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.
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 Jajhada 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.” Leiden, 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 Satha 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**

*Quotes were translated from Hindi, Nepali, and Dangi to English.*
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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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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.
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.

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

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

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

**CONNECT WITH READ GLOBAL**

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