



Bangladesh
Annual Report
2024

GUIDANCE

Iffat Jarin
Mazhar-Ul-Alam
Md. Badruzzaman Khan
Md. Moinul Haque
Mohammad Mazharul Karim
Zakir Hossain

IDEAS

Asma Rashida
Md. Hafizur Rahman
Mohammad Mojibur Rahman
Saidus Saklaen
Sima Sarker

STORIES

Chittapriya Acharjya
Kamal Hossain
Md. Abdul Alim
Md. Yusuf Ali
Md. Zoynal Abedin

REVIEW

Rakhi Sarkar

DRAFT & DESIGN

Amiruzzaman Tamal

PHOTOS

Abdullah Al Kafi
Afzal Siddique
Amiruzzaman Tamal
Emdadul Islam Bitu
Fahad Kaizer

PRINTER

...





Children need room: **room to read** **room to learn** **room to grow**

Children need room to build strong skills, to lead more fulfilling lives and to create a better tomorrow – for themselves, for their families and for their communities. In this report, we are celebrating the many ways we made room for learning in 2024 by developing literacy and life-skills in a dignified and gender-equal way.

We are also marking our 25th anniversary by sharing a bold new strategic vision for the next chapter of Room to Read's story, one focused on accelerating and also expanding our programming to ensure all children have room to read, learn and grow – creating lasting change.

ভালে গিয়াছে
তুল পক্ষির বাসায় উঠে বসল। তার বর্মানি...

খানসিটি জানা মেয়ে ডিব্বকে
কয় কোণ টুঙ্গ। কোথায় যা
পাখিরে খানসি ?

From our *Country Director*



Dear partners and supporters,

In 2024, Room to Read in Bangladesh continued our mission to create a world free from illiteracy and gender inequality in the face of significant challenges, including political unrest and climate change challenges.

Our programs benefited thousands of children and adolescent girls, fostering independent readers and confident leaders. Key milestones include the national adoption of our classroom library model across government Primary schools and integration of a 50-minute weekly independent reading time into national curriculum, ensuring sustainable literacy gains.

Our evidence-based, programmatic approaches strengthened partnerships with the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), driving policy changes that benefit millions. For example, in Cox's Bazar, 54.8% of Grade 1 students in our programs identify 45 letters per minute, compared to just 5.3% in comparison schools. While these results reflect our commitment to building scalable literacy solutions for systemic change, they also equip us in formulating new programmes in 2025 and beyond.

This report highlights how your support is shaping a brighter future for all children in Bangladesh. I invite you to explore our achievements and join us in writing the next chapter of change.

See you there,

Rakhi

2009-2024

*In numbers **

Literacy Portfolio



2.4M Pre-Primary to G5 students supported



31,015 educators received training support



14,406 classroom libraries established



3.16m copies of 196 storybooks distributed



12.9M storybooks read by G1-5 students

Gender Equality Portfolio



3.1M adolescent girls supported



440K mentoring sessions engaged 83% girls



26,824 life-skill sessions engaged 81% girls

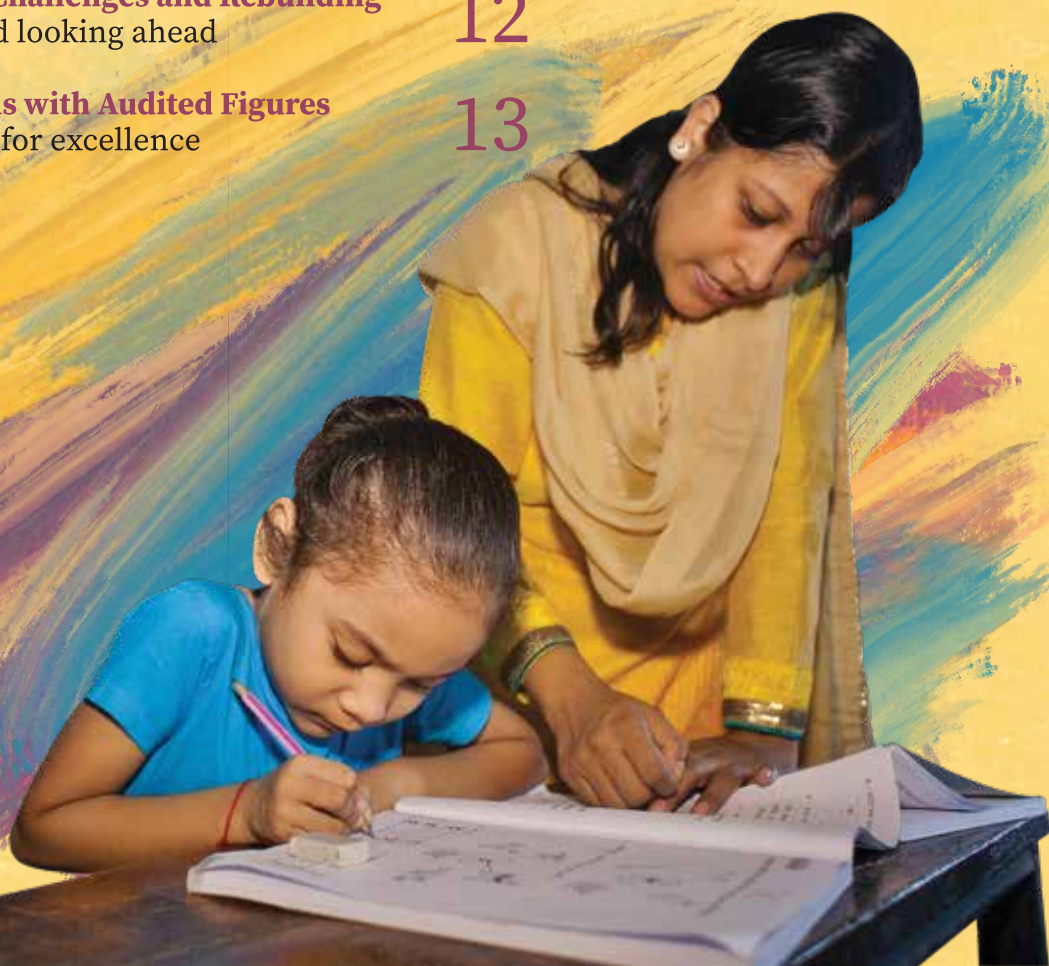


91% pass rate in SSC and HSC exams

* Cumulative data includes our direct Program participants, as well as indirect participants reached via electronic and/or digital means.

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Our Identity is our Pride

Vision, mission & approach

Our vision: the future state that we are working together to achieve

We envision a world free from illiteracy and gender inequality, where all children have room to read, learn and grow – creating lasting change.

Our mission: our core focus and function

Room to Read's mission is to nurture foundational learning skills in children.

Our approach: how we work towards our mission and vision

Our contextualized approach develops children's literacy and life skills in a dignified and gender-equal way.

Our Commitments in Bangladesh

The promises we keep

Bangladesh continues to face critical challenges in early-Grade literacy and gender equality in education. According to UNESCO, approximately 70% of children in low- and middle-income countries cannot read a simple text by age 10 – a statistic mirrored in many Bangladeshi communities. Girls, especially those from historically marginalized backgrounds, face heightened risks of school dropout and limited life choices.

Since 2009, Room to Read Bangladesh has partnered with the Government of Bangladesh to address these gaps through scalable, evidence-based programs that support children's right to quality education. We work closely with the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) as well as the education authorities in the sub-national level to:

- > Strengthen learning ecosystems that nurture strong literacy skills and foster lifelong reading habits among early-graders
- > Develop life-skill curriculum and content to support adolescent girls in advocating for themselves and their futures

Foundational learning ensures literacy and life skills that promote gender equality. Our approach emphasizes dignity and agency – for children and girls as active learners and leaders of their own futures. To inform policy advocacy and scale programs, our work is grounded in a rigorous monitoring .

2024 Results at a Glance

Cumulative numbers

1,300K	Pre-Primary to G5 students supported across Bangladesh	9	new storybooks developed for children
2,644	educators' capacity strengthened	207K	copies of children's storybooks distributed
840	new classroom libraries established for G1-5	6,483	students inducted as book captains

Literacy Portfolio



Gender Equality Portfolio

207K	girls supported for gender equality	1,706	girls received need-based material support
2,337	life-skill sessions delivered to girls	100	schoolteachers' capacity strengthened
4,967	mentoring sessions delivered to them	87%	girls advanced to the next tier of education



Strengthening Early-Grade Literacy

Building independent readers

Enriching Literacy Experiences at Scale



2024, we expanded our literacy program to 163 *new* Primary schools (GPS) in Narail district in addition to 437 *existing* GPS receiving support with educator training, children's titles as the supplementary reading materials (SRM) and classroom libraries. Our comprehensive literacy support directly helped ~118 thousand students, reflecting a steady growth in coverage compared to 2023.



Following our advocacy around the use of SRM resources, government expressed plans to co-create 10 new storybooks with us. We selected essential themes from the national curriculum and integrated them into these joint titles that the government printed for distribution to all +65 thousand GPS.



We extended support to government by digitally integrating professional development course for educators on the Bangla subject into government Learning Management System. This helped improve access to quality resources capacitating ~300K educators.

In the 6 of our self-paced courses hosted on the *Muktapaath* platform of the government:

Total enrolment:
16,588

Certificates issued:
8,203



Evidence-Based Instruction and Monitoring



To assess the progress of children's reading competencies, we also conducted a biannual assessment of 24,957 students, identifying gains in letter and word recognition in Grades 1 and 2, and highlighting areas that would require increased support for educators to better deliver reading comprehension related lessons.



A major part of our capacity development program was invested in developing a pool of Master Trainers and government officials to improve educators' skill in instructional quality. Extended via rigorous ToT and refreshers, this initiative also supported us to gradually release responsibility of quality instructions to educators.



Voice from the community

“[My students] are developing sound identification and manipulation skills. My learning helps me connect phonics with phonological awareness.”

- Abdur Rahman, Grade 1 educator, Cox's Bazar

Sustainable Models for Systemic Change



We delivered transitional training to support the government in assessing the effectiveness of our classroom library model, capacitating Instructors of PTIs to sustain practice beyond direct NGO input. The library pilot was strategically positioned in 8 PTI schools and 3 model schools to also trickle down to educators.



To procure storybooks independently and also manage library resources, promoting ownership of local communities, we extended support to operationalize the SLIP fund (School Level Implementation Plan) for 139 Primary schools in Natore district. SMC is utilizing SLIP and local funds successfully.



As supplementary titles reach +65 thousand gov Primary schools, we also developed guidelines for teachers on conducting the reading hour class. Government adopted the guideline and also onboarded us to chart the national document 'Independent Reader Framework' to foster early-Grade reading.



Foundational Literacy in Cox's Bazar

McGovern-Dole Program

Sustaining Reading at the Local Level



2024, we successfully completed a literacy project that strengthened childrens' foundational reading skill in a flagship initiative in Cox's Bazar funded by USDA/WFP*. The formal handover of our reading activities to schools and community was conceptualized as a phaseout workshop with participation of the local and central GoB officials.

More than 40 thousand students from the Pre-Primary to Grade 5 have received tailored, high-quality, scientific learning materials, including storybooks, workbooks as well as stationery. The project capacitated 1,098 educators through quality and intensive training and ongoing coaching support on classroom instruction.

Master trainers and GoB officials received TOT, securing the envisioned sustainability of literacy gains within the formal education system. To garner an environment that fosters reading, we engaged the community in various activities and also inducted over 8,256 Book Captains – students in each Grades to support classroom library.

Parents and local officials were also engaged to reinforce reading habits and school attendance. We embraced digital innovation by introducing read-aloud videos, enhancing students' listening comprehension, especially during COVID closures. Classroom reading outcomes improved significantly.

* USDA is United States Department of Agriculture,
WFP is United Nations World Food Programme.



Empowering Adolescent Girls

Life-skills for equality, dignity

Holistic Life-Skills Education (LSE)



As part of major review of our Girls' Education Program and strategies, we increased focus on FELS and implemented Life-Skills Education (LSE) curricula for Grades 6-9 aligned to the national standards and local contexts, effectively promoting personal, social and gender transformative learning under Gender Equality Portfolio.



2024, we added school-based strategies to our girl-focused program. This helped us maximize our support to include more adolescent girls while optimizing our investment. In 2024 alone, we capacitated over 135 Secondary school teachers in multiple districts to integrate our gender-responsive pedagogy & life-skills in classroom.



Voice from the community

“My parents were unsure of if I should do sports besides school. Room to Read helped us see, one can do both. I got parents' support and won 1st place in long-jump.”

- Shaila Jahan, Grade 8 student, Cox's Bazar

Expanding and Scaling Program Reach



To continue to spread messages of continued education, the value of life-skills, empowerment etc. beyond our direct interventions, we aired the *Amar Mentor* (My Mentor, 20 episodes) on national radio providing guidance and support to help navigate challenges of adolescence. We reached ~8.9 million households alone in the Sylhet division. The program continues to reach adolescents and earn government praise.



We partnered with Natore district authority to develop Program guidelines to continue supporting adolescent girls & the communities after our direct program has phased-out. We appreciate and celebrate how educators started conducting life-skills sessions independently reaching the wider student populations and effectively integrating high-impact programs in government systems.



Voice from the community

“The mentoring and life-skills sessions helped me believe in my dreams and continue education braving personal challenges.”

- Ruji Begum, Grade 8 student, Moulvibazar

Collaborating for Lasting Imprint

Partnerships and advocacy

Strengthening Government Systems



Throughout 2024, we continued to strengthen our partnership with departments of the government such as DPE, NCTB, PTI and DSHE to co-create curricular materials, educator training module as well as M&E frameworks aligned with the government's education goals set out in the national strategy PEDP4. We're preparing to take part in PEDP5 discussions.



We have extended our technical support to the government to help them meet multilateral donor funding/release requisite such as a Disbursement Linked Indicator (DLI) on digital learning and educator development. As a result, government secured continuation of donor fund for ongoing education interventions in Bangladesh.



We analyzed extensive monitoring data such as children's reading assessment, teacher coaching observations and library usage metrics to inform adaptive programming and policy dialogue, fostering improved education approaches. Adoption of 'reading hour' in national class routine is one example.

Overcoming Challenges and Rebuilding

Resilience and looking ahead

Adapting Program Delivery & Operations

Year 2024 brought considerable disruptions. Political unrest delayed textbook approvals, extreme weather events such as floods and heatwaves caused school closures, and COVID-19 recovery continued to impact learning environments.

Room to Read Bangladesh responded with agility – updating materials swiftly to align with revised curricula, rescheduling activities and increasing remote teacher support. This ensured children's learning and well-being remained protected despite adversity.



To integrate reading, nutrition & community engagement across 149 Primary schools in Habiganj, UN World Food Programme (WFP) has awarded us its next literacy project after Cox's Bazar. It is part of WFP's School Feeding Program with McGovern-Dole development initiative of the USDA.



In a stronger program delivery focusing on the school-based, educator-led interventions, we are aiming to expand our life-skills education to reach five thousand more girls in new district extending special focus on enhanced mentorship, our learning and growth.



We aim to continue to institutionalize and scale teacher training in government platforms for broader and faster access and sustainability. Deepening of our collab with the government and other stakeholders is expected to further expand our work around both literacy and gender equality programs.

The Financials with Audited Figures

Making room for excellence

Financial efficiency, transparency and accountability lie at the heart of Room to Read's values. Our work is possible because of the generosity of our global network of partners and supporters, and we are deeply committed to leveraging that support for maximum results and for transparent sharing on how investor funding is utilized.

Room to Read is similarly committed to maintaining administrative overhead costs well below the industry average to maximize the amount spent on our programs. We ensure that \$0.85 of every dollar spent is on our literacy and gender equality programming.

Below is the audited 2024 Bangladesh budget (next to 2023 data for comparison):

Support and Revenue	2023 (BDT)	2024 (BDT)
Foundations/Institutions	437,463,321	407,489,409
Other Income (Bank Interest adjustment)		
Total Support and Revenue	437,463,321	407,489,409
Operating Expenses	2023 (BDT)	2024 (BDT)
Salary and benefits	272,470,926	261,190,910
Legal and consultancy fees	1,047,355	911,235
Office accommodation	12,427,285	12,091,666
Travelling and perdiem expenses	10,465,009	11,192,672
Program expenses	130,882,141	108,405,175
Other expenses	19,179,546	18,116,874
Office equipment	2,039,804	2,533,779
Total Operating Expenses	448,512,066	414,442,311
Excess of Expenditure over Income (Fund Account)	(11,048,745)	(6,952,902)

Our Country Management Team

Where direction meets action

Badruzzaman Khan
Director
Program Operations

Moinul Haque
Director
Accounting & Finance

Mazhar-Ul-Alam
Sr. Manager
People Operations

Rakhi Sarkar
Country Director

Iffat Jarin
Manager
Gender Equality
Portfolio

Zakir Hossain
Sr. Manager
Research, Monitoring
and Evaluation

Mazharul Karim
Director
Literacy Portfolio



The Glossary

Understanding our work better

Below are key terms used in this report, defined per Room to Read's Language Guide and Message Map, and Government of Bangladesh reference documents:

Disbursement Linked Indicator (DLI): Performance targets set by donors for government programs to achieve measurable outcomes.

Evidence-based advocacy: Using data and evaluation insights to influence policies that improve educational outcomes.

Historically under-resourced communities: Communities facing systemic educational & economic inequities, where our programs create lasting change.

Independent readers: Children who read fluently and comprehend texts, fostering lifelong learning.

Learning Management System (LMS): Online platform for delivering training content and monitoring educator progress.

Life-Skills Education (LSE): Training that equips adolescent girls with skills like collaboration, resilience and decision-making to navigate life's challenges.

Literacy Assessment Framework (LAF): A tool to measure reading proficiency and guide program improvements.

Master Trainers: Expert educators who receive ToT and train educators, ensuring consistent, high-quality training across Primary and Secondary education.

Primary Teachers Training Institute (PTI): Specialized government institutions dedicated to the professional development of Primary school teachers.

School Level Implementation Plan (SLIP): Government budget planning at school level for resource procurement and local initiatives.

Supplementary Reading Materials (SRM): Books and resources designed to complement the primary curriculum, enhancing literacy instruction.

Training of Trainers (ToT): Capacity building approach where selected individuals are trained to cascade knowledge to others.



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OUR STORY, YOUR CHAPTER

Write the next chapter with us

Till date, Room to Read Bangladesh supported an estimated 2 million children and 3 million adolescent girls (cumulative of direct and indirect support), but millions more need support. Partner with us as a donor, advocate or volunteer to ensure every child in Bangladesh has access to quality education. Visit roomtoread.org to learn how you can help create a world free from illiteracy and gender inequality.

- ☎ +880 2 2222 70322
- ☎ +880 2 2222 70952
- 🌐 roomtoread.org.bd
- ✉ bangladesh@roomtoread.org
- 📘 RoomtoRead.BD
- ▶ RoomToReadBangladesh
- 🌐 company/room-to-read-bangladesh

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