets





## International Recognition

### International organizations who have supported *Read with Me*

✓ The IBBY Children in Crisis Fund has supported the Read with Me project on multiple occasions. In 2012, the proposal of *Read with Me* in South Khorasan was granted to cover 800 preschool children in remote areas and villages of South Khorasan.

In 2019, after devastating floods in Iran, the *Read with Me* project was implemented in West and South-West of Iran for about 2500 children and 120 teachers and volunteers by means of this fund. ([Here you can read this project's report in April 2020](#))



✓ The **Nederlands Letterenfonds** ("Dutch Foundation for Literature") has supported *Read with Me* since 2016.



✓ These organizations have nominated Read with Me for several awards during last 10 years:



IBBY Belgium -  
Flanders Branch



International Literacy  
Association



IFLA



IBBY Canada



IBBY Switzerland



Children's Book Council  
IBBY IRAN



The Iranian Association of Writers  
for Children and Youth



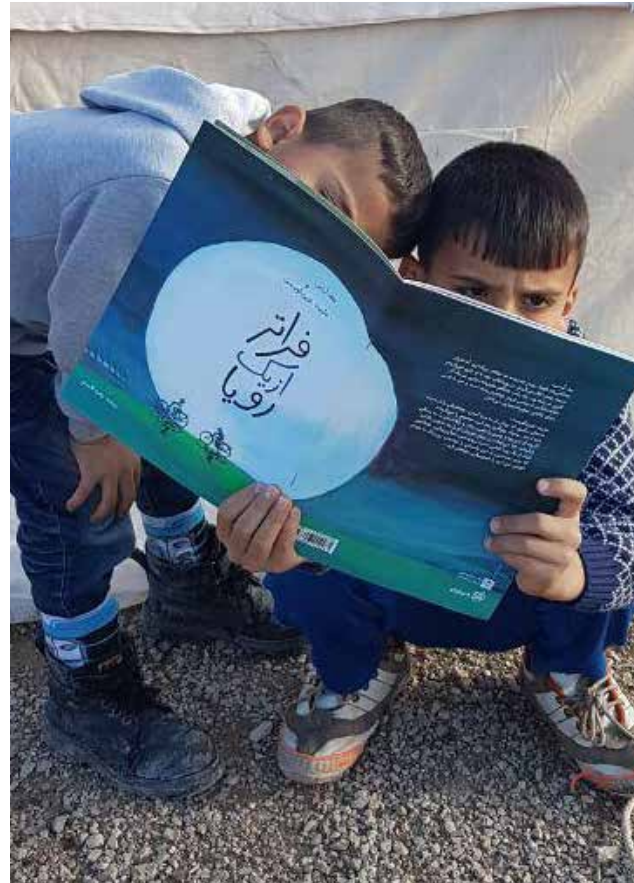
## When two worlds meet



**Marit Törnqvist** the prominent Swedish-Dutch author and 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. She has collaborated continuously with *Read with Me* in the past several years in various fields. We are honored to have this great artist and promoter as a member of the *Read with Me* family.

[Here you can find reports of Marit Törnqvist's collaboration with the Read with Me Project.](#)



Children and adolescents look at the book "Bigger than a Dream" after Marit Törnqvist's workshop in earthquake-affected regions of Kermanshah

## Short Documentaries about *Read with Me*

You can see the following short documentaries about the *Read with Me* project implementation in different centers:



**The sound of reading comes from brick kilns**

Children in MahmoudAbad, a village near Tehran where many seasonal workers live and work in brick kilns, benefit from quality education and quality books in the "Shokoufan Association".



**Read the Joy with Me!**

*Read with Me* has been implemented in some Nomadic Schools of Zahedan since 2015. The project has improved basic literacy in children and has brought joy and happiness into their lives.



**I'm not afraid of anything here!**

The film tells about *Read with Me* activities in the earthquake-affected areas of Kermanshah and how children find hope in *Read with Me* cabin-libraries.



**Steel, Read with Me**

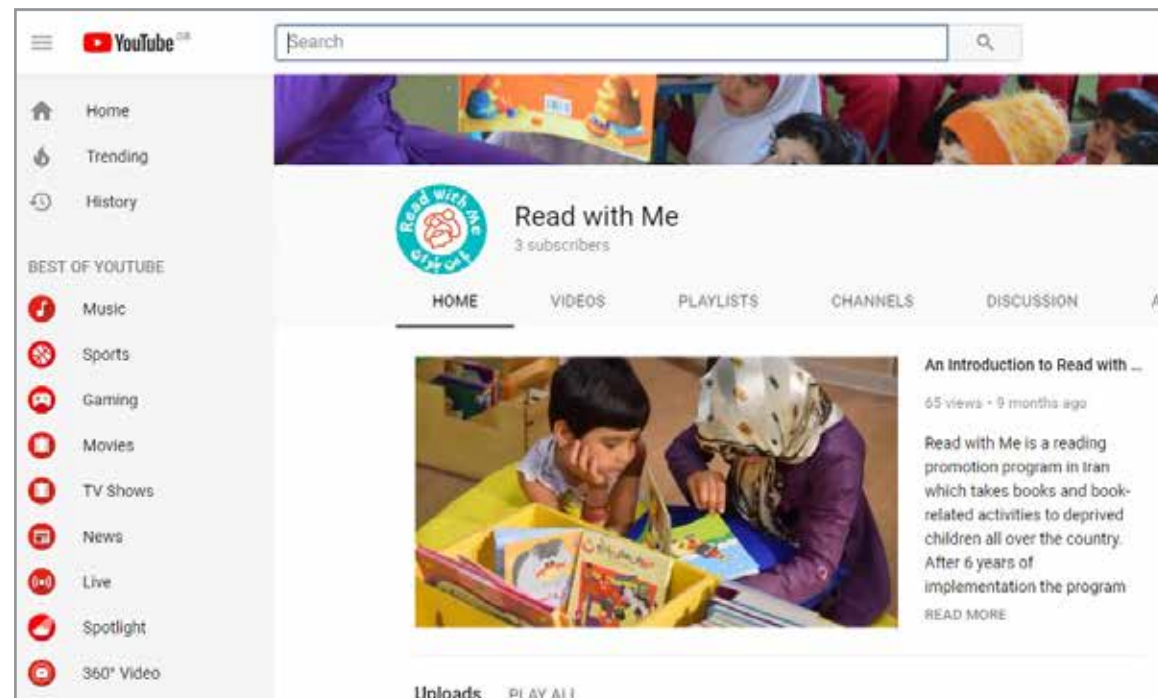
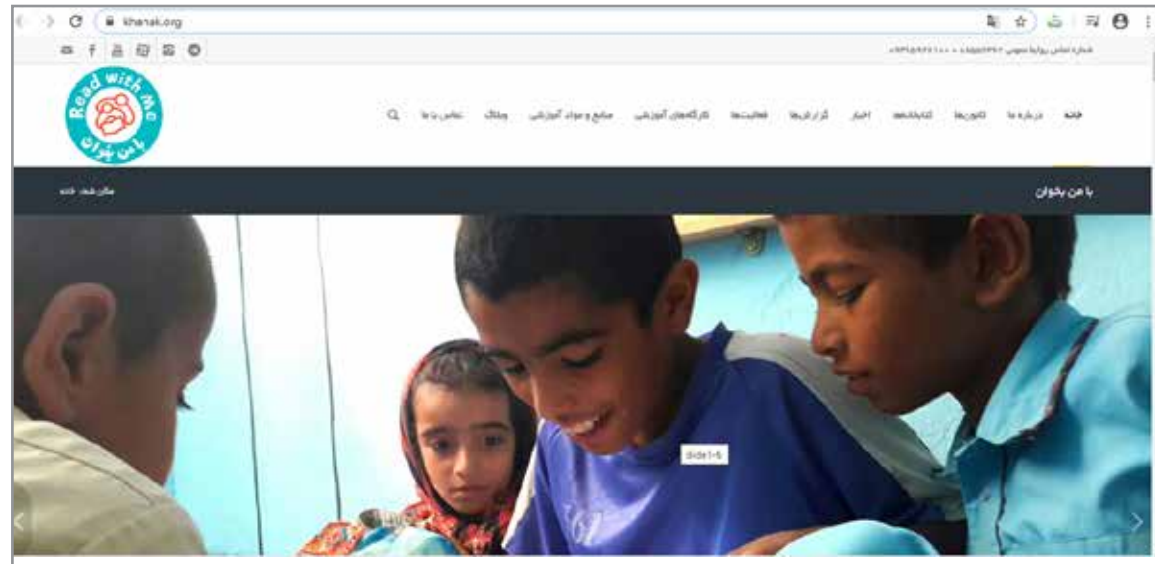
A short film about *Read with Me* implementation in SazavarSazeh Factory and how the workers and their children benefit from the library in the factory.



## Contact Us


For more information about the *Read with Me* project, its activities and achievements in every center or region you can visit our website ([www.khanak.org/en](http://www.khanak.org/en)).

Pictures, videos, reports and news of *Read with Me* activities in different fields and different regions are available on the website. You can follow our videos on *Read with Me* YouTube channel.





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 instagram: [www.instagram.com/khanak\\_org](http://www.instagram.com/khanak_org)

 Youtube: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiG-p\\_7mfM2GTrfseVREnK1A](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiG-p_7mfM2GTrfseVREnK1A)

