



Visitor Guidelines



We are so excited to show you our work and have you meet the students and teachers that you support through Room to Read! **Visits provide a vital connection point that we hope you find inspiring, informative, and motivating.** We value our global communities coming together, because the more connected we feel, the more we will act in a way that supports each other and, in turn, serves our world.

Engaging with our local Room to Read staff, students, and communities

Our Room to Read country and community-based teams work hard to operate our programs. They are proud to have visitors to our work and ensure that each visit is memorable, interactive, and educational. The agenda that you receive before your visit is set in advance in collaboration with the school director(s) and teachers and aims for 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.



Please be mindful that activities are time-bound. We request that you do not ask for activities to be extended or shortened during your visit. Any changes to the schedule should be requested before your visit.

Throughout your visit, our Room to Read team will be your guide and translate from the local language to English. Please keep in mind that English may be a second, third, or fourth language for many of our staff. If you require translations in a language other than English, we must receive your request at least two weeks in advance of your visit.

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, please **defer to our staff if you are asked by a school or community member for additional funds, facilities, or materials during your visit.**

Please do not commit to additional support as all school partnerships are carefully planned for and approved by Room to Read in collaboration with local government partners.

Our program model acts as a catalyst for community participation, ownership, and pride. Therefore, we ask visitors to **refrain from bringing gifts or supplies to school communities or local Room to Read staff.** While we appreciate the desire to bring something to the school, we ask visitors not to bring gifts to not foster a culture of dependence between the students and guests. Room to Read relies on community involvement and co-investment to increase the likelihood of success and long-term sustainability of our projects.

We want to make sure we connect in the most appropriate manner, and according to Room to Read's child protection agreement. Please review the agreement [online](#), and note that on your visit, you **cannot**:

Be linked directly to a student (i.e. sponsor a student, start a pen pal relationship, etc.)

Meet with a student alone. A Room to Read staff member must be present at all times.

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.)

Exchange contact information (including social media friend requests) 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.

In many 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, tell a Room to Read staff member so they can communicate this to the school. If you are offered food or drink during your visit, you should accept it, though it is a personal choice whether to eat the food offered. Sealed bottled water and soft drinks are generally safe to consume. 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 the Room to Read staff member leading your visit.



Preparing for a School Visit

Government schools in the countries where we work are often **not equipped for those with physical disabilities.** If you require wheelchair-accessible vehicles or need special arrangements at the school, please let us know as soon as possible.

Sharing Your Experience

We invite you to share your experience with your network!

Photos and videos are the best way to spread the word about your Room to Read visit and the work that you support. We ask that you **document your visit in a sensitive manner and in alignment with our [Visitor Agreement and Child Protection Code of Conduct](#), and [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 speak to your Room to Read contact in advance of your visit to determine what photography and/or videography is appropriate.

Remember that your photos, videos, and description of your visit will reflect upon a group of people who are often not given a platform to share their own voices. We ask that you share the story of communities responsibly.

It is important to **dress appropriately** and wear modest clothes when visiting schools. This includes covered knees and shoulders for all genders. 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.

As a global organization, Room to Read strives to be socially responsible, promote ethical travel to our project sites, and ensure that we are always respectful of the communities we work with and their respective cultures. We also seek to provide positive experiences to all visitors to Room to Read school communities or offices. Whether you are a novice traveler or a veteran globetrotter, below are tips that can help you prepare for this unique experience:

- Room to Read works in partnership with local governments and communities. *As a guest and visitor, we encourage you to approach the experience with empathy, assume positive intentions, and treat the people you meet as experienced and valuable partners from whom you can learn in our shared goal to promote literacy and gender equality.*
- When visiting local communities, it's helpful to reflect on your own cultural perceptions, which are based on your personal lived experience and cultural background. If something makes you uncomfortable, recognize the value of being uncomfortable, ask yourself why and learn more about potentially conflicting ideas from another point of view.
- Every trip you plan comes with choices that impact the people and environments that call your destination home. From where you choose to eat and sleep, the resources you consume, the places you visit, and the ways you participate in local culture, there are many ways to make [responsible travel choices](#).

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