



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 February 2022.

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO:

- 1. Founded in 2000 on the belief that World Change Starts with Educated Children,[®]** Room to Read is creating a world free from illiteracy and gender inequality through education.
- 2. Room to Read envisions a world in which all children can pursue a quality education and make positive change** – in their families, communities and the world.
- 3. 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 effective in specific country contexts. Through government partnership, we can reach and support more children.
- 4. Room to Read has benefited more than 32 million children** in historically low-income communities and in areas where education inequities exist. To date, Room to Read has worked in 21 countries, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Grenada, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Italy, Jordan, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Rwanda, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda, United States, Vietnam and Zambia.
- 5. With globally distributed headquarters, Room to Read employs more than 1,600 staff across 21 countries.** Of those staff, 88% are employed in our program countries. We hire local nationals to lead our community-based operations in countries where we operate and have visibility from program design through to the communities where our programs are contextualized and implemented.
- 6. We seek to facilitate system reform in each country we work in,** partnering with governments, NGOs, public school systems and publishing partners for change at scale.

WHY WE DO IT:

- 1. A quality education remains out of reach for millions of children around the world.** Approximately 17% of the world's children and youth are not in school. Over the years, access to primary schooling has improved, but educational quality remains a major issue.¹ 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.²
- 2. The COVID-19 pandemic created a global education emergency,** putting youth from historically under-resourced communities acutely at risk.
 - Learning was disrupted for 1.6 billion children around the world.³
 - More than 24 million children are at risk of dropping out of school forever.⁴
 - 10 million additional girls are at risk of child marriage.⁵
 - A majority of the world's students faced prolonged school closures. After eighteen months since the onset of the pandemic, only 35% of the total student population across the world had returned to their classrooms.⁶
- 3. Only 3% of global humanitarian aid is spent on education⁷,** yet education is one tool that can solve so many of the world's pressing problems:
 - **Healthier Families Start with Education:** If all women completed secondary education, child deaths would be cut in half, saving 3 million lives.⁸
 - **Climate Justice Starts with Education:** Worldwide access to primary and girls' education could result in an 85 gigaton reduction of carbon dioxide by 2050. Deaths caused by natural disasters and extreme temperature events could be 60% lower by 2050 if 70% of women were able to achieve a lower-secondary-school education.⁹
 - **Safer and Peaceful Communities Start with Education:** In sub-Saharan Africa, the risk of conflict in countries with higher education equality is less than half that of areas with lower equality in education.
 - **Thriving Economies Start with Education:** Over 40 years, income per capita is 23% higher in a country with more equal education.
 - **Poverty Reduction Starts with Education:** If historically

WHY WE DO IT (CONTINUED):

low-income countries were to reach their goal of universal secondary education by 2030, then by 2050, per capita earnings would increase by 75%, thereby lifting 60 million people out of poverty.¹⁰

4. More than 773 million adults—two-thirds of whom are women—still lack basic reading and writing skills.¹¹

5. 102 million youth lack basic literacy skills. In historically 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 2030.¹²

6. Of today's children and adolescents who are out of school, more than half live in sub-Saharan Africa. Girls are the most disadvantaged, particularly in South and West Asia, where 80% of girls who are out of school are unlikely to start school, compared to just 16% for boys.¹³

7. Lack of gender equality in education is more pronounced when children reach secondary school. In many countries, this is when student enrollment drops sharply for girls due to various societal challenges they face, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia.¹⁴

- At a global level, there are 92 literate women for every 100 literate men, and in historically low-income countries, as few as 77 literate women for every 100 literate men.
- Exclusion from education is especially problematic for young women. In historically low-income countries, 66 female stu-

dents complete upper secondary education for every 100 male students. In sub-Saharan Africa, 86 female students complete lower secondary education for every 100 male students.¹⁵

8. 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 that girls’ education brings a wide range of benefits not only for the girls themselves but also for their children, communities and society.
- **Girls’ education is the best investment a country can make to grow its economy.** Countries lose more than \$1 billion a year by failing to educate girls to the same level as boys.
- **Educated women earn more.** Providing girls with one extra year of education beyond average boosts her wages by 20%. Women with secondary education can expect to make almost twice as much as those with no education, and women with tertiary education almost four times as much.
- **Girls’ education boosts public health exponentially.** If all mothers completed primary education, maternal deaths would reduce by two-thirds, saving 98,000 lives. In the same scenario, 1.7 million children would be saved from stunting from malnutrition.¹⁶
- **Girls’ education boosts countries’ abilities to mitigate the harmful 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.¹⁷

HOW WE DO IT:

1. Our theory of change is rooted in an evidence-based design, optimized for a public school system that integrates reading instruction and learning materials with libraries that offer children a print-rich environment, filled with culturally relevant, developmentally appropriate reading materials. We offer gender-transformative life skills instruction as well as gender-sensitive learning resources. During the course of the global pandemic, we adapted many of our program components for home learning environments.

2. Room to Read’s Literacy Program supports children to develop reading skills and a love of reading, helping young readers become lifelong learners.

3. Our Girls’ Education Program, centered on a multi-year life skills curriculum, supports adolescent girls as they improve learning and life outcomes, helping them graduate with the ability to think critically and find solutions to address day-to-day challenges as independent problem solvers.

4. Room to Read implements a wide range of solutions within its programming, utilizing appropriate and accessible technology channels such as remote mentoring, virtual training and TV and radio broadcast to provide young learners and their families, teachers and communities with the tools they need to ensure education continues in any circumstance.

LITERACY PROGRAM:

1. Our Literacy Program is designed to help children become independent readers and lifelong learners. We define an “independent reader” as a child who possesses both literacy skills and a habit of reading.

- 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. Our Literacy Program is set to reach that standard, feeding both parts of this virtuous cycle to nurture both reading skill and habit.

2. Our Literacy Program contributes to greater reading fluency and comprehension.

- **Our reading skills evaluations show that children in the Literacy Program read more fluently** than their peers in comparable schools. By the end of second 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. We train teachers and librarians in literacy and library best practices, assisting them in developing their skills and knowledge on effective literacy instruction and library management, with ongoing job-embedded support through literacy coaches.

4. Reading instruction is centered around engaging and evidence-based instructional materials that are developed and published by Room to Read, such as local language student textbooks with accompanying teachers guides.

5. Unfortunately, under-resourced communities often face a shortage of child-friendly, diverse local language books designed for students who are first learning to read. In many of the countries where Room to Read works, locally developed children’s literature for early readers is often limited or nonexistent.

6. To remedy this, Room to Read acts as both a nonprofit publisher and as an active supporter of existing local for-profit publishers. We partner with local children’s book publishers, their staff, and local authors and illustrators to create and distribute local language storybooks that readers at various levels can enjoy. We

also purchase millions of children’s books to distribute around the world. We advocate with governments to adopt library standards and support systems that make sure every child has access to a child-friendly library filled with developmentally appropriate, diverse and engaging books.

- With access to such books, children are able to let their imagination run free, finding solace and joy in reading.
- As new readers resonate with the stories they read, they can better understand themselves and develop traits such as resilience, empathy and resolve that will help them question harmful stereotypes. Increased knowledge of the environment around them will support children in positively contributing to the world.

7. Our Literacy Program is encouraging the development of reading habits and our libraries are a contributing factor.

- **Room to Read’s Library Rating System ensures our libraries are high-functioning and sustainable** through twice-yearly assessments that track 15 indicators on a prioritized checklist and rate performance. The system helps prioritize and identify schools that need extra support.

8. As of the end of 2021, Room to Read has published more than 4,800 original and adapted children’s titles and distributed more than 34 million books in 21 countries, providing primary school students in over 49,000 schools with the resources and guidance they need to build a strong foundation in literacy.

- **Literacy Cloud, Room to Read’s online digital library, hosts more than 2,100 children’s book titles in 32 languages,** providing children and teachers access to a rich diversity of books, read-aloud videos and instructional resources.

9. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Room to Read adapted our Literacy Program to reach children in innovative ways, keeping them engaged in their studies and on track to become lifelong learners. We expanded our reach to more children than ever before by making our local language children’s books openly accessible online and:

- Offering read-alouds online and via radio and television
- Staying in touch with students and families through messaging platforms
- Supporting parents with the tools and knowledge to support their child’s learning at home, whether those parents are literate or not
- Providing virtual trainings for educators
- Distributing hard copies of resources to those without internet access through any local infrastructure available

GIRLS' EDUCATION PROGRAM:

- 1. Room to Read's Girls' Education Program supports girls as they develop the skills to succeed in school and make key life decisions.**
- 2. Our Girls' Education Program matches each girl with a local mentor or teacher from their community** that advocates on their behalf and helps them nurture and grow the necessary skills to exercise agency and make informed life choices.
 - **Room to Read mentors monitor risk factors associated with dropping out of school** — 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. Role models support girls as they chase after their dreams and break free from limiting gender stereotypes.
 - **We know that mentorship contributes to academic and life success in historically low-income communities.** Research indicates 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 classroom absences, higher educational expectations, and greater aspirations for success and school belonging.
- 3. As of December 2021, more than 13,300 girls enrolled in the Girls' Education Program have graduated from secondary school.** Each year, more than 95% of program participants who remain enrolled advance to the next grade. Among those who graduate, over 70% go on to tertiary education or employment.
- 4. 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 3.2 million girls to date, changing gender paradigms in communities and strengthening support for girls education that will carry forward for generations.
 - Our cumulative number of children benefited through our Girls' Education Program increased notably in 2020 (through the end of 2019, we had benefited 114,900 girls through the program). This large increase is due to our new methods of supporting girls during the COVID-19 pandemic, including radio and TV programming, through which we were able to benefit a much larger audience quickly.
- 5. Room to Read is poised to implement our Girls' Education Program at scale** as we implement our program in public schools and work alongside ministries of education in several countries to adapt and integrate key parts of our life skills curriculum at the systems level.
- 6. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Room to Read found new approaches to delivering our Girls' Education program** while girls were at home and at greater risk of dropping out and being forced into child marriage or low-earning jobs, due to the additional pressures created by family financial hardships. We adjusted our model to:
 - Support girls while they are isolated at home with remote mentoring
 - Deliver life skills lessons through radio, telephone, and videos, as well as hard copy worksheets
 - Increase monitoring of girls' risk of not returning to school
 - Increase engagement with parents to ensure they stay committed to their daughters' education
- 7. These measures ensured that girls stayed engaged in their education.** In countries where schools reopened (Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Vietnam), on average, 95% of the girls in our program had returned to school by the end of 2020.
- 8. Room to Read recognizes the role that boys and men play as active stakeholders in promoting a more gender equitable world.** We are deepening our commitment to gender equality by offering programming for boys, with a life skills curriculum that supports boys and challenges norms and attitudes that perpetuate inequality.

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 initiated by multiple governments,** cementing the foundation for systemic change in education. Some examples include:
 - **In Tanzania,** Room to Read is supporting the Tanzania Institute of Education in reviewing and revising government curriculum and textbooks for early literacy. These updated materials will support students across the country. We have engaged with government stakeholders to shape the development of national guidelines on life skills curriculum that will also be implemented in all schools across the country.
 - **In South Africa,** we are partnering with provincial and district governments to scale our program within districts through a gradual transfer of responsibility in training and

OUR FUTURE (CONTINUED):

coaching activities as well as cost-sharing.

- **In India**, we engaged in a six-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 1 million children and 32,00 teachers in 2,700 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. Room to Read has since expanded such programs in partnership with other governments, including Cambodia.

- **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.
- **In Sri Lanka**, Room to Read provided technical support for reading rooms in primary schools, where libraries were not previously available to children.
- **In Cambodia**, we are piloting a gender-transformative life skills curriculum for boys to help them grapple with some of the challenges they face in adolescence and become their fullest selves.

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. UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, "Inclusion and Education: All means all" (2020).
2. UNESCO Institute of Statistics; UIS Fact Sheet No. 39, "The World Needs Almost 69 Million New Teachers to Reach the 2030 Education Goals" (2016).
3. UNICEF, "Keeping the World's Children Learning through Covid-19" (2020).
4. UNICEF, "UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore's remarks at a press conference on new updated guidance on school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19" (2020).
5. UNICEF, "10 million additional girls at risk of child marriage due to COVID-19" (2021).
6. UNESCO, "UNESCO warns 117 million students around the world are still out of school" (2021).
7. UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, "Inclusion and education: All means all" (2020).
8. UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, "#HerEducationOurFuture" (2021).
9. Brookings, "Unleashing the creativity of teachers and students to combat climate change: An opportunity for global leadership" (2021).
10. UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, "Education for people and planet: Creating sustainable futures for all" (2016).
11. UNESCO Institute of Statistics and United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General, "Literacy for life, work, lifelong learning and education for democracy" (2020).
12. UNESCO Institute of Statistics, "Learning in Your Own Language, Vital for the World's Literacy Goals" (2019).
13. UNESCO Institute of Statistics, UIS Fact Sheet No. 48, "One in Five Children, Adolescents and Youth is Out of School" (2018).
14. 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.
15. UNESCO Institute of Statistics; Global Education Monitoring Report, "Meeting Commitments, Are Countries on Track to Achieve SDG4?" (2019).
16. UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, "#HerEducationOurFuture" (2021).
17. Braga, Amanda and Kwauk, Christina, "Three platforms for girls' education in climate strategies," Global Economy and Development at Brookings (2017).