Worldreader

Strengthening reading bonds, together

Winter 2023/2024
Dear friends,

Thanks to supporters like you, the reading revolution is now unstoppable. I want to thank you for your unwavering support of literacy and equitable education for children everywhere, and celebrate the extraordinary milestones we have achieved together in the past six months.

We have now reached 22 million readers. That’s 22 million children, families, and learners you have empowered to achieve their potential through reading. Thanks to your passion, we’re now seeing an ever-increasing number of children on the path to completing 25 books a year, making reading the foundational habit they need to succeed in school and life. From underserved urban communities to refugee camps, children around the world are making books part of their daily lives. In the US alone, our Let’s Get Children Reading grant expanded partnerships exponentially, allowing us to reach children and families anywhere from schools to pediatric clinics and even prisons.

These achievements didn’t go unnoticed. This September, on International Literacy Day, Worldreader was awarded the US Library of Congress Literacy Award, International Prize. I’m deeply grateful to celebrate and share this honor with you, knowing that it will serve as an encouragement to further expand our impact in tackling the global learning crisis and getting every child reading.

I wish you a happy holiday season filled with meaning and joy. Thank you for being part of the Worldreader family, and for helping readers build a better world.

With gratitude,

Rebecca Chandler Leege,
CEO of Worldreader
“Literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning.”

UNESCO
Your impact in 2023

312K children’s lives changed with books

1.9 million books distributed to children and families through BookSmart

5,985 families and children completing 25+ books
On September 8, International Literacy Day, Worldreader was recognized as the recipient of the 2023 US Library of Congress Literacy Awards, International Prize. The US Library of Congress (LOC), the largest library in the world, bestows the Literacy Awards’ International Prize annually to commend the exceptional efforts of organizations that made **significant and measurable contributions to increasing literacy levels internationally**.

This year, the choice of Worldreader as the award recipient shines a light on the potential of digital reading solutions in addressing global literacy and reading challenges.

Learn more in [this article](#) or watch [this video](#) from the Library of Congress.

“Literacy is a pathway to an individual’s happiness, health, and wellbeing.”

Carla Hayden, Library of Congress
You’re empowering girls in Ghana

Ayisha always loved reading. When Worldreader joined forces with education nonprofit Achievers Ghana in 2014, the program and BookSmart finally gave her access to hundreds of free books. Now, she helps girls like her grow their love for reading.

Books have not only taught Ayisha about new places, things, and cultures, but they have also helped her express herself better and speak more confidently. This has been especially beneficial as she studies Software Engineering at IPMC.

It has also helped her become a facilitator at the Achievers Ghana program in her community. The center’s activities draw in many girls who come after school each day. BookSmart has allowed Ayisha to reach these children and share the joy of reading. Through the program, she helps a generation of young girls in her community grow and reach their potential. “I believe it is through reading that we’ll be able to learn more and help our community to become better,” Ayisha says.

She says that the most rewarding moment of promoting reading in her community is when she sees children reading books that they couldn’t access before. She’s learned that involving everyone in a community is critical – as she states, “making positive change is a collective responsibility.” Learn more here.
You're changing lives in Peru

School was hard for Gianfranco. He was getting in trouble more often than his peers, and he was told that he was causing issues for his teachers and his mother.

However, when the sixth-grade student discovered the book *Gravity Falls* on BookSmart, his life changed. Gianfranco was inspired to be better every day as he related to the story’s main character, an unruly boy who loved science. The more he read the book, the better he understood it and the more he learned.

With our BookSmart app, Gianfranco was empowered to discover a world of adventure, helping him fall in love with reading and become a better student. It even helped his mother, Elizabeth, gain better reading skills as they read together as a family. Gianfranco says: “I changed thanks to this book, and my life changed too.”

All across Peru and around the world, we’re working to provide children just like Gianfranco with accessible reading materials to help them build a brighter future.

So far, our CreceLee program in Peru has supported more than 44,000 families and children and will reach thousands more in schools across the country. Learn more [here](#).
You’re ensuring children’s reading needs are met

Every child deserves quality, equitable education, and literacy is a fundamental human right.

Yet today, two-thirds of the world’s children can’t read and understand a simple story. One in every five children globally is out of school.

Your impact is getting where education systems can’t reach – from homes to refugee centers, from mountains to libraries around the world, you’re leveraging technology and family empowerment to get every child reading.

You have started a reading revolution.
You're championing reading anytime, anywhere

“We hope BookSmart helps caregivers understand that they do have the time and flexibility to read together. It’s so good for children – the more they read, the more prepared they are for school, and the more they retain. Reading gets children used to learning, and it helps them learn how to engage with the world.

With BookSmart, reading can be done just about anywhere. You can read with your child sitting in the doctor’s office waiting for an appointment. You can do it at the park or over the weekend. As long as a cell phone is nearby, you can read with your child at any time.”

Juanita Yancey
Executive Officer, Georgia Head Start Association
In July, we took an experimental deep dive in Ghana. Together with Achievers Ghana, the Girls Education Ghana Initiative, and the Keta Community Library of the Ghana Library Authority, we pivoted from periodic in-class reading to direct family and community reading. We wondered – how many families can we help read at least 25 books in three months?

By the end of September, 168 families had completed at least 25 books, with some children reading over 40. This achievement signifies both quantitative success in terms of number of books read, and a qualitative leap in fostering a culture of literacy development within the community.

The more books children read, the more success they will have in building language skills, brain development, cultural awareness, empathy, emotional intelligence, creativity, and lifelong learning.
In South Africa – Empowering 150,000 readers

81% of South African children in Grade 4 cannot read with understanding, up from 78% in 2016 (PIRLS 2021). In partnership with Moya App, powered by Datafree, we’re committed to reversing this trend by providing continuous free data access to reading materials and mobile-led solutions to the country’s reading crisis, ensuring all South African children have the reading opportunities they need to reach their potential.

Since the start of this year, 150,000 South African readers have read on BookSmart. Most excitingly, children are reading an average of 16+ minutes per session, up two minutes from 2022, showing a significant 14% increase in our readers' love of reading and improved reading habits.
In Kenya, about 70% of children are unable to read a simple text by age 10. Worldreader and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) are leading the Raising Readers study to answer a key question – Can mobile technology enable Kenyan schools to improve parent and carer engagement in reading with their children?

Phase 1 of the Raising Readers research found positive shifts in caregivers' knowledge, attitudes, and practices in supporting their child's reading using BookSmart.

A second phase of the research – measuring reading outcomes – began in July and the results will be published early next year. Learn more by reading the report here.
In Jordan – Bringing reading to displaced children

Young refugees face extraordinary health, safety, and emotional challenges. And educational disruption means that they can’t always rely on the classroom as a safe space to learn, dream, and grow.

Worldreader is bringing the joy of reading to displaced children and their families in Jordan. Over three months, PLAN International Jordan held reading sessions for 50 children led by facilitators in Azraq refugee camp and provided weekly book recommendations on BookSmart for parents to read with their children. They are looking to expand the use of BookSmart in 2024.
In India – Scaling up efforts for Delhi’s students

In collaboration with the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and our partner Society for All-Round Development (SARD) we are growing our Read to Kids program to an unprecedented scale. The Zonal level expansion plan, announced in August, will bring the program to two zones: Keshavpuram and the West Zone, involving 228 schools and supporting over 100,000 children. Every year, two more zones will be added until reaching 700 schools and 300,000 children. The initiative aims to engage educators, mentors, and caregivers to empower children to read regularly.

In August, Worldreader CEO Rebecca Chandler Leege visited our programs in India. Read about her visit here.
This year we joined forces with 27 new community based partners through the Let’s Get Children Reading Grant. We also launched Community of Practice meetings, convening program leaders in a monthly session to share best practices on driving reader engagements and increase their capacity to lead a digital program.

These partnerships expanded our reach to new exciting sectors – in the past six months, we started working in laundromats, health and pediatric clinics, and afterschool centers. We are part of a pilot gas station/community center and are supporting families in shelters and incarcerated parents.
In Peru – Getting 5,000 families reading

In partnership with the Regional Directorate of Education (DREMO), the Monquegua Lee home reading campaign leveraged mobile technology and social media and involved regional authorities, civil society organizations, local media outlets, and the private sector to encourage parents and caregivers to read with their children.

The results? Over 5,000 families have now become readers in Moquegua, spending an average of 21 minutes per day reading together. Families who read more than 25 books were recognized in a special award ceremony.
We worked with Young Authors Publishing and the Home Depot Backyard for the Atlanta Literacy Event.

We went to UP@AI, organized by the Uttar Pradesh Government and the Director General Education, to showcase BookSmart.

We went to COP28’s RewirEd summit to share insights on prioritizing children as the foundation of climate action and announced our partnership with UNICEF.

We partnered with World Vision, UNESCO, and the Ministry of Education in Ghana for an Executive breakfast on Literacy Day.

We celebrated families and awarded prizes to families who completed 25+ books with the Kenya National Library Services on Heroes Day.

We held a special event with the Moquegua Education Office to award families reading 25+ books with supplies and backpacks.

Spreading the word

Over the last 6 months Worldreader has attended and presented at various events, contributing towards important conversations around the future of learning.
Spreading the word

We've also been recognized in the news:

Worldreader partners with Atlanta nonprofits, schools to promote youth literacy

2023 Literacy Awards Winners and Honorees

Worldreader motivates children, caregivers to complete 25 books annually

9 Best Charities That Promote Reading

Use International Literacy Day to reflect on child education and learning outcomes
Thank you!
Together, we’re helping families build lifetime bonds through the power of books.