



Messaging Toolkit: Proof Points

This is a supplemental and more detailed reference tool, alongside the Message Map, for Room to Read staff and spokespeople to utilize when speaking to external stakeholders. For internal distribution only. *Last updated January 2020.*

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO:

- 1. Founded in 2000, Room to Read believes that World Change Starts with Educated Children.[®]** Room to Read is creating a world free from illiteracy and gender inequality.
- 2. Long-term systemic change to us means that governments will adopt our work at scale,** or the elements of our work that are most scalable and impactful in specific country contexts. Through country-wide government support to scale our programs, we can reach and impact more children.
- 3. We employ more than 1,600 staff across 19 countries,** with headquarters in San Francisco, CA. Of those staff, 87% are employed in our program countries. We hire local nationals to lead our operations in the field in most countries where we operate our programs and have line of sight from program design through to the field where our programs are contextualized and implemented.
- 4. Room to Read envisions a world in which all children can pursue a quality education that prepares them to be fulfilled and make positive change – in their families, communities and the world.**
- 5. Room to Read has benefited more than 18¹ million children** in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Grenada, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Rwanda, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zambia.

WHY WE DO IT:

- 1. A quality education remains out of reach for millions of children around the world.** Approximately one in four young people in low-income countries are unable to read. Over the years, access to primary schooling has improved, but educational quality remains a major issue.² Room to Read is addressing both access to education and quality of education.
 - The world will need to recruit 24.4 million school teachers to provide every child with a primary education by 2030. In the rush to fill this gap, many countries are lowering standards, often leaving new teachers with little or no training. Without concerted efforts, these chronic shortages of teachers will continue to deny the fundamental right to primary education for millions of children for decades to come.³
- 2. Development aid to education has been falling since 2010** and only 2% of global humanitarian aid is spent on education, yet education is one tool that can solve so many of the world's pressing problems⁴:
 - **Education changes health:** If women achieved universal upper secondary education by 2030 in sub-Saharan Africa, it would prevent 3.5 million child deaths in the decade beginning in 2050.
 - **Education changes the environment:** Across 29 countries, concern for the environment increases with the level of education.
 - **Education changes conflict:** In sub-Saharan Africa, the risk of conflict in countries with higher education equality is almost half that of areas with lower equality in education.
 - **Education changes economies:** Over 40 years, income per capita is 23% higher in a country with more equal education.
 - **Education changes poverty:** If low-income countries were to reach their target of universal upper secondary education by 2030, then by 2050, per capita earnings would increase by 75% and the percent of people living in poverty would significantly decline, thereby lifting 60 million people out of poverty.⁵
- 3. Seven hundred and fifty million adults—two-thirds of whom are women—still lack basic reading and writing skills.**⁶
- 4. One hundred and two million youth lack basic literacy skills.** In low-income countries, one in three young people still cannot read. In those same countries, less than 70% of adults and slightly more than 80% of youth aged 15 to 24 years are projected to have basic literacy skills by 2030.⁷
- 5. Of today's out of school children and adolescents, 61.1 million live in sub-Saharan Africa and 28.2 million are in Southern Asia.** Girls are the most disadvantaged, particularly in South and West Asia, where 80% of out-of-school girls are unlikely to start school, compared to just 16% for boys.⁸

WHY WE DO IT CONTINUED:

6. Lack of gender parity in education is more pronounced when children reach secondary school. In many countries, this is when female student enrollment drops sharply due to various societal challenges facing adolescent girls, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia.⁹

- At a global level, there are 92 literate women for every 100 literate men, and in low-income countries, as few as 77 literate women for every 100 literate men.
- Exclusion from education is especially problematic for young women. In low-income countries, 66 female students complete upper secondary education for every 100 males students. In sub-Saharan Africa, 86 female students complete lower secondary education for every 100 male students.¹⁰

7. Whether or not a girl stays in school has an astounding effect on not simply her quality of life, but that of her future family's.

- **The World Bank lists educating girls as a “strategic development investment”** as evidence shows that girls' education

brings a wide range of benefits not only for the girls themselves but also for their children, communities and society.

- **Educated women help their country's economy:** When 10% more girls go to school, a country's GDP increases, on average, by 3%.
- **Educated women earn more:** Providing girls with one extra year of education beyond average boosts her wages by 10-20%.
- **Educated women are healthier:** An extra year of girls' education can reduce infant mortality by 5-10% and can reduce the spread of illness and disease.¹¹
- **Educated women help mitigate the effects of climate change:** Data suggest that there is a strong positive association between the average amount of schooling a girl receives and her country and community's ability to plan for, cope with, and rebound from climate crises.¹²

HOW WE DO IT:

1. Our theory of change is rooted in a research-based design, optimized for a public-school system that integrates explicit reading instruction and learning materials with libraries that offer children a print-rich environment, filled with culturally relevant, developmentally appropriate reading materials.

2. Evidence suggests that when coupled with a supportive environment, initiatives that are focused on both reading skills and the habit of reading can result in significant and sustained improvement in children's reading levels. Room to Read's programs are set to reach that standard.

3. Room to Read has a Literacy Program to increase children's habit and love of reading.

4. Unfortunately, low-income communities often face a shortage of child-friendly local language books designed for students who are first learning to read. In many of the countries where Room to Read works, children's literature is often limited or nonexistent.

5. To remedy this, Room to Read creates local language story-books that readers at various levels can enjoy. These books

capture children's imaginations and share the joy of reading. We develop book creators and book publishers, advocate with governments, and grow libraries and library programs in which children's literature can flourish. Our goal is to inspire children to read, expand their minds, and create a publishing ecosystem that will support a lifelong love of reading and learning.

6. Girls need to see role models in their own communities in order to dream big and break free from traditional gender roles. We give girls mentors that advocate on their behalf and equip them with the necessary skills to exercise agency and make informed life choices.

7. Our Girls' Education Program is designed to improve learning and life outcomes, allowing girls to graduate with the ability to think critically, rely on themselves to meet day-to-day challenges and be primary decision-makers.

8. Room to Read is poised to implement our Girls' Education Program at scale as we work alongside governments in several countries to adopt our life skills curriculum at the public-school system level.

LITERACY PROGRAM:

- 1. Our Literacy Program is designed to create independent readers and lifelong learners.** We define an “independent reader” as a child who possesses both literacy skills and a habit of reading.
 - **Research shows that children with more advanced reading skills read more frequently.** Additionally, children with a habit of reading read often and improve their reading skills as a result. Our Literacy Program feeds both parts of this virtuous cycle to nurture both reading skill and habit.
- 2. Our Literacy Program contributes to greater reading fluency.**
 - **Our reading skills evaluations show that children in the Literacy Program read more fluently** than their peers in comparable schools. By the end of 2nd grade, students tested in program schools read twice as fast as their peers on average and, in some countries, nearly three times as fast.
 - **Children supported by our program also read with greater comprehension.** When asked reading comprehension questions about the passages they had just read, children in Room to Read programs gave, on average, 87% more correct answers than children in comparison schools.
- 3. Our Literacy Program is encouraging the development of reading habits** and our libraries are a contributing factor. Over the course of 2018, children checked out an average of 4,400 books per library.
 - **Room to Read’s Library Rating System ensures our libraries are high-functioning and sustainable.** We assess more than 3,500 libraries twice a year across 15 indicators on a prioritized checklist and give each library a 3-level rating to indicate performance. The system helps prioritize and identify schools that need extra support and exactly what kind of support they need.
- 4. As of the end of 2019, Room to Read has published more than 1,576 children’s titles and distributed more than 26 million books in 15 countries,** providing more than 15.5 million primary school students in over 37,000 schools with the resources and guidance they need to build a strong foundation in literacy.
- 5. We’ve trained over 130,000 teachers and librarians in literacy and library best practices.** We train more than 10,000 teachers a year, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to teach children how to read.

GIRLS’ EDUCATION PROGRAM:

- 1. Room to Read’s Girls’ Education Program ensures that girls build the skills to succeed in school and make key life decisions.**
- 2. Our Girls’ Education Program provides each girl with a local role model and support resource,** called a social mobilizer (mentor), because we believe that mentorship contributes to a girl remaining in school in low-income communities. Each social mobilizer supports at least 50 girls.
 - **Studies from the Global North indicate a significant connection** between a youth’s involvement in a mentoring relationship and positive educational outcomes. The presence of a mentor for example is associated with fewer absences, higher educational expectations, and greater aspirations for success and school belonging.
- 3. Room to Read social mobilizers monitor risk factors associated with school drop out** — repeated school absences, failure to attend life skills education sessions, low performance on exams, and parents’ absence from parent meetings — and provide additional guidance and support to girls and their parents.
- 4. As of December 2018, more than 6,900 girls enrolled in the Girls’ Education Program have graduated from secondary school.** Our program participants have a 96 percent advancement rate, with 81 percent going on to tertiary education or employment.
- 5. Room to Read has operated the Girls’ Education Program in nine countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Laos, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zambia)** and has supported over 81,000 girls to date, changing gender paradigms in communities and strengthening support for girls education that will carry forward for generations.

OUR FUTURE:

1. **The systemic change that we aim to achieve involves government support** to scale, localize and sustain our programs so that we can benefit more children.
2. **Room to Read is involved in large education reforms** that multiple governments have initiated, cementing the foundation for systemic change in education. Some examples include:
 - **In Tanzania**, Room to Read is developing literacy materials that will support 1.4 million students across multiple regions.
 - **In India**, we are engaged in a five-year project with USAID and the Indian government to scale up our Literacy Program in four states: Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The project is building the states' capacities to carry out independent literacy interventions in the future. Since its start in 2015, the project has benefited more than

261,000 children and 5,200 teachers in 2,012 schools.

- In Vietnam, Room to Read began an initiative in 2018 with the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) to achieve a country-wide library scale-up and incorporate our library model into national policies.
 - In Honduras, Room to Read launched our first initiative in Latin America, bringing together publishers, writers and illustrators with the Ministry of Education, to get books into the hands of more children throughout the public school system
3. **Potential is equally distributed but opportunity is not.** We will not stop until every child, regardless of the circumstances they were born into, can access quality education and unlock their full potential.

1. Estimated through the end of 2019.

2. UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, "Education for People and Planet: Creating Sustainable Futures for All," (2016).

3. UNESCO Institute of Statistics; UIS Fact Sheet, October 2016, No. 39, "The World Needs Almost 69 Million New Teachers to Reach the 2030 Education Goals."

4. UNESCO EFA Monitoring Report, "Policy Paper 13" (June 2014).

5. UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, Education for people and planet: Creating sustainable futures for all (2016).

6. UNESCO Institute of Statistics; UIS Fact Sheet, February 2018 No. 48, "One in Five Children, Adolescents and Youth is Out of School."

7. UNESCO Institute of Statistics, "Learning in Your Own Language, Vital for the World's Literacy Goals," (2019)

8. UNESCO Institute of Statistics; UIS Fact Sheet, February 2018, No. 48, "One in Five Children, Adolescents and Youth is Out of School."

9. Note from Room to Read: UNESCO Institute of Statistics groups West and South Asia together and East Asia and Pacific together. Therefore, Room to Read is using these numbers to represent more accurate statistics to address the countries where we work.

10. UNESCO Institute of Statistics; Global Education Monitoring Report, "Meeting Commitments, Are Countries on Track to Achieve SDG4?" (2019).

11. Herz, Barbara and Gene B. Sperling, "What Works in Girls' Education," Council on Foreign Relations (2004).

12. Braga, Amanda and Kwauk, Christina, "Three platforms for girls' education in climate strategies," Global Economy and Development at Brookings (2017).