

# Fact Sheet



**Room to Read believes that World Change Starts with Educated Children.® We envision a world free from illiteracy and gender inequality, where *all* children have room to read, learn and grow — creating lasting change.**

In the midst of a worldwide learning crisis, Room to Read has a proven way forward to make education endure, even in the face of overwhelming challenges. Our mission is to nurture foundational learning skills in children. We develop children's literacy and life skills in a dignified and gender-equal way. As a leading implementer, we deliver evidence-based, contextualized materials and approaches. Room to Read is a valuable partner of choice for government, system and program partners as well as investors focused on education.

## The challenge

- Reading scores for children have declined in recent years. For example, 70% of 10-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries cannot read and understand a simple text. In sub-Saharan Africa, this percentage rises to nearly 90%.
- 2/3 of the 773 million people who cannot read are women.
- In historically low-income countries, 66 girls complete upper secondary school education for every 100 boys.
- 44 million teachers need to be recruited to meet universal primary and secondary education needs by 2030.
- Only 3% of global humanitarian aid is spent on education.

## Literacy Portfolio

**Our Literacy Portfolio develops children's literacy skills and nurtures a love of reading — enabling them to pursue lifelong learning and make informed decisions.** We create quality curriculum and children's book content in local languages, train and coach educators, and establish enriching learning spaces that enable children to become independent readers.

## Gender Equality Portfolio

**Our Gender Equality Portfolio supports all adolescents, particularly girls, to develop life skills that promote gender equality — enabling them to pursue lifelong learning and make informed decisions.** We improve the availability of quality curriculum and content, skilled and supported educators, and enriching learning spaces. Our life skills curriculum focuses on five key skills — collaboration, resilience, leadership, decision-making and critical thinking.

## Across our portfolios

We partner with educators and local communities to implement innovative and dignified learning approaches for children. We generate evidence and share insights on what works. And we collaborate with government, social and private sector partners to enhance and transform learning systems — to benefit the most children, as quickly as possible.

## Our results

**13MM+**

children  
actively  
benefited in  
2024

**43MM+**

books  
distributed, including  
more than 4,900 original  
and adapted titles  
published by Room to  
Read in 57 languages

**2X**

more correct  
words/minute read  
and comprehension  
questions answered  
than Grade 2 students  
in comparison schools

**77%**

of surveyed  
Girls' Education  
Program graduates  
enrolled in tertiary  
education and/or  
employed within a year

## Our reach

Room to Read has benefited more than 50 million children across 28 countries. In 2024 alone, our programming benefited more than an estimated 13.6 million children, and by the close of 2025, we will have invested more than US\$1 billion in global education since our founding.



## Our organizational competencies

**Leading implementer:** Our long-term focus on literacy and life skills development has resulted in a comprehensive design and approach to improving foundational learning outcomes for children that can be leveraged for scale. Our community-based program implementation and scalability has proven successful in geographies around the world.

**Simultaneously local, regional and global:** Our decentralized approach to leadership and functional expertise enables us to support local stakeholders in creating their own solutions, while fostering efficiency and cross-learning in design and implementation across regions. Our global presence ensures that our mission area is supported with the influence of evidence, storytelling and resources from around the world.

**Dignity first:** From the language we use, to how we treat our partners and workforce, to the way children develop self-worth in our programming, kindness, respect and the joy of learning together come first. Our significant expertise in creating a gender-equal world through education enables us to bring a gender lens to our programs and operations.

**Data driven:** Our programmatic core competencies are beneficial in most parts of the world. Our commitment to research and evidence helps us narrow our priorities and investment decisions. We are diligent in ensuring we make informed choices about where and how we will work and about sharing what we have learned with others.

**Flexibly funded:** The majority of our funding is flexible. That means we retain significant control over how we allocate resources to maximize benefit to the children we serve and how we engage in public and private partnerships.



## Invest with confidence

**Fiscal excellence:** For every US\$1 donated to Room to Read, 85 cents goes to our programs. We are proud to have earned 18 four-star ratings from Charity Navigator.

**Trusted and recognized brand:** We have established global recognition through credible educational and charity leadership awards.

- UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education
- UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy
- HundrED Global Collection: Hall of Fame, Top 100 Global Collection and Academy Choice Award. Out of 3,448 education-focused organizations, Room to Read ranked #1 for impact and scalability in a review from an international expert panel of 194 academy members consisting of academics, educators, innovators, students and leaders.
- World's Children's Prize Honorary Laureate
- U.S. Library of Congress Literacy Awards, Rubenstein Prize and Special Response Award
- Great Place to Work recognition
- Book publishing awards including the Ezra Jack Keats Award, the Schneider Family Book Award, the International Board of Books for Young People Honour List and the Philippine Board on Books for Young People, Best Reads Award

## Press

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