READ India
Inspiring Rural Prosperity

Kishalay
READ India Newsletter

Major highlights

- READ Summit 2025: Celebrating Community Libraries as Catalysts for Change
- READ India at the Global Library Summit 2025
- "Let's Learn and Grow" – A unique program launched by READ India with the support of VISA
- Empowering Rural Women for a Greener Future: Livelihood Training Across NCR Villages with the support of HSBC
- A Unique Community Library Initiative: Building a Culture of Joyful Reading and Digital Learning with the support of HT Parekh Foundation
- Sanitation Facilities Inaugurated at Z.P Schools of Daigavahn, Shekta, Ramwadi & Ladsawangi, Aurangabad, Maharashtra with the support of Perkins India Pvt. Ltd.
- Creating Space for Learning: Enhancement of School Infrastructure in Trithali Village with the support of Avery Dennison Pvt. Ltd.
- Entrepreneurship Training Equips Women at Wazirabad Centre with Skills for Success
- Women Empowerment programme focusses on educating women on Government Welfare Schemes
- READ India from Benipatti Shines at International Festival

In frame (Left to Right): Dr. Geeta Malhotra, Maj. Gen. Surat Sandhu, Dr. Shobhit Mathur, Prof. Jagtar Singh, Ms. Kalpana Dasgupta

READ Summit 2025: Celebrating Community Libraries as Catalysts for Change

On 12th March 2025, READ India successfully hosted its annual flagship event, the READ Summit 2025, a platform dedicated to sharing stories of growth, resilience, and innovation from rural India. The summit brought together a diverse group of stakeholders including thought leaders, library practitioners, corporate stakeholders, education experts and community champions united by a common vision; to transform community libraries into engines of social and economic change and to reflect on the evolving role of libraries in empowering underserved communities.

Session 1: Inaugural Session – Reflecting on the Past, Envisioning the Future

The inaugural session began with a heartfelt welcome and context-setting address by Dr. Geeta Malhotra, CEO, READ India. She shared how READ's model of community libraries has evolved into powerful grassroots institutions fostering literacy, leadership, and livelihood. Mr. Jay Vikram Bakshi, Founder Trustee, READ India and Founder of Digiqom Solutions, spoke on "READ in India: Libraries and Beyond," shedding light on the integration of digital engagement and community empowerment through storytelling and local partnerships. Ms. Kalpana Dasgupta, Founder Trustee, took the audience through a reflective journey titled "READ India: Reflections from 2007 to 2025," celebrating the milestones and challenges that shaped READ's grassroots impact. Maj. Gen. Surat Sandhu, Founder Trustee, shared insightful thoughts in his session "READ India: Way Forward," emphasising innovation, youth engagement, and strategic collaborations as the pillars for the next

phase of READ's growth. This session also featured a special address by Prof. Jagtar Singh, who presented the legacy and contributions of the SATKAL Foundation Awards. The audience was also witness to the release of READ India's "Annual Report" and "Orations on the Role of Libraries in Community Development", a powerful compilation of research papers.t The session concluded with an inspiring special address by Dr. Shobhit Mathur, Vice Chancellor, Rishihood University, who emphasized the critical role libraries can play in shaping a values-based, self-reliant Bharat.

Session 2: Role of rural libraries in providing holistic and continuous Higher Education and Skill Development

This session focused on the vital role of rural libraries in providing equitable access to higher education and vocational skills. Ms. Shafina Segon, Co-founder and COO of Vikramshila Education, presented her thoughts on how libraries can be catalysts for academic research and higher education, especially for underserved rural youth. She highlighted the need to reimagine libraries as centers for lifelong learning. Dr. Dinesh Agrawal, Principal Consultant at Consocia Advisory, addressed the challenges and opportunities in skill development through his session "Skill Development for Suitable Employability." He emphasised the importance of industry-aligned curriculum and the potential of CSR investments in enhancing rural skill training through libraries. Mr. Ashis Sanyal, Trustee, READ India, rounded out the session with his talk on "Bridging the Digital Divide through Libraries," sharing practical strategies and digital models implemented by READ to enhance connectivity, access to e-learning resources, and digital inclusion across rural India.

Session 3: Viksit Bharat 2047: Role of Corporates and multi-stakeholders' partnerships in knowledge sharing

Aligning with India's vision for a developed nation by 2047, this session delved into the potential of public-private partnerships in strengthening libraries as knowledge hubs. Dr. Lata Suresh, from the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs, spoke on the need for stronger collaborations between corporates, government institutions, and civil society to leverage CSR funds for community learning infrastructure. Dr. Bhupinder Singh, Associate Professor, College of Vocational Studies, University of Delhi, underscored the importance of contextualized vocational training supported by library systems. Dr. Priya Rai, University Librarian at National Law University, Delhi, emphasized the importance of how libraries can function as access points. Dr. Shantanu Ganguly, Director, Library Services at Ashoka University, concluded the session with a balanced discussion on Physical Libraries vs. E-Libraries. The session collectively called for an ecosystem-based approach where libraries are positioned as central to India's developmental narrative.

Session 4: Library Design and space in the changing times

The fourth session addressed the shifting paradigms of library infrastructure and user-centric design. Mr. Shibu Itty explored how design thinking can help create community-centric libraries that are inviting, adaptable, and responsive to local needs. Mr. R.S. Dalal, former Director General of Police, Haryana, highlighted the importance of libraries as safe spaces particularly for children and women where inclusive and diverse communities can gather, learn, and thrive. Mr. Prashant Jain, Senior Project Director, OSH India emphasised how libraries can play an underrated but critical role in disseminating information and preparing youth for industrial environments.

Session 5: Recommendations and Way Forward

The concluding session brought together experts to synthesise the key learnings of the Summit and lay down a roadmap for READ India's future. Prof. (Dr) Ramesh Gaur, Dean and Director, IGNCA, chaired the session, guiding a robust discussion on policy advocacy, curriculum integration, and cross-sectoral collaboration. Valuable inputs were shared by Prof. Jagtar Singh and Dr. P.R. Goswami, members of the Advisory Board, READ India, both of whom emphasised the importance of sustained partnerships, research-backed programming, and institutional recognition of libraries as developmental infrastructure. The summit concluded with a heartfelt Vote of Thanks delivered by Ms. Smita Rai, Director , Partnerships, READ India, who acknowledged the contributions of speakers, partners, team members, and attendees for their commitment and enthusiasm in advancing the library movement.

Throughout the day, participants engaged in interactive sessions on a range of themes, including:

• Grassroots library models and their role in building resilient communities
• Designing inclusive and safe learning spaces for effective community engagement
• Promoting higher education through partnerships and community collaboration
• Exploring the potential of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in scaling inclusive development through library programs

In alignment with READ India's mission, the summit reinforced the importance of creating spaces where unheard voices are amplified, achievements are celebrated, and future collaborations are fostered.

One of the key highlights of the summit was the recognition of a dedicated READ librarians who were honored with the SATKAL Lifetime Achievement Award for their exceptional work in strengthening rural communities and promoting higher education among girls. Their story, among others shared at the summit, inspired participants and highlighted the quiet revolutions being led by grassroots changemakers.
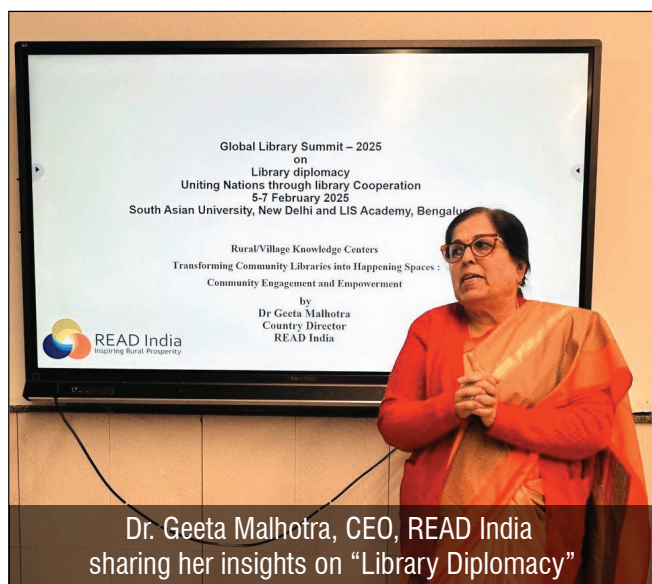

SATKAL Awardees at READ India Summit 2025

READ India at the Global Library Summit 2025

READ India was proud to be a collaborative associate at the prestigious Global Library Summit (GLS) 2025, a leading international platform convening librarians, scholars, and policymakers to reimagine the role of libraries in a rapidly evolving world from 5-7th February 2025. The summit, recognised for fostering global dialogue and innovation, explored critical themes such as digital inclusion, open access, sustainable resource management, and the future of library services.

Dr. Geeta Malhotra, CEO, READ India, presented on "Library Diplomacy: Uniting Nations through Library Cooperation," Her session focused on transforming rural community libraries into vibrant knowledge hubs through community engagement and empowerment. Two representatives from the READ India presented academic papers, contributing valuable insights on the intersection of community libraries, technology, and social development. These presentations highlighted READ India's pioneering work in transforming libraries into empowerment hubs that provide not just access to books, but also to digital literacy, life skills, and economic opportunity.

In parallel, handcrafted products made by marginalized women trained under READ India's livelihood programs were exhibited and made available for purchase. The display served as a compelling example of how libraries can become platforms for inclusive growth fostering entrepreneurship and self-reliance among underserved communities.

Dr. Geeta Malhotra, CEO, READ India sharing her insights on "Library Diplomacy"

Eco friendly products handcrafted by rural women displayed at Global Library Summit'25

"Let's Learn and Grow" – A unique program launched by READ India with the support of VISA

On 19th February 2025, READ India with the support of VISA, officially launched the "Let's Learn and Grow" initiative at the newly inaugurated center located at Gurumurthy Reddy Layout, Bangalore. The event marked a significant milestone in the ongoing efforts to empower communities through education and livelihood opportunities.

The inaugural event witnessed the gracious presence of dignitaries from both organizations. Representing VISA were Mr. Mark Cahill, Mr. Pawan Shetty, Mr. Vikram Kolar, and Mr. Rahul Singhal, while Dr. Geeta Malhotra, Ms. Smita Rai, and Ms. Shailaja representing READ India. The ceremony began with a traditional ribbon-cutting followed by an address by Dr. Geeta Malhotra, who shared insights into the center's five-year journey and its impact on the local community.

In a warm gesture of engagement, the guests from VISA enthusiastically participated in a bangle-making activity, interacting with the women and gaining first-hand experience of the skill-based training imparted at the center. This initiative aimed to provide marginalised women with education, financial literacy, and livelihood skills, empowering them to pursue sustainable income-generation opportunities. The event symbolized the shared commitment of VISA and READ India toward building resilient, self-reliant communities, with a focus on women's empowerment, financial inclusion, and sustainable development.

VISA team at the inauguration of the center

Ms. Smita Rai explaining the READ Model to the visitors

Empowering Rural Women for a Greener Future:
Livelihood Training Across NCR Villages with the support of HSBC

READ India with the support of HSBC has launched a transformative initiative focused on providing sustainable livelihoods to 900 women and girls from marginalized communities across the villages of Chainnsa, Shabad Mohammadpur, Wazirabad, and Sundh in Delhi NCR and Haryana. The 18-month-long project is designed to impart skills in eco-friendly production, encouraging income generation while addressing critical Sustainable Development Goals , SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

READ India Team with women who committed to the 3R approach

At the heart of the project lies a commitment to the 3R approach — Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Women and girls are being trained to create value-added products from stubble waste and industrial fabric remnants, turning potential pollutants into useful, marketable goods. These training sessions not only foster environmental stewardship but also strengthen financial independence and resilience among participants.

By bringing sustainable skilling directly to underserved rural locations, READ India ensures that women at the grassroots are equipped with the tools to build self-reliant futures. The initiative also promotes community-led environmental responsibility, where each product created is a step toward reducing agricultural waste and promoting circular economy practices. This program reflects READ India's holistic vision: empowering women, preserving the environment, and building inclusive rural economies.

Women showcasing the bags made by reusing products

A Unique Community Library Initiative: Building a Culture of Joyful Reading and Digital Learning with the support of HT Parekh Foundation

Engaging young minds through reading activities at Jahangirpuri CLRC Library

READ India, with the support of HT Parekh Foundation, proudly launched a transformative Community Library initiative aimed at bringing the joy of reading and digital learning to underserved communities. This vibrant network of libraries operates across four key locations: Bisnoli and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, Wazirabad in Haryana, and Jahangir Puri in Delhi. These libraries are more than just rooms filled with books, they are inclusive, safe, and child-friendly spaces designed to spark curiosity, creativity, and confidence among children and youth. With a curated collection of age-appropriate books and access to digital tools, the initiative offers engaging library activities, storytelling, and guided learning opportunities that encourage consistent reading habits and digital literacy. READ India envisions these libraries as community hubs for transformation. The mission is to empower children and youth through structured reading programs, digital literacy training, and accessible book-lending systems that enhance reading comprehension, build digital skills for academic and personal growth, and promote active involvement of families in children's education. At the heart of this initiative is the belief that every child deserves the joy of reading, the confidence to learn, and the skills to thrive in a knowledge-driven world.

Sanitation Facilities Inaugurated at Z.P Schools of Daigavahn, Shekta, Ramwadi & Ladsawangi, Aurangabad, Maharashtra with the support of Perkins India Pvt. Ltd.

READ India with the support of Perkins India Pvt. Ltd., inaugurated newly constructed girls' toilets at Zilla Parishad Primary Schools in the villages of Daigavahn, Shekta, Ramwadi, and Ladsawangi. Ms. Aarti Bhati, Program Officer, READ India and Mr. Anil Gaikwad, Project Manager invited the local stakeholders and Gram Panchayat members, School Management Committee (SMC) members, teachers, and students who expressed their gratitude for enhancing the infrastructure of the schools and overall well-being of students, especially young girls who now feel safer and more supported, reducing dropout rates among girls, and promote better attendance and academic participation.

Inauguration of Girls Toilet at a Zilla Parishad School

Creating Space for Learning: Enhancement of School Infrastructure in Trithali Village with the support of Avery Dennison Pvt. Ltd

On 29th March 2025, READ India with the support of Avery Dennison Pvt. Ltd. worked on improving the school's infrastructure by providing 100 new benches at Composite School in Trithali Village, Jewar, Gautam Buddh Nagar to enhance the seating arrangement for students.

The program began with a traditional welcome ceremony, where guests were greeted with tilak and garlands. The school principal, Mr. Rodash Singh, extended a warm welcome by honoring members from READ India and Avery Dennison Pvt. Ltd. with shawls and garlands. The cultural segment featured a welcome song and dance performed by students, infusing the event with energy and enthusiasm.

This contribution is expected to positively impact students' learning experience by ensuring a more comfortable and structured classroom environment. Distinguished attendees included village head Mr. Shahid Khan, school staff, BSA representatives, and community members. The event concluded on a high note, with heartfelt appreciation expressed for this meaningful initiative that aligns with READ India's mission to strengthen educational access and quality in rural areas.

Young minds enjoying their new space for learning

School Principal Mr. Rodash Singh felicitating Mr. Ajay Kumar from ADPL

Entrepreneurship Training Equips Women at Wazirabad Centre with Skills for Success

A comprehensive Entrepreneurship Training program was conducted at READ India's Wazirabad Centre from 13th – 28th February 2025 by Priya and Manvi from Top Rankers, aimed at enhancing entrepreneurial mindsets and building essential business skills among community women.

The training commenced with an icebreaking session on Communication Skills, covering key components such as tone, salutation, clarity, and pronunciation. Participants engaged in interactive role plays to better understand and practice effective communication strategies crucial for customer interaction and relationship building. The curriculum later advanced into Marketing Essentials, introducing the 4 Ps—Product, Price, Place, and Promotion to help participants understand how to package and present their offerings.

Engaging participants in role play for Communication Skill session

Midway through the program, participants were guided on Building Predictability and Reputation, an essential trait for any successful business. These concepts were reinforced with role plays that illustrated practical ways to earn trust, retain customers, and uphold credibility. An Accounting Tool module introduced participants to basic financial literacy, covering account keeping, budgeting and profit and loss tracking. This hands-on session empowered women with tools to manage their small businesses effectively and sustainably. The training concluded with a high-energy session on Team Building, emphasizing the importance of assembling the right team, understanding team dynamics and fostering collaboration.

Women Empowerment programme focusses on educating women on Government Welfare Schemes

Traditional Basket making by Tharu women

The women in the villages of Lakhimpur Kheri are skilled on weaving, basket making and other related skills. READ India is conscious of empowering them and educating them on the government welfare schemes and how they can get benefits of the government schemes by registering them in a group or individually too.

Specia sessions were organized not only on formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) with the women skilled at READ Centers but also encouraged them to start their own micro-enterprise and strengthen their linkage with the READ India Centre in Lakhimpur. The sessions focused on formation of an SHGs, group rules, regulations and guidance on accessing relevant government welfare schemes. The session aimed at strengthening grassroots leadership and enabling Self Help Group members to lead their groups effectively and make informed decisions for the benefit of their communities.

READ India from Benipatti Shines at International Festival

During the prestigious International Conference on Agriculture, Education, and Health Festival held from 7th to 9th February 2025 in the heart of Madhubani district, READ India's Community Library and Resource Center (CLRC) members from Benipatti, Bihar took center stage to exhibit their stunning artwork; each piece echoing stories of empowerment, resilience and creativity nurtured through READ India's holistic programs.

The exhibition drew admiration from a distinguished gathering of dignitaries, including the Hon'ble Governor of Kerala - Mr. Rajendra Arlekar, Member of Rajya Sabha – Mr. Sanjay Kumar Jha and Member of the Bihar Legislative Council – Mr. Ghanshyam Thakur who lauded the participants' efforts and motivated them to continue striving towards a bright and successful future.

In frame - Governor of Kerala, Mr. Rajendra Arlekar

In frame - Member of Legislative Council Mr. Ghanshyam Thakur