



**READ  
Global**

Hope in  
Action



**20  
21**

Year in  
Review



FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

Amidst the continuing challenges of COVID-19 in 2021, communities in South Asia remained hopeful. We at READ Global remember the past year for how the crisis brought out the best in these communities—their hope in action that resulted in:

**Community response:** The pandemic brought out the trust, agility, and ability of communities to collaborate in addressing local needs, especially in times of crisis.

**Flexibility and generosity:** READ's donors and partners strengthened their trust in local communities by giving them more agency over initiatives and solutions.

**Equity:** From brick kiln workers earning below minimum wage to girls on the verge of being subjected to child marriage, READ is strengthening our work with the most marginalized communities to ensure that every individual, regardless of background, can shape their own futures.

In this 2021 Year in Review, we are amplifying voices from READ communities and showing the paths they are taking towards a future full of hope.

With gratitude,

**Sanjana Shrestha**  
READ Global  
Executive Director

## 30 YEARS OF IMPACT TOWARD THRIVING COMMUNITIES

### Our Mission and Vision

READ (Rural Education and Development) Global believes that empowering rural communities is critical to solving the problem of global poverty.

We envision a world where individuals, families, and entire communities have **access to knowledge, resources, and opportunities** necessary to shape their own prosperous futures and build cohesive, resilient, and inclusive societies. Together with communities in rural South Asia, we create self-sustaining community-owned and led library and resource centers. These centers' programs help unlock a community's social and economic potential.

### Our Model

READ's model focuses on sustainable, community-owned and managed Community Library and Resource Centers (READ Centers) as the launching point for rural social and economic transformation.

The Centers are designed as safe spaces to serve whole communities, featuring a place with books and educational materials, training/conference hall, information and communications technology (ICT) room, and women's and children's sections. Through a variety of partnerships, READ Centers offer customized trainings and comprehensive programs in livelihood skills, micro-enterprise development, literacy, women and youth empowerment, health education, and technology to thousands of individuals each year. Using a whole community-driven approach, these Centers are transforming the lives of all community members, particularly women and girls and other marginalized groups that are all too easily left behind.

## Our Leadership Team

### Global Management Team

Sanjana Shrestha  
Executive Director

Megan Volk  
Deputy Director

Sushmita Lama  
Asia Regional Manager

Kezang Choden  
READ Bhutan Country Director

Rinchen Choden  
READ Bhutan Field Officer

Geeta Malhotra  
READ India Country Director

Smita Anand Rai  
READ India Director of  
Partnerships and  
Resource Mobilization

Chhatra Bahadur Khatri  
READ Nepal Country Director

Chin Kaji Shrestha  
READ Nepal Deputy  
Country Director

### Board of Directors

Anouk Hungate  
Board Co-Chairperson

Swathi Massar  
Board Co-Chairperson

Dr. Antonia Neubauer  
Founder

April Burks  
Keith Kehr  
Melissa Anderson  
Tina Sciabica  
Shivraj Mundy

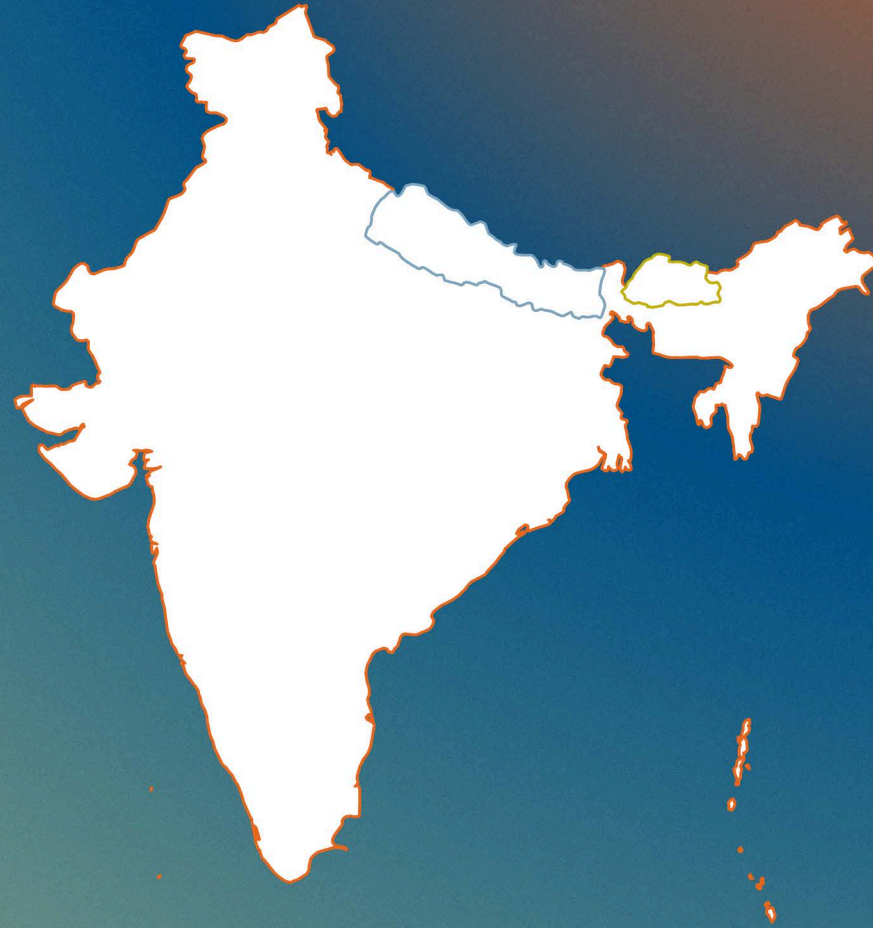
### Advisory Board

Sara Lafrance  
Stephen Wiel



## 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

READ communities continued to build resilience by rooting their work in local leadership and collective action to meet pressing challenges. READ Bhutan, READ India, and READ Nepal successfully raised funds independently, allowing them to expand their operations, build new Centers and implement new programs. Here are some of our success stories.



### Expanding Our Reach

READ celebrated 30 years of collaborating with underserved South Asian communities to spur locally-led development.

**2.52 million** people reached to date

**123** total READ Centers to date

**5** new READ Centers opened in Nepal and India in 2021

### Ensuring Education and Opportunities for Girls

The Tech Age Girls (TAG) program, implemented in India and Nepal in partnership with the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), provided holistic support to teenage girls to help them set and achieve ambitious goals.

**720** girls built their IT, leadership, and community development skills

**2,645** youth were reached through the cascade training and community projects of TAG participants

**85%** of participants in India reported having increased agency in choosing their educational pursuits

### Promoting Inclusion of the Most Marginalized

Through human-centered design interventions, READ partnered with bonded laborers working in brick kilns and other marginalized communities in Jahada and Siraha, Nepal to develop solutions to challenges they are facing in livelihood, safety, education, and health.

**183** families reached with emergency aid and tailored assistance

**17** families received goats and animal husbandry training to launch family enterprises

**42** daily wage workers received low-interest loans to start businesses to break the cycle of bonded labor

**2** mobile learning centers were created that serve more than 60 children



"If there wasn't a READ Center in my community, I might have gotten married early and gotten stuck doing household chores and taking care of kids all day. But because of READ and TAG, I am now able to earn my keep, support my parents and siblings, and get married only when I'm ready." Anjali, TAG Participant, READ Nepal

## COVID-19 UPDATES

Responding to COVID-19 surges in South Asia, in 2021, READ communities continued to design and implement relief efforts to meet their community's specific needs.

**216,341** masks distributed

**11,890** food rations provided

**709** people received routine vaccinations and prenatal check-ups at READ Centers

**38,700** people reached with COVID-related information

### Continuous Support of Students' Learning

READ Centers set up virtual, and later, in-person tutoring sessions so students keep learning and cope with school closures. We set up mobile libraries, broadcasted lessons over radio, and increased computer access for remote learning. We also continued to strengthen our efforts to improve elementary students' reading comprehension through in-school literacy-building sessions during library hours, after-school tutoring, and informal learning sessions for younger children held by older youth during school closures.

**10,500+** students reached with tutoring sessions



"When schools reopened, I was so nervous—I couldn't understand the lessons! But through the after-school program at our READ Center, I was able to learn to read better, which helped me do my homework and improve my grades." Lekden, Student and Participant, READ Bhutan

### A Lifeline for Families Struck by the Pandemic

To combat the economic instability caused by COVID-19, local leaders and READ Center participants came together to develop the Sataha Project, which offers families no-interest microloans to cope with economic insecurity during the pandemic and avoid predatory loans that can trap them in debt. Center staff supported applicants in building business plans and strengthening their financial literacy to increase their chances of success.

**20** families reported they have begun generating income from investments they made through the loan

**17** families received livestock they now breed to cover family expenses



"When COVID-19 hit, my husband and I lost our jobs, our three daughters stopped school, and he took to drinking. Good thing our READ Center started the Sataha Project, which offers interest-free loans! I was asked about the business I wanted to start before the READ staff approved the loan so I could become an independent goat farmer." Madhu, Business Owner & Participant, READ Nepal



## TOWARD LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY

## Our Financial Summary

With more than three decades of experience, READ empowers rural communities in 123 Centers across Bhutan, India, and Nepal. Local sustainability is important to our community-led approach that ensures an agile and contextualized response. As READ Global grows, we are strengthening the independence of the local READ organizations, just as they ensure that READ Centers are owned and managed by the community. Local READ organizations have made significant strides in developing their expertise on international fundraising, organizational enhancements, and community mobilizations through capacity-building programs.

Read about our expenses and fundraising specific to each local READ organization below.

### EXPENSES by FUNCTION

Majority (76%) of our expenses were directed to our programs for education, livelihood, youth empowerment, women, and families.



### FUNDRAISING by COUNTRY



READ Global continues to support programming across South Asia, but the country-level organizations are empowered to conduct their own fundraising. In 2021, READ organizations raised a total of \$1,971,725.

READ India	\$1,183,094
READ Nepal	\$743,176
READ Bhutan	\$45,455

## CHAMPIONING LOCALLY-LED DEVELOPMENT

# 187 champions

Advocates, partners, and donors around the globe make READ's work possible. Your commitment to our work helps ensure access to relevant and life-changing programs for youth, women, and families. Together, we can keep empowering communities in South Asia toward prosperity on their terms.

## Our Donors & Partners





Anchored in our community-led approach and seven of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, READ Global is cultivating hopeful futures.



In 2022, we aim to:

**Strengthen** sustainability and independence of READ Country Offices in Bhutan, India, and Nepal in order to expand to new countries.

11 17

**Deepen** our work in Centers with the most marginalized members of society through human-centered design principles.

1 4 5 8 10

**Elevate** the READ model and broaden the global network of Centers to strengthen their role in local communities during times of crisis.

1 4 5 8 11

**Support** children in regaining lessons, knowledge, and skills missed due to school closures amid the pandemic.

1 4 10

Let's build a future of hope and create lasting impact for future generations.



You can help us inspire rural prosperity.

Watch our 2022 Vision Video [here](#).



## CONNECT WITH READ GLOBAL

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