



# 2017 ANNUAL REPORT



**READ Bhutan**  
Inspiring Rural Prosperity

A photograph of three young boys standing outdoors on a dirt path. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. They are wearing traditional Tibetan-style clothing, which consists of long, patterned robes with wide sleeves and white cuffs. The boy in the center is holding a black and white Adidas soccer ball with both hands. The boy on the right is also holding the ball with his hands. The boy on the left is standing with his hands behind his back. They are all wearing sandals. The background is a blurred natural setting with trees and foliage.

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## Message from the Country Director

I am pleased to report to you that 2017 had been yet another fruitful year at READ Bhutan. And on behalf of the READ team and our Advisory Board members, I have the honor to present to you READ Bhutan's Annual Report 2017. READ Bhutan was established with a vision to inspire rural prosperity and in less than a decade, we have made our presence in nine dzongkhags, providing access to critical resources to over 47,000 villagers.

In addition to building community libraries and offering various educational and community development programs, we piloted a community radio at a remote village of Khotakpa in Pemagatshel. The radio can now be heard in 9 nearby villages and serves as a source of information on health and hygiene, agriculture, local governance, among others.

In 2017, READ Bhutan launched four children's books as an outcome of a year-long Bhutan Folktale project, which brought young people and village elders to share the local folklores. This is our small contribution toward creating local content and encouraging young Bhutanese to read by distributing these books to the local schools. We are pleased to share that we are encouraged to continue the efforts in the coming year.

In partnership with International IDEA, READ Bhutan organized Civic Education workshops aimed at enhancing students and villagers' understanding of the concepts of democracy and its principles. The workshop was also an opportunity for the participants to discuss and learn their civic rights vs duties and responsibilities in a young democracy.

We collaborated with Bhutan Cancer Society and the Ministry of Health to conduct a nationwide campaign on cervical and breast cancer and carried out menstrual health and hygiene workshops for the school-going girls. We continue to provide basic financial literacy to increase public awareness on saving habit and the need to make right financial decisions. In order to have young people discuss and initiate community discourse on various local issues, we have trained them in digital storytelling.

2017 statistics show that 69% of Bhutanese live in villages, rendering it difficult to cater resources. About 34% of Bhutanese people still cannot read or write, and the rate is even higher in rural areas (42%). This is aggravated by lack of reliable road connectivity, electricity and internet, which makes it difficult for the community members to learn and actively participate in the developmental initiatives.

In 2018, we plan to conduct a series of livelihood trainings for the community women in partnership with Dining for Women and form at least 9 savings groups. We will also conduct Leadership and Civic Education workshops and engage more communities to archive their local stories and legends. We will continue providing literacy programs to rural communities.

Our success rests heavily on the communities we serve, our generous funders, partners and supporters alike, and we would like to thank you all for being a part of our journey. We look forward to receiving similar support in the coming year to reach more people in Bhutan and change more lives for better.

Happy READING!



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karma Lhazom". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Karma Lhazom

# Country Highlights

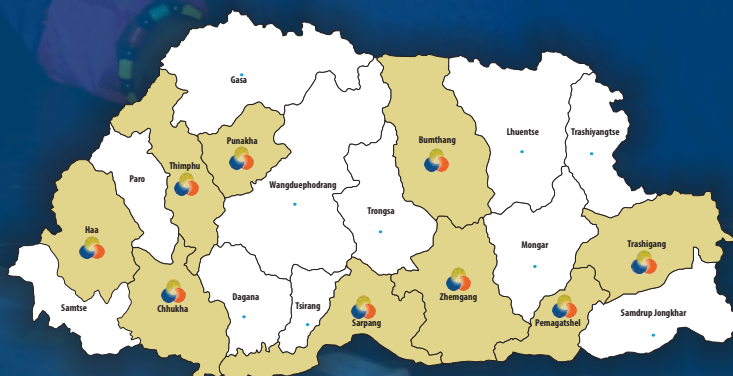
9 READ  
CENTERS

REACH:

47,456  
VILLAGERS

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

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READ Bhutan's reach as on December 2017



### Opening of Panbang READ Center

READ Bhutan inaugurated our ninth READ Center at Panbang village in Zhemgang Dzongkhag. The Center will cater educational resources, and ICT, literacy and livelihood programs to nearly 2,359 villagers.



### Civic and Democracy Education

READ Bhutan conducted Democracy and Civic Education in six READ Centers in 2017 to create awareness at the grassroots level on the concept of democracy, its principles and strengthening democratic processes by boosting people's knowledge and skills. The program also familiarized people's understanding of civic rights and responsibilities.



### Launch of children's books

In 2017, READ Bhutan implemented Bhutan Folktale project, which engaged community youth and elderly members to compile, illustrate and publish four Bhutanese folktales in Rongthong and Yangthang villages. All books were also translated into Dzongkha and distributed to schools in the READ communities.

# EDUCATION

READ Centers are the sources of useful information, and provide community members with opportunities to learn more about themselves and the rapidly changing environment around them.

**READ Centers** serve as an educational platform for all members of the village, and provide improved access to critical **information** and resources. In 2017, READ Centers provided nearly **2,100** villagers with basic educational training, including adult literacy classes, health camps, and environmental education.



#### MEET DORJI WANGMO

At 56, Dorji Wangmo is the oldest member attending English literacy classes at Changjiji READ Center in Thimphu. The mother of 5 lives with her family at Changjiji in Thimphu. Her husband is a traditional painter. She had no opportunity to go to school when she was young, and being illiterate she faced difficulties moving around in Thimphu. But she felt an urgent need to learn to read and write. Things have changed when she enrolled in English literacy classes offered at Changjiji READ Center where she attends classes four times a week. Today, she can read basic words and feels confident and empowered being able to write her name.

*"English literacy classes at the READ Center have helped me become more independent and confident. When I travel to places or visit hospitals, I can read the signboards and understand directions."*

#### 2017 BY THE NUMBERS

7,960

books checked out

1,802

villagers received awareness programs on sanitation and reproductive health

227

people participated in environmental programs

2,236

children took part in Center activities

#### PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- READ Bhutan trained young people and their grandparents in the two rural villages to compile, illustrate and record popular folktales in the communities. Four books were published and distributed to schools as an ongoing effort toward creating local content
- In 2017, rural villagers and young people learnt the concept of democracy and its principles, and discussed a citizen's civic rights and responsibilities

# TECHNOLOGY

READ Centers provide free public access to Internet to over 46,000 villagers in Bhutan.

READ Bhutan builds the capacity of young people in rural Bhutan and hone their skills to use ICT tools and translate their stories in various digital formats. Some READ Centers are the communities' first windows to the world outside with free access to reliable Internet services.

### 2017 BY THE NUMBERS

46,082

villagers had access to internet facility

374

villagers participated in basic computer skills training

61

villagers trained in advanced ICT skills

29

community members learned how to manage radio station and produce quality programs

### PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Through *Engaging Youth with ICT* project, READ Bhutan developed young people's skills in photography, audio and videography. They learned to tell stories and discuss local social issues in the form of digital artworks
- READ Bhutan conducted capacity building and documentary production training for the community radio operators and members. The volunteers learnt to identify stories in the community, and the basics of conducting interviews



### MEET UGYEN RANGDOL TSHERING

Ugyen Rangdol Tshering, (16) studies in Motithang School in Thimphu. He loves taking photographs. He was excited when Changjiji READ Center enrolled him as one of the participants for *Engaging Youth with ICT* program, which trained participants in digital storytelling. The training further improved his photography skills and today he feels rewarded being able to take good photographs. He also learned how to edit photos, audio and tell stories using various media formats. He feels he can do much more now having undergone the training.

*"I have improved my photography skills and I can call myself a photographer. I believe that I will become more professional after taking more pictures. It was such a useful program for us."*

# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

READ Centers provide Basic Literacy classes to the community women and also train them in public speaking to build their confidence.

READ Centers serve nearly 24,000 women and girls by providing them with 'safe space' to gather, learn and advocate. Over 4,613 women participated in various trainings at the Centers, including learning to read, building their confidence, discussing women's health issues, and more.



### MEET PHURBA WANGMO

Phurba Wangmo (19) from Khotakpa had completed high school and is waiting for her college admission. Her parents are farmers and she is the only daughter in the family with five brothers. Phurba was an active member of the READ Center since it started. In 2017, she took part in Community Radio training at the Center. "Having a community radio in my village has benefitted me a lot because I have always wanted to become a journalist, but I never had the exposure," Phurpa says.

*"I think I have the capability become a journalist someday because aside from the experience and the lessons learned, the program also boosted my confidence."*

### 2017 BY THE NUMBERS

763

women attended Civic and democracy education, leadership and confidence building workshops

1,807

women received health awareness and services

61

women underwent literacy classes at the centers

261

women received ICT related skills

### PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- READ Bhutan conducted awareness program on Cervical and Breast Cancer at the READ Centers in collaboration with Bhutan Cancer Society and Basic Health Units. During the camp, pap tests and NCD screening were also carried out
- Young girls in schools attended awareness programs in menstrual health and hygiene, and other health issues. In partnership with Days for Girls (DFG), Australia, READ also distributed some 275 DFG reusable menstrual kits

# ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

READ Centers empower rural villagers by teaching them valuable skills to earn and support their families.

Over 215 villagers participated in livelihood skills trainings, enabling them to earn income through farming, textiles, tailoring, and more. We also continue to provide Basic Financial Literacy programs to farmers and students, thereby creating awareness on the need to save money, budgeting, and bookkeeping.

## 2017 BY THE NUMBERS

165

community members received Basic Financial Literacy, textile and tailoring training, souvenir making, and more

50

villagers attended awareness program on Organic farming

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- READ Bhutan conducted a month-long tailoring program for nearly 100 women in three READ communities. Funded by Direct Aid Program of Australian High Commission in India, the program equipped women with skills to design and stitch traditional garment
- Community members learned how financial institutes function, what are some relevant products, and how to manage personal finance with Basic Financial Literacy programs at the READ Centers. They also understood the importance of saving money



### MEET PEMA THARZOM

26 -year-old Pema Tharzom is a single mother of two and lives with her grandmother in Chuzagng village. "I am illiterate and there aren't many places here that provide opportunities to people like me. The only avenue to earn livelihood for me is to work in the farms," she says. It was difficult to raise her two children. But she always had interest to learn tailoring. Encouraged by the skills she had acquired through READ Bhutan's basic tailoring program, today Pema owns her personal machines, which she operates from her home.

*"READ Bhutan provided a basic sewing program at the Center and so far that has been the best opportunity for me to earn additional income."*

# Institutional Partners

READ Bhutan would like to convey our gratitude to all our partners for supporting us in inspiring rural prosperity. Leading corporations, foundations, international NGOs, and government agencies have partnered with us to further our mission through monetary contributions, program partnership, in-kind support and employment engagement. As a result, we were able to provide more than 47,456 Bhutanese with access to critical resources and programs in 9 Dzongkhags.

**BILL & MELINDA**  
**GATES** *foundation*

## THE BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation was an integral partner of READ having provided capacity-building funding to help strengthen our program design, ICT offerings, monitoring and evaluation processes, and fundraising capacity.



## DINING FOR WOMEN

An NGO dedicated in transforming the lives and eradicating poverty amongst women and girls in the developing countries, Dining for Women is partnering with READ Bhutan to build the livelihood skills of 300 Bhutanese women in 9 dzongkhags.



## DRUK SATAIR

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



## SINGAPORE AMERICAN SCHOOL

READ Bhutan Service Club of Singapore American School (SAS) has partnered with Yangthang Community in Haa Dzongkhag to establish a READ Center, and the school continues to support the center's programs and resources.



## FEATURED STRATEGIC PARTNERS

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 Bhutan has partnered with van Ameringen Foundation, USA, to enhance the ICT skills of young people in Bhutan.



READ Bhutan collaborates with Bhutan Cancer Society to educate rural Bhutanese women on cancer related issues and women's health.

## The John Robert Gregg Fund

The John Robert Gregg Fund supports READ Bhutan's efforts to compile, publish and preserve folktales from rural Bhutan.



International IDEA supports READ Bhutan to conduct civic and democracy education in rural Bhutan.



READ Bhutan partnered with SDC to establish a community radio at Khotakpa in Pemagatshel, Bhutan.



## SPECIAL THANKS TO

READ 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

Days for Girls

BAOWE

BCMD

Royal Monetary Authority of Bhutan

Bhutan Broadcasting Service

### Other Institutional Supporters

National Commission for Women and Children

Bank of Bhutan

RENEW

Tarayana Foundation

*If you're interested in learning more about how your company or organizations can partner with us, please kindly contact us at [info@readbhutan.org](mailto:info@readbhutan.org)*

# Financial Summary

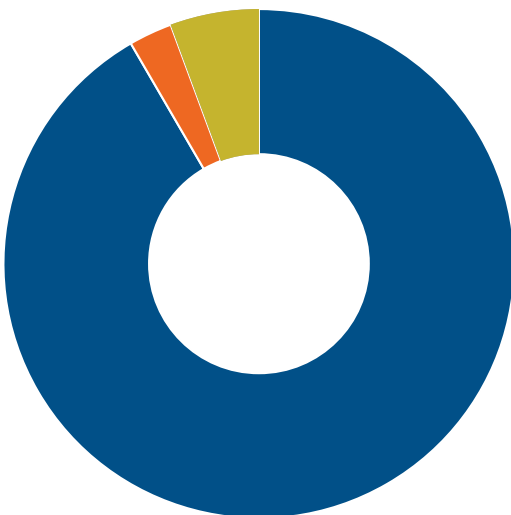
READ Bhutan’s financial highlight represents the sources of revenue collected and consolidated program and administrative expenses of our activities in 2017.

- Starting 2016, READ Bhutan has been managing the Output 3 of Asian Development Bank’s (ADB) TA-9016 BHU: Decentralized Coordination and Partnerships for Gender Equality Results, which is aimed at building the capacity and skills of women self-help groups in Bhutan. The fund thus received to implement the TA to carry out the activities is reflected the reflected as contract income.
- In 2017, READ Bhutan’s Programmatic expenses increased by 11% compared to the previous year. This is due to expansion of programs initiatives in women empowerment, livelihood, ICT, health education and also reflects the expenses made towards the implementation ADB TA. However, administrative expense decreased by 9%.
- Since READ Bhutan had to pre-finance some of the project activities due to delays in transfer of the grant, the net income for 2017 is reflected as negative.



REVENUE VS EXPENSES

Total Revenue	49%
Total Expense	51%



EXPENSES BY FUNCTION

Program services	91%
Fundraising	3%
Administrative	6%

# Looking Ahead

In 2018, we plan to deepen our impacts in rural Bhutan and strengthen the network of READ Centers we have established. We will conduct more livelihood programs for community women in nine villages and build on our Bhutan Folktale project to publish four more children's books. We will also continue with Civic Education programs at the schools and conduct reading programs.

- We plan to provide livelihood skills trainings in 9 READ communities, specifically targeted at rural women, in partnership with Dinning for Women
- We will form at least nine Women's Savings Groups and train the members in group management, basic financial literacy, marketing and bookkeeping
- We will continue with Bhutan Folktale project and publish four more illustrated children's books
- We will organize Leadership and Civic Education programs in three remaining READ Centers
- We will work with Bhutan Cancer Society to create awareness about breast and cervical cancer

**We look forward to sharing updates with you in 2018 through our website, newsletter, and social media.**



## READ MODEL



**LIBRARY**  
with 3000-5000  
books

**CHILDREN'S ROOM**  
with child-friendly furniture,  
educational toys, and  
reading material



**WOMEN'S  
ROOM**  
safe space for  
women and girls  
to attend trainings  
and receive  
medical exams



**ICT SECTION**  
with computers,  
internet access,  
copying services and  
computer skills  
training



**AV ROOM**  
with TV, educational  
videos and DVD player

**TRAINING HALL**  
Space for staff and partners  
to conduct various programs



## PROGRAM AREAS



### Education

- Literacy programs
- Basic English
- Environmental programs



### Empowering women

- Women's leadership and civic participation
- Women's health classes



### Economic Empowerment

- Livelihood skills development
- Small scale business management



### Information Technology

- Computer literacy
- Digital storytelling



# LEADERSHIP

## READ BHUTAN TEAM

**Karma Lhazom**

Country Director

**Kezang Choden**

Program Manager

**Ngawang Phuntsho**

Development Officer

**Rinchen Choden**

Field Coordinator

**Ganesh Chettri**

Field Coordinator

**Tashi Pem**

Administration and Finance Officer

**Dorji Wangchuk**

Field Coordinator

## ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

**Thinley Palden Dorji**

CEO, RSAP Pvt. Ltd.

**Tshewang Tandin**

Director General, Royal Institute of Management

**Passang Dorji**

Cee Dee Construction

**Tashi T. Dukpa**

Director, Bhutan Foundation

**Passang Dorji**

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