Can’t Wait to Learn

Closing the education gap through technology

Lebanon
Education in their hands

Can’t Wait to Learn is a proven digital game-based learning model designed with and for children affected by conflict.

It is a curriculum-based, context-specific solution, which brings together the know-how of locally based education stakeholders, such as Ministries of Education, international and community-based organisations alongside international expertise in software development, game development and design. The result is a self-guided serious gaming format accessed on tablets that takes children through Ministry of Education approved curriculum, providing opportunity for children to work toward primary level certification. In this way, Can’t Wait to Learn aims to reinforce the education pipeline across informal and formal education, to decrease drop-out rates and encourage transition into formal primary and secondary education. In Lebanon, Can’t Wait to Learn is helping Syrian Refugee and Lebanese children currently ineligible for either the government endorsed Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) or formal schools due to either over age or lack of appropriate competency level gain basic maths and reading skills in informal learning centres.

THE SITUATION

NO EDUCATION, NO FUTURE
Almost 60% of the estimated 488,000 Syrian children of school age in Lebanon were not enrolled in public education in the 2016-17 school year and there is a USD 50 million critical gap threatening the enrolment of around 260,000 Lebanese and non-Lebanese children for the 2018-19 school year.

AN EDUCATION SYSTEM UNDER PRESSURE
The issue is not only the 286,000 out of school children, but also the stress that increased numbers of children enrolling has had on the current school system.

THE CHALLENGE

Barriers to education for out of school children in Lebanon include:

- Distances between home and school and insufficient existing public school facilities
- Ability of children to successfully (re-)integrate into formal education due to years spent out of school
- Language of instruction in Lebanon, i.e. technical subjects in French or English, as opposed to Arabic
- Initial intimidation by the Lebanese curriculum, and lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills

THE TRUE COST OF EDUCATION
UNICEF estimates the cost of the loss of human capital resulting from Syrian children missing out on education alone to be US$10.7 billion; more than 17 percent of Syria’s 2010 GDP.
THEY CAN’T WAIT TO LEARN... NOW THEY DON’T HAVE TO

Can’t Wait to Learn offers:

- Maths and reading curriculum educative game and full instructional model based on Ministry of Education & Higher Education curricula and requirements
- A digital user interface that is adapted to context to support motivation and active, self-paced learning
- Diagnostics for every learner which can be aggregated according to Ministry and sector requirements
- A delivery mechanism that works across resource-constrained environments

One of the unique features of the approach is that the software is tailored to the relevant national curriculum requirements and, crucially, designed with target children to ensure familiarity.

CWTL offers a local interface that reflects children’s reality in both the look and feel of the characters and game design and in the game’s storyline, which lowers the threshold for children to engage, particularly if new to technology. Instead of learning to recognize new characters, events and circumstances, children become immersed in a world that reflects their own and focus on math and/or reading.

The game world is their world...

Above — Children learning maths in Lebanon

…the game world is their world...

Below — Part of the Lebanon Math 1-3 game world

“…AND THE WORLD THEY WANT TO SEE

During the co-creation of the math game the children expressed the desire for a green and secure world. Therefore the final design is a very green land with low mountain in the distance which gives the game world a friendly and safe feeling.

“I notice them when they get an image of a carpenter or a musician, they feel happy. Thus, they do not feel happy only by solving the questions. The game itself attracts them. They like to win in order to move to another nice place in the game.” — Facilitator, South Lebanon

“I notice them when they get an image of a carpenter or a musician, they feel happy. Thus, they do not feel happy only by solving the questions. The game itself attracts them. They like to win in order to move to another nice place in the game.” — Child, North Lebanon

“in every new game, a video appears and we learn from it how to play the game before starting the game [...]. It has been very simple, because there has been a video.” — Child, North Lebanon

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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR ALL

The game application can be taken to children who cannot access learning facilities for reasons of physical disability or discrimination. In Lebanon, the most disadvantaged children were included in co-creating the games, resulting in a very inclusive content and design. Implementing partner Forum for the rights of People with Disabilities noted that after one week of playing most of the children chose to forego their Easter break because they wanted to keep playing and finish more game levels.

Nour* is 12 years old and was born with a hearing and speech impediment. She and her family fled from Syria at the beginning of the conflict and they are currently living in an informal tented settlement in Lebanon. With a little help from her 10-year-old brother Ali using sign language, Nour has already finished the first cycle of the Can’t Wait to Learn maths game. “Education is everything in my life” Nour explains. “When I grow up, I want to be a teacher.” — ...
In 2019, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education started reviewing the Can’t Wait to Learn curriculum for potential use in the formal schooling system and the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) - a national organization charged with modernization and development of education - has now asked War Child to submit a concept for introducing Can’t Wait to Learn in formal schools.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR SCALE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Reflecting the Lebanese education sector’s enthusiasm for Can’t Wait to Learn, a wide variety of implementing partners are involved in Lebanon. These partners are chosen for their reach, technical skills, willingness to engage with research and ability to support scale-up.

15 local and international partners including Sonbola, Ana Aqra Association, INTERSOS, Terre des Hommes, NRC, LOST, SEED and AVSI have been part of CWTL. They integrated CWTL into their existing programming as part of their informal education interventions designed to support children to re-enter non-formal or formal education.

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With positive results, strong partnerships and active Ministry of Education and Higher Education engagement and support, CWTL is poised to scale up and bring education to thousands of conflict-affected children in Lebanon.

Between October 2017 and June 2018, we conducted a practice-driven evaluation of the Lebanon Mathematics 1-5 Can’t Wait to Learn programme to determine whether children’s mathematics and psychosocial outcomes significantly improved after taking part. Findings show that on average children improved their math mastery score by 7% within just twelve weeks. Significant improvements on self-esteem scores and psychological symptoms were also noted.
Can’t Wait to Learn currently offers maths (Grade I – 5 equivalent) and reading (Grade I to 3 equivalent) across seven governorates of Lebanon; Mount Lebanon, Beqaa, Baalbek-Hermel, South Lebanon, Nabatieh, Akkar and North Lebanon. Games are based on the basic literacy and numeracy (BLN) curriculum for out of school children aged 10–14 that has been developed and recently finalised by War Child upon appointment of Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

Achievements and scale up ambitions

The programme timeline below shows achievements to date and scale up ambitions in Lebanon:

- **2016**
  - MEHE engagement

- **2016/early 2017**
  - Lebanon Arabic Math game build

- **Q4 2017**
  - Rolling roll-out: one partner at a time

- **October**
  - Can’t Wait to Learn selected by the public for the Dutch Coalition for Humanitarian Innovation’s ‘Best Humanitarian Innovation’ Award

- **March**
  - Lebanon Reading game co-creation

- **End of Q2**
  - Government approval for use of CWTL in formal schools

- **End 2019**
  - Ambition: Current and additional partners to reach 12,000 out of school children

- **End 2020**
  - Ambition: Target to reach 35,000 children

- **End 2023**
  - Ambition: Target to reach 135,000 children

- **June**
  - Roll out Lebanon Reading game

- **March**
  - Awarded the 2018 UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize for the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Education

- **January**
  - Government agreed to review CWTL curriculum for potential use in formal schools

- **Q3 2018**
  - Last partner came on board, bringing total to 16

- **Q4, 2017**
  - Baseline data collection completed

- **October**
  - Baseline data collection for research study

- **End of Q2**
  - Government approval for use of CWTL in formal schools

- **End 2019**
  - Ambition: Support the Ministry of Education & Higher Education with teacher training for CWTL

- **End 2020**
  - Ambition: Target to reach 35,000 children

- **End 2023**
  - Ambition: Target to reach 135,000 children

**Below — Part of the Lebanon Reading Game world**

- **2016**
  - Needs assessment/co-creation

- **2017**
  - Partnership building — signing MoUs with 11 INGOs, NGOs, CBOs

- **2018**
  - 2018 Last partner came on board, bringing total to 16

- **2019**
  - Awarded the 2018 UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize for the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Education

- **2020**
  - Roll out Lebanon Reading game

- **2023**
  - Ambition: Target to reach 135,000 children

**2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2023**

**Q4 2017**

Rolling roll-out: one partner at a time

**June**

Research endline data collection completed

**October**

Can’t Wait to Learn selected by the public for the Dutch Coalition for Humanitarian Innovation’s ‘Best Humanitarian Innovation’ Award

**March**

Lebanon Reading game co-creation

**End of Q2**

Government approval for use of CWTL in formal schools

**End 2019**

Ambition: Target to reach 35,000 children

**End 2020**

Ambition: Target to reach 35,000 children

**End 2023**

Ambition: Target to reach 135,000 children
PARTNERSHIPS

Can't Wait to Learn is managed globally by War Child Holland. In Lebanon, War Child works in partnership with 16 international and local NGOs as implementing partners. Ministry of Education and Higher Education – at national and District levels - has been involved at all programme stages, particularly with regards to supporting the formal integration of Can’t Wait to Learn as a recognized Basic Literacy and Numeracy (BLN) approach in Lebanon.

In Lebanon Can’t Wait to Learn receives support and advice from:

Left — Nisreen the shop owner from the Maths 1-3 game

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