

Room
to
Read®

25

OUR
STORY,
YOUR
CHAPTER



OUR STORY



Our story began 25 years ago in Nepal, written with a simple yet bold goal: to fill schools across the country with books, closing a critical gap in quality reading material. With the vision, operational acumen and collaborative spirit of John Wood, Erin Ganju and Dinesh Shrestha, Room to Read was born. Our founding leaders dared to dream of a world where every child could unlock their potential. They laid the foundation — one book, child and community at a time.

Their collective leadership launched the first chapter of our story and has since catalyzed positive, lasting change around the world. **ONE BOOK HAS BECOME MORE THAN 42 MILLION. ONE COUNTRY HAS BECOME 28. ONE CHILD BENEFITED IS NOW MORE THAN 50 MILLION CHILDREN GLOBALLY.**



We're 25 years into our story. We've proven that ending the global learning crisis is possible. And our story is far from over.

This year, we're writing our next chapter, one focused on a new strategic vision for our future. Our new strategy is not time-bound. We're going bigger, bolder, longer term.

We aspire to institutionalize Room to Read as a **leading implementer** with a **globally recognized and trusted brand**. We will develop and deliver evidence-based materials and approaches focused on **foundational literacy, and life skills that promote gender equality**. We will leverage our literacy and life skills programming toward accelerating learning outcomes for **more children, more quickly**. As a result, Room to Read will be respected as a **valuable partner of choice** for government, other system and program partners, as well as investors focused on education.



We'll start with a 3-Year Outlook, ambitious goals that will guide our success. Each success metric will lead us through our next chapter, in which **WE WILL IMPROVE LITERACY, LIFE SKILLS, DIGNIFIED LEARNING AND GENDER EQUALITY OUTCOMES** for more children, more quickly.



20 MILLION CHILDREN ANNUALLY

Double the number of active children benefiting from our materials and approaches, growing to at least 20 million children annually.



400,000 COMMUNITIES ANNUALLY

Double the number of communities benefiting from our materials and approaches, growing to more than 400,000 communities annually.



3 MORE COUNTRIES

Increase new countries benefiting from our materials and approaches by at least three.



2X MORE PARTNERS

Double the number of system and program partners leveraging our materials and approaches.



6% REVENUE GROWTH

Increase revenue with a compound average growth rate of at least 6 percent, achieving at least 40 percent unrestricted funding and a 9-month operating reserve.

REVIEW OUR STRATEGY

We hope you'll join us for this chapter of growth and impact. We can't wait to see how you help shape our story.



YOUR CHAPTER

As Room to Read celebrates our 25th anniversary, we proudly reflect on the remarkable journey that brought us to this milestone. We celebrate 25 years of transforming lives through education — thanks to the generosity, compassion and optimism of supporters like you, who accelerate positive change and share our belief that World Change Starts with Educated Children®.

We benefit more children, more quickly, in partnership with others. Through our 25th anniversary global recognition list, we celebrate the significant contributions of our global community of supporters and like-minded changemakers, who have played a pivotal role in the growth and success of our organization.

OUR STORY WOULD NOT BE THE SAME WITHOUT YOUR CHAPTERS.

To our partners, ambassadors, investors, board members and staff around the world, thank you for propelling the literacy and gender equality movements forward and establishing Room to Read as a leader in this effort. Let's continue to reach for solutions in support of the world's children, together.



25 CHAPTERS TO CELEBRATE 25 YEARS.

[EXPLORE OUR GLOBAL RECOGNITION LIST](#)



BENEFITING MORE CHILDREN, MORE QUICKLY



In 2024, we shared that we had surpassed a significant goal set in our last strategic plan, Vision 2025: to benefit at least 40 million children worldwide by 2025. In fact, we celebrated benefiting 45 million children across 24 countries, making critical room for these children to develop literacy and life skills in a dignified and gender-equal way.

It's now 2025, and we have an even more extraordinary number to celebrate. To date, we have benefited an estimated* 50+ million children cumulatively since 2000 in historically low-income communities across 28 countries. And that's not the only strategic goal we surpassed.

VISION 2025 GOAL:

Transform the lives of children in at least 10 new countries.

RESULT: Room to Read expanded our programming to 12 new countries. New countries include Canada, China, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Malawi, Maldives, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Uganda and the United States.

VISION 2025 GOAL:

Create children's books in at least five new languages.

RESULT: Created children's books in 18 new languages, resulting in 57 languages total. New languages include Cebuano, Chinese-simplified, Chinese-traditional, Dari, Filipino, Garifuna, Haitian Kreyól, Hiligaynon, Italian, Jarai, Luganda, Miskito, Pashto, Punjabi, Runyankore-Rukiga, Saraiki, Sindhi and Spanish.

VISION 2025 GOAL:

At least one element of our programming is integrated at the national or subnational level in all countries where we work with full-scale operations.

RESULT: This goal was exceeded with multiple examples in many countries! We're thrilled to share just a few examples in the pages that follow.

50+ MILLION CHILDREN BENEFITED CUMULATIVELY SINCE 2000

13+ MILLION CHILDREN ACTIVELY BENEFITED IN 2024

US\$1 BILLION INVESTED CUMULATIVELY IN GLOBAL EDUCATION BY THE END OF 2025

*Preliminary estimates as of the end of January 2025



WRITING A NEW STORY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

ADDING NEW CHAPTERS IN AFRICA

A CHAPTER OF CHANGE IN BANGLADESH

LIFE SKILLS THAT SHAPE LIFE CHOICES

SHE CREATES CHANGE: WHAT'S NEXT

WRITING A NEW STORY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Where children go, our books follow.

When children arrived in school shelters and refugee camps in Northern Lebanon in 2024, our Arabic language books were waiting for them. We provided learning materials and food kits — ensuring children were nourished in body and mind. We trained shelter staff to provide socio-emotional support.

In Palestine, with local partner [ANERA](#), we will soon deliver 10,000 emergency packs to children in Gaza — twice as many as we initially planned. Each pack will include five Room to Read Arabic language storybooks, a sketchbook, a colored pencil set and a sharpener, all housed within a sturdy backpack. We will also soon start work on a new collection of 10 Arabic children's titles, created by Palestinian authors and illustrators, with the goal to distribute 50,000 copies of these books to local schools, in partnership with Palestine's Ministry of Education.

The steps we take to ensure education endures in emergency contexts provide children comfort and consistency. Our books support the development of strong literacy skills. They also help children work through the complex and challenging emotions of trauma.

FOR CHILDREN LIVING THROUGH CHAOS AND UNCERTAINTY, HAVING ACCESS TO EDUCATION CREATES A PATH TO HOPE AND FUELS DETERMINATION — DETERMINATION TO KEEP GOING, TO WRITE THEIR OWN STORIES.

Our work in Lebanon and Palestine in recent years — and throughout the Middle East over the past decade — has enabled us to respond rapidly and appropriately to crisis. Support from partners like you will ensure this work continues.



ADDING NEW CHAPTERS IN AFRICA

Our story on the African continent began in South Africa in 2006. Since then, we have benefited more than 10 million children across South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Uganda and Rwanda with foundational learning skills, and in 2024 formed exciting new partnerships in Kenya and Malawi.

In 2024, we added exciting elements to our story. With the Tanzania Institute of Education, we revised national Grade 1 literacy materials, benefiting all children in government primary schools. Also in Tanzania, we trained 29 new educators across 19 schools in our financial literacy and life skills curriculum, benefiting an estimated 5,000 adolescent girls.*

With our government partners in South Africa, we developed Grade 3 instructional materials, expanding the reach of our literacy programming to align with government priorities.

And in an ongoing collaboration with the [Reading Association of Uganda](#), we finalized our production of Grade 1 instruction books in Luganda and Runyankore-Rukiga, and distributed these books to 91 schools in Mitooma and Mubende districts.

We also began bold new chapters in Africa.

Our chapter in Rwanda opened with a familiar subject: books. The country's book publishing industry is growing — rapidly. The World Bank has reported that publishers have grown from just three to more than 30 in the last 10 years, and Kinyarwanda children's titles have increased from 15 to more than 1,000. While encouraging, this quick expansion has not been accompanied by a similar increase in the technical capacity needed to meet government standards for quality teaching and learning materials. High production costs and subsequently high-priced books create an additional problem: lack of consumer demand.



Room to Read has some experience in this area — 25 years' worth. Our publishing work took root just after our founding, and we have since published more than 42 million books in 57 languages.

Now, Room to Read is strengthening the book publishing ecosystem in Rwanda to support the teaching and learning of reading. Our approach brings together commercial publishers, printers, writers, editors and illustrators, the government, schools, homes and local communities, to increase supply and demand of high-quality reading materials in the Rwandan market.

We work with teachers to learn effective strategies for using these materials to strengthen reading skills among children and ensure that a culture of reading can thrive.

And in Malawi and Kenya, our next chapter is set on the screen. In 2024 we partnered with three organizations — the [Creative Center for Community Mobilization](#), [Girls' Activist Youth Organisation](#) and [Polycom Girls](#) — to adapt Room to Read's *She Creates Change* films, in various lengths, for local children. Each partner is now working to translate and dub the films, adding local language subtitles and local voices, and to contextualize *She Creates Change* lesson plans, while training educators to facilitate discussions that promote gender equality.

To ensure a data-informed approach as we expand the reach of *She Creates Change*, we are developing a multimedia-focused measurement tool. In the months ahead, driven by your support, we will collect data on the effectiveness of this content in altering girls' perception of what is possible, and in promoting gender equality among all adolescent children. Evidence on the use of multimedia in educational programs will help other organizations working with adolescents to apply our content or similar content to their programs effectively, both in and out of school.

*Estimates as of the end of January 2025



A CHAPTER OF CHANGE IN BANGLADESH

ROOM TO READ RECENT RESULTS IN COX'S BAZAR:

- 54.8% of children in Grade 1 can correctly identify 45 letters per minute, compared to just 5.3% of children in comparison schools
- 54.4% of children in Grade 2 can correctly read 45 words per minute, compared to 7.3% of children in comparison schools
- 61% of children in Grade 2 can correctly answer 80% of reading comprehension questions, compared to only 5.9% of children in comparison schools



If you've supported Room to Read at any point in the last 25 years, you've directly accelerated positive change — the kind of systemic change we are advancing in Bangladesh.

For children in Bangladesh, 2024 was a year marked by starts and stops. In July, political unrest forced schools to close. In August, severe monsoon conditions caused catastrophic flooding and landslides, disrupting education yet again.

We adapted to support at-home learning, as we have done so many times before. We mobilized our resources to distribute Room to Read's proven curriculum and educational content: workbooks, notebooks and children's literature. When schools reopened, we guided educators to address learning gaps. Our work does not stop in the face of chaos or uncertainty. Your support has allowed us to become increasingly flexible and adaptable, ensuring that we can take a contextualized approach.

This contextualized approach has made Room to Read a valuable partner of choice for the [Bangladesh Directorate of Primary Education](#). Through this partnership, we published 10 new storybooks in 2024, on subjects like climate change, gender equality and the value of education. These books now fill the shelves of more than 65,500 government primary schools across the country.

With our partners, we also drafted an "Independent Readers Framework," providing literacy guidelines to all government primary schools to ensure all children learn to read independently. Moreover, we advised on a new "Independent Reading Time," a 50-minute weekly reading period for grades 3, 4 and 5, cementing a reading routine into the national academic schedule. Through this routine, children have the room they need to develop a true love of reading, laying the foundation for improved literacy outcomes.

And after successfully establishing 59 classroom libraries in 10 government schools in Dhaka and Rangpur, our classroom library model was adopted nationally, securing safe and accessible delivery structures for our literacy programming. **SOON, ALL CHILDREN IN GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOLS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO COLORFUL LIBRARIES FILLED WITH A WIDE VARIETY OF BOOKS, INVITING THEM TO GET CURIOUS — AND FALL FURTHER IN LOVE WITH READING.**

LIFE SKILLS THAT SHAPE LIFE CHOICES

We are a learning organization. That means we test our assumptions. We measure our impact and identify areas of growth. We collect data to continuously improve our programming, and we share our learnings with others to improve the sector at large.

In 2021, we engaged in a deep review of our life skills curriculum. We recognized that this curriculum — like all our materials and approaches — must be able to adapt to new and changing contexts across geographies. We must prepare children to make informed choices in the face of the unique challenges of their time.

We collected feedback from local leadership on programmatic best practices and evolving educational priorities. And we interrogated our materials, making sure they offered adolescents opportunities to challenge gender biases, norms and stereotypes, and to identify root causes of gender inequality.

The result: In 2024, we unveiled our updated curriculum, with content essential for young people as they navigate the unique challenges of the 21st century.



Financial literacy content supports adolescent children to set a budget, plan for emergencies, develop healthy spending habits and analyze the difference between wants and needs.



Climate justice content provides lessons on the science of climate change along with its social ramifications around gender equality, helping participants understand the gendered consequences of climate change and build the skills needed to act.



Dedicated sessions on menstrual health and hygiene, well-being, bodily autonomy and consent, personal safety and reproductive health all ensure adolescents have access to critical information about their bodies.

By integrating this content into our evidence-based approach, adolescents are supported to focus on their health and well-being, advocate for their rights and continue their education, free from preventable barriers.



You are part of a story that has fueled this learning and improvement, and our future growth will be accelerated by the pages you write next. It is with your support that we ensure relevant, effective and innovative programming — and achieve robust life skills outcomes that promote gender equality in the lives of all children, in their communities and around the world.



SHE CREATES CHANGE: WHAT'S NEXT

WE ARE FOREVER GRATEFUL TO OUR CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE:

- SUSAN DIANE WOJCICKI (1968–2024)
- THE TROPER WOJCICKI FOUNDATION
- FORWARD GLOBAL
- STASIA OBREMSKEY AND DAN CARROLL
- TATCHA
- COMIC RELIEF US
- ALL SHE CREATES CHANGE FILM CREATORS

THESE VISIONARIES PARTNERED WITH ROOM TO READ TO HELP ENSURE ALL CHILDREN — ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND BOYS ALIKE, ALONG WITH THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES — HAVE ACCESS TO STORIES THAT INSPIRE THEM TO DREAM AND DREAM BIG.



It has been a big year for storytelling. In September, the true stories of Dewmini, Keya, Trang, Diksha, Yashika and Naifat reached the big screen during the theatrical release of *She Creates Change* in New York. The following month, on International Day of the Girl, we premiered *She Creates Change* on YouTube, streaming live to audiences around the world. *She Creates Change* director and producer Martha Adams; actors Prajakta Koli and Dilshad Vadsaria; director Prashanti Aswani; composer Lucie Treacher; and Yashika, the real-life hero of her own story, all tuned in to answer questions from viewers.

THE FILM IS NOW AVAILABLE ON YOUTUBE. IF YOU HAVEN'T WATCHED IT YET, THERE'S NO BETTER TIME TO FEEL INSPIRED!



What's next: a dedicated online home for *She Creates Change* at www.shecreateschange.org. The new website, coming in March 2025, will make the film, in various languages and lengths, accessible for free to educators, parents, students, partners, community volunteers and event organizers seeking powerful, relatable stories that catalyze change and promote gender equality. Discussion guides, educational curriculum, and abundant supplemental content will be available for download with a simple click.



ROOM TO READ WORLDWIDE OFFICES: COLOMBO, DAR ES SALAAM, DHAKA, DELHI, DUBAI, HO CHI MINH CITY, HONG KONG, KATHMANDU, LONDON, MUMBAI, NAIROBI, NEW YORK CITY, PHNOM PENH, PRETORIA, SAN FRANCISCO, SINGAPORE, SYDNEY, TOKYO, VIENTIANE, WASHINGTON D.C., ZURICH

HELP WRITE THE NEXT CHAPTER

SHARE YOUR STORY

How has Room to Read been a part of your life and what inspires you to support our mission?

GIVE MONTHLY

Make Room to Read a part of your next chapter with a recurring monthly donation. If you sign up for a monthly gift of US\$25 or more in 2025, Room to Read regional board members will MATCH your first 12 months — doubling the impact of your monthly contribution.

ESTABLISH A MATCHING GIFT PROGRAM

A matching gift program is designed to support nonprofits that a company's employees are passionate about by matching the donations made by their employees. Thanks to matching gifts programs, you can double or even triple your impact!

MAKE EDUCATION YOUR LEGACY

Including a gift in your will or estate plans for Room to Read is one of the most powerful actions you can take to make illiteracy and gender inequality things of the past.

JOIN OUR VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY

We could not be more grateful for the thousands of passionate and committed volunteers who help to fuel our work. Our network of volunteers helps us succeed through fundraising and increasing awareness of our cause in their communities. Whether you are a student building awareness in your school, an employee mobilizing skills and resources within your company or a community builder in your hometown, we welcome you to our volunteer community.



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