



The READ Effect

A PHOTO ESSAY



READ Global
Inspiring Rural Prosperity



A girl looks out at her rural village from her home in India.

The Rural Imperative

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Three quarters of the world's more than one billion extremely poor people live in rural areas of developing countries. Fighting poverty today means first and foremost transforming rural lives and livelihoods."

United Nations IFAD Factsheet: Rural Women and the Millennium Development Goals

MOST RURAL VILLAGERS LIVE BELOW THE POVERTY LINE, EARNING LESS THAN \$2 PER DAY.

For most, subsistence agriculture is the only livelihood option. Cut off from educational, economic and social resources, rural communities struggle with illiteracy rates above 50%, hard-to-reach schools, roads in disrepair, and unreliable

electricity. Few opportunities at home mean that many are forced to migrate to urban areas to find work, leaving their families behind. This lack of access and forced migration is a root cause of poverty and political instability in many developing countries.

More Than a Library

READ GLOBAL BELIEVES THAT EMPOWERING RURAL COMMUNITIES IS CRITICAL TO ALLEVIATING GLOBAL POVERTY. Our proven and replicable model establishes Community Library and Resource Centers (READ Centers) as vehicles for social and economic transformation.



The 21st Century library is no longer just about books or solely a place for kids. Libraries around the world can and have become powerful partners to help deliver services that enable communities to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Beyond Access

We invite you to explore this photo essay – a testament to the powerful role of READ Centers as vehicles for holistic community development and poverty alleviation.



Opening day at the Geejgarh READ Center in Rajasthan, India.



A volunteer donates his time to help a mason build the Chhaensa READ Center in Haryana, India.

Community Engagement



Libraries are vehicles for social change, for positive community development, for unity and for partnerships... but the key is community participation and ownership. The power of community is unbelievable – we are simply here to act as facilitators to empower communities to make our projects sustainable and vibrant for generations to come.”

Sanjana Shrestha, READ Nepal Country Director

LOCAL OWNERSHIP AND CO-INVESTMENT ARE ESSENTIAL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

Community engagement enables READ Centers to serve as platforms for a myriad of development goals. Each READ community contributes at least 15% of the project costs of a Center – through a donation of land, a building to be renovated, labor or fundraising efforts. Once established, each Center is run by local community members.

Literacy



Before, I was nervous about giving my children medication because I couldn't read the bottles. But I took a literacy class at the Geejgarh READ Center, and now I can mark the medicine so that I know what to give my children."

Lali Devi, mother in Rajasthan, India

MORE THAN HALF OF THE POPULATION IN SOUTH ASIA IS UNABLE TO READ. READ believes that literacy opens doors not only to education, but also to new economic opportunities, improved health for entire families, and increased social participation. READ Centers offer reading materials for the whole community: 3,000-5,000 books in both English and local languages, as well as a selection of current magazines and newspapers. Educational programming is designed to foster a culture of reading through literacy classes, reading groups and writing workshops.

A woman receives a certificate for completing a literacy course through her local READ Center in India.





Women in a savings cooperative in Nepal write a loan check for a member.

Women's Empowerment

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I thought that libraries were only meant for reading books, but the library has become a source of inspiration for me. Today I am able not only to read and write, but also to speak freely what is on my mind. Because of READ training programs on women's legal rights and health, I am now able to give advice to women who are victims of injustice.”

Sita Paudel, Beshishahar, Nepal. Chairperson of the Triveni Women's Group, Women's Health and Legal Rights Counselor.

INVESTING IN WOMEN INCREASES FAMILY

INCOME, leads to better child and maternal health, and increases girls' access to education. Throughout much of the developing world, women lack safe spaces to congregate, educate and advocate. READ Centers offer a dedicated space, specialized

educational resources and programming for women and girls. Organized self-help groups and savings cooperatives give women stronger positions in their communities. Health services are also available, including check-ups, awareness programs and counseling on HIV/AIDS and family planning.

Early Childhood Development

CHILDREN ARE QUICKLY LEFT BEHIND WHEN EARLY LITERACY, NUMERACY AND SOCIAL INTERACTION ARE NOT PRIORITIZED. To set children up for success, READ Centers provide a foundation for lifelong learning. Each Center features age-appropriate books, educational games and toys, and child-friendly furniture. Programs include story-telling, young writers' competitions and art camps. By providing a safe and stimulating space for children, READ Centers also empower mothers to learn new skills and improve their livelihoods.

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Early Childhood Care and Education is an integral part of basic education... Recent world conferences testify to a growing appreciation of the crucial importance of the child's earliest years, and of the need to support families and communities in their role as the child's most influential educator.

UNESCO Report, "Links between Early Childhood Development and Education and Primary Education"



A woman teaches a young boy to read in a READ Center in Ura village, Bhutan.



Young men learn to use a computer at a READ Center in Nepal.

Information Communications Technology (ICT)

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Information and communications technology can help reduce poverty, boost economic growth, and improve accountability and governance.”

Rachel Kyte, World Bank Vice President for Sustainable Development

ACCESS TO ELECTRICITY, THE INTERNET AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY IS RARE IN RURAL SOUTH ASIA. READ Centers offer ICT solutions based on the needs of each community. Centers provide free access to computers and the Internet. Increasing use of solar power offers a more dependable source of electricity for READ Centers, allowing villagers to use technology on a more regular basis. Mobile technology, community radio and online distance learning programs are creating innovative opportunities for villagers to create, learn and communicate with others while they develop essential digital skills.

Livelihood Skills

READ CENTERS SERVE AS HUBS FOR SHARING PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS that improve rural livelihoods. Through vocational training programs, READ Centers are helping farmers learn modern agricultural and marketing methods. They are teaching women skills like sewing and weaving, and connecting them to local markets to sell their products. Other trainings include accounting and finance, alternative energy use, beekeeping, animal husbandry and mushroom farming. Savings cooperatives provide micro-loans to help villagers launch businesses with their new skills.



A rural Nepali woman holds a newborn goat that she bred after taking a class in animal husbandry and receiving a loan through the savings coop at her local READ Center.



Mr. Sangtru with his poultry cooperative in Rongthong, Bhutan.

“READ has helped me expand my business, and I am grateful for that. Now I not only supply eggs to my village at lower rates, but I also can transport them to other places. The business is doing well now.”

Mr. Sangtru, owner of a poultry cooperative that doubles as a sustaining enterprise for the Rongthong READ Center in Bhutan.

MANY PROJECTS IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD FAIL BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT SUSTAINABLE.

READ works with each community to seed a for-profit sustaining enterprise that will generate income for the Center over the long run. These businesses make use of local skills and resources, create jobs and often provide a useful service to the community. As a result, villagers are vested in

the business and committed to its success. Some of the most successful businesses to date include tractor rental services, sewing and livestock cooperatives, and community radio stations. Some communities use profits from these enterprises to launch new businesses, build additional rooms onto Centers and add new resources.

The READ Effect

A READ CENTER CAN BE THE CATALYST FOR UPLIFTING AN ENTIRE COMMUNITY. When rural communities engage and invest in READ Centers, they are empowered with access to information, education and skills training, ultimately experiencing positive social transformation and increased economic opportunity.

When a Center provides literacy and livelihood trainings, and invests in local enterprise, the community gains access to new jobs and income-generating opportunities. Experiencing the empowering effects of increased education and income, these parents become inspired to keep their own children in school so that they can become the next generation of leaders for their community. This cumulative **“READ effect”** results in increased knowledge and prosperity for rural communities today, and better prospects for the future.



The community of Kumari in Nuwakot, Nepal celebrates the inauguration of a new READ Center.



Dashiya with her mushroom logs in Jhuwani, Nepal

The READ Effect: A Story of Impact

DASHIYA AND HER HUSBAND SANISHAR, BOTH ILLITERATE, COULDN'T MAKE ENDS MEET FOR THEIR FAMILY. Sanishar left his family to work overseas as a laborer but couldn't send enough money home. With their house in rural Nepal in disrepair, Dashiya decided something needed to change. She joined a literacy class and savings cooperative at her local READ Center, and took a training course in mushroom farming. With a loan, she started her own successful mushroom business and used the profits to launch two more businesses in poultry and pig farming. As a result, Sanishar was able to return home to help with these businesses. Today, they earn ten times more income and can afford to send their child to school. They now live happily in a newly constructed home in Jhuwani.



My library helped me not only through training programs, but also to start a business and gain access to markets to sell my goods. I feel proud now that I can support my family."

Dashiya, Jhuwani, Nepal

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