Supporting Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic

With more than 1.5 billion children and youth out of school due to COVID-19, representing 91 percent of all students around the world, the need for education has never been more urgent. In all 16 countries where Room to Read operates our programs, there have been nationalized or localized school closures. According to the most recent data published by UNESCO, 191 countries have closed primary and secondary schools nationwide.

Education is a fundamental human right and during this time of crisis, we must protect our students’ right to learn. Only through education can people build the skills and resources they need to best respond to crises like the one our global community is currently facing. Parbati, one of our Girls’ Education Program participants in Nepal, communicated this sentiment best when she said, “Education is the only thing that cannot be taken away. It is the key to fulfilling my dreams.” Room to Read’s programs, contextualized for the current situation, are needed now more than ever and we are committed to ensuring that this crisis does not result in a generation of children who are left behind.

When any disaster strikes, children in low-income communities are particularly vulnerable and often excluded from recovery and relief efforts. Many also predict that women and girls will be especially adversely affected by this pandemic, as childcare and healthcare responsibilities fall disproportionately to them. Also, when family budgets tighten, girls are often pulled out of school.

We are not giving up on our students and are working towards our mission with even more determination. We understand that there will be both immediate and long-term negative impacts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Room to Read is working tirelessly with governments and other partners to understand the greatest needs and develop a strategic response to this crisis. Our organizational expertise will be invaluable as the situation continues to evolve.

Your generous donations help us to directly serve millions of children with crucial educational resources. Please join us in supporting children around the world during this time of upheaval by making an investment in our greatest needs.
OUR LITERACY PROGRAM

DIGITAL LIBRARY
Our online learning platform called Literacy Cloud (literacycloud.org) enables a new generation of teachers and young learners to access original, high-quality children’s storybook titles in their local language, paired with accessible professional development resources for teachers, children’s book creators, members of the international publishing community and governments to create a culture of reading for early-grade learners in low-income communities around the world. We are expediting the expansion of our Literacy Cloud digital library to include titles from all our program countries, so it will ultimately house more than 700 storybooks in more than 40 languages.

READ ALOUDS AND VIDEOS
Room to Read has already begun to tape read-aloud videos for our storybooks and will upload a library of video read-alouds to Literacy Cloud. You can find an example of a read-aloud from a project in Jordan targeted to Syrian refugee children here.

In South Africa, we are looking at sharing read-alouds of our books on public broadcasting networks. We are also sharing books and animated videos of our stories that we have produced for Grenada across several other countries.

In Bangladesh, we are pursuing an opportunity to run 26 episodes of our digitized storybooks (with animation) on Duronto TV, a popular distributor of children’s content. The team will also post these episodes on YouTube and Facebook, and to maximize reach, will distribute them to cable operators in the districts where we work.

DISTANCE LEARNING
We are creating worksheets that can facilitate distance learning. We have previously done this effectively for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, which illustrates our experience in supporting out-of-school children.

OUR GIRLS’ EDUCATION PROGRAM

REMOTE MENTORING
We will continue to provide individual mentoring to girls by phone, while further assessing the ability to provide group mentoring sessions via smartphones where girls have connectivity. Individual mentoring will emotionally support girls through these difficult times, provide encouragement for continuing regular academic study at home and refer them to official sources of information regarding staying safe.

We are considering other innovative ways to support our students. For example, in Nepal, the team is considering the feasibility of creating a hotline managed by a select cohort of social mobilizers who could provide immediate support to girls in need.

LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION FROM HOME
Our team is exploring ways to deliver life skills lessons remotely. Girls will need these skills now more than ever before to cope with these challenging times, resist the societal pressures to marry young and drop out of school, and support their families and communities to rebuild a better world.
**FUNDING OUR GREATEST NEEDS**

In times of unparalleled global crisis, we try to adapt quickly to ensure that children do not lose precious time in their educational journey. Funding our greatest needs allows Room to Read the maximum flexibility to work swiftly to develop program adaptations that will be immediately impactful.

In the past, these funds have been used to replace books and program materials lost to natural disasters, like floods in Cambodia and earthquakes in Nepal, and to address issues caused by political unrest in Bangladesh. Without this additional support, Room to Read could not have replaced much needed educational resources or built and repaired libraries and classrooms, halting children’s important educational progress.

Funding towards our greatest needs also gives us the ability to ensure we can still cover the costs of essential operations, which may not be immediately apparent but that become even more crucial during emergencies, including:

- Supporting our technological infrastructure that allows us to work remotely and continue to support our programs across the globe.

- Ensuring our financial integrity and transparency by continuing to deliver financial audits in times of office closures.

- Providing human resources support to our global teams.

These funds make it possible for great organizations to weather crises without losing momentum. Your support would allow Room to Read to focus on delivering maximum impact with the greatest efficiencies. Investing in Room to Read through a gift towards our greatest needs reflects maximum trust in the organization’s ability to make effective and impactful decisions.