

From Knowledge to Power

2018

**Annual
Empowerment Report**



Dear Friends,

Our work empowering women, youth, and communities remains as relevant and energizing as ever. In 2018, READ Global took important steps to improve how we support rural communities across South Asia. We reinvigorated our focus on flexibility, agility, and a dynamic mindset - the secret ingredients providing us with even more power to foster change within our communities - and we deepened our partnership with IREX to help us continue to evolve.

A majority of women polled for our 2018 evaluation reported they have more decision-making power at home as a result of attending their READ Center. This is the kind of impact that spans generations. READ proudly aims to ensure all women realize their powers in the process of futuremaking and community-wide development. Layered on top of this power is an increase in income and/or savings that women who work with READ realize because of our comprehensive offering of programs and services.

With women front and center, READ Centers - and indeed libraries all over the world - have changed how they serve communities' adapting needs. They have evolved to become collaborative, equalizing, and organizing spaces that best meet community needs.

Looking back at 2018, we planted seeds for three paths of change that will carry us into the future:

1. Fostering woman-led, youth-led, and community-led change through programming that puts decision-making in the hands of those most impacted.
2. Supporting our country teams - READ Bhutan, READ India, and READ Nepal - as they innovate and tailor READ's approach to their country's unique circumstances.
3. Building on the deep trust READ Centers have in their communities by bringing in expert programming to help address big issues and urgent, national-scale challenges - like migration, human trafficking, and gender bias.

In this report, we again feature stories of women and youth to illustrate our model, examples of the paths of impact, and our work. Their transformation from some of the most marginalized members of rural society to powerful agents of change who lift up entire communities reaffirms our commitment to the work that we do.

I hope you'll enjoy these snapshots of change and powerful moments of agency felt and experienced by our communities across South Asia in this edition of READ's Annual Report.

In service,



Tina Sciabica
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tina Sciabica".



Deborah Jacobs
Board Chair

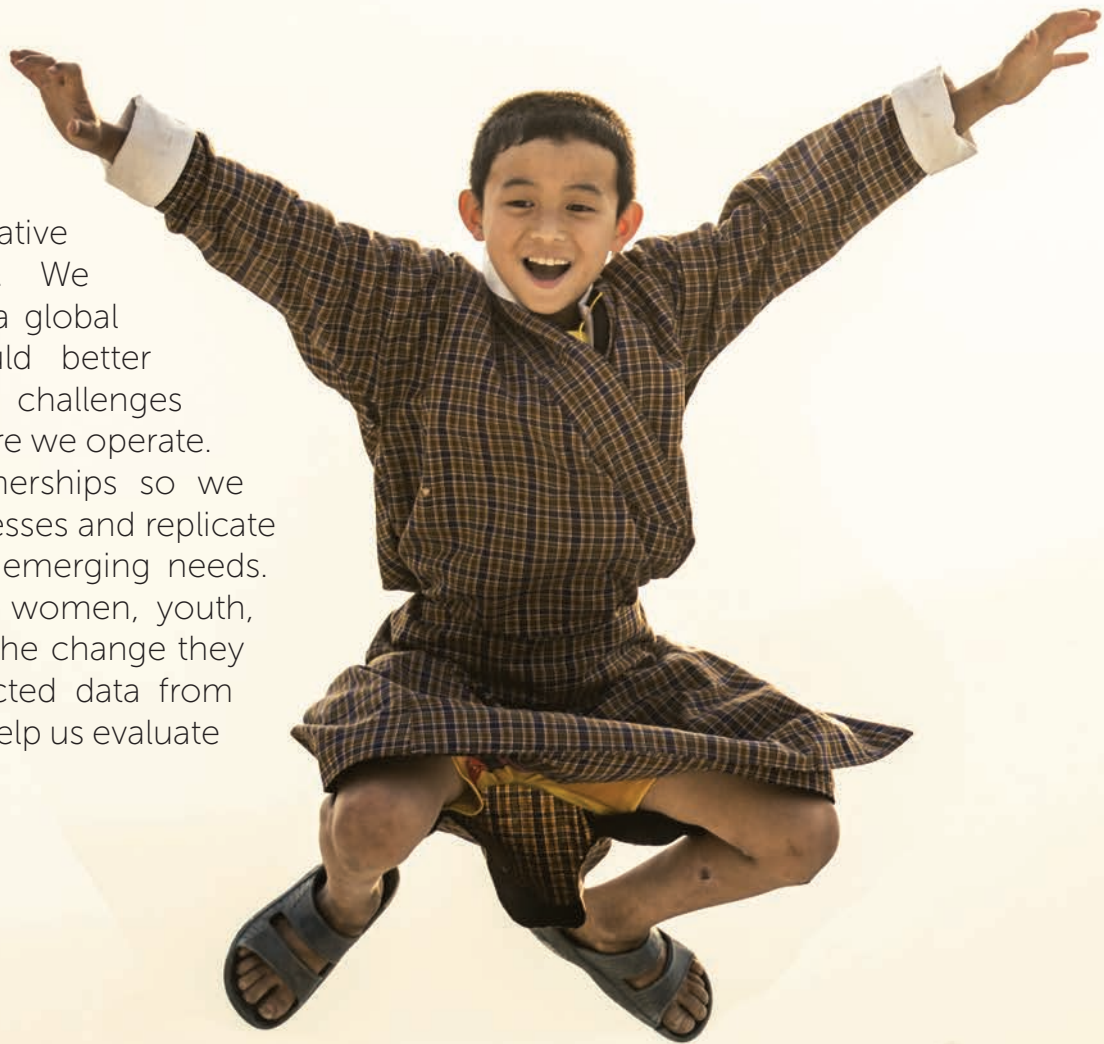
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READ believes empowering rural communities is critical to alleviating global poverty. We envision a world where individuals, families and entire communities have access to the knowledge, resources and opportunities necessary to build more prosperous futures.

Continuous Learning and Innovation in Action - 2018 Highlights by the Numbers

2018 was a transformative year for READ Global. We became more flexible as a global organization so we could better respond to the unique challenges faced in the countries where we operate. We leveraged deep partnerships so we could learn from our successes and replicate them elsewhere to meet emerging needs. In a year of empowering women, youth, and communities to lead the change they need, READ Global collected data from users of READ Centers to help us evaluate the impact of our work.



Featured in the following pages are stories of lives changed and improved by their READ Centers, with supporting data that validates our work.



Community-Led Change

READ communities have power over their own development. Empowered communities manage their own Centers, have real influence over the direction of the Center's programming, and lead the work to increase the prosperity and well-being of everyone in the community.

The vast majority of Center users reported that they have contributed in some way to their READ Center.

Users in Nepal: 96% | India: 99% | Bhutan: 96%



Women-Led Empowerment

Women agents-of-change leverage a READ Center's safe space, women-focused skills training, and economic education to put them in charge of their lives.

Women reported they feel more empowered to make decisions about spending household income since coming to the Center.

Women in Nepal: 91% | Women in India: 69% | Women in Bhutan: 72%



Youth-Led Change

READ Centers give young people the opportunities, encouragement, and resources so they can pursue educational goals, lead initiatives to improve their communities, and change what is possible for their future.

Youth reported that they use their READ Center to not only access information, but to meet with and connect with friends and peers about important issues.

Youth in Nepal: 77% | Youth in India: 57% | Youth in Bhutan: 68%



Our results to date

107

READ Centers

2.5

million people
with access

184

sustaining enterprises
launched


418

villages served



How many people were empowered through training at READ Centers in 2018?

 87,173

 73%

 10,426


people reached through specialized trainings

of all training participants were women & girls


children & youth participated in trainings

Our most popular trainings


Participants

 24,041

 6,757

 28,413

 18,815

 4,987

Topic

Advocacy & Empowerment

Health

Non-Formal Education & Literacy

Business, Entrepreneurship & Livelihoods

Capacity Building & Information and Communication Technologies

Unleashing a Lifetime of Impact



Community Members progress along a continuous cycle of learning and discovery with their READ Center, from their first moment of curiosity to a reflective pause at the end of the program's engagement, when they offer feedback about their experience. They gain new knowledge, enter into a new phase of life, and continue to create impact in their own community in a repeating cycle of continued growth and engagement with the Center.

After learning about READ from a flyer, radio show, or another person, an individual expresses **CURIOSITY** about visiting a READ Center and its programming.



They **ENTER** a READ Center to access its resources, whether it is books or computers, or to listen in on a program.





This visitor and a READ Center representative **ENGAGE** to identify how to support this person and the community, or they participate in an ongoing READ program in their Center.

The person is able to **COMPLETE** their first program with the READ Center and has gained a valuable skill, knowledge, or both, that will help them further their life, and wants more.

Once a person realizes the value of the Center, they engage in other services, tell others about the Center, and give **FEEDBACK** about resources they'd like offered at the Center.



Continuous Learning and Connecting the Past to the Present

A READ Center serves as a powerful symbol of a community's and READ's commitment and partnership to securing a prosperous future for their members. READ Centers are established through a process of co-creation between the community and the local READ team (See Moments of Engagement, pages 10-11). This dialogue between the READ country office and each community evolves over time as the community takes a lead role in directing programming to ensure they maximize the benefits of their READ Center.

Preserving Heritage and Connecting Youth with Elders - Bhutan Folk Tales Project

Bhutan is a country of long-standing customs and local traditions. As it modernizes, it risks losing stories that have never been preserved in writing, especially due to global forces such as mobile phones and urban migration, which can weaken the preservation of oral traditions. READ Bhutan directly addressed this need by launching the Bhutan Folk Tales Program, aligning with Bhutan's own principles of Gross National Happiness - to preserve traditional stories in local languages.

In this program, youth connected with elders who believed in the power and value of these traditional stories. With guidance from teachers and program staff, they recorded the stories shared by their elders, and then authored and illustrated the local folk tales into printed books. READ Bhutan has published five titles and plans to publish more in 2019.

Bhutanese elders were excited about the opportunity to pass on these treasured elements of their culture to younger generations and preserve them, and were grateful for the chance to forge new connections in their own community with the youth who participated. And youth benefited, because in addition to connecting with their elders and these stories, they learned new skills in a context that fit the way children learn best - active, applied skills - all while revitalizing their local language.



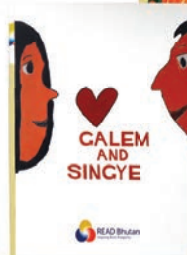
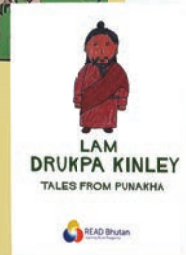
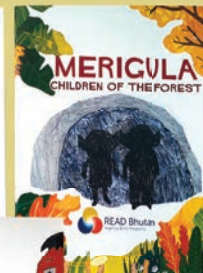
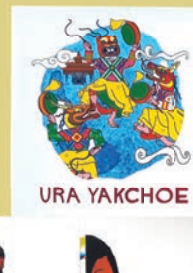
Narrating these folktales to them felt like a completely new experience, because it's been so long since I have done it. At the same time, it also took me back to my childhood, when I used to listen to my grandfather narrate these same stories to me and my siblings. It is heartwarming to see them interested and documenting the local stories.

Ugyen Dorji, 69



96%

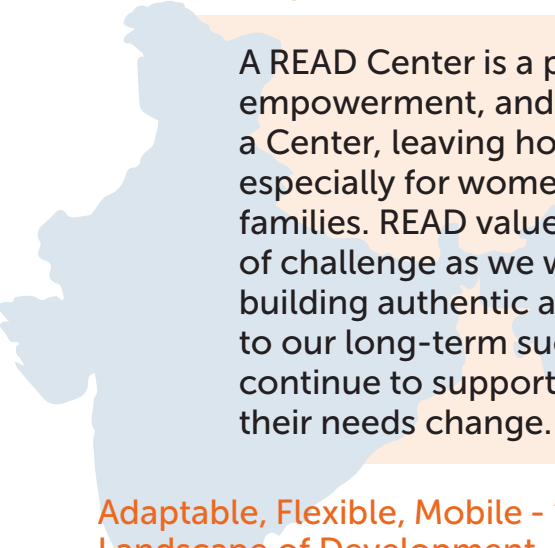
of youth surveyed at READ Centers in Bhutan indicated that they would not have access to services if the READ Center did not exist in their community.



It was interesting to work with an elder from our village on a project. We learned a lot from one another and it was a very valuable experience for us.

Sonam Seldon, 10

Adapting the READ Model to Serve More People



A READ Center is a powerful tool for inspiring rural prosperity, literacy, empowerment, and economic opportunity. For those in communities without a Center, leaving home to visit the nearest READ Center can be a challenge, especially for women who may be restricted by social norms or even their own families. READ values a flexible and human-centered approach to this kind of challenge as we work to meet various needs and mobilize communities, building authentic and long-lasting community ownership that is important to our long-term success. The READ model has evolved over time so we can continue to support a variety of communities, even as their make-up shifts and their needs change.

Adaptable, Flexible, Mobile - “Extension Centers” Ensure READ India Can Fit the Changing Landscape of Development

READ India aimed to solve a core problem facing women across India - marginalization and oppression undermining their vital role in community development and economic growth. So they partnered with Accenture in 2016 to deliver economic empowerment trainings to 5,100 women. This was significantly more than READ India could reach if they were only going to serve women living near existing centers. Their solution was **a leaner operation using extension centers, smaller centers located near an already established READ Center, to expand their total reach and deepen impact.**

READ India reached their training goal in 2017, and then expanded their use of this model in 2018 to provide training to 6,000 new women and girls, while also doubling the number of women elevated to community leadership positions.

Extension centers are creatively established in existing buildings. They need only three to five rooms and have no construction costs, which reduced the barriers for a community to establish their own READ Center. Extension centers still feature the essential resources they need to serve the community: books, technology, and materials to learn a skill or gain a much-needed certification. **Adopting the spirit of a full READ Center, they remain laser-focused on serving the needs of the people in the community, relying on local leadership to mobilize women and others to engage so the extension center can impact the community and meet its potential.**

In exchange for flexibility and reduced “startup costs,” they allow the READ India team to reach significantly more people. They offer the same openness and safety as a primary center, where women and people of all religions and castes can come together, learn and collaborate in a group setting, and grow.



A majority of women surveyed in India reported that engagement with their READ Center yielded powerful life changes including:

- ↑ The ability to now speak in front of groups **70%**
- ↑ Improved literacy **60%**
- ↑ Decision-making power at home **51%**
- ↑ Freedom to travel outside of their homes independently **57%**



I feel proud of myself and now I feel that I have the responsibility that I should help other girls like me in my community.

Yashodha, 17, Aghapur, who hosts a READ training unit in her home



Meet Preeti Gupta, age 31, who established a READ subcenter in her home in Rampur. She has provided beauty culture training to more than 150 women, and many other programs like sewing training and entrepreneurship skills continue to be executed in the same center.

Making Space for Youth to Lead

READ Centers often serve as a catalyst, enticing members of a community to take ownership of the center's future and management, encouraging them to take on leadership roles, and transforming the way they view themselves and are perceived by their communities. This is particularly true for women and youth in these communities.




Young Women Forging Leadership Roles That Impact Their Village and Entire Region

In the village of Kumroj, Nepal, a group of 35 young women and girls between 16 and 28 years old came together to form what they called a "girls' subcommittee," to support the Kumroj READ Center, after being inspired by the actions they saw youth at other READ Centers taking, thanks to social media.

In 2018, this group of young leaders had a dramatic impact on Kumroj, as they "became the backbone of their READ Center," executing a wide variety of programming and aid support in their community. The community's perception is shifting **to acknowledge the impact and power that young women have when given access to resources and opportunities. They've had far reaching influence on other community-based organizations** in the region, which are also emulating the Kumroj girls' approach to inclusive program design and execution.

92%

of youth surveyed in Nepal felt a strong sense of belonging, where they felt their opinions were accepted and considered as part of the decision-making of their READ Center.



Unlocking next-generation talent to solve the toughest challenges facing a community

In 2018, they organized programs to distribute school supplies to needy students, provided sexual reproductive health education to young girls, put on four street dramas—public performances to educate the public about and advocate against the rising number of domestic and sexual violence against women in Nepal— supported relief distribution to flood victims in Chitwan, and supported an educational program called “300 Books for Children,” which promotes reading habits among children from 6 months to 6 years old.

“We girls have earned respect and dignity from the members in our community. In the early days, people thought, ‘What will these girls be able to do?’ but the library management committee and READ believed in us and let us implement the “300 Books Program” at the library. Apart from 300 books, we also conducted street drama on violence against women. Now the community believes that Girls are also able to bring change in the community.”

Ashmita Sapkota, 21

Given the space, support, and resources - including encouragement from READ Nepal and funding from the BeautifulStore Foundation for 300 Books for Children - these young women stepped into leadership roles in powerful fashion, challenging social norms about how women and girls can lead community development.

From Knowledge to Power

We've watched more than 100 (107 at the time of printing) READ Centers come alive, supporting literacy, education, prosperity, and new-found confidence for 2.5 million lives across South Asia. Our vision is for all READ Centers to become self-sustaining vehicles for ongoing rural development led by the very communities they serve. This process of communities stepping up to take charge of their own Centers takes time, with READ teams engaging and supporting them along the way.

The READ model revolves around establishing a READ Center in a community as a vehicle for providing them the services they need, and moving the community at large from its starting situation, to knowledge, and then power, and this happens by progressing individuals and the community from **participation** to **engagement** to **ownership**.

Through participation, communities are informed, consulted, and involved in decision-making about their issues and needs, though they may not necessarily be the ultimate decision-makers. Through engagement, communities take part in leading the process of problem-solving for the benefit of their community, but may not have full power over final decisions. Ownership is realized when communities authentically own their power and drive the decision-making process of solving problems for their community.





PARTICIPATION

1

Once the local READ team starts working with a community, they partner with local leaders to figure out what community members want and need, help them understand the resources available at the READ Center, and encourage participation in the programs. They are informed, consulted and involved. This is the essential period where they all work together to get everyone involved so that the READ Center is really the result of community **participation** and co-creation.



ENGAGEMENT

2

A READ Center relies on local volunteers to keep it running and relevant. They have to take on the mantle and be part of a deeper **engagement**, both between themselves and the READ model, and between the broader community. Decision-making is a joint process. This covers everything from actual maintenance of the Center to working with the community on new programming, to leading the process of figuring out the long-term financial sustainability of the center.



OWNERSHIP

3

We strive to help every community reach the stage of full **ownership**. In this state, we can step back and know that the Center will run well, producing the empowered community members that they need to continue elevating their own prosperity and be confident in their power to use what they've learned to shape their future. Decision-making is driven by the community.

Deep Learning and Scaling Our Best Work

READ Centers serve as a flexible platform for programs and solutions that meet a variety of needs. Thanks to our partnership with IREX, we're able to draw from successes and learnings across our network and their history, delivering programs with a record of success at meeting national and regional challenges.

In 2018, we continued our work with IREX under the Communities Thrive partnership. Together, we launched our Safe Migration Program, and delved deeper into our successful work in South Asia to inform how we can support new communities and READ Centers. We also tested our model for the first time in Africa (Côte d'Ivoire) through a unique partnership working with several other organizations to bring educational resources to rural cocoa farming communities.

At its heart, our relationship with IREX is about leveraging deep partnership and replicating powerful learnings to help more people and to do it more effectively. In the future, we will be able to use evaluations of innovative new programs shared in this report to adapt our work to meet the changing needs of the world that we live in.



Supporting Safe Migration Through Community Centers

Due to a lack of information or resources, people wishing to migrate for work are often unaware of how to do so legally and safely, or they don't know how to seek recourse if they or a family member are the victim of illegal activity or deception. Perpetrators are rarely brought to justice, leaving them free to continue their deception of other migrants.

In 2018, READ and IREX launched the Diyo Program (the Nepali term for an oil lamp that symbolizes “lighting the way”), through support from the Walmart Foundation, to provide potential Nepalese migrants and their families with accurate information and community support they need to make safer migration choices, and to seek justice when trafficking or exploitation occurs.

Since its launch in 2018, our joint safe migration program has helped 17,000 prospective migrants and their families learn about safe migration.

The “Diyo” program uses a multi-pronged approach:

- We ensure critical and timely safe-migration information reaches the most vulnerable.
- We help those who have been victimized to understand how to seek recourse and refer them to relevant service providers.
- We convene stakeholders to develop and implement local strategies to prevent and address human trafficking.

Trained librarians and community members at READ Centers empower prospective migrants with information about processes, documentation, and what to expect as they prepare to negotiate with employers and recruiters. Trained coordinators amplify this work through house-to-house outreach and community events such as street dramas to raise awareness about safe migration and the services and resources available through the READ Center.

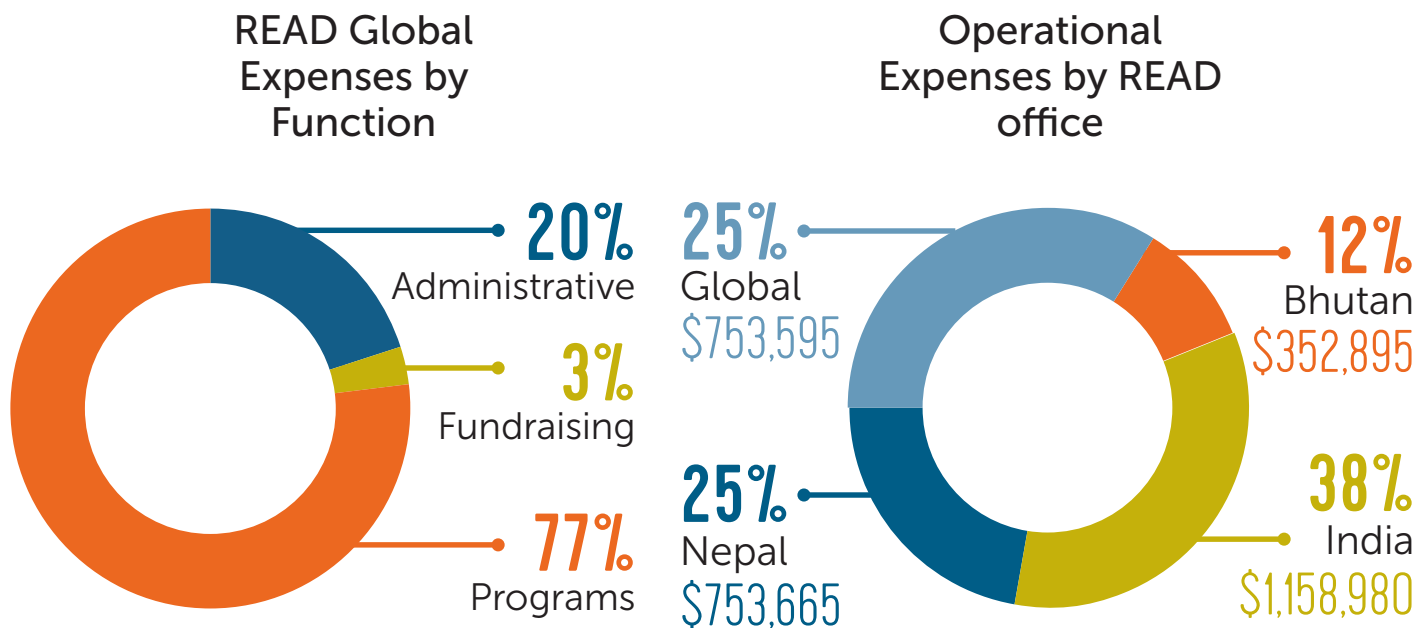


Financial Summary

In 2018, READ continued the Communities Thrive initiative in partnership with IREX. This allowed us to further 2017's learning agenda around the READ model and its potential for growth and expansion globally to new countries.

READ Global also further developed the capacity of country office teams from Bhutan, India and Nepal, deepening their expertise on international fundraising, program development, organizational enhancements and community mobilization.

These efforts all supported READ's sustainability vision of 100% local-office generated funding for each READ country office. Detailed below are breakdowns of READ Global's expenses by function and by country office.



Audited financial statements are available on our website at readglobal.org

Partners

READ would like to thank all of our partners for joining us in inspiring rural prosperity and providing essential support and resources at many points along our process of engagement.

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 nearly 2.5 million people with access to vital resources and life changing programs across South Asia.



Looking Ahead Together

2018 was the year we started making strides on a recalibrated path forward, focusing on responsiveness, flexibility, and a new way to think about our model and how we impact the communities we serve. This work renewed our commitment to empowering rural women, men, children, and entire communities by establishing new READ Centers that offer high-quality programs, by continuing to develop cutting-edge resources and trainings, and by constantly adapting to improve how we serve.

In 2019, READ will continue to:

- Work to achieve the following Sustainable Development Goals through our programming: a world with no poverty, quality education for all, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, and peace, justice, and strong institutions.
- Work with IREX under our Communities Thrive partnership to address pressing challenges and replicate the best components of the READ model.
- Train our staff to focus on human-centered design principles in service of our continued journey to evolve, stay relevant, and innovate to meet community needs.
- Refine our working framework so we can make data-driven decisions.
- Help amplify grassroots voices by highlighting locally-designed solutions.
- In partnership with IREX, launch the Tech Age Girls program in both India and Nepal.



Leadership

Global Management Team

Tina Sciabica, Executive Director

Naita Saechao Chialvo, Deputy Director

Megan Volk, Asia Regional Director

Sanjana Shrestha, Senior Program Specialist

Asia Management Team

Kezang Choden, Bhutan Country Manager

Geeta Malhotra, India Country Director

Pushpa Bhadel, Nepal Country Director

Board of Directors

Deborah Jacobs (Board Chair) - Former Director, Global Libraries Initiative, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Dr. Antonia Neubauer (Founder) - President, Myths and Mountains

Sabina Ahmed - Strategy Planning Manager, Wells Fargo

Melissa Anderson, Psy.D - Consulting Lower School Psychologist, The Agnes Irwin School

Carey Bohjanen - Partner & Chief Strategist, FutureWomenX
Managing Director Sustainable Finance Advisory

Carolyn Brehm - CEO and Founder of Brehm Global Ventures LLC

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