

# Strengthening Communities Through Locally-Driven Action

READ (Rural Education and Development) Global seeks to address poverty by providing communities the resources and opportunities necessary to shape their own prosperous futures. In South Asia, which accounts for a third of the global poor, many communities remain without adequate access to educational, economic, and social development resources. Left with the choice of living in poverty or migrating, many young people leave their families to seek work in urban areas of their own country or abroad, often facing exploitation and oppressive work conditions. The situation is even harder for women and girls as the limited resources are more typically invested in males. The social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated this crisis sinking many families deeper into poverty.

## THE READ MODEL: BRINGING TOGETHER EDUCATION, ENTERPRISE, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

READ's proven and replicable model focuses on community-owned and -led library and resource centers (READ Centers) in Nepal, India, and Bhutan. The Centers serve as vehicles for sustainable social and economic transformation by empowering people with information, education, and skills training through a whole community approach.

## WHAT MAKES A READ CENTER?

READ Centers and their programs are community-led and are designed to reflect the culture, interests, and priorities of their village. Aside from being a safe gathering place for all, Centers offer educational and economic opportunities through a variety of trainings, a library with a collection of books in the local language, a computer lab with free internet access, and an engaging children's section with educational toys. Most Centers also have their own enterprises that generate revenue, making them self-sustaining and independent.

Through local involvement and leadership, READ Centers become sustainable catalysts for uplifting and transforming entire communities. [A 2018 IREX case study](#) found that the READ model helps develop a sense of community, shared commitment, ability to solve problems and access to resources. Community members own the Center, and become key players in determining its main programs.



## OUR IMPACT TO DATE

Through decades of collaboration with partners and local communities, READ has been able to:

- ▶ Provide **2.52 million** people with access to resources
- ▶ Build **112** READ Centers
- ▶ Serve **421** communities
- ▶ Launch **185** enterprises

Since 2010, READ's training programs have empowered 531,938 people:

- ▶ **187,053**  
Non-Formal Education and Literacy
- ▶ **229,111**  
Awareness-Building and Empowerment
- ▶ **115,774**  
Livelihood and Entrepreneurship

# Programs

A core characteristic of READ Centers is their adaptability. READ helps communities address their specific needs based on their local context and situation. Some programs offered in Centers include:

## TECH AGE GIRLS

Launched in 2019 in partnership with IREX, Tech Age Girls (TAG) focuses on uplifting women and girls in READ communities in Nepal and India. TAG equips girls with technology, leadership, and life skills, plus the confidence to push their own boundaries as they explore what it means to be a young female leader in South Asia.

## LITERACY BUILDING

Aside from providing books and educational resources to communities, READ offers literacy programs to people of all ages. This includes the development of engaging lesson plans for children implemented in schools and READ Centers, women’s literacy classes, and creative writing programs such as the Bhutan Folktale Project, where children record folktales told by elders to preserve oral history.

## ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

READ Centers focus on equipping rural villagers with skills to earn a living such as improved farming and weaving so that they do not need to migrate to urban areas to find jobs. Aside from livelihood skills training, READ participants learn financial literacy, which helps them successfully run their own micro-enterprises, manage their finances, and invest in their families and the prosperity of their communities.

## SUPPORT READ COMMUNITIES IN BUILDING RESILIENT FUTURES POST-COVID-19

**216,341**  
masks distributed

**11,890**  
food rations distributed

**38,790**  
people reached with information related to COVID

READ Centers quickly adapted to meet the new challenges posed by COVID-19 quickly becoming a lifeline even when their physical premises couldn’t open. Because the Centers are embedded in each community, they were able to mobilize and address immediate needs by providing face masks, distributing food rations, conducting

information drives which connected those in need with emergency services, and holding remote trainings.

With local READ Centers now pivoting their efforts from response to recovery, vulnerable families are identifying the specific support they need to overcome long-term challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. READ Centers make it possible for communities to have small, socially distanced meetings and develop plans with local government to set plans and ensure community members have continued access to food, education, and economic opportunities. Through your support, you can help READ communities in their rebuilding efforts toward inclusive, sustainable, and resilient futures.



**READ ABOUT OUR IMPACT IN THE PAST DECADE**

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## Stories from READ Center participants



*“I feel different. I feel confident. Because of READ’s trainings, I now have a [sewing] machine in my house and I’m able to earn additional income. I plan to grow this into a real business and have my own shop. READ provided me with the opportunity to know that I can do something. I suppose this is what fulfilling your dreams feels like.”*

**Pema, READ Center Bhutan**

*“When the Panauti READ Center opened, I got involved right away and I feel very proud as now I am known by my own name. Before, I was known by the name of my father or my husband. I did not have my own identity. Now, I am delighted to be known by my own name.”*

**Shova, READ Center Nepal**

*“Our whole family joined READ activities, and I can see a change in my children now, especially my daughters. They have become strong. It is important that we educate our daughters, so that they can stand on their own feet and be independent.”*

**Om, READ Center India**