

Room to Read

Literacy and gender equality as the paths towards active citizenship



Over 60 million primary school-aged children around the world do not have access to education and most likely will never learn to read or write. Room to Read believes that all children, regardless of gender or background, have a right to education. By empowering children through this lifelong gift, we see a world in which people are able to realize their full potential.

Room to Read had its humble origins in Nepal in 2000, where we began bringing donated books to rural communities. Today, we are a global organization dedicated to promoting and enabling education through programs focused on literacy and gender equality in education. We achieve this goal by establishing school libraries, building schools, publishing local-language children's books, training teachers on literacy education and supporting girls to complete secondary school with the life skills necessary to succeed in school and beyond.

We currently work in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Laos, Nepal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zambia – with plans to expand so we can bring educational opportunities and resources to children throughout the developing world.

We believe that World Change Starts with Educated Children and have committed to focusing on two key areas where we can have the greatest impact: literacy and gender equality in education.

Literacy is the cornerstone of all learning and fundamental for participation in today's global society, yet 793 million people across the globe lack the ability to read and write. That includes every medicine bottle, employment ad and ballot form they encounter. Of all the illiterate people in the world today, two-thirds are female and over 90 percent live in developing countries.

Educating girls and women is widely acknowledged as the most powerful and effective way to address global poverty. Women who finish secondary school earn more money, have smaller, healthier families, and are more likely to educate their own children – breaking the cycle of illiteracy in one generation.

Room to Read partners with communities across the developing world to promote literacy and gender equality in education by establishing libraries, constructing classrooms, publishing local-language children's books, training educators and supporting girls' education. We believe all children deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential, and that investing in education now will pay dividends for generations to come.

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