



# 2018 Research, Monitoring & Evaluation Report: Literacy Program



## Thank you for your support of Room to Read and our work in advancing literacy in 2018.

Room to Read’s Literacy Program provides children with the reading skills and habit of reading necessary to become life-long, independent readers. When children learn foundational literacy skills, their educational trajectories are transformed, and their families, communities and countries benefit.

We continuously strive to improve the effectiveness of our Literacy Program through ongoing and thorough data collection and assessment. We track students’ progress using rigorous research, monitoring and evaluation to understand how to reach the most children with the highest quality programming.

In 2018, there were strong results from Room to Read’s Literacy Program across the world. We saw a rise in book checkout, increased fluency and reading comprehension rates, and expansion through our technical assistance projects and scaling initiatives. This work was only possible thanks to our many generous investors around the world, and together we were able to advance literacy for 2.1 million children in 2018.

We hope you enjoy the highlights below, and, with your continued partnership, we look forward to changing more lives through the gift of literacy in the future.

### OUR LITERACY PROGRAM RESULTS<sup>1</sup>

**2.1 MILLION**

New children benefited in 2018

**4,200**

New schools established in 2018

**107**

New and unique books published in 2018

**14.8 MILLION**

Books checked out in 2018

**14.3 MILLION**

Children benefited cumulatively

**37,000**

Partner schools cumulatively

**1,582**

Books published cumulatively

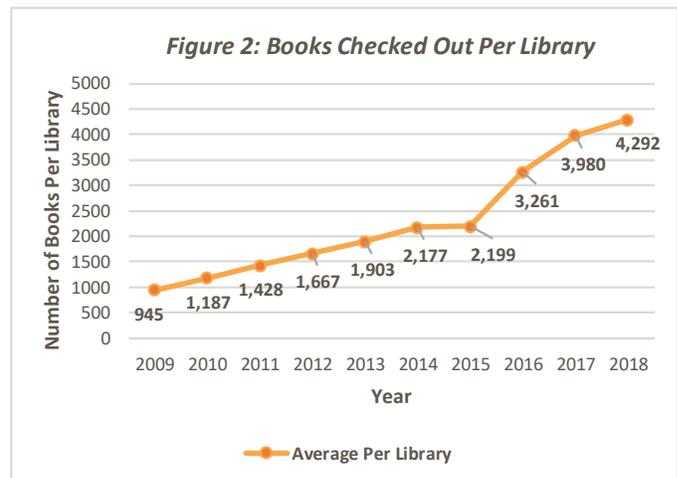
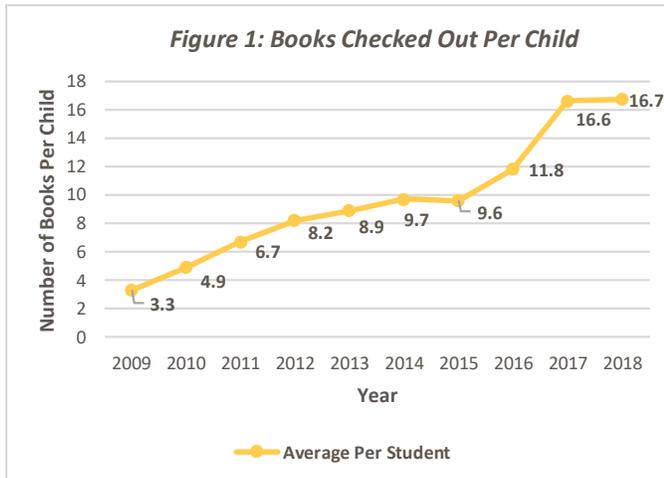
**26 MILLION**

Books distributed cumulatively

<sup>1</sup> Cumulative numbers are since 2000.

## INDEPENDENT READERS WORLDWIDE

We track book checkout in the government schools where Room to Read establishes libraries on a per-child and total basis as an indicator of children’s habit of reading. In 2017, book checkout hit what was *at the time* an all-time high of 16.6 books per child per year, a more than 40 percent increase from the previous year. In 2018, this upward trajectory continued across our program countries, demonstrating sustained results. Each child on average checked out 16.7 books throughout the year (**Figure 1**), and each library had an average of 4,292 books checked out (**Figure 2**). In total, there were 14.8 million books checked out worldwide in 2018. This success is significant because many of our partner schools had no libraries and lacked age-appropriate books prior to Room to Read’s involvement.



## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN LITERACY

Through Room to Read’s technical assistance projects, we build the capacity of local NGOs, Ministries of Education and government agencies to implement our proven model at scale, such as through literacy instruction training, library development or local language publishing. In new countries, such as Myanmar, Room to Read does not set up offices, but rather works through local partners with established networks. In countries where we already have offices, such as Bangladesh and India, we implement components of our programs at significant scale thanks to our longstanding, strong relationships with governments. This enables us to share our learnings and strategies in a cost-effective way, even in potentially challenging geographies. In 2018, we launched and saw great success in our technical assistance literacy projects in Bangladesh, India and Myanmar.



**Bangladesh**

From January 2018 to 2020, with the support of the World Food Programme, we are bringing our literacy intervention to the host communities of two sub-districts of Cox’s Bazar: Ukhiya and Kutubdiya. Results so far include:

- 45,000 new children benefited
- 146 new schools
- 10 new book titles



**India**

From August 2018 to July 2021, we are partnering with UNICEF to scale our Literacy Program across the states of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. In 2018, we had the following results:

*Chhattisgarh*

- 100,000 new children benefited
- 1,786 new schools

*Madhya Pradesh*

- 72,000 new children benefited
- 1,600 new schools



**Myanmar**

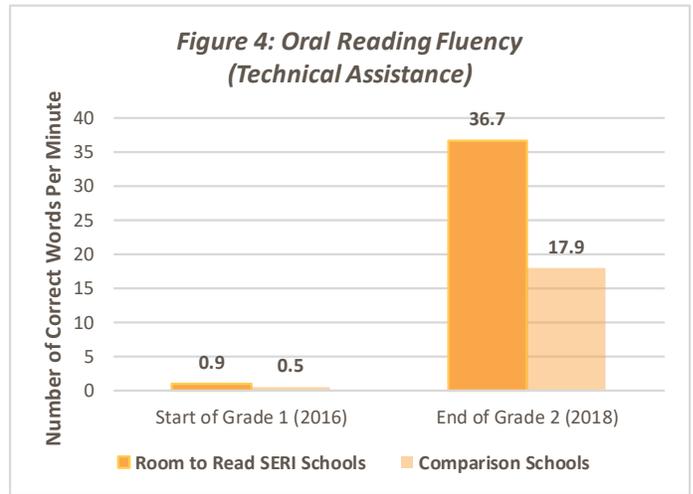
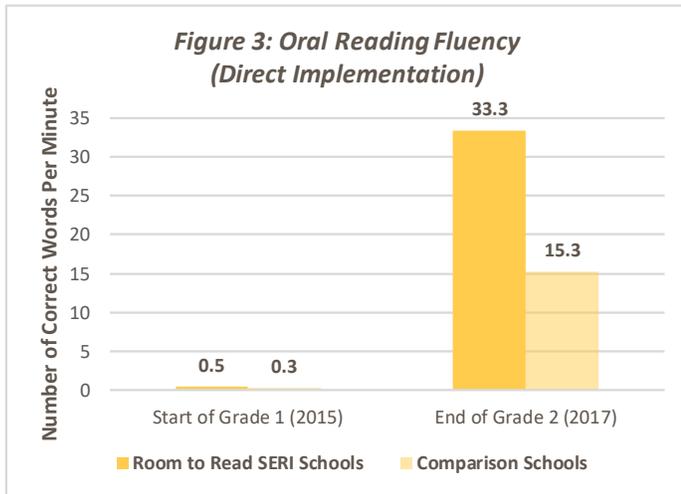
Our project in Myanmar is focused on training the Myanmar Book Aid and Preservation Foundation on book procurement, library establishment and library management in Yangon, Mandalay and Ayeyarwady. We had the following reach in 2018:

- 9,000 new children benefited
- 20 new schools

## SCALING-UP EARLY READING INTERVENTION IN INDIA

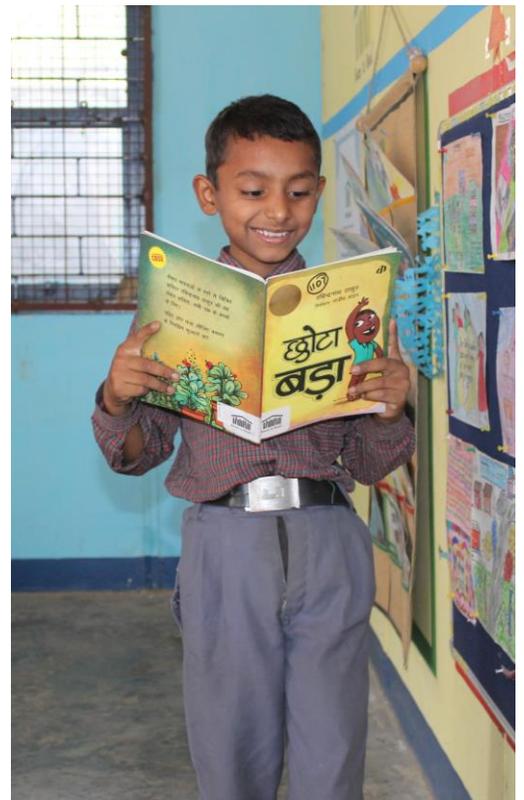
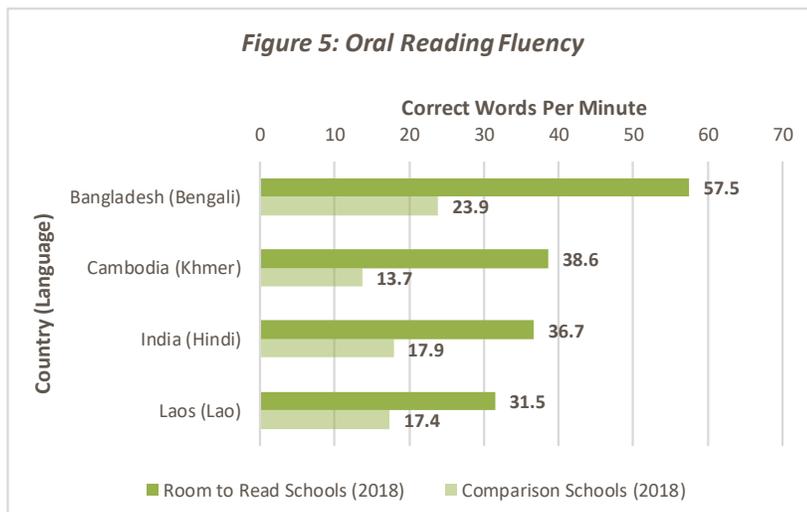
In 2015, Room to Read implemented a technical assistance project in India called Scaling-up Early Reading Intervention (SERI) with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The project is working to build Indian states' systemic capabilities so they can implement effective literacy interventions independently in the future. We project that these efforts will benefit close to 4 million children over time.

We are encouraged by the most recent results from our SERI impact evaluation. Results show that children in Room to Read direct implementation schools (**Figure 3**) experienced two-year gains in oral reading fluency that were **2 times larger** than students in comparison schools. In addition, we were able to achieve the **same impact at less than one-fifth the cost** in SERI technical assistance schools (**Figure 4**). The data show that by focusing on government adoption, Room to Read can successfully provide the same quality implementation of our program at a lower cost.



## ORAL READING FLUENCY

In 2018, Room to Read conducted reading skills evaluations of Grade 2 students in four countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, India and Laos) after they had been in our program for two years (**Figure 5**). Oral reading fluency is important because research shows that children who read very slowly are not able to retain and comprehend what they are reading – significantly limiting their ability to learn. Results from our evaluations showed that children in Room to Read-supported schools had oral reading fluency rates nearly **three times** that of children in comparison schools.



## READING COMPREHENSION MEASUREMENT

To evaluate reading comprehension more accurately, we are piloting a measurement called *Sentence Choice*. *Sentence Choice* measures students' ability to understand grade-level sentences by requiring them to decide if individual sentences are realistic or false, based on their everyday knowledge (for example, "Goats fly in the sky").

Room to Read piloted *Sentence Choice* measurement in our **South Africa** Literacy Program schools in 2018 (**Figure 6**), and the results were highly encouraging. The internal consistency was **more than 0.9**, which is considered excellent reliability in social science research.

Based on these encouraging results from the South Africa pilot, in 2019, we are piloting the *Sentence Choice* measure in all countries where we implement our comprehensive Literacy Program. We will be able to determine the reliability of this measurement across many local languages and see how the results compare to a more traditional comprehension measure.

Figure 6: Sentence Choice Task Sheet



**Learner Sentence Choice Task Sheet**

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Mohlala 1: Dipudi di dula lefaufaug

Mohlala 2: Dikatshe di na le mesela

Mafoko	Leswao [v]/[x]
1. Dimpša di beela mae.	
2. Dikgogo di na le diphephethele.	
3. Tshela ke sebopego.	
4. Ntlo e na le lebati.	
5. Kgwele ya maoto ke thaloko/papadi	
6. Banna ba kgona go sepela.	
7. Re ja pampiri.	
8. Dinose di dira borotho.	
9. Dikoloi di na le mathaere.	
10. Bolo ke mmala.	
11. Kgomo e re fa mafafa.	
12. Kgomo e re fa maswi.	
13. Borotho bo dirilwe ka mokgopa.	
14. Bupi bo dirilwe ka lehea.	
15. Re ngwala ka ditsebe.	
16. Dinose di beela mamapo.	
17. Legotto le na le lebati.	
18. Re ja dijo.	
19. Hubedu ke mmala.	
20. Dikgogo di na le mafafa	
21. Dikepe di na le mathaere	
22. Tshela ke nomoro.	
23. Didiseke di kgona go sepela.	
24. Dinomyana di beela mae.	
25. Kgwele ya maoto ke dijo.	
26. Re kwa ka ditsebe.	
27. Mpsa e dula ka meetseng	
28. Hlapi e dula ka meetseng	
29. Mollo o a tonya.	
30. Mollo o a fisa.	

## NATIONAL LIBRARY SCALE-UP IN VIETNAM

In 2018, Room to Read launched an initiative with the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) in Vietnam to achieve a national library scale-up and incorporate our library model into national policies. For maximum scalability, we implemented an innovative, three-tiered *I do, We do, You do* approach, which incorporates MoET's partnership through **demonstration libraries**, **collaboration libraries** and **expansion libraries** respectively. Our aim is that by scaling the library program to a national level, more primary school students will read frequently, voluntarily and with enjoyment.

We are conducting an analysis of costs per library to lay a foundation of data to show cost-efficiencies toward government adoption of our model (**Figure 7**). While we are in the process of determining exact government costs per library, we know that as government investment increases, so does community ownership of the school libraries. We can also show economies of scale: a greater number of libraries within each province will lower costs for all involved. This aligns with our goal in Vietnam to move toward a focus on technical assistance work, versus direct implementation work that has high library set-up costs.

We will be collecting and sharing data around outcomes over the next several years to prove that expansion libraries are a cost effective, high quality way for governments throughout Vietnam to support children in becoming independent readers.

Figure 7: Cost Per Library

