



# THE END OF IMPOSSIBLE

2018 Annual Report  
Room to Read India





## **THE END OF IMPOSSIBLE**

To make the impossible possible takes resilience, courage, ingenuity and creativity. Facing overwhelming odds, humanity has achieved incredible feats time and again. Illiteracy and gender inequality are complex but not insurmountable problems. Equipped with proven tools, we can today aspire to make all children literate and achieve gender equality in education. Let's take on this challenge and bust the myth that eradicating illiteracy and gender inequality is impossible.



## DEAR FRIENDS

It gives me immense pleasure to present to you the 2018-19 Room to Read India Annual Report. In the last year, Room to Read India has overcome numerous challenges, undertaken new tasks and made great progress in our endeavors to eradicate illiteracy and gender inequality.

Today, Room to Read India operates in 11 states and has benefited more than 4.3 million children, providing them with essential skills that help them discover new opportunities and set them on the path to be decision-makers.

This report is an overview of Room to Read India's unceasing progress in the field of education, as we change lives through new ideas, essential skills and new ways of thinking.

"Scaling up" was our focus this year. Room to Read India has adopted a scaffolded "I Do" (demonstration), "We Do" (collaboration) and "You Do" (expansion) approach to expand our reach to a larger scale. The USAID-funded Scaling-up Early Reading Intervention project was operational in the four states of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.

In Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, the program was implemented in the "We Do" mode, while Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand transitioned to the "You Do" mode. We also started two UNICEF-funded "We Do" projects in the Rajnandgaon district of Chhattisgarh and the Barwani district in Madhya Pradesh.

Room to Read India also took a big leap forward with our Girls' Education Program. Under an IKEA Foundation-funded project, we collaborated with residential schools for girls in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, adopting a "We Do" approach. This project aims to empower around 68,700 girls over a period of three years.

This is also the fifth year in a row that Room to

Read India has been recognized as one of the 10 best NGOs to work for by the Great Places to Work Institute. This recognition is a gratifying testament to our employees' satisfaction and an acknowledgment of the "culture of joy" that we have consciously fostered.

Room to Read India is committed to helping as many children as possible. At the same time, we are tireless in our efforts to improve the quality and effectiveness of our interventions. Today, as we face ever greater demands from all stakeholders to bring our interventions to new geographies, Room to Read remains steadfast in its pursuit of new opportunities that enable us to help all those who need us. Most importantly, we strive to remain uncompromising in the quality of our interventions.

I thank you for your support and hope to continue our partnership towards creating a better tomorrow for everyone.

Warmly,

**Sourav Banerjee**, Country Director, India



# AN IMPOSSIBLE JOURNEY.

Kalpana Chawla was an American astronaut and the first woman of Indian descent to go to space. She said of the weightlessness she experienced during space travel, "You are just your intelligence." Chawla was posthumously awarded the Congressional Space Medal of Honor. She is seen as a national hero in India and was a trailblazer for Indian women in science.

## A JOURNEY TOWARDS SUCCESS.

Room to Read works in contexts in which girls are greatly disadvantaged, facing gender-related discrimination, child marriage practices and pressure to help with household chores. These are some of the reasons behind significant school dropout rates. Through our work with girls in the program, we endeavour to empower them through our various program components which include the critical elements of life skills education and female mentorship.



# GIRLS' EDUCATION PROGRAM

Room to Read's Girls' Education Program seeks to transform the lives of millions of children in low-income countries by focusing on girls' education and gender equality.

Through the program, we support girls to stay in school longer, progress towards the completion of secondary school, and acquire the skills and agency they need to make informed choices and realize their potential. The program is being implemented in the eight states of Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Uttarakhand, benefiting 28,283 girls.

This year, Room to Read entered into a partnership with the IKEA Foundation to scale up the Girls' Education Program in residential schools in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. The project, in collaboration with the governments of Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, aims to empower around 68,700 girls over a period of three years. Currently, 15,967 girls are benefiting



## GIVING GIRLS AGENCY AND STRENGTHENING GENDER EQUALITY

Life Skills Education is central to Room to Read's Girls' Education Program. Room to Read believes that when girls have life skills, they can more effectively negotiate life decisions, allowing them to continue in school and stand up for a gender-equal world.

The program is designed to provide girls with life skills training, mentoring and need-based material support while also advocating for girls' education among parents, school staff and community members. We have a long-term, holistic approach of going beyond academics to build skills such as critical thinking, negotiation and self-confidence that girls need to make informed life decisions.

## PROGRAM COMPONENTS

### 1 LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION

- Classes and camps

### 2 MENTORING

- Group mentoring
- Individual mentoring

### 3 FAMILY, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Parent workshops
- Community events
- Teacher workshops

### 4 MATERIAL SUPPORT

- Need-based material support
- Academic support



### STORY FROM THE FIELD: KALPANA, GIRLS' EDUCATION PROGRAM ALUMNA

Kalpana was in Grade 12 when her mother was diagnosed with cancer. She was preparing for her practical examination but the responsibility of looking after her mother, who was in the hospital, fell on Kalpana's young shoulders. She faced a difficult choice — education or her mother's care. "Your mother's health is more important," her father said. All Kalpana asked for was an opportunity to take the examination, and after much convincing, her father agreed.

Sitting by her mother's hospital bed, Kalpana prepared for the examination. Her perseverance paid off. Not only did she successfully clear the practical examination but to her great relief, her mother recuperated and returned home. However, there was still the final examination to get out of the way.

Kalpana's mother was home but was too frail to manage the household. With the exams barely a few weeks away, Kalpana had to take care of the household as well. The young woman stoically went about her daily duties but her resolve was

about to be tested again. One day, her elder brother met with an accident and perished. Soon after, her mother succumbed to cancer. Exams were around the corner and Kalpana didn't even have the time to grieve.

Displaying great fortitude and courage, Kalpana sat for the school exit examination and earned a grade of 74%, when few had expected her to even pass.

Kalpana attributes her success to the life skills education she received in the Room to Read Girls' Education Program. "The life skills training helped me find solutions to the problems I faced. Creative problem solving, managing my emotions and decision-making helped me to examine my life and build something anew. I believe life gives you challenges and opportunities. It is up to you what you choose. I chose opportunity and took on the challenges," says Kalpana.

"We always advise our students to use life skills to deal with the ups and downs of life. But seeing Kalpana do that in reality, I realized how important these skills are for everyone," says her social mobilizer.

Confident, ambitious and willing to work hard, today Kalpana is everything that a young woman should be. As an admirer of Kiran Bedi, the country's first woman Indian Police Service Officer, Kalpana wants to emulate her idol and join the police service. Kiran Bedi was the only woman cadet in a group of 80 men when she joined the Indian Police Service in 1974. Bedi has since become an activist and politician and serves as a strong female role model in India.



## **GIRLS' EDUCATION PROGRAM IMPACT**

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**CUMULATIVE GIRLS  
BENEFITED**

**34,320**

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**GIRLS WHO ATTENDED LIFE  
SKILLS TRAINING**

**87%**

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**NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL  
GRADUATES IN 2018**

**381**

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**SCHOLARS ENROLLED IN TERTIARY EDUCATION OR EMPLOYED  
WITHIN THE FIRST YEAR AFTER GRADUATION**

**79.9%**

**TOTAL ACTIVE GIRLS IN  
2018**

**28,283**

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**ADVANCEMENT RATE  
(among girls who stayed in the program)**

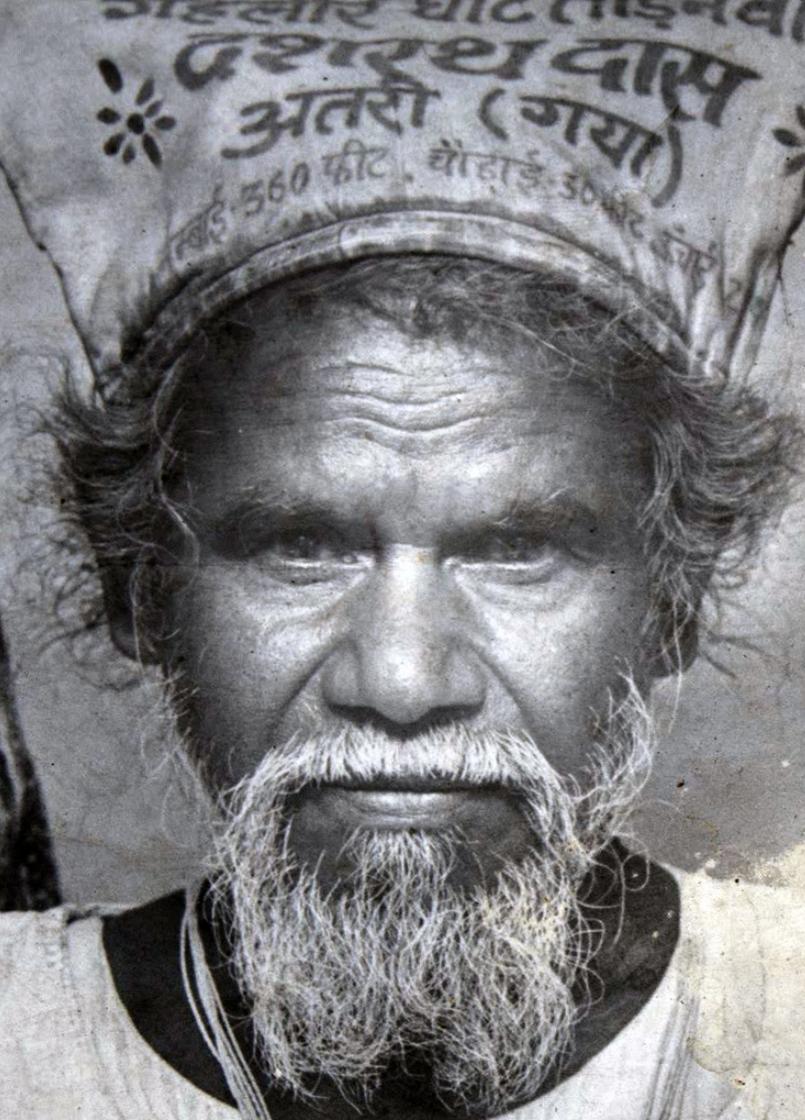
**97%**

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**CUMULATIVE SECONDARY  
SCHOOL GRADUATES**

**1,929**

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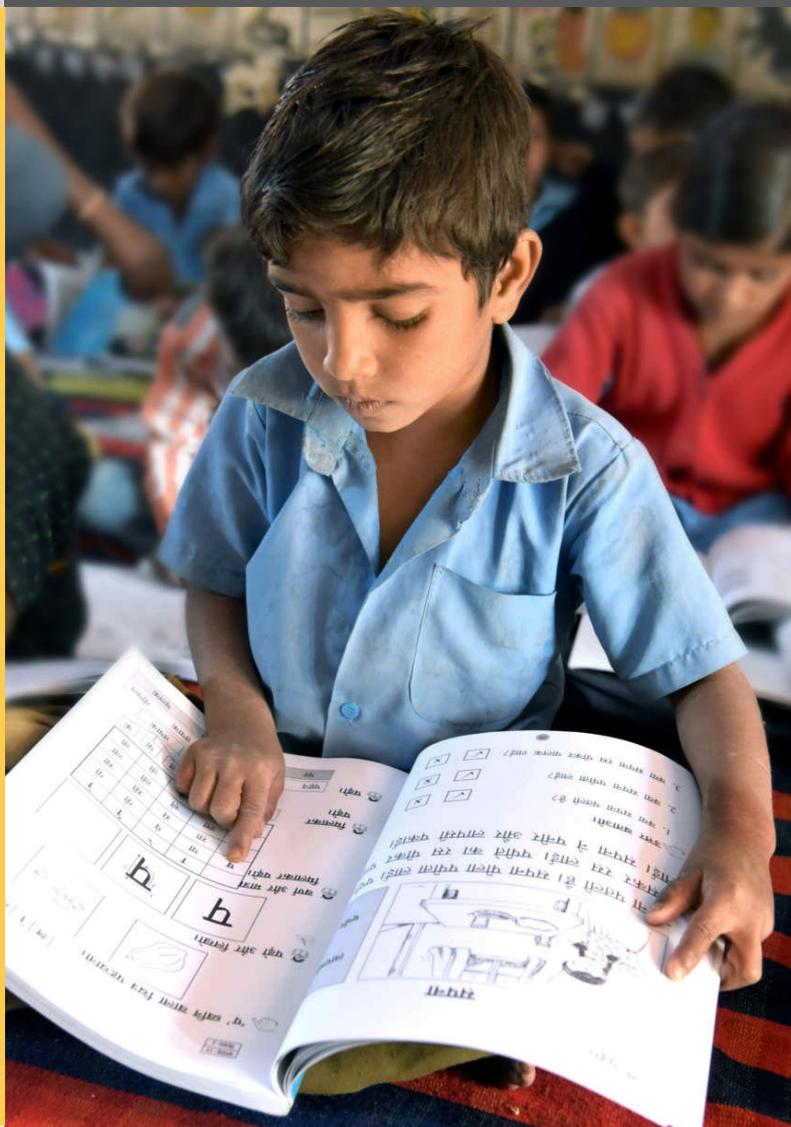


# AN IMPOSSIBLE BREAKTHROUGH.

Dashrath Manjhi proved that nothing is impossible. He spent 22 years conquering a mountain, tirelessly carving out a road that would connect his remote village of Gehlaur with the local town. He carved a 110 meter path through a ridge of hills using only a hammer and chisel. Today, the distance between Gehlaur and the nearby town has been reduced from 55km to 15km. Children have better access to school and villagers can easily reach nearby markets and hospitals.

# A BREAKTHROUGH IN EDUCATION.

Our resolve and expertise have enabled us to make enormous strides toward providing quality education for children in low-income communities around the world. The challenges of illiteracy and gender inequality in education have historically seemed impossible to solve. But with your help, Room to Read is removing these barriers to equitable education for all. We have the solution, and we are transforming the lives of millions of children through our work.



# LITERACY PROGRAM

Room to Read's Literacy Program works with teachers, schools, government officials and communities to develop literacy skills and a habit of reading among primary school children. We have not only contributed significantly to improving children's reading abilities but have also had a large influence on the field of education.

Based on our extensive field experience and scientific research, Room to Read has designed a comprehensive literacy approach in which a child learns the skills to be an independent and a fluent reader. This is done by combining the "science" of learning to read with the "magic" of love of reading in an enabling environment.



## Chenchu

*Literacy Program Participant from Telangana*

"I create my own stories. I am inspired by all the elements of the neighborhood where I live and put them in my stories. The characters can be anything from my daily life — the stray dog on my street, my aunt or the sand on which we sit."

## COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY APPROACH

In the five states of Delhi, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana and Gujarat, Room to Read implements a library intervention, where the focus is on developing reading habits in children, particularly among those in early grades.

The comprehensive literacy model being implemented in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand provides school libraries for children of Grades 1 to 5 as well as reading and writing instruction in Grades 1 and 2. The objective is to ensure that children read with fluency and comprehension by the end of Grade 2.

## PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- 1 ONGOING TEACHER TRAINING AND SUPPORT**
  - Reading and writing instruction
  - Library management and reading activities
- 2 QUALITY READING MATERIALS**
  - Local language storybooks
  - Instruction materials
- 3 SAFE AND CHILD-FRIENDLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**
  - School libraries
- 4 FAMILY, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**
  - Parent workshops
  - Community events



### **STORY FROM THE FIELD: A LIBRARY TUCKED AWAY IN THE HILLS**

Ten hours from New Delhi lies the remote district of Champawat in the hill state of Uttarakhand. Khirdwari Village is 53km from the district headquarters and is the last Indian village on the Indo-Nepal border. None of the 130 inhabitants of Khirdwari have studied beyond Grade 10.

There is only one primary school in the village, which is 15km off the main road. Getting to Khirdwari involves a trek through dense pine forests that are home to leopards, bears and other wildlife. The inhospitable terrain has affected the quality of education in the school.

Room to Read started its comprehensive Literacy Program in this school under the USAID-funded Scaling-up Early Reading Intervention (SERI) project. It comprises of reading and writing instruction to children in Grades 1 and 2 in Hindi, and school library activities for children in Grades 1-5, both carried out by trained teachers.

Setting up the library was not an easy feat, considering that the books and furniture had to be transported manually. Room to Read also trained the assistant teacher at the school, Arjun Singh, to equip him to handle learning challenges faced by the children in Khirdwari.

Students Sarita and Sachin are two shining successes of the program. In the beginning, they

would just flip through the pages of the new library books, look at the illustrations and put the books back on the shelf. As they began to engage in the reading and writing instruction activities, their reading skills improved, and soon they were engrossed in the books.

By the end of Grade 2, both Sarita and Sachin were reading fluently, with good comprehension skills. For these children in one of the most remote villages of India, books became a window to the world beyond the hills.

The children are a source of pride for their teachers as well as the community. “These two children will be the trendsetters for this community and create a good example for the other children,” Headteacher Dhanesh Chandra says.

As the golden rays of the sun break through the clouds to shine on the school library in Khirdwari, they seem to say illiteracy can be eliminated.



**SARITA'S HOME**



**SACHIN'S HOME**



## LITERACY PROGRAM IMPACT

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CUMULATIVE SCHOOLS

**15,059**

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CUMULATIVE ORIGINAL  
BOOK TITLES PUBLISHED

**200**

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CUMULATIVE LIBRARIES  
ESTABLISHED

**9,011**

TOTAL SCHOOLS IN 2018

**7,357**

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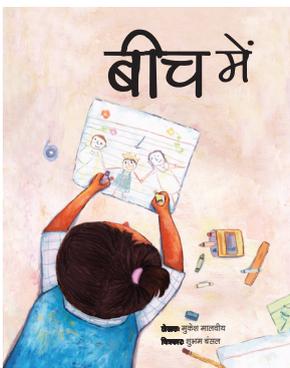
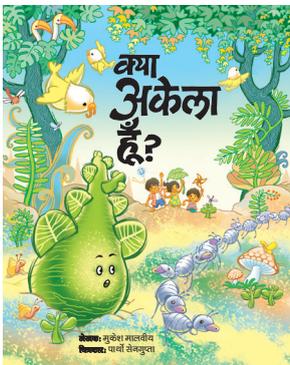
NEW BOOK TITLES  
PUBLISHED IN 2018

**5**

## BOOK PUBLISHING

Our book publishing work creates age-appropriate and culturally relevant books in local languages that readers with various levels of reading skills can enjoy. The stories help young readers to connect with topics, characters and themes that capture their imagination.

In 2018, Room to Read published five more titles, taking the tally of in-house original publications to 200. These titles have been translated and published in five Indian languages — Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Telugu and Kannada.



## AUTHORS AND ILLUSTRATOR WORKSHOPS

Through our Literacy Program, Room to Read organizes workshops for local writers and illustrators to create new storybooks and build local capacity. Since beginner level books emerged as a huge gap-area across all regional languages during the Ideal Book Collection events (described to the right), we focused on these titles during recent author and illustrator workshops. Two workshops were held in April 2018 and February 2019 to create new storybooks for beginning readers.

## IDEAL BOOK COLLECTION (IBC)

To incorporate newer books in the market into our collection, we organize Ideal Book Collection (IBC) events. The books from local publishers go through a rigorous review process by a committee of people that includes school principals, primary grade teachers and children's literature experts to meet Room to Read's standards. The process helps in achieving an ideal collection of high-quality books and provides a balanced, targeted and relevant range of leveled reading resources to Room to Read libraries.

In May 2018, Room to Read organized an Ideal Book Collection event in Gujarat to support 50 libraries established in Gandhinagar in the 2017-18 academic year. The objective was to develop a comprehensive Gujarati book collection for libraries. About 700 books were collected for review and 220 selected to be included on the existing Gujarati IBC list.

A similar event was held in Delhi in December 2018 for updating our Hindi Book Catalogue. Sample books from more than 50 publishing houses were collected and experts in children's literature from different organizations were invited to help us in selecting the books. More than 2,000 books were screened during the four-day event and 546 books selected.



**Teja**

*Literacy Program Participant from Telangana*

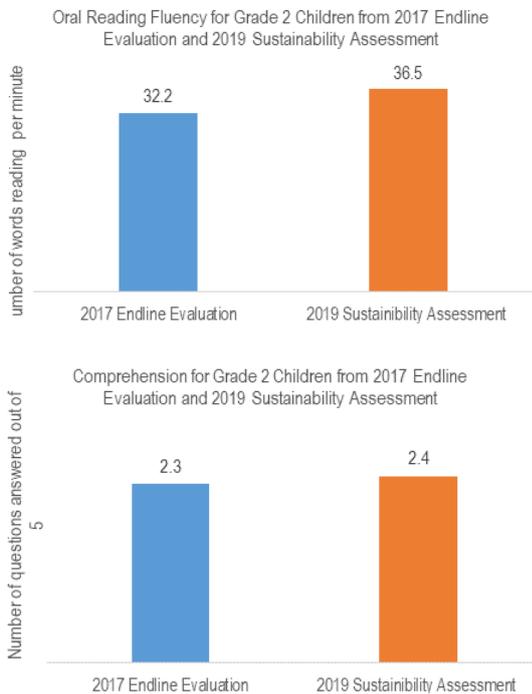
**"I love Room to Read storybooks and I want to read, read and read."**

## LITERACY PROGRAM EVALUATION

From 2015-2017, Room to Read conducted a two-year impact evaluation of our Literacy Program in Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand. The results of this study established a positive and statistically significant impact of the program on children’s reading skills in the intervention schools. From February-March 2019, Room to Read again conducted a reading skills sustainability assessment with a new cohort of Grade 2 children who benefited from the intervention for two academic years (2018 and 2019) in the same 75 schools, after the completion of the two-year impact study. The aim was to evaluate whether the positive effect of the program was sustained in the remaining four-year intervention period.

## ORAL READING FLUENCY

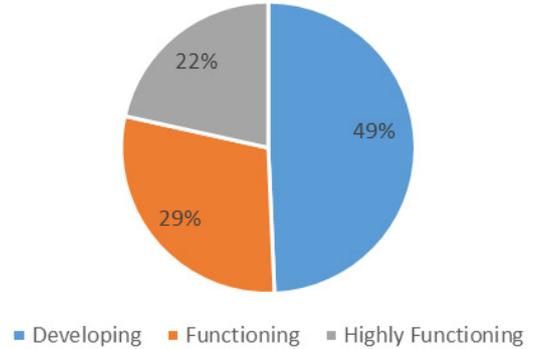
The average oral reading fluency of the children in the 2019 assessment was 37 correct words per minute compared to 32 correct words per minute in 2017. Also, average reading comprehension in 2019 was higher than it was in 2017.



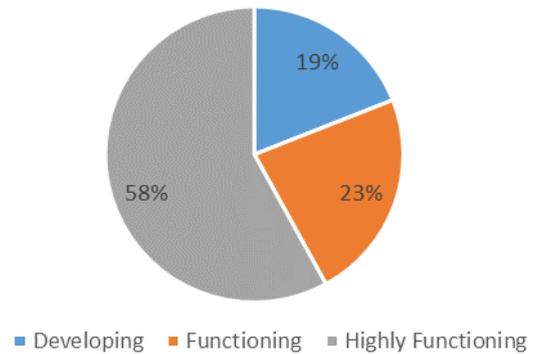
## LIBRARY RATING SYSTEM

The Library Rating System (LRS) tells us about the performance of the libraries set up by Room to Read. The LRS consists of a set of 15 indicators and is used to evaluate libraries twice per year.

Library Rating - August 2018

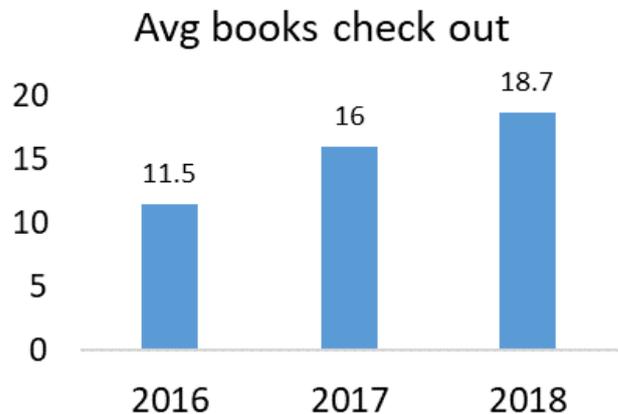


Library Rating - Feb 2019



## BOOK CHECK OUT

Book check out per-student, per-year has increased steadily over the past few years as seen in the graph below.





# AN IMPOSSIBLE CLIMB.

India created history by successfully launching 104 satellites in a single mission in 2017, overtaking the previous record of 37 satellites launched by Russia. The launch by the Indian Space Research Organization contained three satellites from India and 101 smaller nano-satellites from five other countries: the United States of America, the Netherlands, Israel, Kazakhstan and Switzerland. This record-setting feat contributed greatly to the scientific community in India and across the globe.

## A CLIMB TO NEW HEIGHTS.

Room to Read's success is due in large part to our powerful network of supporters. In 2018, our global community supported our mission through advocacy and fundraising. Thank you for partnering with us to unlock the potential of children across the world. Together, we have proven that "impossible" is no match for our collective determination.



# PARTNERSHIPS AND EVENTS

Room to Read uses a scaffolded “I Do, We Do, You Do” approach whereby we first demonstrate the model in selected government schools (Demonstration schools – **I Do**), then work in close collaboration with the government to scale up this model, where we support the program’s implementation (Partnership Schools - **We Do**), and finally, we plan a larger expansion along with increased government ownership for sustainability of the approach (Expansion Schools - **You Do**). This intervention model has proven that if there is effective technical support and ownership from the government, then maintaining quality on a larger scale is possible.



## OUR PARTNERSHIP MODELS

Apart from our regular Literacy and Girls’ Education Programs, Room to Read India also implemented various custom projects during the year in partnership with the local governments:

- 1 **SCALING-UP EARLY READING INTERVENTION (SERI), FUNDED BY USAID**
- 2 **STRENGTHENING ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP FOR EARLY READING (SALER), FUNDED BY UNICEF**
- 3 **STRENGTHENING EARLY GRADE LITERACY (SEGL), FUNDED BY UNICEF**
- 4 **EMPOWERING GIRLS TO LEAD SUCCESSFUL LIVES, FUNDED BY THE IKEA FOUNDATION**

Demonstrate evidence of model's success

**I DO**

**DEMONSTRATION MODEL**



Prepare the system for scale up: simplify, standardize and institutionalize

**WE DO**

**COLLABORATION MODEL**



Government-led scale up with Room to Read's Technical Assistance

**YOU DO**

**EXPANSION MODEL**



## SCALING-UP EARLY READING INTERVENTION

Room to Read, in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development, has been implementing the Scaling-up Early Reading Interventions (SERI) project since September 2015.

The project is being implemented in a scaffolded mode in selected districts of Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. SERI has demonstrated the effectiveness of our early grade literacy model in about 650 schools in the four states through direct implementation. Further, 2,012 schools have been reached under the “We Do” partnership model in the four states.

In March 2019, the “We Do” phase of the SERI project in Champawat in Uttarakhand and Baloda Bazar in Chhattisgarh phased out. The path has been set for the “You Do” phase, where

we are looking at institutionalization of the Early Grade Literacy (EGL) agenda in whole or parts for scalability. The project will run till September 2020. It has, so far, benefited over 250,427 children in 2,662 schools, developing their reading skills as well as reading habits and setting them on the path of becoming independent readers for life. More than 16,243 teachers have also been trained on the ways children learn to read and comprehend.



**Manju**, Mother of Literacy Program Participant

"She has learned very good Hindi. She teaches me as well, which makes me very happy. She also reads stories to us."



**Gotrahin**, Mother of Literacy Program Participant

"We couldn't go to school, but our kids are going. Watching him read and narrate stories makes us happy"

## STRENGTHENING ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP FOR EARLY READING

In 2018, Room to Read, in partnership with UNICEF, designed and rolled out the Strengthening Academic Leadership for Early Reading (SALER) project to ensure that by the end of Grade 2, all children in Barwani District of Madhya Pradesh can read fluently and with comprehension. A unique feature of the program is the rotation of books among cluster-level libraries. Libraries are set up at the cluster level, and each of them is provided with 1,000 books for monthly rotation. Rotation helps bring in different books and new reading material for the children.

The intervention focuses on building the capacity of government academic representatives. During the past year (August 2018- March 2019), 89 CAC/BACs and 40 Master Trainers (MTs) were trained by Room to Read. These trained MTs, in turn, trained 1,580 teachers and reached out

to 74,696 beneficiaries (in Grades 1-5) via the current intervention.



**Vidhya**, Literacy Program Participant

"I love reading stories to my mother. A lot of good storybooks have come to my school from Room to Read. "



**Praful**, Block Resource Coordinator

"The cluster-level libraries established by Room to Read are bringing quality children's literature to schools...The availability of children's literature increases not only children's interest in reading but also their attendance in school "

## STRENGTHENING EARLY GRADE LITERACY

In Chhattisgarh's Rajnandgaon District, UNICEF and Room to Read works with the local administration to implement an innovative Early Grade Literacy project at scale. Strengthening Early Grade Literacy (SEGL) benefited around 103,359 children in 1,786 government primary schools in Rajnandgaon District. The Early Grade Literacy intervention involves reading and writing instruction in Grades 1 and 2, and a functioning school library for all primary grades.

A key element of this intervention is the building of institutional capacities for SEGL at scale. This involves engaging a district program management group (education officials, Room to Read and UNICEF representatives). Further, capacities of all 151 Cluster Academic Coordinators (CACs) will be built for Early Grade Reading. The CACs train and support all the teachers as per the program design.



**Rajendra**, ABEO

"The Early Grade Literacy Program has strengthened children's ability to read and has enabled their active participation in classroom and library activities. After the implementation of the Early Grade Literacy project by UNICEF and Room to Read in Grades 1 and 2, all the children have learned to read with comprehension."

## PROJECT VIJAYI, EMPOWERING GIRLS TO LEAD SUCCESSFUL LIVES

Supported by the IKEA Foundation and in close partnership with the government, Room to Read is strengthening the life skills of adolescent girls in all government residential institutions in the state of Chhattisgarh. Vijayi, as the project is called, is being implemented in Porta Cabins, Ashramshalas, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas and RGSM hostels across Chhattisgarh and has also been active in Rajasthan. The project aims to empower around 68,700 girls in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan over three years.

Life skills education and mentoring support for adolescent girls are at the heart of Room to Read's Girls' Education Program. Vijayi trains teachers and wardens, provides teachers and students with learning materials, and continuously supports teachers to build their capacity as life skills educators. Gaining

enhanced life skills and enhanced career aspirations are the key outcomes of the project.



**Gayatri**, Girls' Education Program Participant

"Earlier I used to feel embarrassed and never talked to anyone, but everything changed after I joined the life skills sessions. There I learned how to communicate effectively. These sessions helped me change my behavior for the better. I would like to thank Room to Read, my warden and my teachers who gave me such wonderful lessons for life."



**Deepmala**, APC Surguja

"The contents of the life Skill sessions such as, 'safe places for girls,' 'puberty and menstruation,' 'controlling emotions,' etc. are particularly beneficial for young girls. Life skills education must be a part of mainstream education so that every child (both girls and boys) can benefit from it."

## EVENTS

### PRIME MINISTER VISITS SERI PROJECT

The highlight of the year was Honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's visit to a SERI project school in Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh on September 17, 2018. He spent some of his precious time in the Government Primary School, Narur, where project intervention commenced in July of that year. The Prime Minister visited the library and interacted with the children. In the library, he was also shown a brief video of Room to Read's work in the country in general and Varanasi in particular. In his address, the Prime Minister commended the work done by Room to Read.



### EARLY LITERACY CONFERENCE: QUALITY AT SCALE

A conference on Early Literacy: Quality at Scale was held in Delhi on December 18-19, 2018. A summary document with key learnings from the SERI Project and a summary of a socio-linguistic study of Madhya Pradesh's Barwani district were shared with the participants.

USAID India's Deputy Mission Director Ms. Ramona El Hamzaoui, Dr. Luis Crouch from RTI International, Dr. Rukmini Banerji from the Pratham Education Foundation, Dr. Dhir Jhingran from the Language and Learning Foundation, noted educationist Professor AK Jalaluddin and Room to Read's Chief Program Officer Heather Simpson were among those who attended the event.



The participation of government officials from nine states where Room to Read India is working was encouraging. The conference initiated meaningful discussions on quality at scale in the field of early grade literacy.

### IKEA PROJECT LAUNCH IN CHHATTISGARH

The IKEA girls' education project in Chhattisgarh was formally launched on February 28, 2019, by the Honorable Chief Minister, Bhupesh Baghel. "Project Vijayi: Empowering girls to lead successful lives," as it is called in Chhattisgarh, aims to provide life skills to girls from Grades 6 to 8. It covers government residential institutions in all 27 districts — all 93 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas, 53 Ashramshalas, 28 Porta Cabins and five other residential institutes. The event was attended by district education officials from all districts and state-level education officials.



## NATIONAL GIRL CHILD DAY

On January 24, 2019, the National Girl Child Day, Room to Read's staff came together with all the stakeholders, including community, school and government representatives, to discuss the importance of education in a girl's life.

Through roadshows, street rallies, signature campaigns and street plays, Room to Read gave voice to the problems faced by girls, urging people to act. Two members of the India staff were on national radio, sharing Room to Read's efforts in rural areas, as they urged young girls to live on their own terms.



## SKILL TO LEAD CAMPAIGN WITH YOUTH KI AWAAZ

On International Women's Day, March 8, 2019, Room to Read celebrated every woman and girl's strength to power change. Our theme "Life Skills are Superpowers" was a great success that saw participation from Girls' Education Program and our staff. A video compilation featured Girl's Education Program participants, employees and donors answering the question: "What's your Superpower?"

Building on the theme, Room to Read India launched a national campaign called "Skill to Lead" in partnership with Youth Ki Awaaz (March 8-23, 2019), India's largest online platform with four million followers.



## GALA IN LONDON, \$2.9 MILLION RAISED FOR OUR WORK

Kamla, a Girls' Education Program alumna from Uttarakhand, attended the London Gala on October 4, 2018 and got a standing ovation. Room to Read CEO Geetha Murali applauded Kamla's efforts and emphasized the role life skills play in a young girl's life. "I regularly see girls who benefit from lessons in life skills and consistent mentorship, channeling their inner fortitude and fighting to explore their potential," Murali said.



## TIMES LITERATURE FESTIVAL, DECEMBER 2018

The Times Literature Festival 2018 focused on "Cultivating the Habit of Reading in Children," a theme central to the Room to Read's mission. Room to Read's sessions on December 1, 2018, were streamed live on Facebook to widespread acclaim. Talks given by eminent personalities were well received. The festival also hosted a storytelling session that focused on children's literature.



# AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

## **FIVE YEARS IN A ROW, ROOM TO READ INDIA WINS GREAT PLACE TO WORK CERTIFICATION**

Great Place to Work (GPTW) is a globally accepted certification, which is an important milestone for Room to Read India. Building a great workplace culture is driven by Trust Index parameters, which resonate with our ethos of a culture of joy. In 2018, the GPTW stated that Room to Read's top three strength areas are: physical safety, positive staff attitude about the way Room to Read contributes towards society and staff pride in sharing the employer as a brand. Our Child Travel Policy, inclusion of parents in the Group Mediclaim Insurance and work-from-home policy are greatly appreciated by the staff. In its October 2018 issue, The Outlook magazine wrote about our best practices. We are proud to report that for five years in a row we have been recognized as a Great Place to Work and are on the list of the Institute of Great Place to Work's top 10 NGOs to work for in India.

## **MOST SUSTAINABLE NGO OF INDIA**

Room to Read walked away with the "Most Sustainable NGO of India" honor at the India Sustainability Leadership Summit and Awards on November 26, 2018 in Mumbai, a gratifying acknowledgment of our commitment to responsible development.

## **CULTURE OF JOY**

The joy that we derive from shaping our culture is what makes us a great place to work. Joy is the character and personality of Room to Read. Room to Read focuses on inculcating in employees a sense of pride, camaraderie, credibility, diversity and more importantly, inclusivity. Trust and engagement are the two key values that drive our work culture. Our commitment to diversity and inclusivity is

aided by the fact that Room to Read's recruiting policy allows a diverse group of people to work together, with respect and fairness. We have women's groups, an internal complaint committee and a zero-tolerance harassment policy. Our rewards-and-recognition policy encourages staff to be stellar performers. Room to Read India's work is spread across ten states and we have a workforce that is diverse and spread out geographically. So, it becomes all the more important for us to unify the entire workforce together through this joy.

## **TESTIMONIALS**

"Room to Read gave me a mission to live for." – **Sucheta Sharma, Program Officer, Girl's Education Program**

"Room to Read is an organization for working mothers. I have been getting all the support I need." – **Nini Mehrotra, Senior Manager, Girls' Education Program**

"Room to Read's work is aligned with my personal mission and vision, and employee benefits are exceptional." – **Kanupriya Ransubhe, Field Officer, Literacy**

"Room to Read has an open and healthy work environment. It is a great place for me to work." – **Zain Hussain Zaidi, Senior Associate, Administration**

"Room to Read is a great place to work because of its commitment to transform the lives of children through education." – **Shubhangi Shukla, Associate, Program Operations**

# FINANCIALS

For the years ending March 31, 2019 and 2018 (INR)

<b>Support and Revenue:</b>	<b>2018-19 (%)</b>	<b>2017-18 (%)</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2017-18</b>
<b>Project &amp; General Fund</b>	18.35%	10.75%	121,770,525	66,732,393
<b>Grant Revenue:</b>				
Room to Read US	39.19%	48.10%	260,112,043	298,609,685
UN Agencies	1.70%	0.48%	11,298,135	2,978,029
USAID India	14.31%	15.81%	94,962,340	98,175,441
Corporations	17.85%	15.41%	118,446,548	95,666,681
Foundations	6.29%	6.86%	41,736,451	42,586,895
<b>Donations (Individuals)</b>	1.19%	1.84%	7,886,041	11,420,464
<b>Investment Income</b>	1.12%	0.74%	7,440,472	4,606,940
<b>Total Support and Revenue</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>663,652,554</b>	<b>620,776,530</b>
<b>Operating &amp; Administrative Expenses:</b>	<b>2018-19 (%)</b>	<b>2017-18 (%)</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2017-18</b>
<b>Program Services:</b>				
Literacy	52.05%	54.53%	292,794,365	272,090,002
Girls' Education	19.09%	18.84%	107,406,583	94,027,889
Book Publishing	2.71%	1.64%	15,220,614	8,160,049
<b>Indirect Expenses</b>	24.21%	23.53%	136,212,593	117,428,624
<b>Fundraising Expenses</b>	1.94%	1.46%	10,921,741	7,299,441
<b>Total Operating &amp; Administrative Expenses</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>562,555,896</b>	<b>499,006,005</b>
<b>Net Current Assets (bank and cash balances including deposits, advances and current liabilities)</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>101,096,658</b>	<b>121,770,525</b>

The financials are extracted from the Audited Report and its annexures for the year ended 2018-19 and 2017-18.

# TRUSTEES AND LEADERSHIP

## TRUSTEES

**Geetha Murali**, Trustee

**Yashvinee Adarkar**, Trustee

Room to Read India Private Limited; represented by **Apala Majumdar** and **Pooja Vinayak Sharma**

## INDIA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD

The India Regional Board was launched in October 2018 to support Room to Read's strategic growth in India. The board guides Room to Read's growth strategy in India and advocates for Room to Read through introductions and resource development.

The launch of the India board provides an excellent opportunity to build momentum for the next phase of growth and advocacy in India.

**The members of the India Regional Board include:**

**Gaurav Dalmia**, Chairman of Dalmia Group Holdings (Board Chair)

**Mickey Doshi**, Managing Director and Country CEO of Credit Suisse India

**Khozem Merchant**, Partner, India Head at Brunswick Group

**Nandini Piramal**, Executive Director of Piramal Enterprises Ltd

**Sumati Raheja and Ravi Raheja**, Group President of K Raheja Group

**Jitu Virwani**, Chairman and Managing Director of Embassy Group

## LEADERSHIP TEAM

**Sourav Banerjee**, Country Director

**Jitender Bansal**, Finance Director

**Saktibrata Sen**, Program Director

**Puja Trisal**, Program Operations Director

**Poornima Garg**, Peoples Operations Director

**Gagandeep Puri**, Sr. Admin Manager

**Padmanav Dutta**, Sr. RM&E Manager

**Sanjay Singh**, Communication Manager

**Arvind Singh**, Field Manager, Rajasthan

**Roopak Chauhan**, Field Manager, Delhi

**Mukesh Joshi**, Field Manager, Uttar Pradesh

**Nishant Shrivastva**, Field Manager, Chhattisgarh

**Rajesh Patel**, Field Manager, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana

**Pushlata Rawat**, Field Manager, Uttarakhand

**Raja Sekhar**, Field Manager, Maharashtra and Gujarat

**Yeshvardhan Uniyal**, Field Manager, Madhya Pradesh

# KEY DONORS

## UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (USAID)

Room to Read entered into an agreement with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to implement a project for Scaling-up Early Reading Interventions (SERI), aimed at benefiting children in the government primary schools in the states of Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

## BAJAJ AUTO LTD

Bajaj Auto Limited supports Room to Read's Literacy Program, benefiting thousands of children in government primary schools directly and millions more indirectly in the states of Maharashtra and Uttarakhand.

## BA CONTINUUM INDIA PVT LTD

Since 2015, Bank of America – BA Continuum India (BACI) has supported Room to Read's literacy efforts in India by establishing 169 libraries. BACI is also supporting thousands of girls in the Girls' Education Program.

## UNICEF

Since 2018, Room to Read has been working with UNICEF in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in implementing district-wide early grade literacy programs in Barwani and Rajnandgaon districts. The model is part of Room to Read's "We Do" approach which focuses on working with Cluster Academic Coordinators and teachers to ensure improvement in reading skills and reading habits of primary grade students.

## TATA-CMF

"Nurturing Early Literacy Project" is being implemented in 100 government primary schools in Sirohi District since 2015. The project is being run under USAID India and Tata Trust's co-funded Transformation Initiative in Rajasthan to promote

early grade reading and is being administered by the Centre for Micro Finance. The project provides reading instruction to grade 1 and 2 students and a school library intervention benefits children of Grades 1-5. Nearly 60% of the project schools are in predominantly tribal areas and the children's home language is different from the language of instruction. Room to Read is undertaking necessary research and contextualization of the program design to address the specific multi-lingual needs of these children.

## THE HANS FOUNDATION

Room to Read has launched a four-year partnership with The Hans Foundation to support its Literacy Program. This partnership is supporting Room to Read's program in Uttarakhand, benefiting thousands of children and providing a life changing educational opportunity in the hill state.

## BNP PARIBAS

BNP Paribas group entities supported our Girls' Education Program across India in 2018 through its corporate social responsibility grants and employee engagement. The partnership has helped more than 4,699 girls to succeed in secondary school and develop key life skills.

## ORACLE

Oracle in collaboration with Room to Read strives to improve basic literacy skills and support Girls Education in India. Since 2015, Oracle's investment in Room to Read has impacted more than 30,000 students from disadvantaged and marginalized communities. Oracle also engages actively with Room to Read through employee volunteering initiatives, impacting neighboring communities and supporting Room to Read work across multiple locations in India.

### Photo Credits:

*Front and back cover images - Sanjay Singh.*

*The rest of the images included in this report were captured over the course of different projects in the past year.*



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