Figures at a Glance

- **8** New READ Centers in 2022 and 2023
  (2 in Nepal, 6 in India)

- **139** Centers

- **1,034** Villages

- **347,304** people served in 2023

In 2022/2023, READ trainings reached the following number of individuals:

- **24,974** Livelihood Skills
- **32,847** Literacy
- **2,277** Entrepreneurship
- **5,424** Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
- **5,042** Safe Migration
- **9,516** Participants in READ Savings Cooperatives
Letter from the

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on the past year, it fills me with immense pride and gratitude to share the remarkable accomplishments of the READ family through our annual report. We have witnessed transformational change in the communities we serve and the enduring impact of our work as investments made decades ago continue to produce results. We have also experienced great sadness with the passing of our founder Antonia Neubauer, but are dedicated to ensuring her legacy lives on through the communities we serve.

The success of the READ Method is a testament to our commitment to community-led development. We believe that true change can only be achieved when communities are empowered to identify and address their own challenges. Through our approach grounded in patience, deep listening, trust and respect, we have stood hand-in-hand with communities, fostering their belief in their own power to effect change. It is heartwarming to see the vibrant network of Centers that continue to thrive even after decades of operation.

We have always strived to adapt and grow with the changing times, and this year has been no different. At READ Global, being a learning organization is at the core of who we are. We understand that each community is unique, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to development. Therefore, we remain committed to deeply understanding the circumstances of each community with whom we engage. Our team fosters a culture of regular reflection, encouraging flexibility and creative working methods that suit each unique local context. Together, we constantly seek new insights and knowledge to enhance our collective impact, embracing the ever-changing contexts in which we operate.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the unwavering support and generosity of our donors, partners, and the tireless efforts of our dedicated READ country affiliate staff on the ground. Thank you for being part of our journey and for believing in the power of community-led development.

As we look forward to the future, we remain committed to our mission and continue to build upon our successes. Together, we will create a world where every community can shape its own destiny and build a brighter, more sustainable future.

With deep appreciation and warm regards,

Sanjana Shrestha
Executive Director, READ Global
Following an initial investment, most READ Centers are financially self-perpetuating & remain a highly valued, enduring community institution.
The READ Method for Transformational Change

**What is Built**
- Community owned and operated resource center (Space)
- Local enterprises sustain center
- Local Partnerships

**Community Capacities Strengthened**
- Sense of Community
- Shared Commitment
- Ability to Solve Problems
- Access to Resources

**Major Impact Seen**
- Enhanced Social Cohesion
- Development Outcomes (economic prosperity, education, women’s empowerment)
- Greater Individual & Community Resilience
- Increased Agency & Belief in Their Potential

Values Underpin Enduring Impact

- We believe in human potential
- We have faith in community action
- Compassion and respect are at our core
- Inclusivity is at the essence of our approach
- Equity-driven thinking is key
The READ Method

As READ supports and empowers communities to launch and manage their own READ Centers, it’s work is guided by the READ Method, a facilitation approach developed through its 30 years of community-led development efforts. A study by IREX has shown that this approach has effectively nurtured social trust and collective action, building communities’ capacity to come together and tackle pressing problems. This increased community capacity leads to a transformational change. As a result, communities design and launch local initiatives that impact a range of development outcomes from increased literacy rates, improved household income, and greater opportunities for women, girls, and other disadvantaged groups.

READ’s proven method for building community agency empowers communities to recognise and believe in their own inherent potential to solve local problems and foster more fulfilling futures.

THEORY OF CHANGE

IF

READ lives and breathes its core values and facilitates a community’s belief in itself through the process of establishing community-led library and resource centers that serve as a foundational platform for unlocking a community’s social and economic potential.

THEN

We build cohesive, inclusive, and resilient communities where everyone – especially those most marginalized – access and benefit from knowledge, resources, and opportunities necessary to shape their own dignified and fulfilling futures.
READ’s Method- 8 Principles for Facilitating Transformational Change

1. **Deep, empathetic listening**
   Trust is fundamental and must be earned. Deep listening with genuine empathy is an essential tool to understand perspectives, to recognize biases and to avoid judgement.

2. **Patience**
   Local leadership must be fully committed and engaged to lead the change. Sustainable results take time and must advance on the communities’ timeline.

3. **Managing power dynamics**
   Harmful power dynamics preclude challenging the status quo. Broad based agreements improve the likelihood of adoption and implementation of decisions and changes.

4. **Inclusive dialogue**
   Broad cross-section of community members must be engaged to ensure broad buy-in and understanding. Community members across caste, economic, political and religious affiliations must be convened in a safe place to share opinions and build understanding and cohesion.

5. **Participatory decision making**
   Communities cultivate trust by engaging diverse groups in decision making and ensuring their perspectives are heard. READ’s facilitation method cultivates space for inclusive and accountable decision making and action.

6. **Holistic approach**
   Developmental hurdles result from interconnected economic, social, environmental, and cultural dimensions. Recognizing, understanding and addressing the multiple dimensions and interconnectedness of community life and social problems results in a more sustainable solution.

7. **Built on partnerships**
   Working together and harnessing other’s resources and capabilities results in the greatest impact. READ and READ centers do not work in silos but act as a convenor to bring everyone together to solve social problems collaboratively.

8. **Commitment to evolution**
   Uniqueness of communities and their development needs means solutions and approaches need to be localized. Solutions and programs should be adaptable to accommodate community feedback, changing circumstances, and evolving needs.
READ’s Organizational Structure

READ’s organizational structure exemplifies a lean global framework with an emphasis placed on creating vibrant local affiliates that serve as equal partners in our joint work. READ India and READ Nepal are locally owned and registered, and READ Bhutan is in the process of becoming so. READ Global’s three country affiliates are staffed by more than 50 dedicated individuals working directly with communities. These offices support 139 Centers, each equipped with its own infrastructure and a community-owned sustainable funding plan. Moreover, these centers are served by hundreds of enthusiastic volunteers who support READ Centers’ activities. We pride ourselves on considering all individuals involved—whether staff or volunteers—as equal partners and vital constituents in our mission. Through these concerted efforts, READ continues to advance its vision of empowering communities, ensuring that each step we take is in harmony with our core values of inclusivity, respect, equity, and a belief in human potential.

How We Define Transformational Change

- **Cultivating Agency**- Ability of communities to solve their own problems through collective effort and shared commitment
- **Inclusive Reach**- All community members engage and benefit, particularly those most marginalized
- **Systemic Change**- Addressing the root case of marginalization and leading to changes in policies, structures, and practices
- **Self-Propagating**- A ripple effect is created when those who benefit use the READ Center’s platform to scale knowledge, skills, and attitudes
- **Sustained Solutions**- Creation of locally-owned solutions that have enduring impact
2022/2023 Program Highlights

In this 2022/2023 annual report, READ is proud to highlight just a few of the programs being implemented at READ Centers across South Asia. As programs are based on community needs and priorities, the slate of programming offered varies across countries and Centers.

Expanding the Network of READ Centers

In 2022-2023, 8 new READ Centers were launched, 2 in Nepal and 6 in India. In addition, 2 Centers damaged in the 2015 earthquake in Nepal were rebuilt by the community with support from the Shanti volunteer association and local governments.

The READ Method in Action

Nepal’s Saraswati Dinabhadri Center

The concept of this READ Center germinated from interactions with the nearby Siraha READ Center and a READ-initiated mobile learning center. Initially targeting children, this mobile center evolved into a communal hub where adults shared aspirations for their families and community, leading to adult literacy classes and other essential services.

After experiencing the benefits of this mobile outreach project, the local community embarked on an ambitious project to create its own center. The disadvantaged village is situated in Nepal’s Province 2 where illiteracy is prevalent, and many have only recently escaped bonded labor with the help of READ. Their goal is to create more than just a building; it’s to build a hub for addressing critical issues in education, health, and economic development. Significantly, the new READ Center will also house the village’s first toilet.

The community has successfully secured lands and raised funds for construction, which they have started by donating their own construction skills and labor. READ Global is helping with international fundraising to make their dream a reality with the opening of the Center planned for 2024.
READ Nepal

READ’s journey began in Nepal more than thirty years ago. READ Nepal is actively partnering with communities to help them launch new Centers, with the aim of having a presence in all of Nepal’s 43 districts. These efforts are complemented by introducing innovative programs at existing Centers, tailored to meet the specific priorities and needs of local communities.

Protecting Potential Migrant Workers from Exploitation: The Diyo Safe Migration Program

Last year, over 650,000 Nepalis left their homes to seek work abroad. Many hoped to provide a better future for themselves and their families, but instead found themselves subject to exploitation and hazardous work conditions.

READ Centers serve as a platform to the potential migrants to access the information related to safe migration.

READ Nepal Partnerships

1,186 Local volunteers
34 Local government partners
136 Civil society and educational partners
In an environment where many ill-intentioned labor recruiters are seeking to exploit vulnerable youth, READ Centers serve trusted, safe spaces where people can access reliable, unbiased information. This includes measures potential migrants can take to safeguard themselves during the migration process, or better yet find economic opportunities at home.

Through the Diyo (Navigator) program, implemented in partnership with the IREX, 40 READ Centers across Nepal are providing people with the skills they need to find employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in their home communities. For those who still choose to seek work abroad, READ Centers have provided advice and guidance on safe migration to over 75,000 people.

**Breaking the Cycle of Exploitation**

Meet Sita (pseudonym used to protect her privacy), a 26-year-old mother of two from Bardiya, Nepal. In search of a better life for herself and her family, she chose to seek work abroad, but instead found herself trapped into slavery in far-away Oman. Yet, thanks to her local READ Center, Sita’s journey took a remarkable turn. Her story is a testament to the challenges encountered by many in deeply marginalized communities and the transformative support provided by READ Centers.

Sita’s family, like countless others, faced challenges meeting their basic needs, including providing for their children’s education. Desperate to alleviate their financial burdens and build a better future, Sita made the difficult decision to pursue foreign employment. However, lacking knowledge of proper procedures, she fell victim to exploitation by an unscrupulous broker who led her to use an illegal route through India. After paying more than a year’s salary to be matched with a job as a school cleaner, she instead found herself sold into slavery in Oman where she was subjected to 18 hour work days and violence with no pay.

But fortunately, Sita’s story doesn’t end there. She had remembered that her local READ Center provided safe migration counseling and reached out to them over Facebook. **Thanks to the intervention of Kalika READ Center and its dedicated team who coordinated with local authorities in Nepal and Oman, Sita was rescued and brought back home to Nepal.** She continued to work with the READ team to file a case against her traffickers. As a result of these efforts, the perpetrator has been arrested, and Sita is in the process of receiving restitution, including a refund of her initial payment.

“I can’t express the dire situation I faced working in Oman. I had lost all hope of being rescued and couldn’t see any way out. It was then that Kalika READ came into my life like a godsend. I owe my rescue entirely to the library. I consider myself fortunate to have been rescued because of my connection to the library. However, there are countless others facing similar issues who still need this support.

**Trafficking Survivor Sita**
Tackling Modern Day Slavery through the Practical Communities Solution Program

READ is tackling modern-day slavery in Nepal by aiding workers to break free from vicious cycles of bonded labor prevalent in brick kilns. With support from Humanity United, this assistance is provided through Jahada (Lumbini, Province 4) and Siraha (Madhesh, Province 2) READ Centers, which have established themselves as trusted institutions capable of mobilizing stakeholders to address pressing community issues. To date, through the adoption of a locally-driven, human-centered approach, READ has helped 106 families successfully break free from bonded labor.

READ Centers are trusted, neutral, safe space able to bring together an array of local stakeholders to access knowledge, resources and opportunities to advance and address local needs.

To catalyze this transformation, READ cultivated a safe space where laborers could openly confront the obstacles they encountered and collaborate to find sustainable solutions. Concurrently, READ fostered partnerships with local government and kiln owners, encouraging their acknowledgment of the challenges faced by workers and participation in identifying enduring remedies. This comprehensive approach yielded a spectrum of holistic interventions:

- Launch of 2 mobile learning centers, which spurred 40 similar Centers launched by the government
- Establishment of savings cooperatives, providing local, secure, and affordable credit
- Initiation of adult literacy classes
- Creation of viable livelihood opportunities
As a result, participants were empowered on economic, emotional, and social fronts, families were fortified, and communities gained a sense of agency over their future and a platform to achieve their goals.

Practical Community Solutions Impact

- 72% increased their income
- 84% of children started to attend school regularly
- 55% of women had more decision-making power
- Over 50 community leaders have emerged, driving development in their communities
- Brick kilns have raised wages and provided safe spaces for kids to learn

The community in Siraha is building a new READ Center in a marginalized neighborhood to maintain its commitment to fostering positive change for those most in need.

Empowering the Next Generation of Leaders: Tech Age Girls

Tech Age Girls (TAG) is an intensive training, mentoring, and networking program that models for society how young female leaders can confidently use their technology expertise and leadership skills to contribute to their community’s development.

TAG is structured into three stages of basic professional skills and leadership development, with select participants advancing to subsequent stages of more advanced skills building. This ensures that a broad group of young women build their employability skills, while top performers receive targeted, advanced training and leadership opportunities. Through the program, participants implement community projects to tackle local challenges, provide training to other youth, and engage with local officials to discuss the issues that matter to them most.
In 2023, READ launched the second round of the Tech Age Girls program bringing the program to five additional Centers with funding from the L’Oreal Fund for Women. Meanwhile, the network of nearly 500 young women trained through first round of the program continue to independently operate youth leadership committees at the 10 participating READ Centers that regularly organize services for youth and advocate for their priorities.
READ was honored to host a US Congressional Delegation led by Representative Mark Pocan (WI) at the Jahada READ Center in Nepal in August, 2023. During the delegation’s visit, READ Center users shared their stories about how READ programs transformed their lives, helping them break free from bonded labor and navigate the challenges of labor migration. The delegation also heard from a group of confident and energized graduates of the Tech Age Girls program, witnessing firsthand the transformative power of education and empowerment.

In 2023, READ had the honor of hosting a US Congressional Delegation led by Representative Mark Pocan (WI)

The delegation had the opportunity to learn from READ about the community-based programming READ Nepal supports in order to build more resilient, thriving communities across Nepal. READ’s work has made a huge impact on the Congressional delegation and we are excited to work with these Congress members over the coming months to solidify their support for Nepal through concrete legislative action.

— CARE USA Learning Tours, Deputy Director Kalei Talwar

Thank you to the READ Nepal team!
READ Bhutan

READ expanded its work to Bhutan in 2007 with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Currently there are 9 READ Centers in Bhutan. Prior to READ’s establishment in Bhutan, the country had only one public lending library. READ Global is among the few international non-profit organizations active in the country.

Partnering with Schools to Promote Childhood Literacy in Bhutan

Since 2019, READ has partnered with the Magic Libraries Foundation (MLF) to promote and improve the reading literacy of 4,956 children between the ages of six and twelve years old. The initiative enhanced reading environments at school libraries and READ Centers in Thimphu and Punakha through library refurbishment, the supply of children’s books, more than 510 literacy building sessions held during school library hours, reading recovery sessions at READ Centers for struggling readers, and camps and community events to raise the importance of reading throughout the community. Despite the challenges faced with the COVID pandemic and recovery, READ and MLF achieved the following results:

- **60%** of struggling readers (511 students) identified as reading below their age level enhanced their reading skills and could read at the appropriate level at the end of the program.
- Six (6) primary schools’ libraries and two READ Centers were refurbished to create a conducive and accessible reading environment with 5,950 new children’s books.
- **44** language teachers and librarians were trained to lead structured literacy-building sessions.

60% of participating struggling readers identified as reading below their age level enhanced their reading skills and could read at the appropriate level at the end of the program.
Through a partnership with the Bhutan Society for the UK Trust Fund, in 2022 and 2023 READ Bhutan added an additional 6,500 children’s books to its READ Centers across the country, ensuring that children, even in rural areas, have access to the most recent titles. Since the beginning of the partnership, more than 12,000 books have been provided by the Bhutan Society to READ Centers in Bhutan.

Promoting Menstrual Health in Bhutan

READ Bhutan has used its position as a trusted partner to bring awareness and education on menstrual health and hygiene to more than 2,500 students and nuns from 13 schools and 3 nunneries in 7 districts in Bhutan. The program, which was supported by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, has broken down the stigma surrounding menstruation and empowered youth and women with the knowledge and resources they need to manage their periods with confidence and dignity.

With support from Days for Girls, READ Bhutan distributed reusable sanitary pads to 533 students and nuns in 2023, ensuring that they can attend school and participate in daily activities during their menstrual cycle while also being environmentally friendly.
Bhutan Folktales Program

To preserve Bhutan’s folktales, traditionally passed down orally through generations, READ Bhutan initiated the Bhutan Folktales Initiative in 2015. Since its inception, READ Bhutan has released 13 books compiled by young aspiring authors based on stories shared by village elders. In 2022, with support from Global Inner Peace, the Singapore American School, the Global Environment Facility and Bhutan Tourism, and individual donors, READ Bhutan published two new titles: “Agay Purba and the Dancing Cranes” and “The Guardians of the Wetlands.” These books highlight local environmental advocates dedicated to safeguarding Bhutan’s cherished biodiversity for future generations. Over 1,000 copies of these books have been printed and distributed by READ Bhutan to schools and READ Centers. Copies of the Bhutan folktale books are also sold at local bookshops, the proceeds of which go to conducting more educational programs at READ Centers in Bhutan.

Thanks to our team in Bhutan!
READ India

READ India is registered as an Indian NGO with status of a Trust and has an approved FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) registration. Presently, READ India has supported communities to establish 60 Centers and counting across 15 states, offering access to services for over half a million people. READ India receives funding directly from a wide range of corporate donors.

Enhancing Women’s Economic Independence: READ India’s Skills to Succeed and Employability Skills Program

In rural India, women are often confined to daily chores and societal expectations, facing gender discrimination, economic subjugation, and a lack of agency over their lives. READ India, with support from Accenture’s Corporate Social Responsibility program, introduced the Skills to Succeed program to empower women, boost their confidence and enable them to contribute financially to their families.

Through the program’s mix of skills training, coaching, and support to create micro-enterprises, READ India built the livelihood and entrepreneurial skills of 7,500 women across 140 rural communities, **5,560 of whom reported that these new skills transformed their lives.** The program has reached 44,000 women since 2015. The women’s collective efforts have been a driving force for inclusive development, setting an example for others in rural areas.

Skills to Succeed Impact

- **372** started new businesses
- **7,500** women built the livelihood and entrepreneurial skills
- **665** grew existing businesses
- **41%** of these women entrepreneurs are providing jobs to other women
- **370** got jobs
- **66%** increased their confidence and have greater decision-making power

Skills for Employability in India

Youth unemployment is a pressing problem in India and communities and corporates in India have turned to READ India to help prepare young people for jobs in sectors such as IT and health. Through the Skills for Employability Program funded by HSBC Electronic Data Processing India, READ India worked with READ Centers in Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana to **skill more than 3,119 youth, many of them internal migrants from rural India, to prepare them for careers in ICT, as community health workers, or as entrepreneurs.**
As a result of the program:

- **1,438** received jobs
- **290** launched businesses
- **488** worked freelance or part-time jobs

Building Resilient Villages through Holistic Development

In partnership with Perkins India Pvt. Ltd. and under their Corporate Social Responsibility initiative, READ India is helping to change the future of 47 villages in Aurangabad, Maharashtra through the Learning for Holistic Development program. The program employs a comprehensive development strategy that integrates six core areas: Education, Digital Learning, Health, Women Empowerment, Youth Skill Development, and Environmental Sustainability.

The impact of the program includes the following:

- **Education Enhancement**: Distribution of books and resources to improve literacy, with age-appropriate programs for children and adults to foster reading and writing skills.
- **Digital Learning**: 19 schools equipped with IT infrastructure to enhance learning quality and accessibility.
- **Health Initiatives**: Construction of 24 girls’ toilet units in schools to reduce dropout rates and the organization of health awareness sessions with 1,378 participants in 2022/23.
- **Water Safety**: Installation of water purifier units in four schools to combat water-borne diseases.
- **Women Empowerment and Livelihood**: Training programs for more than 5,000 women to improve employability and support micro-enterprise initiatives. On a cumulative basis, the women were able to earn 91,000 Indian Rupees ($1,096) per month with their new skills.

Thank you to the READ India team!
CROSS-BORDER:

Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction in Nepal and Bhutan

At READ, one of our core values is a belief that equity-driven thinking is key. Putting that belief into practice, READ is dedicated to ensuring that individuals with disabilities and the elderly are afforded equal opportunities to lead secure and prosperous lives.

To do this, READ Bhutan and READ Nepal are partnering with the German aid and welfare organisation, Arbeiter Samariter Bund (ASB) to provide livelihood skills training to people with disabilities, and working with communities and local governments to prepare disability-inclusion disaster risk reduction plans to mitigate the impact of climate change-related emergencies.

This work has helped individuals like Leki, a 23-year-old women living in Bhutan. Despite facing speech disabilities, she had been sustaining herself through a tailoring business initiated in 2022 but was struggling to make ends meet.

Leki’s fortunes started to shift after she enrolled in the entrepreneurship development training series provided by READ Bhutan. Through this program, she acquired basic skills in marketing and accounting, and formulated a strategy to expand her business. Additionally, READ Bhutan equipped her with two more sewing machines, which allowed her to employ another worker and broaden her business operations.

Leki now enjoys better financial stability and can meet her financial obligations and invest more in her business. Her participation in the program has expanded her network, elevated her visibility, and earned her respect within the community, which has paved the way for collaborations and additional opportunities.

As Leki progresses on her entrepreneurial path, her narrative stands as a powerful example of the transformative effects of offering comprehensive, long-lasting support. This includes not only training and resources but also a nurturing ecosystem that addresses the specific needs of every individual.
Our Financial Summary

With more than three decade of experience, READ empowers rural communities through 139 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 functional expenses, as well as expenses and fundraising specific to each local READ organization below.

READ Global

2022

2022 TOTAL REVENUE $ 669,008.47
2022 TOTAL EXPENSES $ 629,314.69

2023*

2023 TOTAL REVENUE $ 801,497.18
2023 TOTAL EXPENSES $ 629,314.69

[2023 data is yet to be verified by an independent auditor and is subject to change]

2023 Functional Allocation (this does not include program funding secured directly by READ country organizations)

Program 84%
Admin 14%
Fundraising 2%

Funds raised directly by READ country affiliates in 2023:

READ Nepal $400,581
READ India $1,312,251 (2022/23 fiscal year)
READ Bhutan $189,545
Partners

READ Nepal
READ India
READ Bhutan

L’ORÉAL
FUND FOR WOMEN

DAYS FOR GIRLS

ASB
Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund

Global INNER PEACE

Samsung Dream Scholarship Foundation

CFLI/FCIL
Canada Fund for Local Initiatives
Fonds canadien d’initiatives locales

IREX

SFE

van Ameringen FOUNDATION

HUMANITY UNITED

Book Aid International

SVA
Science Voluntary Assn.

Magic Libraries Foundation

The Bhutan Society of the UK

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