2009 Monitoring Report

Introduction

We are pleased to share with our stakeholders Room to Read’s second annual Monitoring Report. This report reflects our commitment to monitoring our projects on a regular basis to ensure that we are implementing quality programs that provide the greatest benefits to children in the communities we serve. Room to Read and its partners routinely visit our projects to gather information about program effectiveness, provide support to schools and communities, and highlight areas for future improvement.

Room to Read uses global indicators (GIs) to track progress of each of our program objectives on a global scale. Data collected in our program countries is input into a common database and summarized at the local and global levels. Analysis provides feedback for improvement and charting milestones toward Room to Read’s long-term goal of improving educational access and opportunity for 10 million children in the developing world. The lessons learned will help provide a broader view of our successes and challenges ahead.

This document summarizes changes in outputs related to 29 global indicators. Room to Read staff and partners collected data at the end of 2009 on all activities receiving active support from Room to Read across our nine countries of operation. This includes 5,634 Reading Rooms currently receiving support, 478 schools, and 8,644 girl scholars, as well as information on all Local Language Publishing activities.

Overall Results

The data collected indicate that programs are largely achieving planned objectives and that Room to Read is making progress toward our program goals. Illustrative indicators of success as we measure changes from 2008 to 2009 include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Room</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Libraries with staff receiving librarian training</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries with book classification system in place</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries with functional check-out systems</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>97%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Language Publishing</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of local authors/illustrators hired to create books</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of workshops for authors/illustrators to improve skills</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Language Publishing books distributed to Reading Rooms</td>
<td>561,824</td>
<td>730,164</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Rooms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools constructed by the community directly</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools needing basic maintenance</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilets functioning</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>95%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girls’ Education</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of girls receiving scholarships</td>
<td>6,491</td>
<td>8,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of girls receiving life skills training</td>
<td>2,451</td>
<td>4,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of scholars completing secondary school</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Findings:

Reading Room
The goal of our flagship Reading Room program is to promote literacy and a habit of reading in children. Since 2000, Room to Read has established over 9,000 libraries in nine countries. Our Global Indicators reflect the progress made in 2009 toward achieving the following global program objectives for our Reading Room program:

1. Increase student and teacher access to and usage of library resources.
2. Improve school administration, librarian, and/or teacher capacity to ensure the libraries are well run.

Global indicators used to track the progress of the Reading Room program are a combination of the numbers of program outputs and measures of the quality of program results. Quality is in part examined in terms of library management (book classification and check-out systems) and student behavior (books checked out).

Increase school and/or community members’ access to and usage of library resources. Room to Read has established a total of 9,220 libraries (Reading Rooms) from 2000-2009. In 2009, 3,019,187 local language and English books were provided to these libraries, a third more books than the previous year. This was largely due to the implementation of a program best practice to provide an average of 5 books per student during Room to Read’s 3 years of support. To assess usage of library resources, we collected information on books checked out. In 2009, library users checked out 3,819,830 books, indicating a 3 fold increase from the previous year. On average, each student had access to a Room to Read library 2.5 hours per week, representing an additional 30 minutes as compared to 2008. The global increase was largely due to the increase of time in India, where the designated time for library periods went up in three states.

Improve school administration, librarian, and/or teacher capacity to ensure the libraries are well run. In 2009, Room to Read and its partners provided on average 3.7 days of librarian training to school personnel at 92 percent of the libraries established in 2007-2009. Annual training was identified in 2008 as an area needing improvement, and this indicator increased substantially in 2009 as a result of attention to training in the second and third years of support. All countries provided training to more than 80 percent of libraries served. Overall, 97 percent of our 2007-2009 school libraries have book classification systems in place, and 96 percent have functional book check out systems, indicating that the libraries are being actively and effectively managed. Both of these indicators were strong in 2008 and became even stronger in 2009.

Local Language Publishing (LLP)
The goal of the LLP program is to promote literacy and a habit of reading among children by providing them with culturally relevant materials to inspire them to read, expand their minds, and develop a lifelong love for reading and learning. Since the program launched in 2003, Room to Read has published 433 original children's book titles in 22 languages across 7 countries.

The global program objectives for our Local Language Publishing program follow:

1. Increase access to culturally and locally relevant reading materials for children
2. Develop and/or enhance the local children’s publishing industry.

Currently, all global indicators for Local Language Publishing focus on program outputs measuring titles published, books distributed, and engagement with local authors and illustrators. We are working towards developing indicators that measure quality or impact of our books on student reading attitudes, habits, or skills. These indicators will be incorporated into future tracking as we focus on the habit of reading and children’s reading skills.

Increase access to culturally and locally relevant reading materials for children. In 2009, a total of 730,164 Room to Read books were distributed to our worldwide network of libraries, a 30 percent increase from the previous year. In addition, a total of 203,246 Room to Read books were donated to other organizations, such as public libraries, non-Room to Read school libraries, NGOs, orphanages, partners, and private organizations, multiplying the impact of our program.
Develop and/or enhance the local children’s publishing industry. In 2009, Room to Read hired 139 local authors and illustrators to create Room to Read’s books, and trained 738 local authors and illustrators. To increase and improve writing and illustration skills, we organized 33 workshops for authors and illustrators. Globally, our number of trained authors and illustrators increased dramatically from 292 in 2008 to 738 in 2009. Much of this increase was due to South Africa’s hosting workshops for the first time in 2009. In addition, Vietnam posted advertisements for workshops on writing and illustrating for children that attracted a number of emerging authors and artists.

School Room and Constructed Reading Room
The goal of the School Room Program is to provide children access to safe, dedicated learning spaces that will help them achieve their educational potential. The program meets this objective by partnering with local communities to build primary and secondary schools, and in some cases, pre-schools. From 2000-2009, 1,129 schools and 140 Constructed Reading Rooms (CRRs) were built by Room to Read across 5 countries. Our School Room program also incorporates the building of CRRs, which are larger separate library buildings. For this report, calculations for 2009 include all School Rooms that were constructed in the three-year rolling period of 2006-2008, while calculations for 2008 include all School Rooms that were constructed in the 2005-2007 period.

The global program objectives for the School Room Program follow:
1. Increase students’ access to and usage of dedicated learning spaces.
2. Improve quality of school infrastructure.
3. Increase community participation in construction and maintenance of schools.

Increase students’ access and usage of dedicated learning spaces. The rolling three-year total of schools and CRRs rose by 21 percent, from 395 to 478, with all implementing countries showing planned increases. The three-year number of classrooms, libraries, and teacher rooms constructed increased by 30 percent, from 1583 to 2060, and the number of students enrolled at these schools increased by 8 percent, from 149,798 to 161,440.

Improve quality of school infrastructure. In 2008, 21 schools were identified as possibly having structural defects. Following careful examination and field visits, it was determined that only one school in the 2006-2008 cohort had significant structural defects. Room to Read provided $1000 and the community provided $700 to repair these defects at the identified school. In 2009, 34 schools were identified by the data collectors as having potential defects. Follow-up examination reduced this number to one school with structural problems. A comprehensive strategy for undertaking major repairs is currently being developed. Overall, more than 99% of Room to Read schools remain structurally sound. Basic maintenance needs (such as roof repair, painting, plaster, windows) decreased from 69 percent in 2008 to 50 percent in 2009. Our 2008 monitoring results led to the addition of maintenance training for communities as part of our School Room program. We expect to see the results of this training reflected in a further decline in the percentage of buildings with basic maintenance needs in 2010. Finally, the percentage of toilets functioning in our schools increased dramatically from 69 percent in 2008 to 95 percent in 2009.

Increase community participation in construction and long-term maintenance of schools. Globally Room to Read continues to move towards a community-based construction model. In 2009, 62 percent of our projects were constructed by the community, a substantial increase from the 47 percent rate achieved in 2008. This increase was primarily due to the piloting of a community-based construction effort in Sri Lanka. The number of school construction committee members trained in basic construction techniques or project management (prior to school construction) more than tripled from 2008 to 2009, increasing from 1,288 to 4,340. This was primarily due to increases in training in Nepal. We also found that of schools needing some type of basic maintenance, only 26 percent of the communities had undertaken such repairs. We are currently evaluating how best to more actively engage and incentivize local communities in making needed repairs.
Girls' Education Program (GEP)
Room to Read established the Girls' Education program in 2000 to motivate, educate, and empower girls by providing the support they need to enroll and remain in school. The program identifies girls at risk of dropout and ensures they have the opportunity to complete secondary school.

The global objectives for the Girls' Education program are:

1. Increase girls’ access to and retention in school.
2. Increase girls’ educational opportunities.
3. Increase guardian awareness about the value of girls’ education.
4. Increase school completion of girl scholars.

Global indicators reflect program outputs, such as the number of girls receiving support and the kinds of support they received, as well as outcomes related to staying in school and completing secondary education.

Increase girls’ access to and retention in school. In calendar year 2009, 8,644 girls participated in our Girls' Education Program representing an increase of over 33 percent from 2008. Overall, the program experienced a 4 percent dropout rate. This statistic increased slightly from the 3 percent rate in 2008 due largely to an aging scholar population and the increased dropout tendency as girls get older and competing priorities multiply. To address this issue, country teams are increasing our academic tutoring, life skills workshops, and mentoring efforts. 96 percent of eligible girls (those remaining enrolled) advanced to the next grade, and 94 percent of those eligible girls transitioned school levels (for example, advanced from primary school to secondary school).

Increase girls’ educational opportunities. In 2009, 5,233 girls received tutoring during the school year, and 4,456 attended life skills training. Academic tutoring nearly doubled, a direct result of efforts to offer this critical educational component to more girls enrolled in the program. Similarly, girls attending life skills workshops nearly doubled, reflecting the heightened importance Room to Read is placing on this program component and the role it plays in helping girls navigate key life decisions and achieve success.

Increase guardian awareness about the value of girls’ education. The parents and other guardians of 91 percent of the girls participated in Girls’ Education meetings. An important component of the program, Room to Read encourages scholars’ parents and guardians to demonstrate their active support for their girls’ education, and be advocates for the girls’ success.

Increase school completion of girl scholars. At the close of 2009, 69 scholars had completed the final year of the Girls’ Education Program, successfully finishing secondary school, as compared to 10 girls in 2008.1 This number is expected to increase substantially each year going forward as more girls move through the program.

IV. CONCLUSION
Room to Read’s 2009 monitoring effort was successful in continuing to build staff capacity, monitoring our work and progress, and identifying areas where we are doing well and areas needing improvement and support. With two years of data collection now completed, we have access to trend data that will enable us to more deeply evaluate program effectiveness. As we move forward in our monitoring efforts, there will be a growing emphasis on measuring achievements and impact.

Based on this data collection experience, Room to Read will continue to refine the definitions and data collection methods for some indicators in order to make them most useful. In addition, the results of our data analysis are being used for program improvements that will enable us to better serve the communities where we work.

1 The Girls Education Program started in 2001. Depending on the age of the girls they often have 7 to 10 years to complete secondary school, so girls are just beginning to graduate.