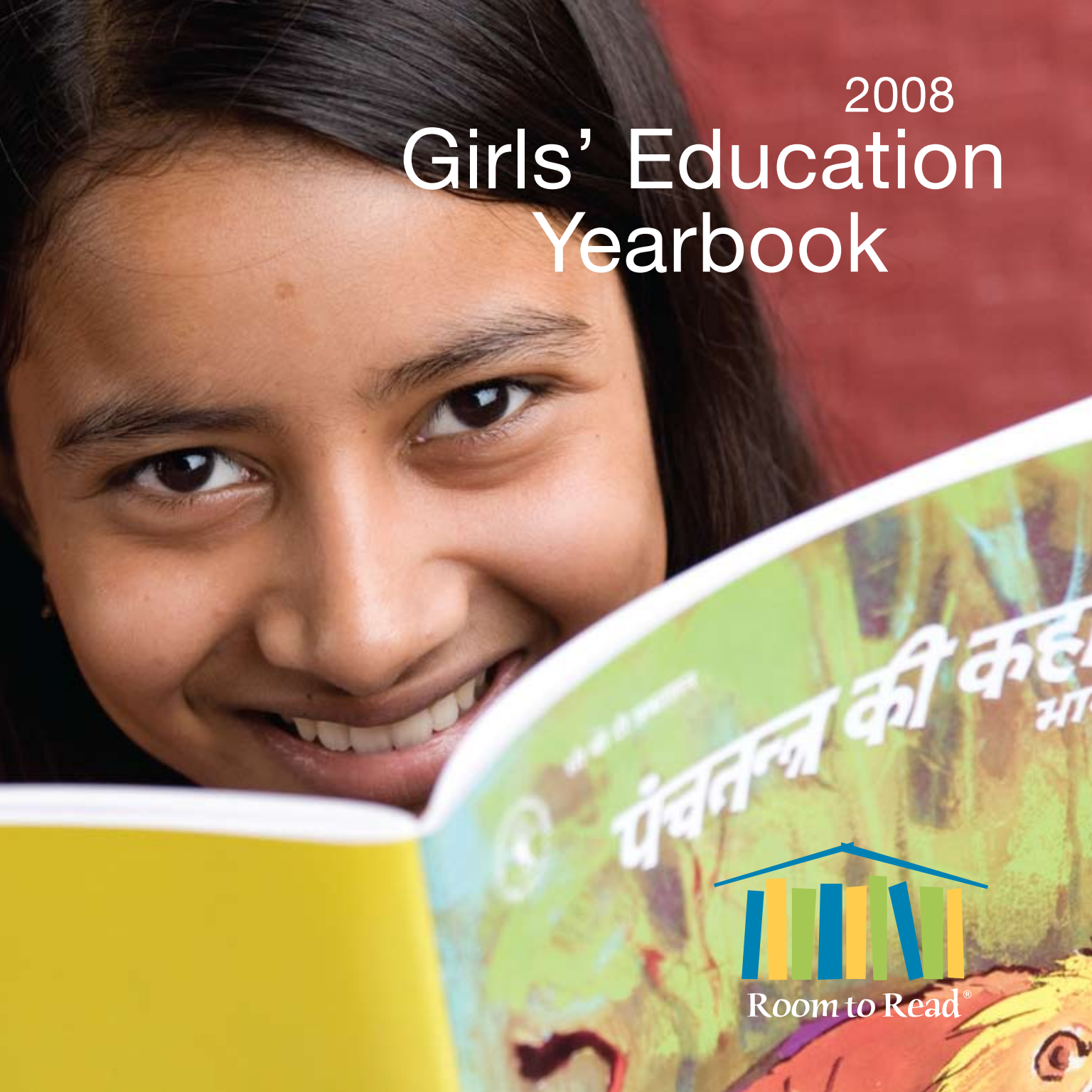


2008

# Girls' Education Yearbook



पंचतन्त्र की कहानी  
भा

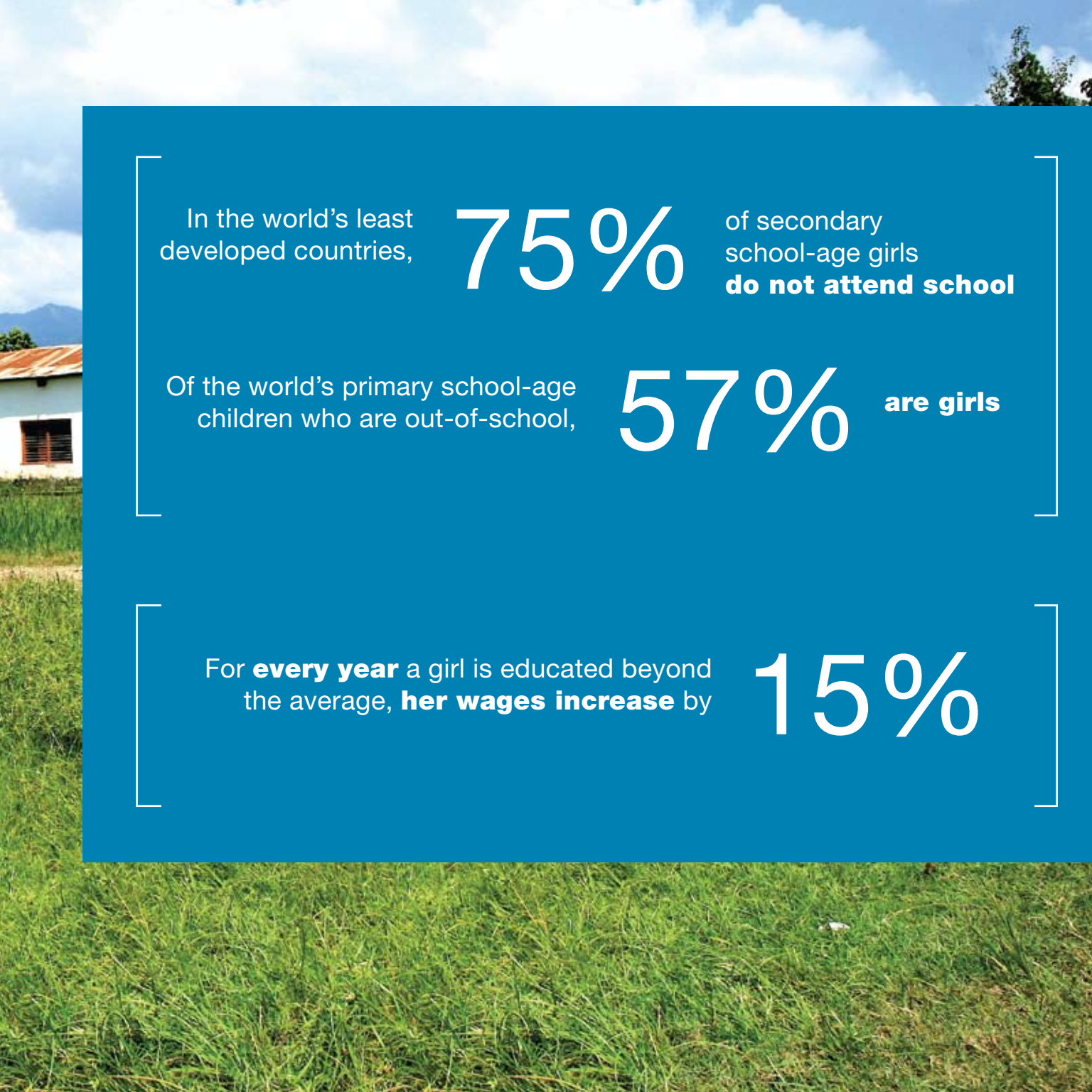


Room to Read®









In the world's least developed countries,

75%

of secondary school-age girls **do not attend school**

Of the world's primary school-age children who are out-of-school,

57%

**are girls**

For **every year** a girl is educated beyond the average, **her wages increase** by

15%

# Program Overview

A close-up photograph of two young girls. The girl on the left is wearing a bright pink headscarf with gold embroidery and a matching pink top. She has her hands clasped near her face, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The girl on the right is wearing a red and white patterned top and has her hands resting on her chin, looking slightly to the side with a calm expression. The background is softly blurred, showing hints of other people and traditional patterns.

## The problem.

Each day, over 250 million children across the developing world wake up and don't go to school. Even more startling is that nearly 800 million people in the developing world – one out of every seven – are illiterate. Two-thirds of those unable to read and write at even the most basic level are girls and women. The risks of ignoring this issue are staggering; if each one of those 500 million women has four children, it's likely those additional two billion children will grow up without the benefit of an educated mother. We owe it to ourselves, and to future generations, to take immediate and large-scale action to reverse this course.

Economics, cultural bias and gender discrimination often exclude girls from educational opportunities in the developing world. It is widely acknowledged that educating girls is the most powerful and effective way to address global poverty in the developing world and the single best investment one can make. When girls learn,

their families, communities and societies all benefit. This assertion has been backed up time and again by empirical research. Education for girls is directly linked to a range of positive outcomes, including: lower infant mortality rates; increased eventual wages; increased likelihood of educating the next generation; improved family health; success in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS and other preventable diseases; and improvement of general economic development. Yet, despite these known benefits, girls are less likely than boys to attend school; and those girls fortunate enough to enroll are likely to drop out during their adolescence, when transitioning from primary to secondary school.

## Our solution.

Room to Read's Girls' Education program is designed to educate, motivate and empower girls by providing the support they need to enroll and remain in school. Our approach is long-term and holistic. We provide both material support (school fees, textbooks, uniforms, school supplies and transportation) as well as a range of supplementary activities (tutoring, life skills training, mentoring and medical check-ups) that contribute to the girls' educational success. We also work with their parents, teachers, school administrators and community members to ensure each girl has a strong support system in place that enables her to thrive.

The Girls' Education program in each Room to Read country is specifically tailored and relevant to the community's context and needs. The local teams and partners target out-of-school girls and those who are most at risk of dropping out of school due to economic or cultural pressure. Some girls are selected individually to participate in the program, while in other cases we work with an entire class of girls in schools where the vast majority of them have been traditionally underserved.







## Our accomplishments.

In 2008, the Girls' Education program grew in strength and in numbers with enrollment increasing by 85 percent from the previous year. Moreover, the Vietnam team welcomed their first graduating class of girls from the program! Room to Read now has a total of 16 girls from India, Nepal and Vietnam that have graduated from secondary school and completed the Girls' Education program.

Also added to the program was the development and implementation of age- and grade-appropriate "Life Skills" activities in each country. We believe that these activities are a critical component of Room to Read's program because they round out the girls' academic education with real-life skills that are essential to their long-term success both inside and outside of the classroom. Activities in 2008 focused on a wide array of topics, including lessons on decision making, problem solving, critical thinking, goal setting, good hygiene, peer pressure and reproductive health. Older girls learned about potential career opportunities such as becoming a teacher, healthcare professional or business owner.

Girls participating in the program are mentored by Room to Read female staff and women from within their own communities. These role models provide guidance to help the girls overcome the barriers to their education, as well as the conditions and struggles commonly faced by women in these local communities. Our local staff also continues to meet with and engage parents, teachers and administrators to discuss the importance of education and foster greater support for the girls. Furthermore, the Girls' Education program leverages other Room to Read programs by ensuring that the students have access to a library – many times established by Room to Read – and children's books from our Local Language Publishing program.

## Our results.

- Growth of program by 85 percent with the addition of 3,137 girls in Cambodia, India, Laos, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Zambia
- Training to 38 women in the local community to serve as mentors for program participants
- Launch of the Girls' Education program in Zambia by supporting 200 girls in grades 6-8
- Providing girls access to other Room to Read programs with an emphasis on bilingual school libraries

## Our goals.

- Deepen program quality with new initiatives, including an accelerated learning course to assist marginalized, out-of-school girls to transition into the formal educational system
- Expand evaluation metrics to long-term, cross-national measurement of the Girls' Education program to assess the effects of the program on individual girls' lives
- Launch the Girls' Education Program in Bangladesh – a country where over 50% of girls are not enrolled in secondary school
- Continue providing girls with access to other Room to Read programs with an emphasis on bilingual school libraries



Country	Program launched	Current # of girls	Girls that advance	Girls that drop out
Cambodia	2003	1,525	99%	9%
India	2004	1,753	94%	2%
Laos	2007	525	100%	<1%
Nepal	2000	1,250	100%	1%
Sri Lanka	2006	750	100%	0%
Vietnam	2002	814	99%	3%
Zambia	2008	200	100%	0%
Total/Average	N/A	6,817	98%	3%



*Youry, age 16  
Kampong Cham province*



*Samot, age 17  
Siem Reap province*

Early every morning, Youry sells vegetables at the local market and then eagerly races to school. After school, she helps her mother water vegetables, look after her younger siblings, and do household chores. As the eldest of five children, Youry is always busy lending a hand but cites helping her brothers and sisters learn to read using the Khmer language books from the local library as the highlight of her day.

Youry joined Room to Read's Girls' Education program in 2006. As part of that support, she received a bright blue bicycle that allows her to ride nearly five miles to and from school each day, a distance that had been long and difficult for her on foot.

Of the 43 students in her class, Youry proudly ranks second. She is now hard at work preparing for the national exams she and her classmates will take at the end of this year. She is determined to pass with high marks because she dreams of becoming a Khmer Literature teacher. She says Room to Read's support and encouragement give her hope for a brighter future for herself and her family.

In 2006, after Samot's mother died, her father regretfully asked her to drop out of school to help support the family by farming and fixing bicycles. With tears in his eyes, Samot's father admits, "I wanted her to study, but I couldn't afford it because I had no money to pay for the expenses." Because of her love for learning, leaving school was difficult for Samot but her family saw no alternative. That is, until, a caring teacher intervened and suggested that Room to Read might be able to help.

Today, Samot is thriving as a student in the Girls' Education program. She attends school regularly, reads books at the library and volunteers to help teachers at the school prepare the lessons for the next day. If not for Room to Read's support, Samot says, "I would have to work farming and doing labor. I want to work someday, but I want to work in a village as a teacher for families that cannot afford school. Now I have hope that this can be my future."



# Cambodia



## Cambodia Summer Camp Teaches History Lesson

Room to Read's Cambodia team organized its first overnight summer camp in May. One hundred girls in grades 5 and 6 came together for three days to participate in a program that was specially designed by our staff. For most girls, it was an adventure – their first experience being away from home. Workshops and activities were designed to promote self-confidence, foster relationships and build team spirit. As part of the experience, the girls toured the famed Khmer temples of Angkor Wat. Due to the effects of decades of war and the genocide under the Khmer Rouge, many Cambodian children know only a history of conflict, poverty and political instability. This excursion was meant to connect the girls to some positive aspects of Khmer history and to show them the beauty of their culture and country.



Rebika, age 12  
Delhi state



Rajbala, age 13  
Rajasthan state

Rebika is one of 25 girls that live in the Muneer Girls' Orphanage in Delhi. The orphanage was established after a devastating fire in the slum area of Yamuna Pushta left many girls without shelter and vulnerable to violence. Currently, the orphanage is home to girls ranging in age from 4 to 17 who came from difficult, unsafe, and sometimes life-threatening circumstances. Since 2006, Room to Read has been supporting all the girls in the orphanage, including Rebika, and allowing them the opportunity to study from pre-kindergarten through secondary school.

When Rebika joined the orphanage in 2002, she was quiet and shy. Today, she has blossomed into an active and outgoing student who spends her leisure time reading books in Hindi to the younger girls and telling them stories she creates about far-away places she dreams of one day visiting. Rebika is a good student and consistently scores in the top half of her class. She particularly enjoys learning how to use the computer; her favorite activity is using the computer to improve her writing skills.

Four years ago, Rajbala (pictured, center) dropped out of school to help support her family. Her parents work as day laborers on local farms but food is scarce many months of the year. Though Rajbala's story sounds familiar, the difference is that she is a member of the Dalit community, traditionally known as "untouchables" or those in the lowest caste.

In 2005, Rajbala was fortunate to find Room to Read's Girls' Education program, which enabled her to return to school. In this remote village of just 750 families, Rajbala is currently the sole girl in a class of 26. Soon, she will become the first girl from her village ever to complete grade 8.

Rajbala's father says, "Earlier in her life, I was not sure about sending my daughter to school. But through the constant support of Room to Read and their partners, it encouraged me to keep her in school. Today, I am very proud of my daughter. She is the only girl [in] grade 8 in our village. As a result, people in the community treat me with a lot of respect." Rajabala's mother adds, "My daughter is determined to complete grade 12 regardless of the challenges she faces."

# India



## Room to Read Girls Publish their First Newsletter in India

In 2007, the India team began publishing a quarterly newsletter created especially for participants of the Girls' Education program. The newsletter is developed jointly by the program participants and Room to Read staff, and serves as an open forum in which the girls can share their opinions, personal experiences and interests. It also contains information on career opportunities, vocational training and continuing education to encourage the girls to think about their future. In addition, the newsletter showcases the girls' diversity – offering equal representation of different geographies, rural and urban backgrounds and age groups. Published in Hindi, *Gupshup* (*Chit Chat* in English) has become a very popular item for both program participants and female students outside of the program. It's also a successful tool in facilitating dialogue among girls from different states. The India team has received such positive responses to *Gupshup* that in the future they plan to increase their cross collaboration with the girls for the newsletter's development.





*Souksamay, age 13  
Salavan province*



*Yearthor, age 16  
Xayabouly province*

Souksamay comes from a family of 13, and both of her parents are farmers. Due to flooding over the past several seasons, their rice crops have been poor – which means less income for the family. As a result, Souksamay’s father recently moved to Thailand to earn additional income as a hired laborer.

Souksamay’s parents both attended primary school and desperately want their children to remain in school for as long as possible. While some of her brothers and sisters have completed primary school, Souksamay is the first to continue on to secondary school. It is now Souksamay’s dream to be the first in her family to graduate from secondary school, and her father is committed to supporting this dream.

Souksamay’s proudest accomplishment was being selected by her teachers to represent her school in a district-level writing competition involving 35 schools. She won the competition in Lao language and literature and received a prize of 65,000 kip (equivalent to US\$8), three books and a pen. As a role model to her family and friends, Souksamay is now more determined than ever to reach her goal of being the first in her family to graduate.

Yearthor’s mother, a single parent, feared that if her children (Yearthor and her younger brother) received an education, they would leave their village and she would never see them again. Although Yearthor (pictured, center) deeply wanted to learn, her mother refused to support her wish to stay in school and their disagreement was tearing apart the entire family.

Room to Read staff decided to visit and speak with Yearthor’s mother about her fears. They stressed the positive impact that an education would have on Yearthor and her family’s future. It was a difficult and emotional conversation, but in the end Yearthor’s mother agreed that her daughter could continue her schooling.

Yearthor continues to assure her mother that she wants to remain in her village and help her community. She hopes that one day all of the children in her village will be educated and envisions herself as a future educator. Indeed, she has already started on this path – in her free time she borrows books from the Room to Read library at her school and reads them aloud to the children in her village. “It makes me happy to read to children,” she says.

# Laos



## Laos Life Skills Training Allows Girls to Dream about their Future

Life Skills trainings are an increasingly important component of Room to Read's Girls' Education program because they round out the participant's academic education with real-life skills that are essential to their long-term success. Last year, girls ages 9 to 14 participated in a series of workshops that were designed by our team in Laos. The facilitators used storytelling, games, artwork, and group presentations to introduce a variety of "life" topics, such as time management and handling peer pressure. To encourage the girls to think about their futures, one session involved the girls learning about different jobs. They envisioned themselves in different careers and talked about which ones they thought were interesting – the most popular professions being "teacher" and "doctor." While some girls had previously thought about what they wanted for their future, for others this was their first opportunity to dream big about their life, their potential and a career.



*Prem Kumari, age 16  
Pokhara district*



*Dil Maya, age 10  
Chitwan district*

Prem Kumari found it hard to sleep the night before her School Leaving Certificate exam results were announced. Passing the grade 10 exams marks an important milestone for children in Nepal because it means you graduate from an upper level of the formal school system. The tests are extremely difficult, and one must pass to continue into the higher secondary school. Prem Kumari admits that she was up all night anticipating the outcome and rushed to school early the next morning to hear the good news. “I had passed the examinations!” she remembers. She cherishes that moment as the “proudest memory of my life.” Beyond passing, Prem Kumari became the first girl in her family to complete grade 10. With Room to Read’s support, she is now enrolled in a higher secondary school.

Similar to other adults in Prem Kumari’s community who make a living mining and selling sand from the Seti River, her mother, Maya, did not have the chance to go to school. Maya is a vocal advocate of her daughter’s education: “Seeing children become literate and educated is the greatest gift any parent can give. We work very hard to ensure that all of our children receive an education. With it, they will surely lead a more capable life.”

Dil Maya is an ethnic Chepang, one of Nepal’s indigenous groups, and the only girl in her family to finish primary school. With support from Room to Read, Dil Maya and 87 other Chepang girls at the boarding school in Chitwan are among the first in their community to attend school and counter the 85 percent illiteracy rate in their region.

“Without school,” says Dil Maya, “I would spend all of my time in the field, tending to animals and searching for food.” The school in Chitwan is too far from their homes to travel back and forth each day so many girls board, which has also fostered a sense of community among them. Dil Maya wakes up every morning, makes her bed and performs other morning chores. All the girls learn these important life skills in addition to the academic knowledge they will need to succeed.

“I love being in school, having the company of my friends and the care of my teachers,” she enthuses. Dil Maya dreams of becoming an educator one day, just like her favorite instructor, Sabitri Chaudhary. “Miss Sabitri has inspired me very much,” she says. “I want to be just like her, encouraging and teaching other students like me. I want to be their role model, someone whom they can look up to.”



# Nepal

A photograph of two young girls in school uniforms sitting at a desk. They are looking down at an open book together. The girl on the left is pointing at something in the book, and the girl on the right is looking at it with interest. They are both wearing white shirts and green ties. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

## **Marginalized Kamlari Girls in Nepal Transition Back into School**

Kamlari is a historically accepted social custom among the indigenous Tharu community in Nepal in which poor families sell their daughters into bonded labor. While the practice is now technically illegal, old habits die hard; currently, an estimated 20,000 Kamlari girls are living as indentured laborers. Room to Read's Girls' Education program in Nepal focuses on this group of marginalized children by partnering with a local nonprofit to intervene in situations where girls have already been sold. Once the girls return to their families, Room to Read provides ongoing educational support. Last year, 350 former Kamlari girls participated in an accelerated learning course designed by Room to Read and our partner organizations to prepare them for the transition back to their schools and communities. Following the course, all 350 girls successfully enrolled in 38 government schools in Bardiya district. The Girls' Education program will continue to provide educational support so the students remain in school and break this social custom for future generations.



*Sabitha, age 11  
Matale district*

Each night, Sabitha (pictured, left) studies her school books by the dim light of a kerosene lamp because her one-room mud house has no electricity. Her family lives in a remote village on the border of a jungle reserve that is well known for the many wild elephants that threaten the family's safety at night. As added protection for the family, her father sleeps in a nearby shed covered by branches of a tamarind tree.

Sabitha's village is nearly two miles from her school, and traveling there is very dangerous because of the elephants that roam free along her route. When Sabitha received her very own bicycle from Room to Read, it put a smile on her face because it meant safer travel – getting her to school faster and getting her home before dark allowing more time for her homework. Since joining the Girls' Education program, Sabitha hopes to become a primary school teacher in her favorite subject of math and provide additional opportunities for her family.



*Hansa, age 12  
Puttalam district*

Each day, Hansa (pictured, center) rides to school on her silver bicycle with her sister catching a ride on the back. Before joining the Girls' Education program, Hansa says she was shy – she did not pay much attention to her studies or contemplate her future. Now, Hansa feels she has been given a gift that has changed her life. Her reading skills in the Tamil language have improved because she can use the library at her school, which was created in partnership with Room to Read. She loves bringing these stories home and sharing them with her younger brother and sisters. In addition, Hansa says she is now more focused on her studies and feels happier and more confident. She dreams of becoming a doctor one day.

Hansa's school teacher confirmed her transformation: "Hansa used to get average grades. Since joining Room to Read's Girls' Education program, she is doing better in all her classes. She is also more confident, even taking on the leadership role as teacher's assistant during school activities. She encourages other students to study and is a good friend to many of her peers who are struggling."



# Sri Lanka

## Layering Programs in Sri Lanka to Maximize Impact

This past year, Room to Read Sri Lanka focused on “layering” programs – combining multiple programs at one school site to maximize impact. The Sri Lanka team began by surveying all schools running the Girls’ Education program to determine resource needs such as books or a library. As a result, many of the girls in our education program now also have access to a Room to Read library as well as to children’s books in their local language, whether it be Tamil or Sinhalese. Likewise, Room to Read’s Local Language Publishing program has benefited from involving the girls in the development of posters to illustrate themes such as gender equality and child rights. Room to Read plans to continue layering programs in the future, so that the benefits will be reinforced in multiple ways for long-term impact.







Nga, age 19  
Long An province



Xuan, age 15  
Long An province

For Nga, every hour of each day is spent studying for school and working to pay for her university fees. She perseveres knowing the importance of an education. This was not always the case, but it was cemented when Nga graduated from Long Thoi high school and became one of the first girls to graduate secondary school and finish Room to Read's Girls' Education program. Adding to this success, after passing all her exams, Nga immediately began attending university in Long An to study law.

Without Room to Read, Nga believes that even with her parents' emotional encouragement, it would have been extremely difficult for her family to financially support her through graduation. Said Nga, "Room to Read's help lessened the burden from my parents' shoulders." While Nga greatly appreciated the financial support, she said that she was also inspired and excited by the passion of Room to Read's staff and the friendships she made through the program.

Nga recognizes that attending university is a tremendous opportunity in her life. She says her goal is to continue to excel academically, to overcome obstacles that may arise and to establish a good career for herself as a lawyer in order "to support myself, my family and others."

Xuan's parents never finished primary school, but they have higher hopes for their daughter. Her father says, "I think I finished second or third grade, maybe a little more. I honestly don't remember, but I want my daughter to finish high school." To keep their daughter in school, Xuan's parents work 10 hours a day fishing in the local river for seafood to sell because they believe that if Xuan has an education, she will have a better life.

Every morning Xuan walks on a long, muddy road to her school. She enjoys her classes and plans to pursue a teaching certificate when she completes high school. Every day after school, Xuan studies first and then helps her mother catch small crabs to sell at the local market the next morning.

While attending a Room to Read summer camp, Xuan expressed a deep admiration of her parents' sacrifice and their understanding of the importance of her education. Xuan admits it's her appreciation of her parents that drives her to succeed. When asked to share her greatest wish, Xuan graciously replied, "If I was granted a wish I would give that wish to my parents, because I don't need anything more than the love I receive from them. That is enough for me."

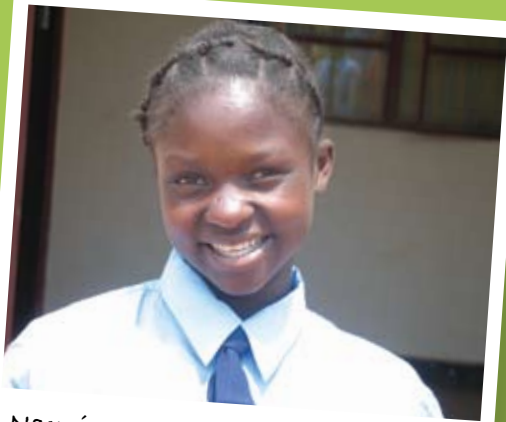
# Vietnam

## Vietnam Summer Camp Addresses Girls' Health and Well-Being

In July, Room to Read's Vietnam team organized a summer camp for 59 girls in grades 9 and 12. The camp focused on developing Life Skills such as leadership, public speaking, healthy relationships and team building. Perhaps most important, one workshop focused on reproductive health, a subject rarely addressed by schools and families in Vietnam but a vital issue for adolescent education. Adolescence is a special period in a girl's life cycle with particular health and nutritional needs, involving considerable physical and emotional changes. Just as Room to Read equips girls with an academic education through secondary school, we also provide girls with crucial information on topics that will have a significant bearing on their future well-being as women. The camp is a safe environment for the girls to examine sensitive information, to ask questions, and to express their opinions and feelings – which, in turn, empowers them and strengthens their self-confidence.







*Naomi, age 14  
Chongwe district*

Naomi, the youngest child in a family of 10, had never worn her very own school uniform until this year. She and her four sisters are orphans and live with their grandmother in a small hut. They cannot afford the luxury of new clothes and therefore always borrowed old uniforms and shoes from their neighbors, which never fit Naomi quite right.

Although Naomi and her sisters' possessions are minimal, Naomi feels fortunate to have her family; they work together to survive and ration food so everyone has at least one meal each day.

In 2008, Naomi became part of the first group of girls to participate in Room to Read's Girls' Education program in Zambia. There are few government schools in Chongwe district, so Naomi must walk over three miles to and from school each day, but she doesn't mind – Naomi loves school and hopes to one day attend university.

The highlight of Naomi's year was when she received her own school uniform and shoes from Room to Read. These two items she treasures more than anything because they are hers and they fit – plus, they allow her to better play her favorite game of netball, a popular sport in Zambia.



*Trezar, age 14  
Chongwe district*

Trezar and her siblings live with their grandmother and migrate with the seasons in search of work and food. Trezar's mother lives in the city and rarely visits because she has no regular source of income, and Trezar's father is deceased. As the eldest child in her family, Trezar helps look after her younger sister and brother.

From November to June, the peak harvesting months in Zambia, Trezar and her family live on a farm near Kaunga village, which is five miles from her school. To get to school on time, Trezar leaves home early in the morning when it is still dark. The remainder of the year, from July to October, Trezar's family lives in a village that is less than an hour's walk to her school.

Trezar is passionate about learning, to the extent that she's read more than half of the books in the school library built by Room to Read. She works hard in her classes and also to help her grandmother. She loves dancing and singing and wishes to use her creative spirit to instruct others when she is older. Trezar's grandmother says, "I am very happy for Trezar and our family. This scholarship has lightened my financial burden, and Trezar will benefit from receiving an education."

# Zambia



## Girls' Education Program Launches in Zambia

In 2008, Room to Read launched the Girls' Education program in Zambia, marking this program's first entry to the African continent. The concentration of our work is in the Chongwe district, a rural community near the capital city of Lusaka, which has a particularly high drop-out rate for girls. Girls in Zambia face many challenges in their pursuit of an education, including cultural practices such as early marriage; extreme poverty; gender-based harassment at school; and safety concerns when traveling long distances to school. In addition, the high prevalence of AIDS has impacted girls' access to education. Sadly, the disease has spread twice as fast among uneducated girls in the country when compared with those who have attended school. These obstacles prevent many girls in Zambia from enrolling in and completing school; as a result, only 21 percent of girls continue to high school. To address the need for girls' education in Zambia, Room to Read focused its first-year efforts on bringing together 200 girls in grades 6 through 8 from across Chongwe. Responses to the program from the girls and the community have been extremely positive and the Zambia team looks forward to supporting these girls through the completion of secondary school.



Thank you for bringing the lifelong gift of education to girls in developing communities around the world.

In doing so, you join a global network of supporters who believe in the transformative power of education. Due to your generosity, nearly 7,000 girls in Asia and Africa are now guaranteed an education through secondary school. This continued investment will yield benefits to their families, communities and societies for many years to come because as you know, when you educate a girl, you educate the next generation.

We need your continued support to achieve our goal of providing an education to five million children by 2010. To learn more about how you can help, please visit us at [www.roomtoread.org/girls](http://www.roomtoread.org/girls).

“My name is Channa and I am an orphan. I am currently in 11th grade, one year away from graduating high school! Without Room to Read I would not be able to attend school. Providing support to me and other girls motivates me to continue studying, even when it is difficult. Beyond my classes, I have learned to respect my teachers and school and I have created so many friendships with my classmates. My educational experience will be in my heart forever.”

– Channa, Cambodia



Thank You







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