



2014
**ANNUAL
EMPOWERMENT
REPORT**

A photograph of a workshop or training session. Several people are seated around a wooden table, focused on drawing or writing on papers. In the foreground, a woman with long dark hair is writing. To her right, another woman is drawing with a pink marker. Various art supplies like watercolor palettes, pens, and markers are scattered on the table. In the background, a blue sign on the wall reads 'COUNSELLING'. To the right, a whiteboard is covered with colorful, hand-drawn words and phrases such as 'TOILET', 'POOL', 'STALL', 'Water', 'Pee', 'Sink', 'Toilet Flush', and 'Seal'.

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Message from the Country Director

READ Bhutan was established in 2008 with a vision to empower rural communities by providing access to information and strengthening their skills and capacities.

Over the past six years, we have been able to establish six vibrant Community Library and Resource Centers (READ Centers) in six Dzongkhags. As a result, we managed to provide with useful resources and programs to more than 28,200 villagers across the country.

Our aim was to go slow and not be concerned with the quantity, but driven by quality of the work we do in our communities. We wanted to bring about meaningful changes in the lives of rural populace. And that is why 2014 had us focus more on expanding our existing programs and strengthening our partnerships.

We opened our sixth READ Center at remote Khotakpa Village in Pema Gatsel Dzongkhag in partnership with Druk Satair Corporation, a local mining company, as part of their CSR activity in the community. The community donated land. Khotakpa READ Center will benefit more than 2,000 villagers, who are mostly farmers. We would like to thank Druk Satair and the local government, and the people of Khotakpa. READ Bhutan also became the first organization in the country to provide free public access to Internet services at Chuzagang community in Gelelphu. Chuzagang READ Center now provides Internet services to more than 4,000 villagers. It was a proud moment for us to have successfully connected yet another remote village to the outside world.

During the year, READ Bhutan also launched a women's health manual, which was published both in Dzongkha and English. We are happy to report good feedback on the manual from our users in the field. And we continued to strengthen and build on leadership and health programs for women and girls.

More than 64% of Bhutanese people live in rural areas and 60% of our schools in the country have no access to Internet services. 36% of schools in the country have no access to road. About 45% of Bhutanese adults cannot read or write while more than half of adult Bhutanese women are illiterate. All these factors hinder our communities' participation in their learning processes.

2015 will be a special year in Bhutan as the nation celebrates the 60th Birth Anniversary of our Fourth King. The government of Bhutan had also declared the year as the National Reading year and it would make our work more relevant and need felt. We will focus on our Reading and Writing Project and also organize more livelihood skills trainings. Finally, we will pilot a community radio station at Khotakpa with financial support from SDC Bhutan.

Our work depends on generous support of our donors and partners both at home and abroad. Therefore, we would like to let you know that we are grateful to you all. Our hope is that you will continue to support and partner with us in our quest to empowering more people, one village at a time and turn them into vibrant communities.

Happy READing!



Karma Lhazom

Country Highlights

6 READ
CENTERS

REACH:
28,205
VILLAGERS

READ (Rural Education and Development) Bhutan believes that empowering rural communities is critical to alleviating global poverty. We establish community library and resource centers (READ Centers) in rural communities, and seed small businesses called 'sustaining enterprises' that support ongoing resources and programs.



Opening of Khotakpa READ Center

READ Bhutan inaugurated our sixth READ Center at Khotakpa Village in Pema Gatsel Dzongkhag in partnership with Druk Satair Corporation and Linklaters, Tokyo. The Center will provide 2,100 villagers with access to books, literacy and ICT programs.



Youth Interaction Art camp

In 2014, READ Bhutan conducted its Youth Interaction Art Camp at Rongthong READ Center in Trashigang Dzongkhag in partnership with Zorig chusum, the traditional arts and crafts institute. Participants learned the traditional art techniques and also created waste management and hygiene awareness in the community.



Launch of Women's Health Manual

Coinciding with the first ever International Women's Education Day on July 13, 2014, READ Bhutan launched our first Women's Health Manual – Understanding Your Body: A Practical Guide to Women's Health. The book was printed both in English and Dzongkha.



ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

In 2014, READ Bhutan linked and facilitated the registration of 40 women weavers as the primary members of SABAH Bhutan.

READ Centers **empower** rural villagers by teaching them valuable skills to earn an income and support their families. Over **1,794 villagers** participated in livelihood skills trainings, enabling them to earn an income through farming, animal husbandry, textiles, and more. READ Bhutan successfully launched a bee-keeping sustaining enterprise to generate revenue for the Ura READ Center.

2014 BY THE NUMBERS

106

community women received textile related training; sewing, embroidery, souvenir making, and more.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2014, READ Bhutan continued to build the capacities and hone the skills of the identified women home-based workers. The program had linked women weavers to SABAH Bhutan, which in turn assures a constant flow of income for the se women and their families.

MEET SONAM TSHOMO

Sonam Tshomo is 25 years old and a mother of 2. She moved to Rongthong, Trashigang from Mongar at the age of 20 when she got married. As a young girl, Sonam never went to school but recently, she had enrolled herself for the Non-formal Education (NFE) classes, which are conducted at the READ Center. "I look after the household work and also work on the farm to support my children's education," says Sonam. With the READ Center in her community, she has become a part of most of the activities and programs conducted there. She took part in a capacity building program conducted by READ Bhutan at the Center for home-based weavers. Today, she is a member of SABAH Bhutan.



"I am happy that the additional income I earn from my weaving helps me provide for my family."

EDUCATION

READ Centers provide skills and necessary tools for the local youth to collect, illustrate and promote local stories.

READ Centers serve as a platform for education for ALL members of the village. Our centers meet the most pressing needs of rural communities, and may be the only place where villages have **access to cutting-edge resources.** In 2014, READ Centers provided over **555 villagers** with basic educational training, including adult literacy classes, health clinics, and language skills.



MEET UGYEN WANGMO

Ugyen Wangmo attends English Literacy classes at Changjiji READ Center in Thimphu. The 35-year-old housewife is a mother of three. She also takes part in other programs at the Center. By attending English classes, Ugyen is encouraged to read and write. Although illiterate she now can communicate in simple English with confidence. "I can now attend Teacher-Parent's meetings at school," she says, adding that learning how to read and write in English also helps her communicate and express herself better. "It is tough to learn a different language, especially at my age," Ugyen admits. "But with enthusiasm and purpose, we are trying to do our best." English literacy classes are conducted four days a week.

"I always have new English word to take home every day!"

2014 BY THE NUMBERS

23,888

books checked out

50

adults trained in literacy skills

100

villagers received health services programs on sanitations and reproductive health

421

people participated in environmental trainings on tree planting and climate change

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- READ Bhutan conducted Youth Interaction Art Camp at Rongthong READ Center in partnership with the traditional institute for arts and crafts in Thimphu – Zorig chusum – to create a platform for young people to interact and share their experiences, introduce them to medium of artworks and convey important social messages.
- Two groups of high school students from Thimphu and nearby districts attended Summer Writing workshop facilitated by a local writer, Ms. Chador Wangmo at Changjiji READ Center in Thimphu. During the workshop, participants were trained on creative writing and guided with the process of writing stories.

TECHNOLOGY

A photograph showing three young girls in school uniforms (dark blue jackets over white collared shirts and plaid skirts) sitting at a wooden desk in a classroom or computer lab. They are focused on a computer monitor. The girl in the foreground is using a black mouse. A small paper with colorful circular icons is on the desk. In the background, another girl is also working at a computer. The room has a simple, slightly worn appearance with a window in the background.

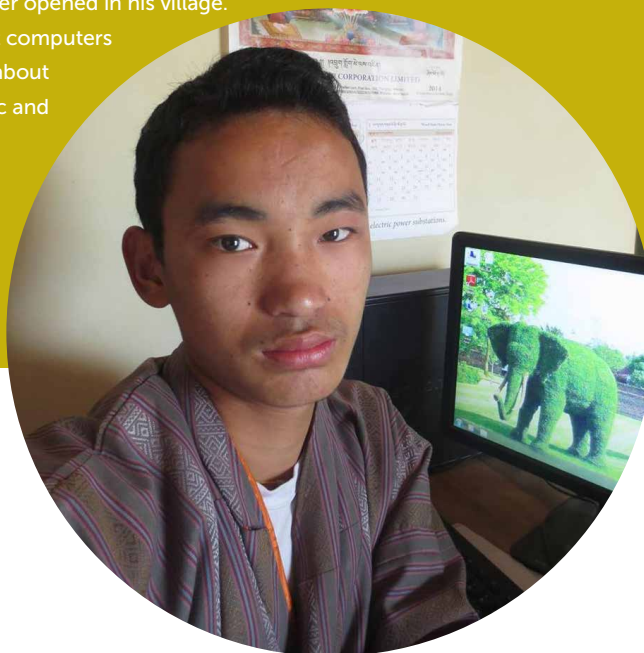
READ Centers provide free public access to Internet services to some of the remotest villages in the country and nearly 28,000 villagers have access to the outside world.

READ staff in Bhutan developed confidence and increased their capacity to drive ICT related initiatives for centers. Two pilot Centers in the country experimented with innovative ICT and sustainable energy systems. User feedback from the pilot Centers shows that all participating centers learned many promising practices. Oftentimes, READ Centers are the first to bring Internet to their communities they serve expanding the possibilities for communication to the world beyond Bhutan.

MEET UGYEN WANGCHUK

20-year-old Ugyen Wangchuk from Khotakpa studied up to tenth grade at Pema Gatshel MSS and was selected as one of the Center coordinators when Khotakpa READ Center opened in his village.

"Before I joined as a Center Coordinator, I had a little knowledge about computers and was not confident using them," Ugyen admits. "But I learned a lot about computers and the Internet in particular." After he had undergone basic and intermediate ICT trainings, Ugyen today volunteers to teach interested village youth and community members how to use computers and browse the Internet. "I am happy since I am able to help others in my village." In addition to his duties at the Center, Ugyen will be trained in community radio management and become a station manager in 2015 when READ Bhutan establishes a community radio at Khotakpa.



2014 BY THE NUMBERS

27,069

villagers had access to **consistent and reliable** internet opening a world of opportunities for advancement

135


villagers participated in basic computer skills training

24

villages took advantages of advanced ICT trainings vital to **21st century employment**

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- READ Bhutan launched pilot ICT Project at Ura and Chuzagang READ Centers
- READ Bhutan piloted ICT training at Chuzagang READ Center in 2014. The weeklong training taught the participants Microsoft Office and also provided practical knowledge on hardware maintenance.

A large group of women and children are posed for a photograph in front of a building. The women are dressed in traditional Bhutanese clothing, including colorful kiras (long skirts) and gados (jackets). Some are holding infants. The building behind them has a sign that reads "READ Bhutan Rural Education and Development Ugyen Wangchuck Payzoeckhang (READ Community Library & Resource Center) Mendhagang, Punakha" and "Established on 15th December 2013".

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

READ Centers continue to provide Basic Literacy classes to the community women and train them in public speaking, and build their confidence through leadership programs.

READ Centers serve more than **14,000 women and girls by providing them with access to safe spaces to gather, learn, and advocate.** Over **1,153 women** participated in trainings at READ Centers—learning to read, building their confidence, discussing women’s health issues, and more. Women were leaders in their communities by serving on Center Management Committees.

2014 BY THE NUMBERS

65

villagers trained on women’s leadership, civic participation, and confidence building

45

women empowered with literacy

36

women were educated about their legal rights

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Launched a women’s health manual called “Understanding Your Body: A Practical Guide to Women’s Health.” This bilingual manual vastly expanded the women of rural Bhutan’s access to information on their health and hygiene.
- Launched “Women Represent” video, which emphasized the importance of women’s participation in the public sphere and aimed to inspire women to consider political office.
- Conducted capacity building and skills enhancement trainings to home-based women workers in the READ communities, which empowered women with in-demand skillsets and expanded their opportunities for growth.

MEET THAM MAYA RAI

When 33-year-old Tham Maya Rai was in class one, she had to leave her studies since her school was far away from the village. Both her parents died when she was young and she had to marry and move with her husband, who works as an electrician at Chuzagang. She is now mother of four. But her interest to learn to read and write was reignited when she learned that Chuzagang community had initiated Non-Formal Education (NFE) Program for farmers like her. “Today I can correctly read signboards in the streets of Gelephu or any other instructions written in Dzongkha. That makes me proud,” Tham Maya says.

“It was difficult to interact with friends and neighbors since I could not speak a word of Dzongkha, but now I feel more comfortable and at home with my friends. It is highly empowering and satisfying experience for me.”



Institutional Partners

READ Bhutan would like to thank all our institutional partners for joining us in **inspiring rural prosperity**. Leading corporations, foundations, international NGOs, and government funders have partnered with us to further our mission through monetary contributions, program partnerships, in-kind support and employee engagement. These **partnerships** have enabled us to provide more than **28,205** people with access to vital resources and life changing programs across Bhutan.

BILL & MELINDA
GATES foundation

THE BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

The Bill & Melinda continues to be an integral partner of READ providing capacity-building funding to help strengthen our program design, ICT offerings, monitoring and evaluation processes, and fundraising capacity.



DRUK SATAIR

The Druk Satair Corporation Ltd.; a Bhutanese mining company, has partnered with READ Bhutan to establish Khotakpa READ Center in Pema Gatshel Dzongkhag. The company provided funding, coordinating the construction of the Center infrastructures, and helped mobilized the community members.



SINGAPORE AMERICAN SCHOOL

Singapore American School (SAS) is partnering with Yangthang Community in Haa Dzongkhag to establish a READ Center. SAS READ Service Club fundraised to build the infrastructures and resource the Center.

Linklaters

LINKLATERS

Linklaters Tokyo LLC partnered with READ Bhutan to establish the first READ Center in Ura in Bumthang Dzongkhag. Since then, it continues to support our programs. The firm also funded READ Bhutan to resource the newly established Khotakpa READ Center in Pema Gatshel.

FEATURED STRATEGIC PARTNERS



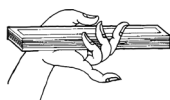
READ Bhutan partners with **VAST Bhutan** to conduct our annual Youth Interaction Art Campo at our READ Centers. Youth Interaction Art Camp is an annual program initiated to engage youth in meaningful activities while at the same time the participants also learn essential life skills.



HomeNet South Asia and SAARC Business Association of Home-Based Workers (SABAH Bhutan) continued to partner with READ Bhutan to conduct capacity building trainings for women home based workers.



READ Bhutan partners with **Ministry of Education**, Royal Government of Bhutan to conduct Non-formal Education classes and other literacy programs through our READ Centers.



READ partners with **Loden Foundation** to conduct Early Childhood Care and Development programs at our Ura READ Center.

FEATURED IN-KIND PARTNERS

READ collaborated with the **Stanford Graduate School of Business** to bring pro bono **Global Management Immersion Experience (GMIX)** student advisors in the country to conduct feasibility studies and create business plans for new sustaining enterprises.



SPECIAL THANKS TO

READ Global was founded by **Myths and Mountains** President Dr. Antonia Neubauer in 1991, and operated as the nonprofit arm of the company for many years. Since that time, both Myths and Mountains and its clients have provided valuable support of READ's work.

In-Kind Partners

IREX

GNH Commission, Royal Government of Bhutan

National Housing Development Corporation

Other Institutional Supporters

Athang Training Academy

Bank of Bhutan Ltd.

Bhutan Broadcasting Service

Bhutan Youth Foundation

BCMD

Bhutan Power Corporation

Chuzagang Agricultural Farmers Cooperative, MoAF

Dakinny Productions

Druk Holdings and Investments

QED

Radio Valley

RENEW

If you are interested in learning about how your company/organization can partner with READ Bhutan, please contact us at info@readbhutan.org

Looking Ahead

In 2015 we plan to extend our reach in **rural Bhutan** while strengthening our existing network of **READ Centers**. We will build upon both global and local **partnerships** to expand our technology offerings, launch new Center sustaining enterprises, and increase programs for women and increased **livelihood** for greater **impact**.

- We plan to plan to establish at least two new READ Centers in 2015 in order to deepen our reach in the country
- We will continue with leadership skills and training for women and girls, women's health and gender sensitization workshops both for men and women
- We plan to strengthen our economic empowerment programs by introducing more relevant livelihood skills development and capacity development trainings
- We will conduct and continue on our Reading and Writing Programs to mark the National Reading Year 2015
- With the financial support from SDC Bhutan, we will launch our first Community Radio station at Khotakpa Village in Pema Gatshel
- We will join the nation in celebrating the 60th Birth Anniversary of the 4th King of Bhutan by conducting a series of programs and activities
- In observance of the National Reading Year, we will launch our Literacy project **Reading Sense** to promote reading habit in partnership with Bhutan Broadcasting Service

We look forward to sharing updates with you in 2015 through our website, newsletter, and social media.





LEADERSHIP

READ BHUTAN TEAM

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