

A photograph of two young girls in a classroom. The girl in the foreground is wearing a blue denim jacket and a white headband, smiling at the camera. The girl in the background is wearing a white shirt with pink floral patterns and a yellow headband, also smiling. They are sitting at a desk with a blue surface.

2020 | ANNUAL EMPOWERMENT REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Message from the Country Director

Education

- A. Literacy and Education
- B. Use of ICT

Tech Age Girls Project

Story of Change

- C. Early Childhood Development and Springwood Schools

Enterprise

- A. Social Enterprise managed by skilled rural communities
- B. Youth Development for Employability

Community Development

- ❖ Women Empowerment and Livelihood
- ❖ Health Awareness and Sensitization
- ❖ Leadership Skills
- ❖ Personality Development Sessions
- ❖ Educating Farmers

Change of Strategy during COVID-19 Pandemic

- A. Team Management Strategy
- B. Programme Management

Message from the Country Director



READ India has been working in India to demonstrate the model developed by READ Global in Nepal since 1991. READ India took birth in 2007 to replicate the model in India as a Non-for-Profit Organisation registered as a Trust with like-minded leaders joining hands to set up Community Library and Resource Centers with community participation. The journey has been so empowering at both the ends, reaching to more than 400,000 rural communities empowering people on various skills in the past 13 years.

Now, we are in the changing times; Time to think through; new thinking with new commitment in new scenario is the need of the hour. Need to reflect the past strategies, whether they all fit in the new scenario. The time has come to re-design the pattern of actions, virtual togetherness and realise the challenges we are facing and going to face. This is the time to prepare ourselves with new normal scenario, thought process, planning for action and action-oriented results.

Libraries are the home of books. Keeping in view the traditional culture of libraries, can we create strategies for distribution of books in new normal. Librarians are the God Fathers and God Mothers of making the Nation literate and educated. They can play an especially important role in creating the masses who make this country read. Commitment to the cause is a call of the Nation.

The need is to bring innovation during this pandemic. Here innovation is combination of traditional methods integrated with the new needs of the people:

- ❖ Coordinated activities through a digital platform.
- ❖ Identify challenges as catalyst.
- ❖ Research the best practices globally but think and plan keeping the local needs which vary from place to place.
- ❖ Match with the Indian scenario in new normal
- ❖ Be community focussed, assess their needs, and provide services through libraries accordingly.
- ❖ Apart from books, need-based skills are the way forward.
- ❖ Libraries are the home for holistic development.
- ❖ Reduce the need and service gap.
- ❖ Advocate at all levels

People and Policy advocacy together, Private and Public partnerships together, Participation and Management together, Public voices and actions together, Commitment and Coordination together is required to mitigate the challenges foreseen in coming times.

To create online resources for children and youth, Connect, Create, Coordinate, Cooperate for need-based content creation with respect to their culture and caliber of all. Children and youth are the priority. Life skills for adolescent girls and boys with positive energies and enthusiasm will change the dynamism of their growth and development. Youth power is to be explored who can create wonders in technology accessibility.

A few recommendations for the Libraries to work on:

- ❖ **Show** the power of Libraries.
- ❖ **Produce** communicate and distribute key resources and materials.
- ❖ **Deliver** high quality campaigns, information and other communication products on a regular basis to engage and energize libraries and its users.
- ❖ **Develop** standard, guidance and other materials that foster best professional practices in managing the libraries.
- ❖ **Provide** tools and infrastructure that support the work of libraries.
- ❖ **Support** virtual networking and connections which are important and need of the hour.
- ❖ **Empower** the field of libraries at the national and regional levels.
- ❖ **Provide** targeted learning and professional development.
- ❖ **Foster** the long-term financial continuity and stability of the libraries.

Effectively mobilize human resource and volunteers to engage with the libraries, contribute and define ownership for the holistic development at the local level and share the stories at the national and international platforms.

Dr. Geeta Malhotra
Country Director



Education

Education being the core component of READ India as community empowerment is done through Community Library and Resource Centers in 12 States. Safe spaces for rural communities with community participation, management and ownership of the programme is the binding force for self-growth and development. The beauty of the programme is that the local staff is from the community, the stakeholders are also from the same community for whom READ India designs various programmes. The flow of the programme is, READ India trains the Master Trainers who are the core team at the READ Centers, further train the stakeholders, the learners and through peer learning the holistic development is the outcome, which is measured with well-designed monitoring and evaluation mechanism with quantitative and qualitative outputs.

The following programmes are categorized under Education.

A. Literacy and Education

Reading and Writing Activity

This programme is implemented across all the READ Centers, age specific activities are organised by the local team at the READ Centers, at Anganwadis and with the schools children in close coordination with the school management. Women members of the community in the age group of 20-45 years are integrated in this component of education interventions. Those women who never attended school or had to drop out of the education because of early marriage or other domestic issues are identified and encouraged to join this programme at the centers.

This programme is also organised for girls only at two specific locations, Chainnsa in Hathin block of Palwal and Bhawargarh in Shahbad block of Baran district, for 3-6 years: 7-15 years and for their mothers with age group 25 to 45 years. This programme is supported by Oracle for 175 beneficiaries in three age groups. Here the targeted group is drop out girls, who never gone to school and those girls who are going to the school in the age group 7-15 years and need special classes for improving their academic scores. During COVID, READ team quickly adapted to the hybrid model and started collecting the data from already enrolled beneficiaries about access

to digital platforms/mobile phones. Two groups were made for online and offline teaching and the programme was accordingly conducted. Though during lockdown, those who did not have access to mobile phone suffered for a few months, but with following strict guidelines, the offline batches also continued at a later stage.

The library users were integrated on WhatsApp group and reading material was sent online which included newspapers, stories, and academic reference material. Those who are not able to connect online or do not have smartphones, are issued books at their doorsteps. Reading and writing sessions were conducted with the students of the local level government and private schools, who do not have access to the technology and digital resources.

These sessions include, essay writing activities, reading, and sharing e-newspapers, Hindi Stories, General Knowledge quizzes, Sentence formulation in English language, Learning through Art, and Craft. These sessions are accompanied with the learning assistance provided by teachers dedicated for Reading and Writing Sessions conducted with children in the community.

Spoken English Sessions

Video lesson on spoken English were prepared and shared with the participants enrolled under this component of education intervention. These sessions were recorded by a professional trainer at READ India. Emphasis is laid on practical use of English language in our day-to-day interactions at multiple points of communication.



B. Use of ICT

Basic & Advanced Computers Skills (MS Office)

As the centers were closed during the lockdown, video lessons in the form of packages developed by an online platform, namely GyanYagya were sourced with due approval for sharing with the beneficiaries. The content is segregated topic wise and is divided into small capsules of learning for ease of understanding of the learner. This training was continued by sending video lessons through WhatsApp group. After completion of each topic, assessment was conducted using google form, where in the questions are set with marks for each correct answer. In this way it becomes a readily available for the trainer as well as the programme team to understand the level of understanding that has been developed among the learners after viewing the video lessons.



Online Training on Social Media Marketing and Cyber Safety with the support of Commonwealth of Learning – Skills Online India Initiative

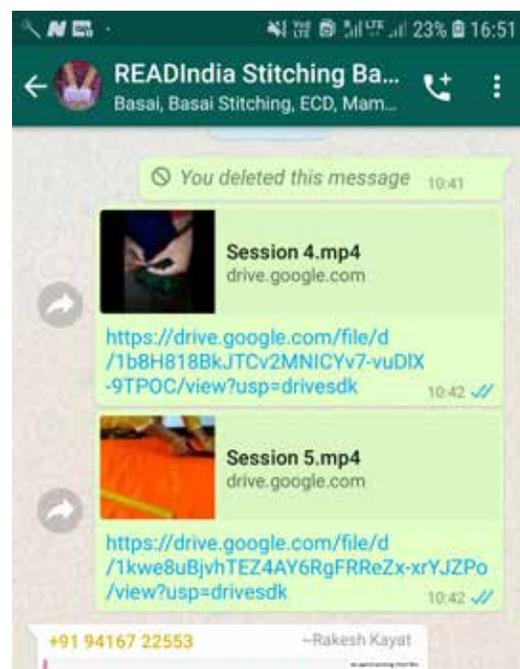
READ India with the support of Commonwealth of Learning (COL) implemented a pilot training programme with 5000 girls/women and boys/men in the age group of 15-45 years on use of technology for marketing of products and training on online safety and cyber security for the communities.

Dedicated training sessions were conducted on the following modules:

1. Online Safety and Cyber Security
2. Social Media Marketing

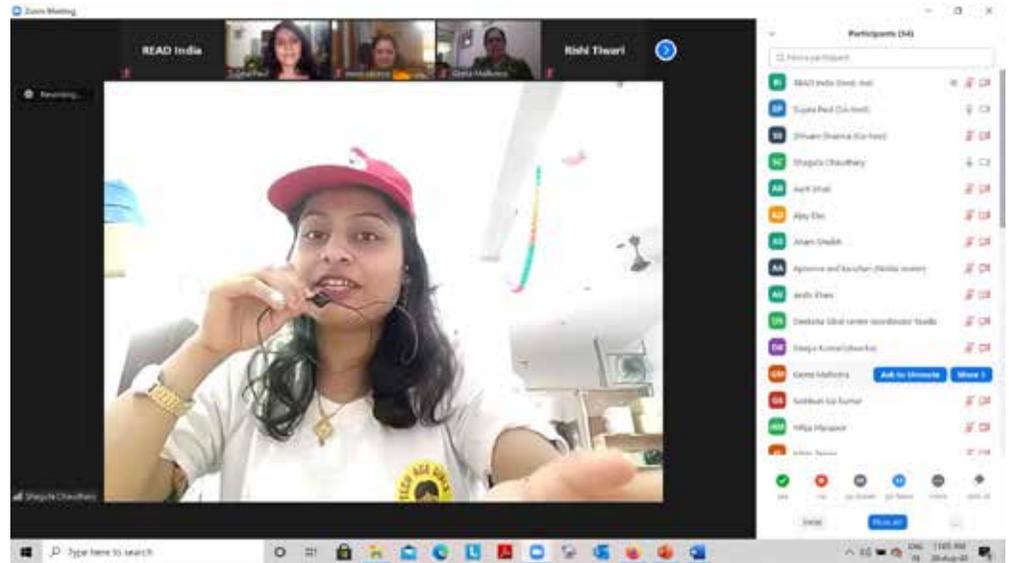
These trainings were conducted online through Zoom video conferencing and Digital Content sharing, directly with **2641** stakeholders for a period between April-July 2020. These trainings were then further cascaded by the above-mentioned stakeholders to their friends/relatives and acquaintances, eventually integrating **2503** indirect stakeholders with the project. In total, there are **5144** stakeholders who are integrated with the project for a period between (April-August 2020).

In the current scenario when majority of the people are confined to their home and online platforms being the only respite, these training proved out to be impactful and resulted into many success stories. Both the trainings complemented each other, wherein Social Media Marketing educated the stakeholders, to use online platforms to sell products online and enable business/sustaining enterprise to grow. Online Safety and Cyber Security training on the other hand, informed

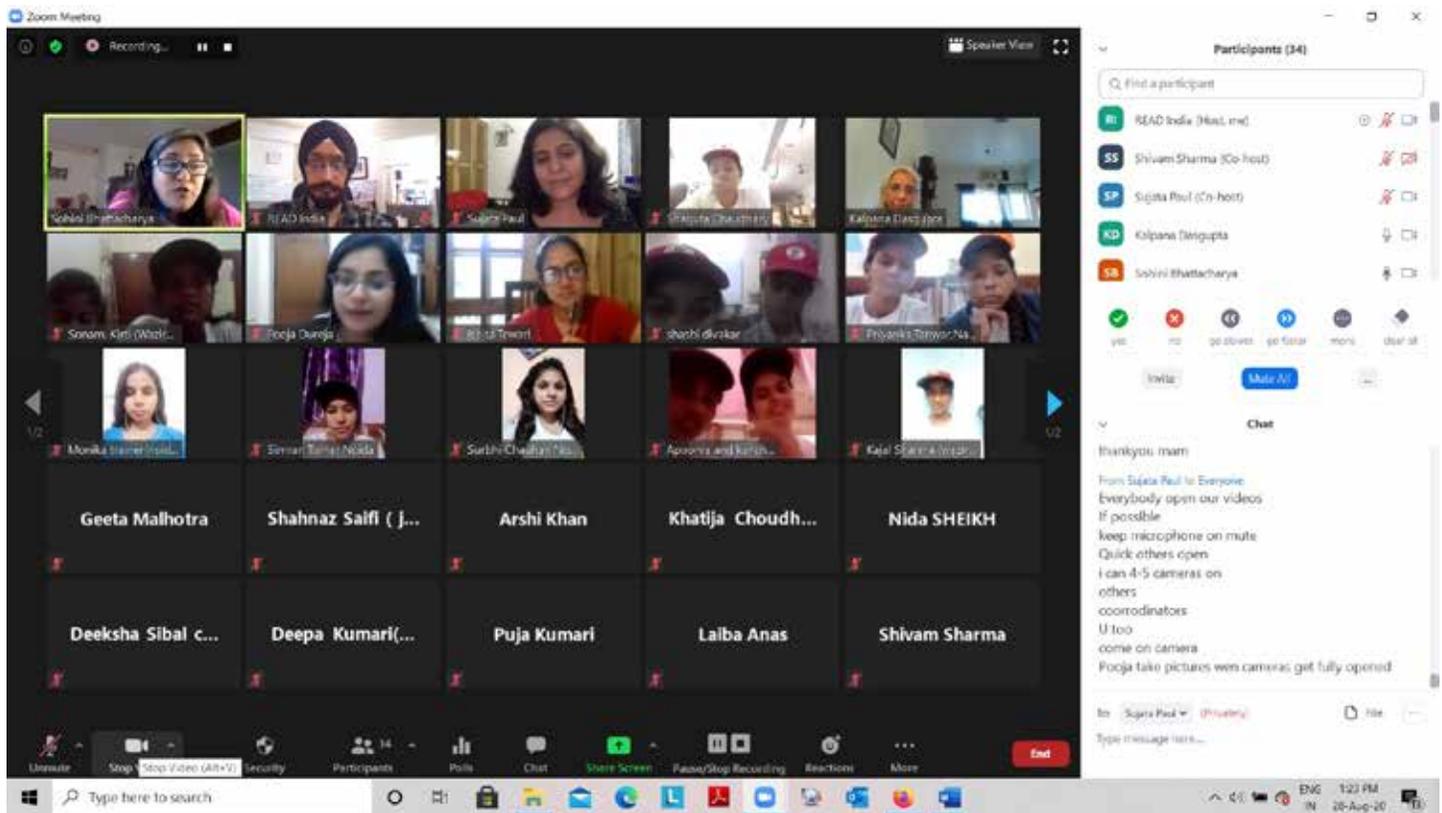


the stakeholders on checks and balances, as well as the nuances of using online platforms safely and securely.

In order to increase the outreach and making the educational content far-reaching, Open Education Resources in the form of video lessons were created on the above-mentioned modules. Both these Courses are also created on Alison.com, which can be accessed globally, benefitting innumerable learners who seek to understand and develop their skills on fundamental concepts of Social Media Marketing and Online Safety and Cyber Security.



Voice over videos in Hindi and English were also prepared and disseminated among the stakeholders in order to give them access to the learning material, which can be referred anytime at a later stage. Those stakeholders who could not connect online or did not had the access to the digital platforms were reached by a team of 94 master trainers, deployed in the villages of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Haryana, Hyderabad, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh & Rajasthan.



Stakeholders were reached by master trainers deployed in the villages of the states



Direct stakeholders Trained



Stakeholders Trained Through Cascade Training

Andhra Pradesh Chittoor and Sricity	126	117
Tamil Nadu Pallavam, St. Thomas Mount, Chennai, Kanchipuram	55	106
Delhi	218	383
Haryana Jhajjar, Gurugram, Sonipat, Nuh, Palwal	751	191
Karnataka Chikballapur	20	
Maharashtra Mahad, Raigad, Beed, Aurangabad, Pune	287	130
Telangana Sangareddy, Rangareddy	88	29
Uttar Pradesh Lucknow, Barabanki, Ghaziabad, Noida, Rampur	526	952
Rajasthan Baran, Bharatpur, Dausa	570	595

Total Stakeholders Trained



2641

Direct stakeholders Trained

2503

Stakeholders Trained Through Cascade Training



Direct Stakeholders

Indirect (Cascade Training)

Male

893

291

Female

1748

2212



Tech Age Girls Project

Technology advancements are leading to increased share of IT sector in the Indian economy. As of 2020, India's IT workforce account for 4.36 million employees, contributing 7.7 percent share in the national GDP. Women constitute 34 percent of the total ITES workforce in India.

Despite all of this, there is a great disparity in terms of access to technology tools and means to learn and develop job-oriented IT skills, for females. Social stigma, restriction in movement, and patriarchal stereotypes impedes the possibility of females to learn, build their skills, earn, and become self-dependent. One can witness a huge gulf of access to learning opportunities between male and female counterparts in not only rural, but also in urban areas.

With this mission of filling the gap, READ India in partnership with IREX and RAD Global implemented a programme in the communities of Wazirabad (Gurgaon), Noida (Uttar Pradesh), Dwarka (Delhi) and Jaffrabad (Delhi). The programme focused on developing professional IT and leadership skills among girls who enrolled themselves in project. The Master Trainers were trained by IREX and READ Global Deputy Director, Megan Volk. Modules were designed by IREX team and shared with READ India for training the girls on soft skills.

As the name explains, Tech Age Girls, wherein all the female candidates underwent a rigorous training routine, comprising of IT Skills and Community Development Project in the first stage, then being shortlisted for the next stage for Advance IT Training (Blogging, Social Media, Graphic Designing, Video Editing etc.), moving into the final stage of National Leadership Conference. In this conference, which

was conducted online, on 27th and 28th August 2020, Tech Age Girls Finalists, after undergoing a year long journey of learning, shared their experiences and presentations, reflecting on the positive impact that they have realized after undergoing the programme.

READ India Country Director, Dr. Geeta Malhotra motivated Tech Age Girls on how ICT can be used as a tool to become leaders in any field they chose to go ahead in life along with Ms Neeti Saxena from British Council. Panel discussion was held on the topic, Gender and Social Inclusion, with READ India Trustees, Ms. Sohini Bhattacharya, and Ms. Kalpana Dasgupta, who encouraged girls to think positively, take responsibility of their life, maintaining high standards of honesty and integrity and becoming financially independent.

The National Leadership Conference marks the conclusion of collective intervention made by READ India and IREX, i.e., Tech Age Girls Programme, in strengthening and empowering young girls. The change observed in the finalists, reflects enormous potential and dynamism among girls, who can further improve their skills, leveraging the use of technology platforms, eventually becoming examples for other girls in their community, enabling a domino effect.



Story of Change



Anjana

Anjana was born with no physical disability at the time of birth. At the age of 16, her legs got paralyzed and was completely bound to wheelchair for movement. She could not continue her schooling after 10th.

She never came out of the confines of her house thereafter, until the age of 25, which is a period of 10 long years. Her self-confidence and self-esteem were completely drowned to lowest point. Anjana felt like a burden on her family, until she joined the Tech Age Girls Programme. She was identified during one of the health camps organized by READ India in Dwarka. Counselling by READ India Team, she enrolled herself in the programme and learnt both basic and advanced ICT skills.

Anjana now plans to start her own online business, where she will sell garments, earn an income, and support her family financially. She is confident, optimistic and carries a beaming smile.

C. Early Childhood Development and Springwood Schools



Early Childhood Development

Educating children (2-6years) with fun activity-based sessions is continued using online medium. Teachers are in constant touch with the parents in order to help them, with any kind of difficulty or challenge they are facing in teaching children. Feedback in terms of pictures shared by the parents is a positive sign that online mode of education can also work effectively, in the present circumstances. Regular parent-teacher engagement is ensured through WhatsApp, Online sessions, and scheduled homework to keep the learning of children continued without any gap. Video lessons are prepared on different topics and shared with the parents through WhatsApp, to ensure that children do not lose the time and keep on learning, within the safe confines of their home.

Springwood Schools

E-content is shared with the students on a daily basis, covering Math, English, Hindi, E.V.S, and Art & Craft. Teachers do a follow up of the e-content shared by calling the students and interacting with them. E-content recorded is in simple language which the children could understand easily. Teachers record the content in bilingual language so that even parents who are not educated can teach their children from the videos.

In addition to sharing of e-content, online classes are also being conducted with the children who are joining the sessions along with their parents on a regular basis. There are 10 teachers who are dedicated to conduct these online sessions with the kids enrolled in Springwood Schools.



As the local level restrictions are lifting up, teachers are conducting classes with the students in small groups following all the safety measures at the physical spaces in schools. These classes are being conducted with the children who do not have access to the digital platforms. The intent is to reach to those who cannot afford or do not have the resources to educate their children in this time of great difficulty, through outreach educational programme interventions of READ India. Feedback meetings are conducted with the parents to note their response on the interventions and improvise on the suggestions that come up during these meetings. Review meeting with the teachers at an interval of every 15 days helps the team improve upon the gaps or challenges that are faced during implementation of educational programmes and initiatives through springwood schools.

Location	Number of Students (Before Lockdown)	Number of Students (At present)	Number of Dedicated Teachers
Wazirabad	65	15	1
Baireddipalle	33	12	1
Devli	26	16	1
Geejgarh	42	40	1
Gadejalgaon	26	28	1
Gurugram	40	7	1
Rampur	105	40	1
Dwarka	70	25	1
Beed	38	12	1
Tandaheri	23	12	1
Total	468	207	10

Receptibility and adaptability to the technology platforms is a major challenge that is being faced in the rural communities and this is visible in terms of the reduced strength of students enrolled in Springwood Schools. Limited attention span of children, lack of access to available digital resources in the family and shifting priorities of the households in village, where primary concern is survival, is resulting into developing of disinterest among parents to contribute their time on their children's education. The prospects of education in rural areas are bleak, as in these areas digital connectivity is limited, abrupt and impeded with infrastructural lacunae. Efforts are being made to constantly motivate the parents on importance of education by the teachers in the community.



Enterprise

A. Social Enterprise managed by skilled rural communities

Production Units

Under Skills to Succeed project implemented with the support of Accenture, production units were set up at the READ Centers and products made at the community level are categorized into following segments,

- a) Food Products
- b) Herbal Cosmetics and Natural Items
- c) Stitched Garments
- d) Organic Cloth (Handloom)
- e) Handicrafts/Corporate Gifting Items

Production Units are set up at the following locations



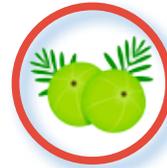
Beed
Spices & Pulses



Geejgarh
Organic Khadi Cloth



Rampur
Zari Zardosi
Embroidery Garments



Baran
Spices & Amla
Products



Devli
Hand Made Rugs
and Pickles



Dwarka
Readymade Garments
& Corporate Gift Items



Lucknow
Cushion Cover, Kurti,
Plazzo (Garments)



Kaigal
Herbal Product



Wazirabad
Readymade Stitched
Garments



Lakhimpur Kheri
Organic food products
(Honey and Jaggery)

These products are made by rural women who were trained under skilling programme Skills to Succeed. Efforts are being made in the direction of bringing these products to a wider network of market linkage so that the revenues coming from selling these products could help women in the rural communities to become financially independent.

Women members of the community who are connected with the production units are regularly trained on different aspects of enterprise management, in order to build their capacity to take charge of the production and become completely responsible for end-to-end process management of product making and selling.

Some of the enterprise management-based trainings which are conducted with the women entrepreneurs are,

- Product Design and Development
- Product Quality and Scale
- Packaging
- Logistics and Operations Management
- Financial Management
- Online Selling and Social Media Marketing

Diyas made and supplied to Amazon

An order of 95000 decorative diya sets were made by the women who are integrated with READ India centers at 9 locations in the rural communities.

These locations are:

1. Manesar, Haryana
2. Tauru, Mewat, Haryana
3. Wazirabad, Gurugram, Haryana
4. Sonapat, Haryana
5. Sheetla Mata Colony, Gurugram, Haryana
6. Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
7. Rampur, Uttar Pradesh
8. Hyderabad
9. Dwarka, New Delhi



On an average each woman who was engaged in this project was able to earn around INR 2500 at an individual level. This earning helped the women in these rural communities to get an additional reinforcement of financial support which they could utilize to meet the expenses during Diwali. Many women shared that this work lifted their spirits, and brought smiles on the faces of their children, in the otherwise, environment of uncertainty and insecurity.

Set up of Sanitary Napkin production Units

Sanitary Napkin Production Units are installed at four locations in the rural communities of Mewat, Manesar and Hyderabad. Production set up was completed with the support of Amazon and Jaishree Industries. Groups of rural women are integrated at these locations who will be responsible for operating the unit, selling the Sanitary pads in the community, and conducting awareness drives to prevent diseases originating as a result of lack of menstrual hygiene. There are 28 women, at four locations who are engaged in these production units.

Vocational Courses



The centers are also offering vocational courses such as Stitching, Beauty and Wellness, Basic Computer Courses, and other need-based skill development trainings specific to the community. These courses are conducted by taking nominal fee from the participants.

In this way, seriousness among the participants in rural areas increases. Fee collected is deposited for sustainability of the Center, which is utilized to meet the cost of the trainers and other ancillary expenses to purchase training material.

B. Youth Development for Employability

Career Counselling Sessions with Youth

Career counselling sessions were conducted online with the youth members of the community in rural areas, who are not having access to the necessary information which is very crucial to prepare oneself for treading on different career domains.

Sessions were conducted with the youth on following topics,

- ❖ How to prepare for competitive examinations – Civil Services, SSC, IBPS, LIC etc.
- ❖ Steps to become a teacher – NTT, TGT, PGT, HTET, CTET, NET
- ❖ Pursuing a career in Law.
- ❖ Pursuing a career in Management and Administration.
- ❖ Diploma in Computer Science, Food Technology and Electrical.
- ❖ Career in Social and Development Sector – NGOs and MSW.
- ❖ Pursuing career in medical stream.
- ❖ Pursuing career in agriculture.
- ❖ Career in journalism.

Almost 100 youth participated in these online career counselling sessions conducted by the domain expert. These proved to be greatly beneficial for those who were confined and restricted to their homes in the rural areas not aware of the opportunities that can be availed to pursue a career with charted direction.





Community Development

Women Empowerment and Livelihood

Under Skills to Succeed Project supported by Accenture CSR, multiple trainings are conducted in the rural communities which enabled rural women to learn a skill and develop an acumen of becoming entrepreneurs as well as sufficiently skilled to get employed or start earning an income from the products they are able to make. Trainings are selected and designed in accordance with the existing skills in the community. These trainings act as a capacity building medium for women who were hitherto using their skills at the household level, but after improvisation on the professional techniques incorporated, they become skilled enough to bring a finished, presentable, marketable product, or service depending upon the domain of trade.

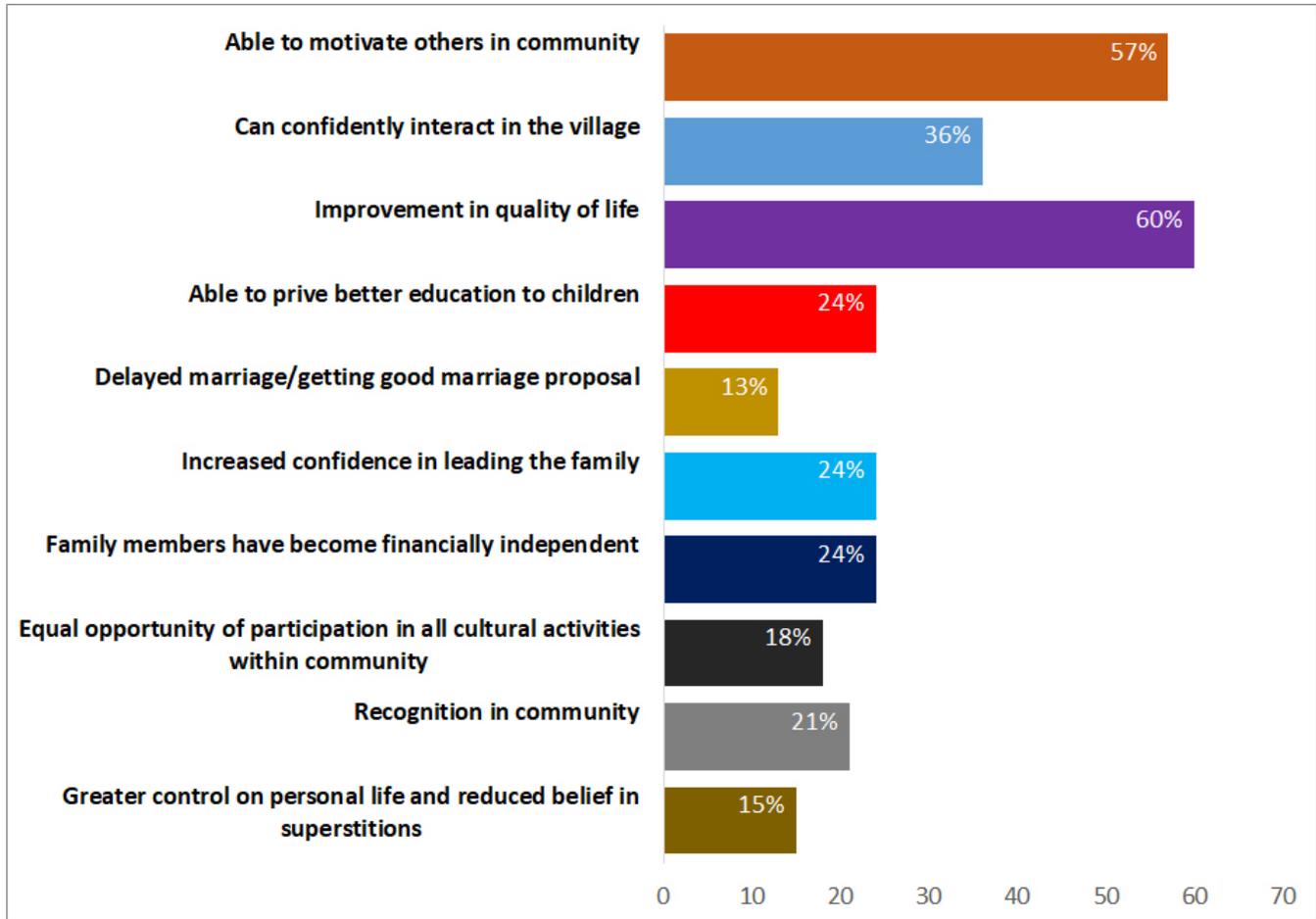


Skill based trainings which are conducted are as follows:

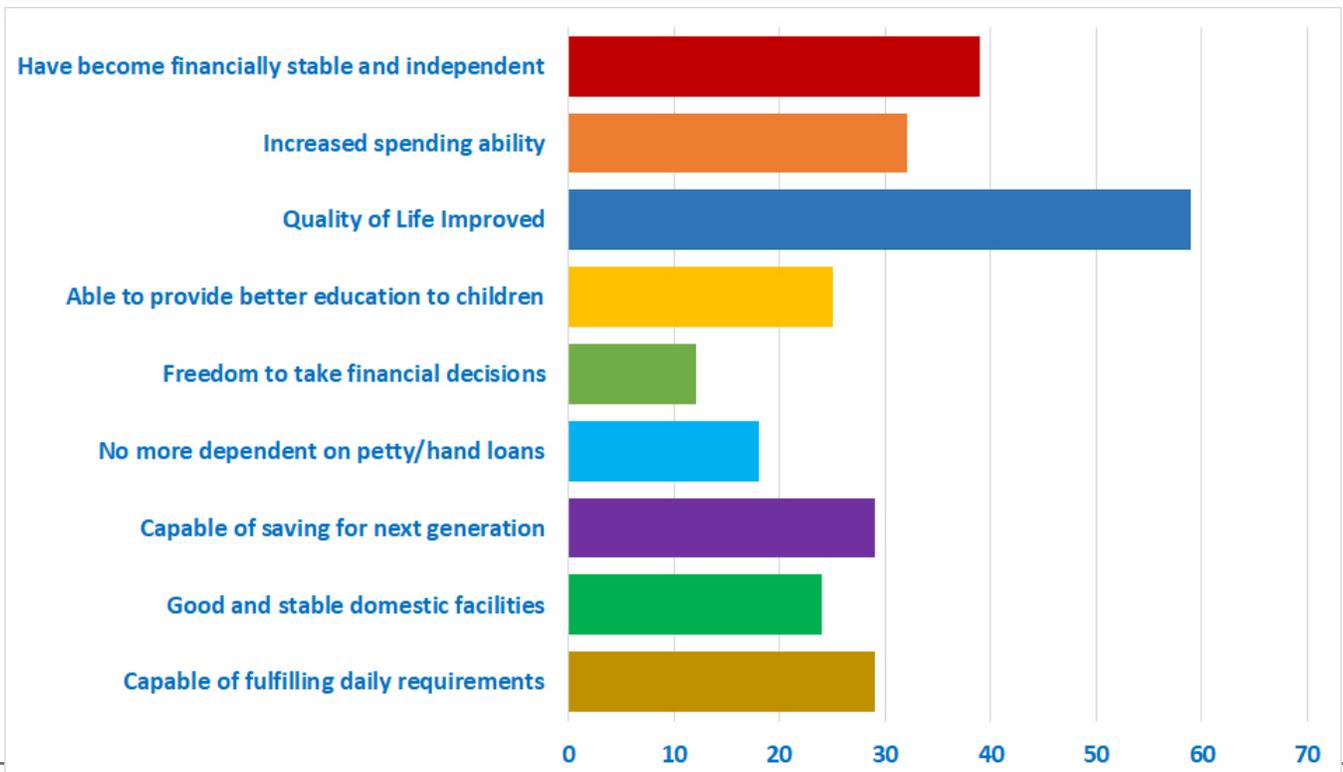


Stitching and Beauty Culture trainings are conducted across all the READ Centers, as these domains of learning are majorly popular among women in the rural parts of the country. And since these trainings help in generating income to the learner, there has been a marked change observed socio-economically in these communities. The status of women has increased at the household and community level. They have gained recognition and respect in their families. They have greater control in their lives and are taking financial decisions at the household level.

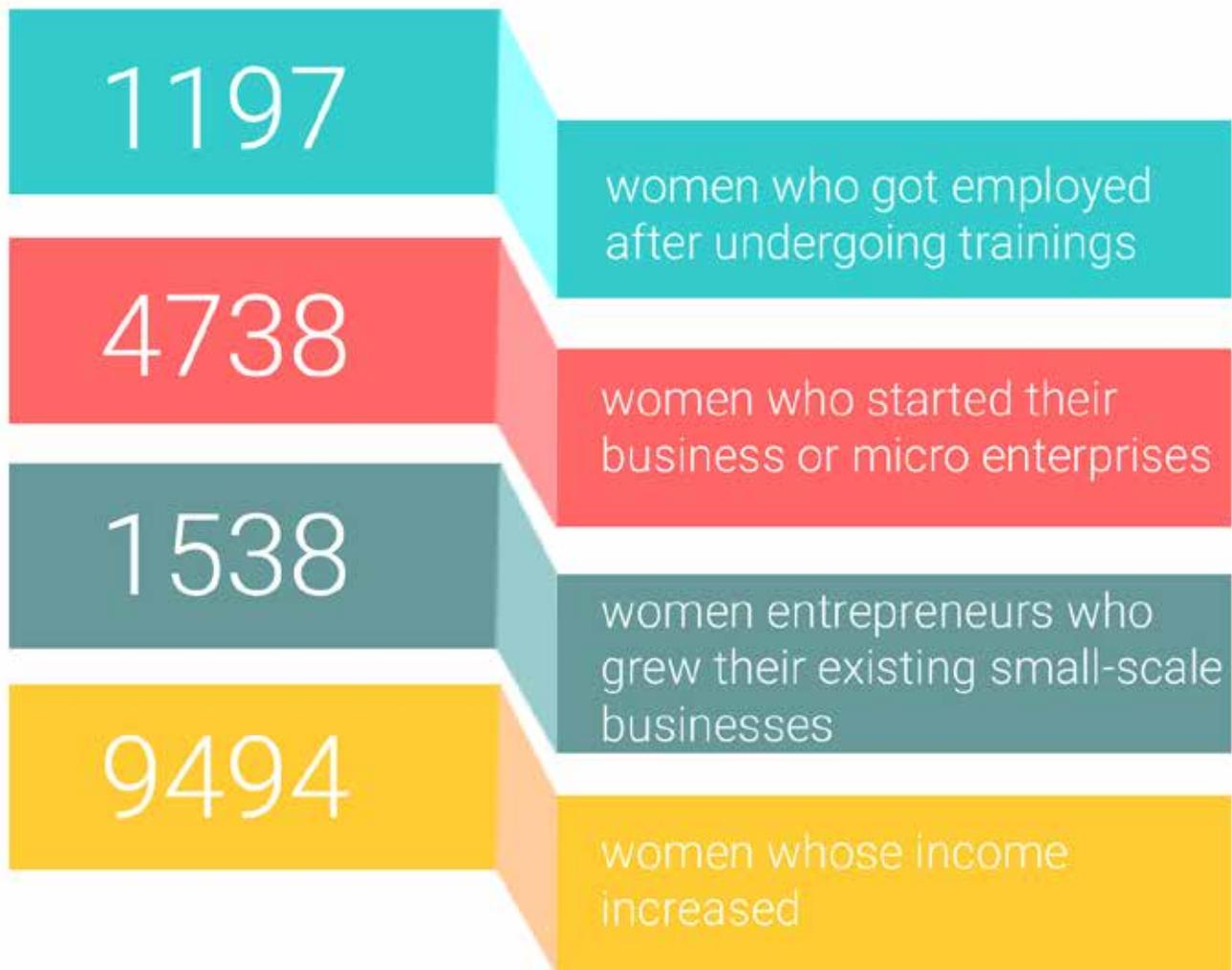
Indicators of Improvement in Social Life



Indicators of Economic Improvement in Life



Impact of the Skill based livelihood trainings leading to empowerment of women



24490 Total Number of Women Trained (2015-2020)

Health Awareness and Sensitization

Audio programmes based on the certified information by the Government sources are shared regularly in the communities through WhatsApp groups and READ India Online Radio Station. These programmes are capsules of health awareness generation and are disseminated in the community to sensitize and educate on basic health related preventive measures.

These programmes are based on the following topics:

- a) What is COVID -19 and How it spreads.
- b) Ayurvedic methods to improve Immunity.
- c) Do's and Don'ts for a possibly infected person.
- d) How to maintain cleanliness and hygiene.
- e) Precautions to take during COVID-19.
- f) Handwash – Best Practices and Technique.
- g) Social Distancing
- h) Importance of Hygiene

Apart from above Community Health Workers Trainings were conducted online for the communities of Mewat (Haryana) and Aurangabad (Maharashtra). These sessions were conducted with the help of experienced and qualified doctors who educated the participants to become Hospital Assistants and Community Health Workers after completing the 30 days course. The objective was to impart professional learning with complete

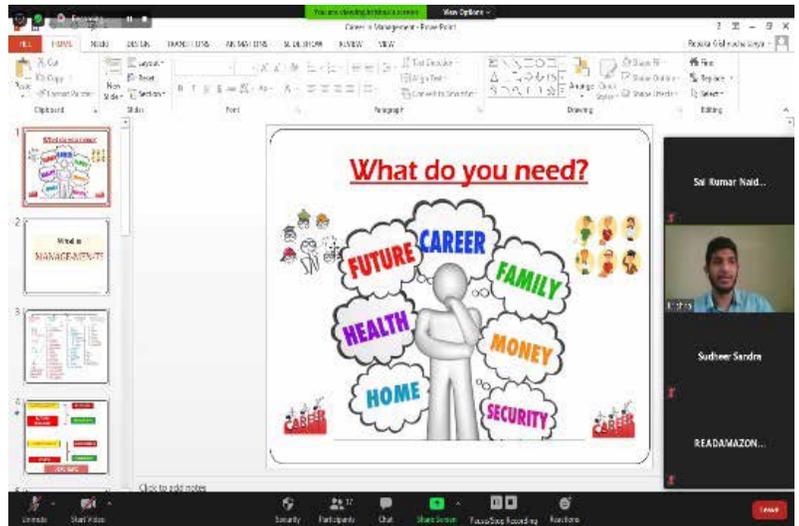


understanding of medical procedures and processes required to become supporting staff at the local level health posts. In total 87 participants from both the locations have completed the training course.

Leadership Skills

Leadership skills are essential for a collective and inclusive progress. READ India believes in imbining leadership skills in all the stakeholders it is connected with, right from the ones who are working with READ to those who are being benefitted by the programmes and interventions, which are being implemented on field. With this intent, Leadership Skills Development Master Class sessions were organized during the pandemic, so that in times of difficulty and great challenge, a charismatic character can be built to face any adversity. The objective of conducting leadership sessions with the project execution team was two-fold. One was to increase the level of self-awareness, interpersonal communication, commitment, developing social etiquettes and eventually becoming a situational leader

who could drive right decisions for the benefit of the community as a whole. And second, was to transform at least 500 rural women entrepreneurs across India, who are integrated with the Skills to Succeed Programme supported by Accenture leading to building of the social capital in these rural communities. The impact of conducting leadership sessions was immediate and the project execution team responded with a great fervour towards completing the project objectives intended to be achieved. These sessions enhanced engagement level within the team and propelled them to develop their leadership potential. Technical concepts like Johari window, Time Management, Prioritization Matrix and Effective Delegation of the tasks helped participants to gear up for stepping up the ladder and build their capabilities.



Life Skills Sessions



Women in the rural communities are majorly occupied in completing the daily chores of the household. Their daily routine is usually packed in fulfilling their domestic responsibilities towards family and children. Life Skills sessions conducted through READ Centers, becomes a node of attraction for women and young girls in the rural areas, who attend these sessions with great interest. These sessions include developing communication and interpersonal skills, decision making and problem solving, creative thinking and critical thinking, assertiveness, equanimity, self-control, resilience, and ability to cope with problems which are faced

on a daily basis. These sessions become an outlet to the emotions and aspirations of women and girls living in these communities who develop a rationale to give their lives a meaningful direction, firstly by developing Life Skills and thereafter attaining livelihood generating skills at the center.

Personality Development Sessions

Dedicated personality development sessions are regularly conducted with the youth members of the community across all the READ Centers. The sessions conducted this year were slightly different from the previous sessions. As the influx of youth migrating back to their villages with dejected outlook towards what the future enfolds, it was imperative for READ India to intervene and lift the morale of this section of population, which was clueless and demotivated towards moving beyond the challenges that have come to the fore. These sessions were conducted keeping in mind the acceptability and

Educating Farmers

Farmers meeting were conducted in the rural communities of Haryana and Rajasthan, wherein the farmers are made aware of the loans, subsidies, schemes and important information on the cultivation processes in order to increase the yield of their crops and at the same time keeping the fertility of their farms by following best agricultural practices. Farmers are also provided with the weather information in the rural parts of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Haryana. There is a total of 826 farmers who benefitted from the weather information services. Two messages per week were provided to farmers and an impact assessment study was conducted in the year 2019. This service helped farmers to take decision on irrigation and other agricultural operations which led to increase in food security, sustainability, higher crop yield and profitability.



Change of Strategy during COVID-19 Pandemic

READ Centers present in 228 rural communities across 12 states were closed during the nationwide lockdown announced, in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic. As the centers in these rural communities are a safe space for learning and capacity building for all age groups, programmes which were delivered before were continued in an innovative manner. The immediate response was to identify any instance of distress in the communities where READ is present and lending the support in accordance with the need that surfaced at different locations. As the lockdown impositions and restrictions further strengthened programme interventions were implemented in a hybrid mode. Hybrid Mode of programme delivery includes both online and offline platforms, in order to reach to the wider community, adapting to the needs, availability of resources and relevance of planned objectives to be achieved.

Use of technology platforms and digital interface of connecting with the community became the new normal and is still in practice, since first lockdown was announced. This change in strategy of implementation using technology platform, not only helped the stakeholders to learn its effective and productive utilization, but also made it possible for the ground team present in the communities to expand their outreach.

READ India proactively executed the following plan to counter COVID 19 challenges:

A. Team Management Strategy

- ❖ READ Staff at READ India office in Gurgaon as well as at 47 READ Centers were encouraged to work from home.
- ❖ Motivating them and training them to take up online platforms to implement training and relate to their respective beneficiary groups.
- ❖ Assurance of the continuous remuneration during this period to make the team feel secured, confident, and motivated to execute the programmes.
- ❖ Training of Trainers and capacity building trainings focussing on the READ Mission were conducted with the team present in the rural communities.
- ❖ Encouraging the staff to collate e-content, which can be circulated to the beneficiaries in groups.
- ❖ Trainings of the staff on leadership qualities.

Community engagement and mobilization was done by conducting one to one interaction with the beneficiaries, using phones and messages. READ Team on ground remained in continuous touch with the beneficiaries. Realizing that a major portion of urban population, who were hitherto working in the cities have now come back to their villages, READ India organized multitude of online training sessions to enable the members of the community, especially youth to remain engaged and improvise their skills preparing them, for the new set of employment avenues.

Seamless conversation between the trainers and the trainees was made possible with the WhatsApp groups formed for each training component. Beneficiaries can ask questions and get their answers right away, on the group with limited margin of any error, gap, or delay. This has improved the quality delivery of trainings which are conducted online.

Discussions are done with the team present on ground, regarding challenges being faced by the beneficiaries in

adapting to the technology and dedicated assistance is given to the beneficiaries. Sessions on use of technology walk-through are regularly conducted for ease of access and better adaptability.

Content that is shared in the form of videos and audios is developed in-house by READ India Team, which is proof-checked and verified by the senior programme team, to ensure authenticity of the knowledge material.

B. Programme Management

- ❖ Sharing audio programmes made by READ India designated staff based on the certified information by the Government sources being actively shared through WhatsApp groups – Some examples are: -
 - ❑ Sessions made on precautions to be taken during COVID 19
 - ❑ Hygiene practice
 - ❑ How to make home-made cloth mask
 - ❑ How to make home-made hand wash solution.
- ❖ Distributed ration (essential food items – wheat, oil, rice, pulses) to the community who requested READ India to support. READ India supported these activities in collaboration with local stakeholders, Sarpanch, Block Development Officers and other important community members.
- ❖ Distributed masks stitched by women, soaps and handwash kits.
- ❖ Given disinfect bottles to the hot spot zone through READ Centers, this was done at the request of the local stakeholders.
- ❖ Created and disseminated motivating messages to the communities in rural areas for their mental wellbeing.
- ❖ Conducted trainings online using zoom and other tools to women, young boys and girls, parents of the differently abled children. School teachers are making short videos on the lesson plans and sharing with the parents of the children. READ India is motivating them for acceptability and accessibility to the changing scenario.
- ❖ Programmes on COVID– 19 and mental health were developed with the help of an expert in the subject area and then virtual TOT sessions were conducted.

The following programmes were conducted through technology platforms, resulting into achieving of dual objective of reaching to a greater number of beneficiaries in the rural communities during the phase of restriction in movement and creation of e-content/knowledge material at the organizational level. This knowledge material has become a repository of modules which could be further used to conduct the trainings in different communities, benefitting a greater number of people living in rural areas, who do not have access to such resources.

1. Reading and writing keeping age-appropriate curriculum for 2 – 6 years; 6- 10 years and 10 – 15 years, with a life cycle approach.
2. Life skills for adolescent girls and boys
3. Career Guidance for youth
4. Livelihood trainings,

- a) Design and Product Development
 - b) Online selling
 - c) Digital Training (Basic computers and Technology Empowering Girls)
 - d) Stitching and Sewing
 - e) Block Printing
 - f) Soap making
 - g) Health care assistants
 - h) Hospitality training
 - i) Leadership linking with Enterprise skills
5. Health Awareness and Sensitization
 6. Social Media Marketing and Cyber Safety

People in the rural communities where READ is present, are being motivated to listen every day READ India online Radio wherein the motivating and knowledge-based programmes are uploaded. They are encouraged to share the audios made by READ India to their relatives, friends and neighbours, peers for maximum knowledge dissemination. Members of the community are advised to be in touch with the Coordinators of READ India for any assistance or immediate need related to COVID.

As the lockdown restrictions were lifted centers were reopened for the community following strict guidelines of safety protocols. Each Center was advised to only open the premises if they get the consent of the local level authorities. Trainings which could be done using online medium were continued digitally on zoom. Skill based/ Livelihood trainings were re-initiated at the Center, following all the safety measures. Some trainings were also conducted through Master Trainers who took the sewing machines/laptop/training equipment to their respective location and completed the batches from their communities.

Location	Food Kits Distributed	Location	Hygiene Kits/Masks / Disinfectant Distributed
Wazirabad, Gurugram, Haryana	40	Aurangabad, Maharashtra	4000
Vinhere, Raigad, Maharashtra	373	St. Thomas Mount Chennai	500
Aurangabad, Maharashtra	300	Mumbai	400
Khamgaon, Maharashtra	103	Tauru, Mewat	2500
St. Thomas Mount Chennai	500	Sonepat, Haryana	750
Mumbai (to be distributed)	400	Manesar, Haryana	4000
Guda, Mewat, Haryana	390	Chitkul, Hyderabad	4340
Total	2106	Total	16490

READ India is regularly distributing information on COVID prevention and response through verified written audio content on READ India online radio and WhatsApp groups. Volunteers organized through the centers distributed soap, sanitizer and essential food supplies to families in need and volunteered to take the temperatures of local residents. READ Centers offered to serve as quarantine facilities for the local government should the need arise.

Stitching and sewing groups that had previously been organized through READ Centers, were quickly pivoted to making face masks and PPE Kits. As of May, the women had already made more than 100,000 masks which were distributed to communities around READ Centers and Women are also engaged in making cloth mask as per order. READ India is also helping these women adapt their trade in light of the pandemic, organizing remote training on social media marketing to help them build a market for their goods while physical sales opportunities are limited, but also expand sales to a broader base of customers.

READ India with the help of its CSR partners and local level stakeholders distributed ration (essential food items – wheat, oil, rice, pulses) to the communities who requested READ Centers for support, during the pandemic. This would have not been possible without the collaboration of local stakeholders, Sarpanch, Block Development Officers and other important community members.



