



Literacy Program Fact Sheet



Literacy: Helping Dreams Take Flight

The global education emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic will set millions of students back permanently. We know that it is crucial for students to develop literacy skills and the habit of reading in early primary school to have a strong foundation for learning throughout their lifetimes.

To keep children engaged in their studies and on track to become lifelong learners, Room to Read has adapted our Literacy Program to reach children in innovative ways during this evolving crisis. We are supporting parents with the tools and knowledge to support their children's learning at home, providing virtual trainings for educators, staying in touch with students and families through direct messaging platforms, distributing hard copies of resources to those who lack internet access, offering read-alouds via radio and television, and posting our local language children's books online. These remote interventions help students develop literacy skills even in the face of school closures and numerous other challenges. They also enable Room to Read to expand our reach and benefit more children than ever before. As schools begin to reopen, we are partnering with educators to help students get up to speed and address learning loss. We will use the important lessons we've learned throughout this crisis to continue evolving our programming in increasingly beneficial ways.

At Room to Read, we know reading and writing are crucial to keeping us connected. Books open up a child's world, allowing a young learner to soar to new places and seek new experiences right from their own home. Over the last two years, we have provided children with their own storybooks, delivered directly to their homes. In some communities, these books have been the only learning resources children received during the pandemic.

More than 50% of primary school children living in historically low- and middle-income countries cannot read.

Help us make change possible by benefiting **more children than ever before** through our Literacy Program this year.

OUR RESULTS

Greater reading fluency.

Our reading skills evaluations show that children in our Literacy Program read more fluently than their peers in comparable schools. By the end of Grade 2, students tested in program schools read twice as fast as their peers on average and, in some countries, nearly three times as fast.

Improved reading comprehension.

Children supported by our program 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.

Increased reading.

Our Literacy Program encourages the development of reading habits, and our libraries are a contributing factor. In 2020 alone, 3.5 million books were checked out of our libraries.

Our Approach

Our Literacy Program transforms primary schools into child-friendly learning environments that enable children to become lifelong, independent readers. We do this by ensuring that schools have libraries filled with books in local languages, and that teachers and librarians are well-trained on how to engage eager, young learners.

1 Teacher training and support

One of the most important elements of literacy learning is having an instructor who knows how to effectively teach and nurture reading and writing skills. We provide early grade teachers with professional development and in-class coaching to make sure they have the knowledge and tools to successfully support their students. The phonics-based instructional design that we provide helps children learn to decode sounds and words in a logical sequence and build confidence in their budding skills.

We also provide educators with training on how to effectively manage a library and conduct activities that encourage students to read independently. Our local staff regularly monitor library environments and provide feedback, so communities know how to sustain high-functioning libraries long after our support ends.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have built the capacity of teachers, school leadership, book creators and parents through virtual outreach. Our remote support helps educators keep children learning during school closures.

2 Quality reading materials

Beginning readers need books and instructional materials designed for their skill levels. Texts that are too challenging or complex can intimidate students and discourage them from reading. Unfortunately, early reader texts are often extremely limited or nonexistent in the communities where we work. To remedy this, we create local language storybooks that readers at various levels can enjoy. We also develop book creators and book publishers, and grow libraries and library programs in which children's literature can flourish.

To address the needs of children learning remotely, we have expanded Literacy Cloud, a digital library of children's books created by Room to Read with support from Google.org. Literacy Cloud now houses more than 2,000 book titles in 32 languages, along with read-aloud videos and resources for teachers, publishers, authors and illustrators.

We also offer our literacy content in a variety of mediums to help close technology gaps. Since 2020, we have collaborated with television stations across South Asia to produce literacy-focused programs, including read-alouds of our children's books and tips on how parents can support reading habits.

As radio is still the most commonly available and accessed technology across the world, we have introduced literacy-focused radio programs as well. Children in many of our partner communities can now tune in to hear stories read aloud and engage in reading and writing lessons.

3 Safe and child-friendly learning environments

Learning to read and write is challenging enough without the distraction of a hot, dark or overcrowded classroom. We partner with communities to improve learning spaces so children have safe, comfortable environments where they can focus on learning. Our projects include renovating existing school spaces to improve lighting, safety and ventilation, and establishing dedicated library spaces where students can have positive interactions with books. We also help procure child-sized furniture and guide educators on how to arrange learning materials so students can easily practice reading on their own.

Strong community and government partnerships

To ensure the long-term benefit of our program, we engage communities early in project planning and co-invest in project costs to establish local ownership. We also work with governments to promote widespread policy and curriculum changes that will improve literacy learning for children far beyond our program schools.

INVEST WITH CONFIDENCE

Fiscal Excellence

Received Charity Navigator's highest four-star rating for sound fiscal management 15 times since 2005.

Leader in Literacy

Received the 2014 U.S. Library of Congress Literacy Award, the 2011 UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy and recognized as a 2014 World's Children's Prize Honorary Laureate.

Received the 2020 David M. Rubenstein Special Response Award of the Library of Congress Literacy Awards Program for responsiveness and outstanding work in addressing challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Social Innovator

Chosen as Twitter's first Corporate Social Innovation partner and three-time winner of the Skoll Foundation's Award for Social Entrepreneurship.

Have questions?

Contact us online at
info@roomtoread.org

Room to Read Global Offices:

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