



Country Overview

India is a diverse and complex country with a rich history, and is home to over one billion people. It became an independent nation in 1947, after a nation-wide struggle to overthrow the British rule that had lasted for hundreds of years.

The agriculture, textile, tourism and technology industries play a major role in contributing to India's GDP, but natural disasters such as flooding, droughts and earthquakes have long plagued the country and been a hindrance to infrastructure development.

Educational Landscape

Of all the world's illiterate people, 36 percent live in India. If drastic measures are not taken to reverse this trend, it's estimated that this number will rise to 50 percent by the year 2020. Despite recent economic growth, India still lacks many basic resources needed to educate its people. Schooling is free and compulsory from ages 6 to 14, but inadequate facilities, lecture-based curriculum, and gender bias have led 46 percent of children to drop out before completing primary school. In 2014, it was estimated that 11.9 million primary school children were not enrolled in school.

Country Information

Population	1.3 billion
Land area	3 million km ²
Languages of instruction	Hindi, English
Launch of operations	2003
Room to Read offices	New Delhi



Only 30 percent of Indians speak Hindi, and 18 other languages have official status—including English, the language of business and government. This linguistic diversity has made developing statewide education standards extremely difficult.

Of the nearly half of all students that drop out prior to secondary school, the majority are girls and Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe children. India’s complex social system of caste structure has historically presented a challenge to development. Many Indians’ futures, access to education, and other opportunities are still predetermined by their social status at birth. Girls face obstacles to their education both inside and outside of school. Early marriage plays a large role in keeping girls out of secondary school, with 47 percent of girls in India getting married before their 18th birthday. School settings often reinforce gender inequality through social norms and community control.

2018 India Targets	
Literacy Program	
Schools supported	1,880
Children benefited	270,870
New local language titles	5
Reprinted local language titles	70
Girls’ Education Program	
New participants	2,500
Total participants	11,560

During the past decade, India has made great strides in improving access to education. Statistics show that 98 percent of children in India are able to access primary schooling within one kilometer of their home, and almost 92 percent are located within 3 kilometers of an upper primary school.

History and Results

Room to Read India was established in 2003, and India has since become our largest operating region. Initially, we focused on providing critical support by establishing libraries through our Literacy Program, because research showed this was the greatest contribution we could make at the time.

In the years since, our operations in India have grown to include our Girls’ Education Program. This program has addressed gender inequality in India’s education system by: 1) supporting classes of girls with the resources they need to successfully complete secondary school and 2) working with government stakeholders to advocate for the importance of girls’ education at the state and national levels.

The country’s extensive NGO community allows us to leverage many NGO partnerships and amplify our impact in our regions of operation. With the overall increase in enrollment in primary school, decline in dropout rates, and the mandatory inclusion of school libraries under the Right to Education Act, Room to Read has the opportunity to continue implementing our programs across India in a long-lasting and scalable way.



Give with confidence. Room to Read has received 11 four-star ratings for best charities from Charity Navigator since 2007. We take pride in our transparency and accountability.

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