GAME CHANGERS

Room to Read India Trust Annual Report 2017-2018

Room to Read®

EDUCATION IS THE ULTIMATE GAME CHANGER.

Education transforms children's futures — their job opportunities, civic participation, even their health. It provides more choices for students and their families, improving their quality of life in a single generation. A new generation of educated children can turn the tide on crises like hunger, conflict and discrimination, building a better world for everyone.

In 2017, you helped 393 thousand girls and boys access life-changing educational opportunities.

Thank you for being a game changer for children across India.

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FROM THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

It is my pleasure to present the 2017–2018 annual report for Room to Read India.

During the past year, Room to Read India has expanded operations to four new states — Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat — growing our geographical spread to 11 states. We have emerged as a thought leader in the areas of early grade literacy and girls' life skills and have now benefited 3.82 million children in India with game-changing educational programs.

This report highlights Room to Read's role as a game changer in the field of education with innovative programs, a vigorous commitment to measuring our impact, a unique approach to scale and above all passionate employees and government stakeholders who make a world of difference. Our efforts are increasingly being recognized by the national government, our state government partners and the donor community.

For the fourth consecutive year, Room to Read was recognized as one of the 10 best NGOs to work for by the Great Places to Work Institute. This signifies our employees' continued trust in the organization and an acknowledgement of the "culture of joy" that we have tried to create within Room to Read India. These committed and passionate employees are our biggest resource in taking the organization to the next level of scale and performance.

Room to Read India remains committed to growing our programs to benefit many more children while simultaneously working toward improving the quality and impact of our interventions. There is a huge demand from governments and donors to expand our programs to new geographies. We are dedicated to strategically pursuing opportunities that will allow us to widen our impact while still ensuring the fidelity of our programs.

I thank you for your tremendous support of our work to date and hope to continue to partner with you on our journey to reach millions more deserving children with our game changing educational programs.

Warmly,

Sourav Banerjee

LITERACY
PROGRAM

Our Literacy Program is designed to help every child become an independent reader. Our program ensures primary schools have libraries filled with books in the children's local languages, as well as teachers and librarians who are trained on how to engage a classroom of eager, young learners. We build strong relationships with families, communities and governments to ensure local buy-in for the transformation of learning environments and their long-term success.

OUR LITERACY PROGRAM IN ACTION

ADDRESSING MULTILINGUALISM: ORAL LANGUAGE INTERVENTIONS

India is a multilingual country. Apart from the 23 official languages, there are more than 700 unofficial languages and dialects also spoken across the country. This multilingualism has traditionally presented a challenge for implementing literacy programs in many regions of India.

Room to Read, however, has found a way to incorporate multilingualism into our programmatic approach in order to help children in India's linguistically diverse areas thrive in school. We have achieved this by developing oral language interventions to rapidly improve students' oral skills (vocabulary, grammar, listening comprehension and speaking) in the language of instruction in school. These interventions complement our core literacy instruction design, which is based on seven key components of oral language development: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing and independent reading time. We also promote the use of stories and appropriate reading materials in children's home languages to support literacy development.

NO SEASON FOR READING: MEET MAHAK

Udham Singh Nagar District, Uttarakhand

Room to Read's Literacy Program has helped many students to become leaders in their schools. Mahak, a grade five student from Udham Singh Nagar District in Uttarakhand, is one such student.

Both of Mahak's parents are illiterate, and she is a first-generation learner. In stark contrast to the experience of her parents, Mahak has read more than 350 books and has developed a passion for reading that she shares with others by setting up a library during summer vacations every year.

"In 2016, when the library was established, I did not find it worth a visit," she said looking at the storybook in her hand, "but my teacher changed my mind."

"Mahak avoided interactions and activities in school. She found it difficult to break into the social group. I remember when she avoided the first library session. But not the second one — I brought her to the library," said her teacher. "I observed that she could not read well initially and would repeat the same mistakes. It was through those consistent library sessions that she learned how to read properly."

After six months, Mahak started to read full sentences. She also participated in all library activities. Her progress, measured by the number of books checked out, showed her growing fondness for reading.

As her love of reading grew, and summer vacation neared, Mahak knew she needed to find a way for students to access the library during the school break. With the support of the school, she volunteered to organize and monitor a temporary library during the summer.

"I want my friends to read and increase their knowledge and become writers. The temporary library is an opportunity to drive them toward reading," said Mahak as she placed storybooks on display.

"She has dedicated herself to the library. Ask her about any story — she knows them all by heart. Room to Read has opened this world to her and so many of her friends," said her teacher proudly.

SCALING UP EARLY READING INTERVENTION

In 2015, Room to Read launched a partnership with the United States Agency for International Development and the government of India called Scaling up Early Reading Intervention (SERI). The five-year project aims to demonstrate an innovative model of scaling up literacy programs across four states: Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. As of March 2018, the project had already benefited more than 261,000 children and 5,200 teachers in 2,012 schools, and more will benefit in the years to come.

Early Grade Reading Assessment results from two-year impact evaluations taken in 2018 at SERI partnership schools in Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand show that Room to Read's approach is having substantial success. Children from project schools read an average of 36.7 words per minute while children from comparison schools could only read 17.9 words per minute. Children from project schools could also answer an average of 2.3 questions correctly (out of 5), compared to only 1.3 questions answered correctly by children from comparison schools.

These results demonstrate several significant factors that will help encourage other state governments to adopt our approach:

1. The quality of our Literacy Program is transferrable at large scale through a training-of-trainer approach.

2. Government educators are taking a high-level of ownership for the program.

3. We have found cost efficiencies that allow for significant systems change in marginalized communities.

INTERVIEW WITH DR. IQBAL
EX DISTRICT MAGISTRATE OF CHAMPAWAT, UTTARAKHAND

Q: How did the SERI project start, and what were your initial thoughts about it?

A: The SERI project was rolled out in Champawat in June 2016. Incidentally, it was the same month when I took charge as the district magistrate. From the very beginning, I and the team of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), never saw it as a Room to Read program but as a collaborative effort.

Q: What were the major hurdles you faced in the beginning of the project and how did you overcome them?

A: Changing the attitude of the teachers toward the intervention was the biggest challenge. The fact that the intervention was being done by an external agency in order to improve upon the quality and efficiency of an existing system (in this case literacy instruction methods for primary grade students) was resisted by teachers.

Thus, convincing teachers to accept this intervention as something supportive — rather than a hindrance — was the first big challenge and it took more than six months to overcome. Through continued monitoring and support we were able to show teachers how the intervention could enhance their teaching and improve students' skills.

Q: How did you motivate teachers and master trainers to implement the new program?

A: Teachers and education department officials in the district initially expressed apprehension and indifference toward adopting this new approach. They felt that this was something extra being thrust upon them over and above the usual mandate. We addressed these concerns through an early workshop, prior to the start of the intervention, which helped them begin the project with a positive outlook. Constant encouragement to high-performing teachers and ongoing assistance to below-average performers helped to keep the intervention on track.

Q: What do you think of the Room to Read instruction modules?

A: The detailed day-to-day guidance in this pedagogical style ensured that teachers were able to quickly and easily understand and implement effective lessons. This improved their teaching and saved them time when preparing for classes. It also helped teachers to more easily monitor students' progress.

Involving the DIET in planning for and contextualizing the intervention also helped to ensure successful project implementation.

LITERACY PROGRAM RESULTS

CHILDREN BENEFITED

NEW IN 2017
390K

CUMULATIVE THROUGH 2017
3.81M

BOOKS PUBLISHED

NEW IN 2017
5

CUMULATIVE THROUGH 2017
195

SCHOOLS BENEFITED

NEW IN 2017
1,640

CUMULATIVE THROUGH 2017
10,839

AVERAGE NUMBER OF BOOKS CHECKED OUT PER CHILD
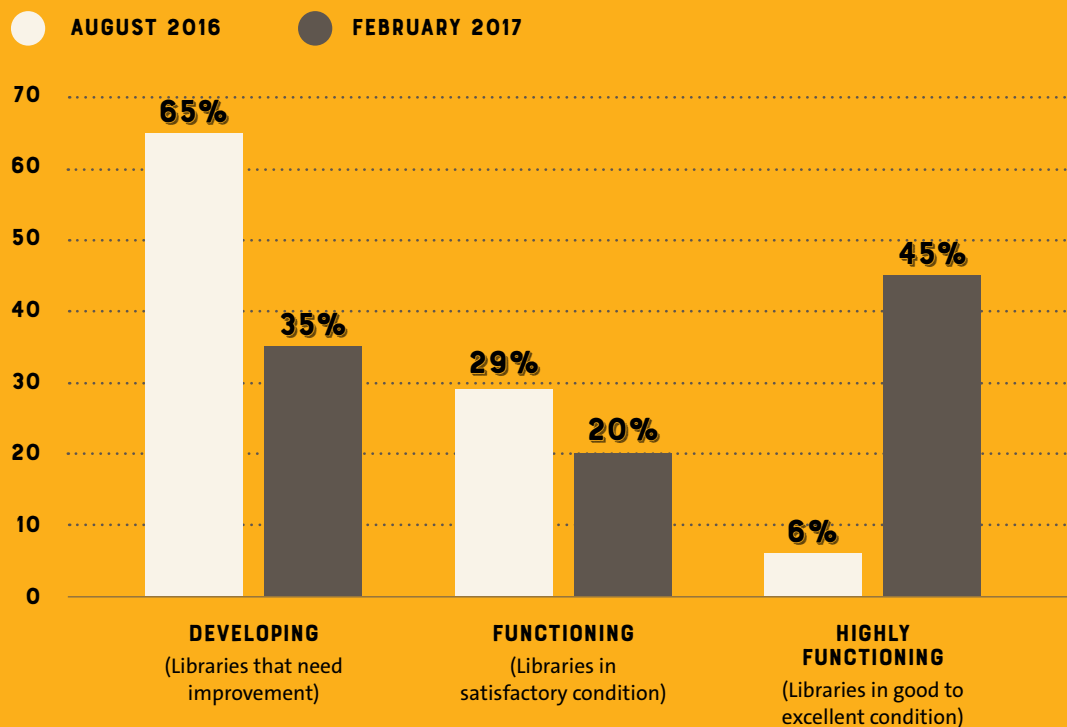
2017
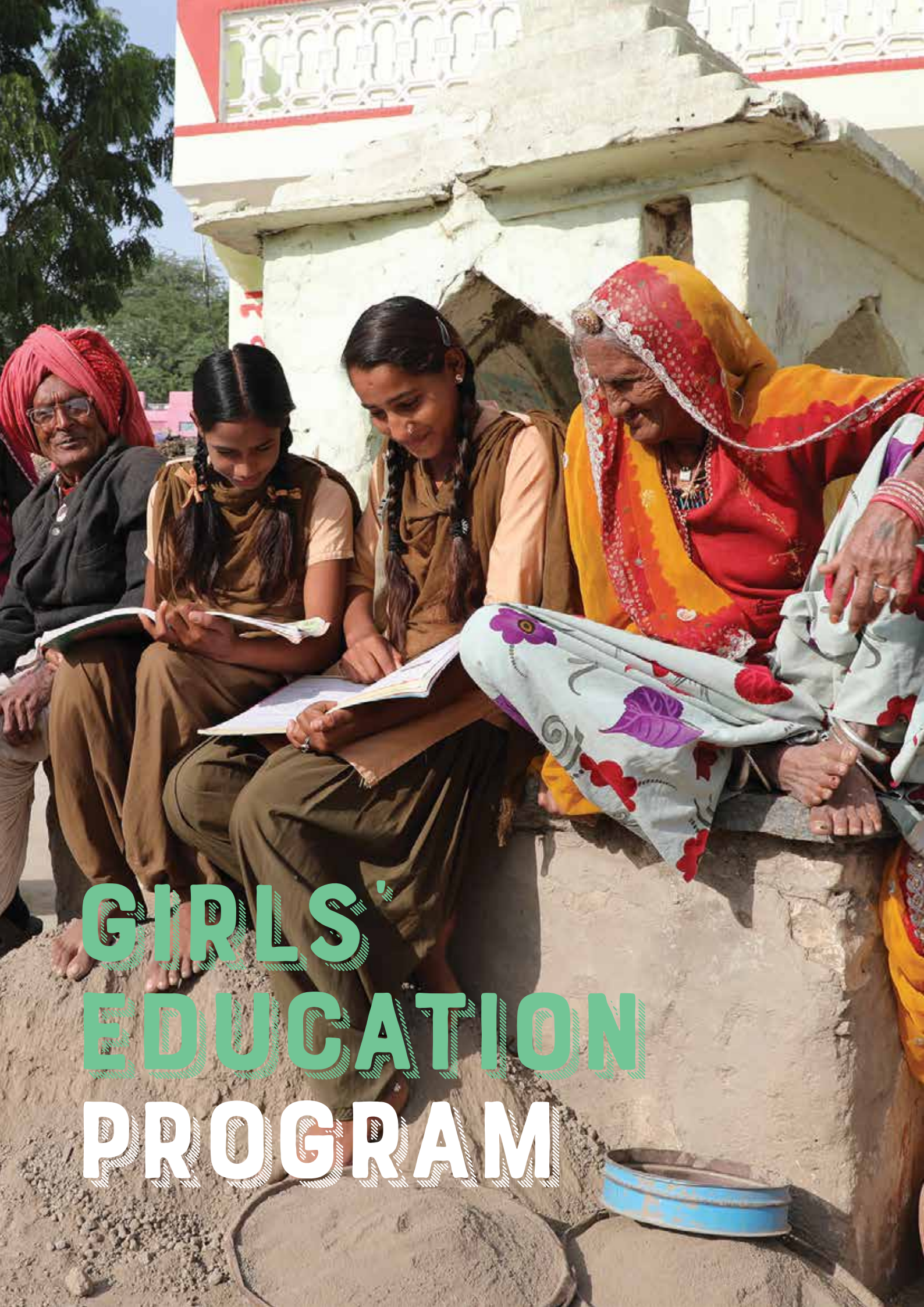### 16

TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS TRAINED

2017
7,365

LIBRARY RATING SYSTEM

The Library Rating System (LRS) is a tool for monitoring the effectiveness of our school libraries. It evaluates the functioning of each library against a set of 15 indicators. The LRS is used in all active libraries that are at least six months old.

○ AUGUST 2016   **● FEBRUARY 2017**

	DEVELOPING (Libraries that need improvement)	FUNCTIONING (Libraries in satisfactory condition)	HIGHLY FUNCTIONING (Libraries in good to excellent condition)
August 2016	65%	29%	6%
February 2017	35%	20%	45%

GIRLS' EDUCATION PROGRAM

Our Girls' Education Program ensures that girls complete secondary school and have the skills to negotiate key life decisions. We offer girls life skills training, mentoring and need-based material support while also increasing advocacy for girls' education among their parents, school staff and communities. We take a long-term, holistic approach by going beyond academics to build the skills that girls need to make informed life decisions.

OUR GIRLS' EDUCATION PROGRAM IN ACTION

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SOCIAL MOBILIZER

Essential to our Girls' Education Program are our social mobilizers, local women who are hired as mentors and work with girls and their families to ensure that girls stay in school, participate in life skills activities, and navigate the challenges of adolescence with the ability to make their own life choices, both personally and professionally. Shaheen Praveen, a social mobilizer in the Girls' Education Program in Delhi, spends her days teaching life skills to girls and emphasizing the value of their continuing in school.

"I mentor girls at the Jasola Village Centre in Delhi. My day starts by making tea and breakfast for my family and lunch for myself to take to work. Then I travel for an hour, sharing a carpool with strangers, to reach my office.

"I usually begin by preparing for my classes, which start at 2:30 p.m. I conduct regular life skills and group mentoring sessions for approximately 80 girls. My work also takes me into the homes of the girls who I mentor. I meet with girls' families and ask if there are any issues or areas of concern related to their child's education.

"I always take time out in the evening to spend with my pupils, sharing their joys and sorrows, and helping them to discover ways that they can address any challenges that they are facing.

"Most of the families believe that girls should get married at a young age. One of my goals is to change this attitude within the community in Jasola. The life skills sessions, which include critical thinking, negotiation skills and assertiveness, help girls become self-advocates and communicate why they should continue to go to school instead of getting married. I enjoy spending time with the girls and I'm so proud when they start applying the life skills that I've taught them in their daily lives.

"When the sun is low in the sky, I make my way home through the narrow by-lanes of Delhi. After reaching home, I conduct tuition classes for children in grades six through nine until 9:00 p.m. I then cook dinner for my family."

— *Shaheen Praveen, Social Mobilizer, Delhi*

OVERCOMING THE ODDS: MEET RESHU

Haridwar District, Uttarakhand

Raised in a poor family of eight people, Reshu was not expected to complete her secondary education. Her elder brother and sister were both forced to drop out after primary school as her family could no longer afford their school fees, and it seemed that Reshu was destined for the same fate.

Fortunately, Room to Read intervened when Reshu was in grade six and enrolled her in the Girls' Education Program. Through the program she received material support and was able to continue studying until grade 10, when her father began to pressure Reshu to drop out.

"I told my father about my wish to study further, but he was not convinced. I shared my concern with my social mobilizer. She then visited my father at home, and they discussed how continuing to study could impact my future," Reshu says.

Afterward, her father finally understood the value of educating his daughter. "He was ready to send me and my sister to school, but where would the money come from? That was the biggest question," she says.

To ease the financial burden on her father, Reshu decided to save money. "The life skills session on saving money was thought provoking. I decided to take responsibility for my and my sister's fees. After March, I worked in the field for 5–6 hours daily. For 15 days, I toiled to save the Rs. 2300 needed for our admission," she says.

Reshu is now the first girl in her family to study in grade 12 and is thankful to Room to Read for supporting her on her educational journey.

GIRLS' EDUCATION PROGRAM RESULTS

GIRLS BENEFITED

TOTAL IN 2017
9,367

CUMULATIVE THROUGH 2017
14,323

GIRLS WHO ATTENDED LIFE SKILLS TRAINING

2017
84%

ADVANCEMENT RATE AMONG GIRLS WHO STAYED IN THE PROGRAM

2017
96%

GIRLS WHO GRADUATED SECONDARY SCHOOL

NEW IN 2017
281

CUMULATIVE THROUGH 2017
1,119

78%
OF 2016 GRADUATES ENROLLED IN FURTHER EDUCATION OR FOUND WORK WITHIN THE FIRST YEAR AFTER GRADUATION

ALUMNAE TRACER STUDY

In 2017, we completed an in-depth qualitative "Alumnae Tracer Study" of alumnae in India that revealed information about the long-term life and livelihood outcomes of our Girls' Education Program. Young women who had completed the program in Delhi and Uttarakhand between 2010–2014 were selected for interviews.

The study revealed that our program has had an important and lasting effect on these women's lives. We have succeeded in supporting girls to complete their secondary education and to pursue work opportunities, higher education and supportive relationships. Specific findings from the study include:

ALUMNAE HAVE DELAYED MARRIAGE

Most young women interviewed, who were between the ages of 21 and 25, have delayed marriage. These outcomes stand in contrast to the average statistics for girls in these regions, where the mean age of marriage for women in rural areas was 21.7 in Uttarakhand and 22.4 for Delhi.

ALUMNAE HAVE PURSUED TERTIARY EDUCATION AT A HIGH RATE

Many of the program alumnae have pursued higher education after graduating from secondary school. Communication, goal-setting and resiliency were the primary life skills that young women attributed as being helpful in their pursuit of higher education.

ALUMNAE ARE PURSUING CAREERS

Thirty-eight percent of the alumnae pursued full-time work — often in private organizations or businesses — immediately after completing grade 12. Almost all who worked also pursued higher education degrees at some point, either while working or after making a transition from work.

ALUMNAE HAVE HEALTHY APPROACHES TO THEIR GOALS, THEIR FUTURES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS

Life skills that young women learned and used in the Girls' Education Program have supported their decision-making and problem-solving in the pursuit of their future goals. The program has also shown impact on changing young women's ways of thinking about themselves, their goals, futures and relationships.

ACHIEVEMENTS & EVENTS

20,000 COMMUNITIES BENEFITED AND 50,000 GIRLS SUPPORTED

Since 2000, Room to Read has benefited more than 20,000 communities through its Literacy Program and supported more than 50,000 girls through its Girls' Education Program worldwide. Room to Read global and local leaders, board members and investors joined government officials and community members in Uttarakhand in November 2017 to celebrate these milestones.

LITERACY PROGRAM EXPANSION

Room to Read India and the state governments of four states — Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat — signed Memorandums of Understanding to expand our Literacy Program to select government schools in these states.

PROGRAM ALUMNA HONORED IN HONG KONG

Girls' Education Program alumna Neelam from Delhi shared her story with donors in Hong Kong in March 2017. With Room to Read's help, Neelam was able to navigate immense family and community struggles and graduate from secondary school. Neelam wowed the audience with her determination and her commitment to promoting girls' education.

TALK SERIES: LITERACY IN MULTILINGUAL INDIA

Room to Read India held a second annual talk series about literacy issues in India. Prof. Udaya Narayana Singh, Chair Professor at the Amity Centre for Linguistic Studies, and Dr. Sonali Nag, Associate Professor of Education and the Developing Child at the University of Oxford, discussed how to promote literacy within the complex multilingual realities of the country and stressed the need to explore new theoretical frameworks.

ROOM TO READ LIBRARIES INAUGURATED IN DELHI AND MADHYA PRADESH

Room to Read India Trust, in partnership with the Directorate of Education, Government of NCT of Delhi, held an inaugural ceremony for 100 new primary school libraries in New Delhi. The Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia joined the ceremony as a featured guest. A similar ceremony was held to establish 50 new libraries in Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh, with Education Minister Vijay Kunwar Singh leading the inauguration.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION

Room to Read India organized a one-day consultation to bring together key players in girls' education and gender equality to discuss various interventions and best practices in supporting girls to thrive in school, particularly through life skills education. Representatives from 38 organizations — including local and international nonprofits, bi- and multilateral agencies, grantmakers and government personnel — met to learn about and debate possible frameworks for implementing large-scale programs across the country.

"GREAT PLACE TO WORK" AGAIN!

Room to Read India was recognized as one of the 10 best NGOs to work for in 2017 by the Great Places to Work Institute for the fourth consecutive year.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

APRIL 2017 TO MARCH 2018 (FIGURES IN INR)

Support & Revenue	2017–2018 (%)	2016–2017 (%)	2017–2018	2016–2017
Project & General Fund	10.75%	17.46%	66,732,393	81,688,892
Grant Receipts				
Room to Read US	48.10%	46.44%	298,609,685	217,302,758
UN Agencies	0.48%	0.02%	2,978,029	101,476
USAID India	15.81%	12.92%	98,175,441	60,460,204
Corporations	15.41%	16.27%	95,666,681	76,123,817
Foundations	6.85%	5.50%	42,515,386	25,744,516
Donations (Individuals)	1.84%	0.20%	11,420,464	932,757
Investment Income	0.75%	1.19%	4,678,449	5,576,821
Total Support & Revenue	**100%**	**100%**	**620,776,528**	**467,931,241**

Operating & Administrative Expenses	2017–2018 (%)	2016–2017 (%)	2017–2018	2016–2017
Program Expenses				
Literacy Program	54.53%	52.76%	272,090,002	211,682,868
Girls' Education Program	18.84%	18.10%	94,027,889	72,614,772
Book Publishing Program	1.64%	1.51%	8,160,049	6,060,926
Indirect Expenses	23.53%	25.75%	117,428,625	103,307,455
Fundraising Expenses	1.46%	1.88%	7,299,441	7,532,828
Total Operating & Administrative Expenses	**100%**	**100%**	**499,006,006**	**401,198,849**

Bank & Cash Balances Including Deposits and Advances	**100%**	**100%**	**121,770,522**	**66,732,393**

The financials are extracted from the audited report and its annexures for the year ended 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.

TRUSTEES & LEADERSHIP

TRUSTEES

Dr. Geetha Murali, CEO, Room to Read

Yashvinee Adarkar, Chief of Staff, Room to Read

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

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