



# Guidelines for Visiting a Local Community

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We are so excited to show you our work and have you meet the students and teachers who benefit from Room to Read projects! These visits provide a vital connection point that we hope you find inspiring, educational, and motivating. We value and promote our global communities coming together, because the more connected we feel, the more we will act in a way that serves each other and, in turn, serves our world.

Engaging with Local Room to Read Staff, Students and School Communities:

- Our teams work with school communities to set up an agenda for your visit. Please be mindful of the fact that each activity is time bound and should not be extended.
  - We seek to make minimal disruptions to the daily functions of the students, teachers, and administrators. We believe it is important to recognize that first and foremost, our projects are places to learn, where daily routines add to the success of the students.
- Our local Room to Read team will lead your visit. The level of English in-country staff, school administrators, students and parents speak may be basic or heavily accented. Please speak slowly and enunciate when communicating with them. When needed, our local staff will provide translation support.
- We prepare the school for your visit in advance. This includes explaining your relationship with Room to Read and asking community members to refrain from directing funding questions to you. However, if you are asked by the local community for additional funds, facilities or materials during your visit, please defer to our staff.
  - Please do not commit to additional support as all school partnerships are carefully planned for and approved by the local country management staff in collaboration with local government partners.
- We want to make sure we connect our network in the most appropriate manner. Therefore, Room to Read visitors cannot:
  - Be linked directly to a student (i.e. sponsor a student, start a pen pal relationship, etc.)
  - Offer a student (or his/her family) special gifts or promises of future monetary support (i.e. money for tutoring or school supplies, tuition support for university education, etc.)
  - Meet with a student alone. A Room to Read staff member must be in attendance at all times.
  - Exchange contact information with local Room to Read staff, students, or community members. If you have questions following your visit, please direct them to your main contact on the Development team at the Global Office.
- We believe in the Do No Harm philosophy. Because of this, we ask visitors to refrain from bringing gifts or supplies to local Room to Read staff or school communities.
- School communities love to welcome visitors. In some of our countries of operation, it is customary for schools to welcome guests by presenting them with flowers, garlands, and/or food.
  - Please be sure to take flowers or any other non-food gift items with you when you depart as it will be seen as disrespectful to leave them behind. If you are allergic to pollen and/or grass, please tell your Room to Read guide so they can communicate this to the school.
  - If you are offered food or drink during your visit, you should accept it. However, it is a personal choice whether to eat local food offered. Feel free to pass anything off to our local staff that you do not want.
  - If you have questions about culturally appropriate responses to gifts, please check with your local Room to Read guide.

## Preparing for a School Visit

- Government schools in the countries where we work are not equipped for those with physical disabilities. If you or your travel companions require wheelchair accessible vehicles or need special arrangements at the school to accommodate your group, please let us know as soon as possible.
- We want to be respectful. Please dress appropriately and wear modest clothes, this includes covered knees and shoulders. Additionally, women should not wear low-cut tops. Do not wear camouflage patterns.
  - When entering a library or home, it is respectful to remove your shoes and hat.
- We want you to share your experience with your network! Photos and videos are the best way to spread the word about Room to Read and your involvement in world change. We do ask that you document your visit in a sensitive manner and in alignment with our branding guidelines. It is critical that you never photograph someone in a situation that puts them at risk, portrays personal or sensitive information, or compromises their privacy or safety. Please also refrain from taking photographs that would embarrass or strip dignity from the subject. For further information, please review Room to Read's Branding Guidelines and Identity Standards at <https://www.roomtoread.org/media/150187/branding-guidelines.pdf>
  - While you are welcome to bring your video cameras, there are some places that we request you not to film. In some remote communities, the local people consider filming to be too intrusive and recording aspects of their private lives. In these more sensitive communities, we also request the utmost courtesy and discretion when taking photographs.
  - Our local team will assist you in determining when picture taking and videoing is and is not appropriate.

Following your visit, we kindly ask that you direct any questions or requests for information to your main contact on the Development team at the Global Office. Our local team's primary focus is to oversee the implementation of our programs and therefore do not have the capacity to manage direct correspondence with donors and visitors outside of your visit.