

# OUTCOMES OF READ'S LITERACY PROGRAMS IN NEPAL

*Summary Evaluation Report- 2018*



**READ Global**

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## 1. About the study and method

READ Global hired an independent strategy and evaluation firm Learning for Action to develop a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to measure the impact of the READ model. The framework designed by this firm included an organizational theory of change, logic models, an evaluation plan, data collection methods, and a training manual for READ staff to use in ongoing evaluation efforts in 2011. The data collection instruments were field-tested in 2013, which resulted in important findings as well as recommendations for READ Global. Evaluation methods for this 2017/2018 report are a result of this process and reflect the framework and methods designed and field-tested by READ Global in 2013.

READ Global applied a lean approach for the 2017/2018 evaluation and relied on field-based staff to collect and enter data for global analysis.

**Data Collection:** READ staff and community volunteers administered surveys to a gender-diverse, age- diverse, and social class-diverse group of Center users. Survey instruments are in the appendix and descriptions of the instruments follow below:

**Center User Survey:** This survey was administered to diverse groups of Center users who ranged from eight to 78 years of age. Although the surveys were originally intended for adult users, some youth inadvertently completed the user survey; this data was included in the analysis. The user surveys consisted of approximately 30 questions and were used to collect information about the countries' respective priority outcomes.

**Women's Survey:** The women's survey was administered to adult women. The definition of "adult" varied by country; therefore, women users ranged from age 15 to 68 years of age. The seven-question survey aimed to explore women's experiences at the Center and the resulting ways in which they were empowered by their participation. There were women who completed both this survey and the user survey. Therefore, this was an extension of the user survey targeting women users in particular.

**Youth Survey:** The youth survey was administered to users ages 13 to 19 years old. The youth survey questions focused on READ Center youth outcomes, including: 1) The use and exchange of knowledge, information, and resources; 2) The ways in which youth engaged with and demonstrated ownership of the READ center; and 3) The development of a culture of reading among READ Center youth in Nepal and Bhutan.

**Livelihood Training Survey:** Center users who participated in livelihood trainings completed the Livelihood Training Survey immediately following one of the trainings. The survey assessed the extent to which the training increased participants' knowledge and skills specific to the training subject, their satisfaction with the training, and their intentions to start a business using their new knowledge and skills.

**Livelihood Training Follow-Up Survey:** Center users who participated in past livelihood training completed a follow-up survey to share increases in economic empowerment they experienced as a result of the skills they acquired and implemented after the trainings.

In addition to surveys, READ staff and community volunteers facilitated two types of focus groups: one focus group was for Center users and one for women. Focus group protocols are in the appendix and descriptions of the focus groups follow below:

**Center Users' Focus Group:** A subset of users from each Center participated in respective focus groups. Focus group participants were diverse in age, gender, level of engagement with the Center, and in the types of services and resources they accessed at the Center. Each Center users' focus group was designed to provide more in-depth information about the ways in which community members engaged with and benefited from the Center.

**Women's Focus Group:** A subset of women from each READ Center participated in respective Women's focus groups. These focus groups were designed to gather in-depth information about the reasons women came to the Center and the ways in which they benefited from the Center.

It should be noted that Center users may have participated in more than one data collection method if they fell into multiple user groups. For example, a Center user who participated in a livelihood training might have completed a Center User Survey and a Livelihood Training Survey. However, different instruments collected different types of data; in other words, completing multiple types of surveys did not result in redundant data.

READ country staff collected data from a small sample of READ Centers that varied in length of time in operation, the region in the country, and programs offered. The sample included two Centers in Bhutan, four in India, and five in Nepal. They implemented all nine instruments in each of the field testing sites. READ staff conducted all focus groups, and in India and Bhutan READ staff also collected all survey data. In Nepal, READ Nepal staff trained volunteers to collect survey data. Staff in India and Bhutan administered surveys for Center users who were unable to complete the survey themselves because of limited literacy or who preferred to share answers verbally. Community members completed self-administered surveys where their level of literacy and comfort allowed. All surveys were administered by staff and volunteers in Nepal. Paper surveys were used and a team of interns was trained to enter the data into spreadsheets. Data collection took place in fall 2017 and winter 2018.

Data Analysis: READ field staff shared survey and focus group data with the evaluation team for analysis by mid-2018. The evaluation team conducted statistical analyses on all survey data submitted by the field staff using STATA software for statistics and data science and conducted content analysis and thematic coding on all qualitative data from focus groups to surface trends and key themes in the data.

## 2. Center services

- 94% percent of users indicated that they have accessed library books, 81% said they have accessed magazines, and 51% reported that they have accessed the newspapers. According to Center users, the Internet was also a very popular resource, with 72% indicating that they have accessed it at the Center
- 84% of Center users indicated that they would not have been able to access some or any of these resources if they were not provided at the Center
- 97% percent of youth indicated that they had used library books at the Center to obtain information or to increase knowledge. Eighty-four percent read magazines, 80% used the Internet, 64% used computers and 50% read newspapers.
- 78% of Nepal users visit a READ Center at least two times per week. And, over half of users visit at least four times per week.
- This evaluation attends to four focal knowledge areas: health information and resources, agricultural information and resources, economic information and resources, and technology. For each area, users from all READ Centers accessed resources to gain knowledge and used that knowledge to improve their lives and share with others. Although data suggest access and sharing occurred to varying degrees by knowledge area and by Center, it is clear the Centers play a particularly important role in users gaining information that they can share and that leads to actions they can take to improve their lives and achieve goals.
- Nepal Centers may provide space, services, and programming that has the broadest impact, including an impact not only on self-esteem and confidence but also on the relational and financial realities of women users. Additionally, given a high percentage of users selected multiple changes, it might also be the case that individual users utilize a bigger variety of resources at Nepal Centers.
- Given the importance of community in the design and operation of the Centers, community members' buy-in, sense of ownership and engagement with the Centers is critical. It is also important that community members contribute to the center in meaningful ways. The majority of Center users in Nepal have made significant personal contributions to their READ Centers, indicating that they feel ownership of, and are invested in, their community Centers. Overall, 96% of respondents said that they

*"Library is infrastructure-wise the best thing in the entire community that provides service to every groups and brings. No one feels unwelcomed in the center."*

*– Moti User Focus Group, Nepal*

have contributed in some way to their READ Center. The most common contributions made by Center members were: 1) Publicizing the center 2) Volunteering their time 3) Offering opinions about programming, and 4) Making financial contributions. Most users (85%) indicated that they have told their family and friends about the Center, while approximately one-third of users (35%) said that they have volunteered their time. One-quarter indicated that they have shared their opinions about Center programs and events, and 19% said they have made monetary contributions. Fewer users (15%) made in-kind donations, such as labor, books, land or equipment.

### 3. Outcomes from literacy and learnings

The outcomes specifically contributing to literacy are categorised in following sections.

#### 3.1 Functional literacy

##### 3.1.1 Outcomes related to Economic empowerment

- 70% percent of users said they have been able to increase their harvest and 65% indicated they can take better care of their animals. Fifty-eight percent of users said they have applied innovations in farming or are empowered to share agricultural information. Half of the users (53%) indicated they can now solve problems related to crops or livestock.
- The majority of Center users indicated that they accessed information about livelihood skills and/or income-generating activities (65%). Although this was the most popular type of economic information accessed at the Center, users also selected information about savings, credit, and micro-loans (49%), financial literacy (42%), and market and buying/selling information (35%). Because of this information, Nepal Center users indicated that they can now do a better job of saving money (75%), sharing economic information with others (74%), produce more income (42%) as well as obtaining loans (37%), starting and improving their businesses (30% and 27%, respectively).
- Nepal Center users accessed agricultural and economic resources and information, and reported benefits from those experiences. Whereas more than half of Center users accessed information and resources related to animal husbandry, crops, general farming and livelihood/income information, other regions had more of a spread between topics with none resulting in a clear majority. The benefits to Nepalese users ranged from being able to take better care of their animals to be able to share information with others.
- The results indicate that ICT resources have been especially helpful to some users. Nearly one-third of users said they have used ICT resources to help them find information about their current job or livelihood, and 20% of users reported they have used ICT resources to help them search for new employment.
- Most participants (82%) said they learned the skills they needed to start a business or enterprise because of the livelihood training offered by the Center. The most common types of businesses that participants hoped to start as a result of the training included agricultural (40%), embroidery or textile-related (30%), mushroom farming (24%), or livestock raising and selling (21%).
- The follow-up survey on livelihood training results highlights some of the ways in which the livelihood trainings had a lasting impact on the participants and their ability to generate income. In the follow-up survey, a large majority (87%) indicated that they have started a business since being a part of a livelihood training; the most popular types of new businesses were agricultural (51%) and mushroom farming (36%). Additionally, 79% said they improved a business that they already had and most participants said they did so by expanding their business, improving the quality of their business, gaining access to a new market of clients, and being able to obtain a new loan or get technical advice.

*"I had a land but due to lack of agricultural knowledge I had given the land in lease. After I took the training, I cancelled the lease and started doing agriculture myself. I expect to earn NRS 20,000 profit this time and confident about increasing the profit in [the] near future."*

*– Agyouli Women Focus Group, Nepal*

- Participants reported that the skills and knowledge that they have gained through the livelihood trainings have translated into greater income, and in turn, have improved their quality of life. The majority (92%) of participants reported that their income has increased since the training and they reported an average monthly increase of 7,165. As a result of participating in these trainings, approximately three-quarters of participants indicated that they can now pay for more or better food (76%), access healthcare or pay for medication (76%), increase their savings (74%), and/or send their children to school (74%).
- The majority of Center users indicated that they accessed information about livelihood skills and/or income-generating activities (65%). Although this was the most popular type of economic information accessed at the Center, users also selected information about savings, credit, and micro-loans (49%), financial literacy (42%), and market and buying/selling information (35%).
- When asked about agricultural knowledge, the majority of Center users indicated that they have accessed knowledge, resources, and information related to crops (68%) and animal husbandry (67%). Another 50% said they have accessed resources related to general farming. Although not selected by the majority of Center users, irrigation/water access (37%) and problems with livestock (35%) were also popular topics for which they utilized Center resources. Center users in Nepal indicated that they now can do many things with their newfound agricultural knowledge. For instance, 70% percent of users said they have been able to increase their harvest and 65% indicated they can take better care of their animals. Fifty-eight percent of users said they have applied innovations in farming or are empowered to share agricultural information. Half of the users (53%) indicated they can now solve problems related to crops or livestock.
- The majority of Center users indicated that they accessed information about livelihood skills and/or income-generating activities (65%). Although this was the most popular type of economic information accessed at the Center, users also selected information about savings, credit, and micro-loans (49%), financial literacy (42%), and market and buying/selling information (35%). Because of this information, Nepal Center users indicated that they can now do a better job of saving money (75%), sharing economic information with others (74%), produce more income (42%) as well as obtaining loans (37%), starting and improving their businesses (30% and 27%, respectively).
- Nepal Center users accessed agricultural and economic resources and information, and reported benefits from those experiences. Whereas more than half of Center users accessed information and resources related to animal husbandry, crops, general farming and livelihood/income information, other regions had more of a spread between topics with none resulting in a clear majority. The benefits to Nepalese users ranged from being able to take better care of their animals to be able to share information with others.

### 3.1.2 Outcomes related to Health and wellbeing

- Data suggested that Nepal READ Centers increase the knowledge and knowledge exchange of users and influence the actions and decisions that come as a result of the newly acquired information. Although users access resources and gain knowledge related to health, agriculture, economics, and technology, the majority of users accessed resources and gained knowledge related to health.
- Those who did gain knowledge indicated newfound abilities and decision-making resulting from their learnings. For example, accessing the Centers' health-related resources and information was related to being able to practice healthy behaviors, gain access to other health resources, and make more nutritious food choices for themselves and their families (among other significant benefits found in the data).
- Those who did gain knowledge indicated newfound abilities and decision-making resulting from their learnings. For example, accessing the Centers' health-related resources and information was related to being able to practice healthy behaviors, gain access to other health resources, and make more nutritious food choices for themselves and their families (among other significant benefits found in the data).



- When asked about the type of health resources and information that they have accessed, almost all of the Center users indicated that they have accessed resources about general health and well-being (91%), and sanitation and hygiene (92%).
- Fifty-four percent said they had accessed information and resources related to sexual and reproductive health resources and information. Many users had also accessed information and resources related to maternal/child health (48%), vaccines (49%) and nutrition (47%). Because of the information they learned through resources at the Center, 90% of users said they could practice healthy hygiene behaviors and 84% indicated they could access other health resources. Approximately three-quarters of users said they were able to feed themselves and their families more nutritiously, could solve health-related problems, and were empowered to share health information with the community.
- Health-related resources and information seem to be among the most popular knowledge areas accessed by Center users in all regions. Within this domain, information about general health and well-being was most popular and seemed to lead people to engage in more healthy lives and make healthier choices for themselves and their families.

### 3.1.3 Outcomes related to Literacy skills and reading habit

- The results suggest that the Nepal READ Centers had a positive impact on literacy and reading habits of their youth and adult Center users. The impact seems to have enabled adults to engage in some important tasks and knowledge building in their lives; and, the impact on youth seemed to be perceived by youth themselves as quantitatively great.
- The result of increased literacy and reading habits, users read books, newspapers and other publications very often (62%) and 42% use the computer, websites or the internet very often to access information and resources. When asked what they can now do with their increased literacy, users reported that they can read more books and print materials (73%) now that have become more literate, they can use the Internet with greater ease (74%), participate in Center training programs (72%), continue their own education (65%), help their children with schoolwork (61%), read to their children (61%), and better read signs and directions (51%). In taking a look at these new abilities, many are directly related to knowledge gains, therefore using reading for learning.
- For Nepal youth, 82% said their literacy had increased and 88% indicated that their reading had increased very much since coming to the Center.

### 3.1.4 Outcomes related to Women empowerment

The evaluation surfaced three findings that emphasize the notable role READ Centers play in empowering women:

- i) READ Centers support increases in women's self-esteem, confidence and ability to share ideas.
- ii) Women's engagement with READ Centers is related to powerful life changes.
- iii) READ Centers empower women as decision-makers for themselves, their families and their communities.

- READ Centers empower women in many ways. First and foremost, they provide safe opportunities for women to leave their homes and participate in learning. Through these programs and services, women can share their ideas with others and can gain new knowledge and skills contributing to women's economic empowerment and shared prosperity.
- Nepal READ Centers seem to have a strong impact on women's increased decision-making in the areas of spending and healthcare. Additionally, the high numbers of women reporting increased decision-making in so many other areas may indicate the Nepal Centers' broad impact on so many women and the possibility that many women access a variety of resources the Centers have to offer. Given the high percentages in so many areas of impact, it is also interesting to note the areas that were not chosen by the majority. The least number of women felt empowered to make decisions about employment (13%); also with numbers in the lower range, fewer women felt the Center empowered them to make decisions about their own marriages (26%), buying and selling of land (26%), and their own education (32%).

*Whatever things we are confused in, we can search through the internet and available books, which has reduced the dependency towards other people which we used to have in the past and made us self-reliant."*

– Gardi User Focus Group, Nepal

- On important change is the power of having a voice. Eighty-eight percent of women indicated they are now able to speak in front of groups, which is important when considering the power in sharing ideas with others. The ability to share and speak up may also be connected to the sharing of ideas in public and at home (82%) and the increase in the power to make decisions at home. Therefore women seem to feel empowered to speak into conversations and decisions that span both the public and domestic spaces. Additionally, Nepalese women felt empowered to travel outside the home more often (85%) and increased their social circle to include new friends, who can serve as support and resources.
- The majority of women surveyed indicated that the Nepal READ Centers played a role in many important life changes. Table 27 lists these changes and highlights those that were selected by the majority of women surveyed.
- On important change is the power of having a voice. 88% percent of women indicated they are now able to speak in front of groups, which is important when considering the power in sharing ideas with others. The ability to share and speak up may also be connected to the sharing of ideas in public and at home (82%) and the increase in the power to make decisions at home. Therefore, women seem to feel empowered to speak into conversations and decisions that span both the public and domestic spaces. Additionally, Nepalese women felt empowered to travel outside the home more often (85%) and increased their social circle to include new friends, who can serve as support and resources.
- Visiting the Centers also led to improvements to personal and family health (58%), increases in income and savings (61%), new skills acquired (50%), improved literacy (56%) and better relationships with their families (73%). With the number of changes women indicated, it seems the Nepal Centers' resources, programs, and information support women to believe in their abilities, empower them to have a voice, and provide the support and resources to get the help they need to make important life changes. One Moti woman user reported that, "Woman in the community have realized the power of togetherness."
- In particular, women have said that, since coming to the Center, they were able to contribute to decisions regarding spending, family planning, healthcare, and their children's education.

*"Information and awareness regarding diseases like breast cancer is spread among women. Also, importance of reproduction health and concept of family planning is provided to women with different books and materials."*

– Gardi Woman Focus Group, Nepal



- Nepal Centers' women users participate in the women's savings co-op (70%) and about half of the users have been participating in women's groups for more than three years (49%).
- Sixty-eight percent of women in Nepal reported that their level of self-esteem has increased at least moderately since coming to the Center.
- A similar percentage of women (69%) reported that their self-confidence has increased as a result of participating in Center programs and women have reported a moderate increase in their abilities to share ideas thoughts and opinions with others (73%).
- Nepal READ Center women users feel empowered as decision-makers, data suggest nine areas to be the areas of greatest impact. Most women indicated the ability to make decisions about spending (91%) and healthcare (90%). These two areas were selected by the vast majority (nearly all) of women users surveyed and may be reflective of strong programming and resources in these two areas. Other areas selected by the majority of women were family planning/childbearing (59%), their children's education (69%), their children's marriage (53%), travel/mobility (56%), civic participation (51%), involvement in social activities (75%), and selecting crops or animals for farming (60%).
- READ Centers empower women in many ways. First and foremost, they provide safe opportunities for women to leave their homes and participate in learning. Through these programs and services, women can share their ideas with others and can gain new knowledge and skills contributing to women's economic empowerment and shared prosperity.

*"Before there were no places to go out for us woman, and even if we wanted we were not trusted by family member, but now since I have started coming to the library, I can now talk my way out of home, I can convince family members why I like going to the library."*

*– Kamala Poudel Women Focus Group, Nepal*

### 3.2 Ability to solve problems

For this category, many outcomes are similar to outcomes in section 3.1, thus the same is not repeated in this section.

- Half of the users (53%) indicated they can now solve problems related to crops or livestock.
- Approximately three-quarters of users said they were able to feed themselves and their families more nutritiously, could solve health-related problems, and were empowered to share health information with the community.

Those who accessed agricultural resources were able to better care for animals and increase their harvest (among others).

### 3.3 Communicative competence

- Those who used technology were able to use it to engage in important activities such as communication with others, help with school, and getting a job.
- Women have also indicated that they were more comfortable speaking in front of groups, able to travel outside of their homes more frequently and have felt empowered to make decisions within their family or community
- A similar percentage of women (69%) reported that their self-confidence has increased as a result of participating in Center programs and women have reported a moderate increase in their abilities to share ideas thoughts and opinions with others (73%)

### 3.4 Sense of community and shared goals

- Community members have a strong sense of ownership of, and belonging to, their local READ Centers. Adult Center users in Nepal also indicated an extremely high sense of personal belonging. Although only 10% of users indicated that they were involved in establishing their local Center, 85% reported that the Center feels “very much” like a place where they belong.
- 64% of survey participants indicated that they have used ICT resources to communicate with people outside of their village, 62% used ICT to access the Internet, and 60% used these resources to help with school. Many users also indicated that they have utilized ICT resources to prepare important documents (47%) or to help with their job (31%). Additionally, Center attendance is related to increased comfort with using computers to access information, as 93% indicated their comfort levels have increased and 67% indicated it increased very much. According to this data, we may infer that accessing technology-related resources, support and information at the Center has increased users’ comfort in using computers, thus, the ability to use the computer for important knowledge-building, knowledge-sharing and livelihood functions listed above.
- Those who used technology were able to use it to engage in important activities such as communication with others, help with school, and getting a job.
- It is also worth noting that 61% used the READ Center to not only access information, but also to connect with friends. Therefore, the Center also seems to both serve as an informational resource for all users and an important social context for Nepal youth.
- Ninety-eight percent of Nepal Center users said they had shared health knowledge with at least one other person and 50% said they had shared information with 10 or more people.
- In addition to learning more about agriculture, users indicated that they share this information with others. Seventy-nine percent of users have shared newly-acquired agricultural-related information with at least one other person, 38% shared with 10 or more people, 24% shared with between four and nine people, and 17% shared with one to three people.
- Because of this information, Nepal Center users indicated that they can now do a better job of saving money (75%), sharing economic information with others (74%)
- Eighty-two percent of users surveyed shared the economic information they learned with at least one other person, 19% shared with one to three people, 26% shared with between four and nine people, and 37% shared with 10 or more people.
- Visiting the Centers also led to improvements to personal and family health (58%), increases in income and savings (61%), new skills acquired (50%), improved literacy (56%) and better relationships with their families (73%). With the number of changes women indicated, it seems the Nepal Centers’ resources, programs, and information support women to believe in their abilities, empower them to have a voice, and provide the support and resources to get the help they need to make important life changes. One Moti woman user reported that, “Woman in the community have realized the power of togetherness.”
- To further demonstrate the impact of livelihood trainings, in the follow-up survey, 91% of participants said they had referred family members or friends to the livelihood training, which suggests that they believe the trainings are beneficial not only to themselves, but to their community

*"Whenever anyone is in unfavorable situation, proper suggestions or helping hand is provided by the woman for problem solving. This very thing makes us realize that we are never alone which encourages us to fight with whatever the problem is."*

*– Moti Women Focus Group, Nepal*

*"... after coming to the center, I feel like I am part of the community, my identity in the community have increased. There has been lot of knowing people and introducing myself to them as well."*

*– Goma Acharya Focus Group, Nepal*