Theory of Change

**Change Statement**

IF READ (Rural Education and Development) Global engages rural communities to invest time and resources in Community Library and Resource Centers (CLRCs) that offer access to information, non-formal education, and skills training, THEN communities in rural South Asia will experience positive social transformation and increased economic opportunity.

**Core Strategies & Model Elements**

All programs and enterprises in CLRCs are driven by each community’s needs and leadership, and consequently vary across CLRCs. The READ model holds that it is these three strategies working together that make community transformation possible:

- **Education**
  - Books, information, and resources
  - Educational programs including literacy and computer literacy training, health and agricultural programs
  - Computer center and available Information Communications Technology (ICT) resources including community radio

- **Community Engagement**
  - Community involvement in the planning and design of the CLRC
  - Community co-investment in, ownership, and leadership of the CLRC
  - Continual assessment of community needs, assets, and resources
  - Dedicated space for women’s empowerment
  - Leadership and library management trainings
  - Cultural activities

- **Economic Empowerment**
  - Local livelihood trainings
  - Savings co-ops and micro-loans
  - Sustaining enterprises

**Intermediate Outcomes**

- Increased access to, usage of, and exchange of, knowledge, information, and resources
- Increased literacy rates
- Increased computer literacy
- Increased value placed on education for all community members
- Increased culture of reading
- Improved health and hygiene behaviors and attitudes
- Increased women’s empowerment
- Improved social norms around women’s rights and status
- Increased community ownership of and engagement with CLRC
- Increased social inclusion and decreased discrimination, especially against women and disadvantaged community members
- Increased social capital of communities
- Preservation of local cultural arts, activities, and traditions
- Increased economic opportunities for community members
- CLRC sustainability

**Impacts**

- Villages experience widespread participation in education and knowledge exchange
- Villagers experience greater and lasting economic empowerment and well-being
- Rural areas experience sustainable development

**Beliefs and Assumptions**

- Empowered rural communities are critical to alleviating global poverty.
- Women and girls are more likely to pass on information to others and reinvest earnings in their families.
- Libraries are a powerful vehicle for change in rural South Asia because they are a respected and socially acceptable gathering place for community members, especially women, who are often the levers of change.
- Communities’ co-investment and leadership of READ Centers—throughout all phases of Center development—ensure authentic partnership with READ, sustainability, and maximum community impact.
- Rural development is more sustainable if it is driven by and customized to each community.
- Access to and engagement with resources or programs within a READ center will allow community members to realize their untapped potential.
- Rural communities need access to ICT and education to join the global economy.

**Environmental Context**

- In South Asia, where the majority of the population lives in rural areas, illiteracy and poverty rates are high.
- In rural communities there is more social discrimination especially against women and disadvantaged community members.
- Social norms in rural villages mean that girls are often not sent to school and women have restricted mobility. As a result, women are less educated and less empowered.
- Rural community members lack educational and economic opportunities available in urban areas.
- With rapid changes in technology, READ has new tools available for expanding its reach and CLRCs’ reach. READ also has a responsibility to make sure that villagers have opportunities (through the CLRCs) to learn and use new technologies so they can compete in the global economy.
- A growth in unemployed youth makes urban migration a security issue, not just a poverty issue.