

Kishalay

READ India Newsletter

Editor's Note

“Reading is an exercise in empathy; an exercise in walking in someone else’s shoes.” – Malorie Blackman

We are pleased to share the events and programmes at READ India Gyan Kendras in our latest Newsletter – KISHALAY.

Feel free to share your thoughts to:
japneet@read-india.in

Happy Reading!

Major highlights

- Community Leadership Recognised at Amazon India’s Ideathon SAHYOG
- Engaging, Enabling, Empowering and Educating Through Community Leaders
- Bringing Healthcare Closer: READ India’s Community Health Camp in Rabupura
- READ India Opens New Skill Development Centre in Mulbagal
- Building Futures Through Women Led Innovation
- Transforming Libraries for Viksit Bharat 2047
- From Vision to Transformation: Recognising Women-Led Leadership
- From Discussion to Impact: READ India at the Forefront of Safety and Preparedness
- Advancing Safer Workplaces Through Informed Leadership
- READ India at the BW Social Impact Summit
- READ India’s Initiative with OSH India: Educating Communities and Distributing Safety Products

Upcoming Events

- READ India is set to inaugurate a **new Community Library & Resource Centre (CLRC) in Dabaspete, Karnataka**, with the support of Avery Dennison Private Limited (ADPL). This fifth ADPL-supported centre will expand access to learning, resources, and opportunity for the local community.
- READ India will convene the **Skills to Succeed Coordinators’ Meet** to reflect on the year’s impact and translate learnings into action. The session will focus on outcomes, course corrections, and strengthening follow-ups to deepen and sustain skilling impact.
- **READ India Summit 2026**, our annual flagship event, will bring together partners, practitioners, and community leaders to reflect on impact, share learnings, and chart the way forward. The summit will celebrate collective progress while shaping READ India’s vision for the year ahead.

Community Leadership Recognised at Amazon India’s Ideathon SAHYOG



READ India Team at the Amazon India’s Ideathon SAHYOG

The second edition of **Amazon India’s Ideathon SAHYOG**, centred on the spirit of sahyog or collaboration, brought together NGOs, corporate partners, government stakeholders, and volunteers to celebrate community-led solutions across livelihoods, food security, social entitlements, and inclusion.

For READ India, the event marked a proud moment as its community ambassadors—Gram Mitras and Pragati Mitras were recognised for their grassroots leadership and sustained community engagement.

Their work, built on trust and local ownership, stood out among initiatives from across the country. **Jatin Kumar** received the Best Gram Mitra Award and **Suraj Mandal** was honoured with the Best Pragati Mitra Award for their efforts in enabling access to education, livelihoods, women’s empowerment, health services and social security schemes. By working closely with local authorities and community institutions, READ India’s ambassadors continue to bridge critical gaps at the grassroots. Ideathon SAHYOG reinforced the importance of **cross-sector collaboration and community-centric leadership**, affirming that meaningful social impact is strongest when driven from the ground up.

Engaging, Enabling, Empowering, and Educating Through Community Leaders

Strong communities are built on empowered leaders who understand local needs and drive meaningful change. Recognising this, READ India organised a **Capacity Building Workshop** for Gram Mitras and Pragati Mitras on 11th December 2025, bringing together field leaders, READ India’s program team, and experts Mr. Kamaljeet (Kisan Sanchar) and Mr. Harsh Arora (Improve Life).



Gram Mitras and Pragati Mitras along with READ India Team

The workshop focused on **Social Security, Food Security and Menstrual Hygiene Management**, combining practical sessions, motivational talks and peer learning activities. Participants shared achievements, reflected on challenges and gained insights to strengthen outreach and program implementation.

The workshop boosted confidence, clarified thematic understanding and strengthened leadership and ownership among Gram and Pragati Mitras. By equipping community leaders with knowledge, skills and motivation, READ India continues to ensure grassroots programs translate into meaningful, sustainable impact.

Bringing Healthcare Closer: READ India’s Community Health Camp in Rabupura

For many families in rural and semi-urban communities, access to timely and affordable healthcare continues to be a daily challenge. Long distances to medical facilities, loss of wages, and delayed consultations often mean that routine health concerns are postponed until they become more serious. What should be simple check-ups or basic treatments frequently turn into long-term health issues due to lack of access.

To respond to this gap, READ India organised a **community health camp in Rabupura, Jewar**, with the aim of bringing essential primary healthcare services closer to the community. The camp was conducted by [Helpfulhearts.co.in](https://www.helpfulhearts.co.in), in

collaboration with **Felix Hospital**, and supported by **Avery Dennison Pvt. Ltd.**, reflecting a shared commitment to improving access to healthcare at the grassroots level.

Over the course of the day, the camp became a vital point of care for the community. Nearly 150 individuals received medical consultations across key specialties, including **General Medicine, Paediatrics, Gynaecology, and ENT**. For many participants, the camp offered timely medical advice and reassurance, often without the financial and logistical burdens associated with hospital visits. The strong turnout underscored a persistent reality: there is a significant and unmet demand for **preventive healthcare, essential medicines and specialist services** within underserved communities.



Glimpses from the Health Camp

READ India Opens New Skill Development Centre in Mulbagal



Beneficiaries and trainers at the new READ India Centre in Mulbagal.

In a significant step toward empowering rural communities, **READ India** has launched a new skill development centre in **Mulbagal**, located on the Karnataka - Andhra Pradesh border. The centre aims to provide local women and youth with opportunities to build livelihoods, acquire new skills, and explore pathways to sustainable growth.

Baseline interactions with the community revealed a strong appetite for training and a readiness to engage in programs that can improve employability and foster long-term socio-economic change. Many young people face challenges such as limited opportunities and early socio-economic stress, making skill development programs vital for creating productive alternatives and positive futures.

The centre, supported by local leaders and community members, has been established in a well-equipped training facility, ensuring an accessible and conducive environment for learning. With this new initiative, **READ India** is set to create a vibrant hub of **learning, empowerment, and community engagement**, reflecting its enduring commitment to transforming rural lives through education, skills, and opportunity

Building Futures Through Women Led Innovation



The story of READ India has always been rooted in a simple yet powerful belief, that meaningful and lasting change begins within communities themselves. This belief, nurtured over nearly two decades of grassroots work, found national and regional recognition in 2025 as Dr Geeta Malhotra, Chief Executive Officer of READ India, was honoured at the **Forbes India – We Serve India Awards, Season 2**, presented by Lions Clubs International, under the Women-led Social Innovation category.

The journey of recognition began on **3rd November 2025**, when Dr. Malhotra was announced as the **Regional Winner (South)**. The award celebrated her pioneering leadership in building community-owned libraries and learning centres across rural India – spaces where knowledge meets empowerment, women step into leadership roles, and communities take ownership of their collective futures. Reflecting on this journey, Dr. Malhotra shared, “Our role is only to ignite the spark, but it is the people who carry the light forward.” Her words echoed the essence of READ India’s approach: development driven not by dependency, but by trust, ownership, and local leadership.

This journey reached a national milestone on **17th December 2025**, when Dr. Malhotra was honoured as the National Winner at the awards ceremony held during the **53rd ISAME Forum in Gandhinagar, Gujarat**, a global gathering of leaders and changemakers from India, South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. As part of the ceremony, a specially produced film showcased READ India’s community-driven model, highlighting its strong emphasis on women’s leadership and lifelong learning. The film offered a powerful glimpse into the organisation’s on-ground impact, carrying READ India’s story of quiet, persistent transformation to a national audience.

Together, these recognitions stand as a testament to the transformative impact of READ India’s work under Dr. Geeta Malhotra’s leadership. By creating spaces where children discover the joy of learning, women emerge as confident leaders, and communities shape their own pathways forward, READ India continues to build a future rooted in dignity, opportunity and equity.



Transforming Libraries for Viksit Bharat 2047

At the International Conference on Transforming Libraries for Viksit Bharat 2047 (SVSU – ICTL 2025), leaders and practitioners gathered to reflect on a simple truth: a developed India begins with an informed India.

In her address, Dr. Geeta Malhotra, CEO of READ India, highlighted the power of collaboration between government, private sector and civil society to ensure knowledge reaches every community. She emphasised that while libraries provide the platform, it is librarians who are the anchors of learning and catalysts of community development.

The conference also underlined the importance of bridging the gap between youth and elders to preserve India's rich knowledge systems and the role of ESG principles in fostering sustainable progress. Under Dr. Malhotra's leadership, 60+ READ Libraries now serve as hubs of learning, digital inclusion, and empowerment across India. Recognising her outstanding contribution, she was honoured with the Gyan Setu Award 2025 for Community Engagement, a testament to READ India's transformative impact on communities.



Dr. Geeta Malhotra receiving the Gyan Setu Award 2025 for Community Engagement

From Vision to Transformation: Recognising Women-Led Leadership



Dr. Geeta Malhotra receiving the Dr. Sarojini Naidu International Award for Working Women, 2025

Leadership, when rooted in purpose, leaves a lasting imprint far beyond titles and awards. On 29 November 2025, this legacy was honoured at Marwah Studios as Dr. Geeta Malhotra, Chief Executive Officer of READ India, received the 9th Edition of the Dr. Sarojini Naidu International Award for Working Women, 2025 – a recognition celebrating women whose resilience, vision, and leadership continue to shape change across the world.

Yet, this honour extended far beyond individual recognition. It carried within it the collective story of READ India – of communities that have walked this journey together, of women who discovered confidence and leadership through shared learning spaces, and of children who found possibility within community-owned libraries. The award became a reflection of years of patient effort, grounded in trust, ownership and grassroots leadership. The ceremony, chaired by Dr. Sandeep Marwah and hosted by AFT University, in collaboration with IWFF and ICMEI, brought together women from diverse fields whose stories echoed perseverance and purpose. Though their paths were different, each narrative reaffirmed a shared belief: that leadership grows strongest when it uplifts others.

This recognition reaffirmed a guiding principle that continues to shape READ India's work—that empowered women are central to lasting social transformation. The moment stood not only as recognition of past efforts, but as a renewed call to continue building pathways of opportunity, leadership, and hope at the grassroots.

From Discussion to Impact: READ India at the Forefront of Safety and Preparedness



Dr. Geeta Malhotra at the inaugural ceremony - IFSEC India 2025, along with other dignitaries

When conversations on safety and security take shape on national platforms, their true significance lies in how meaningfully they connect with people beyond formal spaces. It is in this movement from dialogue to daily life that such conversations find purpose.

READ India marked its presence at **IFSEC India 2025**, South Asia's largest commercial security expo and conference, as **Dr. Geeta Malhotra**, Chief Executive Officer, attended the **inaugural ceremony** at **Bharat Mandapam**, New Delhi, from 11–13 December 2025, following a special invitation extended to distinguished leaders from the sector.

Now in its **18th edition**, IFSEC India brought together policymakers, industry leaders, and innovators to engage in discussions on evolving safety and security challenges. While these conversations often centre on systems and technologies, their relevance is realised when they are translated into awareness, preparedness, and informed action at the community level.

For READ India, this translation has always been central to its work. Through community-owned learning spaces and sustained grassroots engagement, READ India works to ensure that knowledge around safety, risk awareness and preventive practices reaches families and communities where access to information is limited, yet the need is most immediate.

Dr. Malhotra's presence at the inaugural ceremony reflected READ India's continued engagement with national dialogues on safety and preparedness. It reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to bridging high-level conversations with lived realities, ensuring that safety is understood not just as policy or infrastructure, but as knowledge that empowers communities and reaches the last mile.

Advancing Safer Workplaces Through Informed Leadership

Recognising that safe and inclusive workplaces are strengthened through informed leadership, Ms. Smita Anand Rai, Director – Partnerships and Resource Mobilisation, READ India, attended the POSH (Prevention of Sexual Harassment) Awareness Workshop organised by Gurgaon First on 17 December 2025 in Gurgaon. The workshop brought together participants from NGOs, corporates, and academic institutions to engage with critical issues surrounding workplace safety and compliance.

The session focused on the POSH Act, 2013, with in-depth discussions on creating respectful work

environments, understanding legal obligations, and strengthening the role of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs). Expert-led sessions, practical case studies, and interactive discussions enabled participants to translate statutory provisions into effective organisational practices. The participation reflected READ India's institutional commitment to ethical governance, workplace dignity, and preventive approaches to safeguarding.



READ India at the BW Social Impact Summit



READ India was part of the **4th Edition of the BW Social Impact Summit & Awards**, organised by BW Disrupt, where the theme “Tech with a Soul: Reimagining Social Change in the AI Era” sparked meaningful conversations on the role of technology in building a more equitable future. The summit brought together leaders and organisations exploring how innovation, when guided by empathy and purpose, can create lasting social impact.

Dr. Geeta Malhotra, CEO, READ India, joined the panel “**NGOs Using Technology for Real Social Transformation**,” sharing insights drawn from READ India's work across rural communities. She spoke about how technology, when rooted in local realities, becomes a bridge—expanding access to education and skilling, strengthening monitoring and accountability, and enabling community leaders to drive change from within.

Her reflections reinforced READ India's belief that technology is most powerful when it remains human at its core. By combining digital tools with strong community ownership and trust, READ India continues to demonstrate how responsible, people-centric innovation can reduce gaps, amplify voices, and create sustainable social transformation.

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Strengthening Safety Awareness at the Grassroots: READ India's Commitment to Dignity and Protection



Distribution Drive at Jamalpur



Distribution Drive at Chainnsa

At READ India, we believe that every individual, regardless of their occupation or location, deserves a safe, dignified and healthy working environment. Occupational safety is often discussed in formal sector spaces, yet the need is equally urgent in rural communities where awareness, access to protective gear and knowledge of safe practices remain limited. Bridging this gap has been central to our mission.

In recent years, READ India has intensified its efforts to strengthen occupational safety awareness among rural communities. In collaboration with OSH India and with the generous support of Aktion Safety and MN Rubber, READ India organised community-focused safety outreach programmes in August 2025. Sessions were held on 5 August in Chainnsa, Hathin Block in Palwal District and on 12 August in Jamalpur, Manesar in Haryana. These sessions focused on preventive safety measures,

essential workplace practices and the critical role of personal protective equipment.

During these programmes, reflector jackets and rubber gloves were distributed to community members. This reinforced the message that safety is not a privilege but a fundamental right. Beyond distributing protective gear, the sessions empowered workers with knowledge that can prevent injuries, enhance well-being and uphold dignity in their daily work.

Despite these efforts, a significant knowledge gap around workplace safety continues to persist at the grassroots level. Many rural and informal sector workers remain unaware of basic safety protocols that could protect their lives and livelihoods. By embedding safety education directly within communities and ensuring access to essential protective equipment, READ India is helping shape a more secure and informed workforce. As we continue addressing existing awareness gaps, our focus remains on promoting a culture where safety is recognised as an essential aspect of dignified work. Continued collaboration and support from stakeholders and corporate partners will strengthen these initiatives and contribute to safer and more resilient rural livelihoods.

These safety efforts are particularly important in the context of India's demographic transition. More than 60% of the rural population consists of young people seeking meaningful engagement with corporates and public sector units while requiring the necessary skills for employability. Although several skilling initiatives are available, the focus on educating youth about workplace safety and the protection of their lives along with their livelihoods is still limited.

There is a growing need for more skilling centres that build competencies, enhance awareness, offer hands-on learning and prepare youth for safe and suitable placements. Nonprofit organisations such as READ India play a crucial role by integrating hard skills with soft skills, helping rural youth become job-ready within their own communities. This approach reduces migration, keeps families together and supports socio-economic stability.

As India moves towards a future where the elderly population will increase significantly, the

importance of keeping families united becomes even more critical. If young people continue to migrate away from their communities in search of employment, managing the emotional, physical and financial needs of ageing parents will become increasingly difficult.

READ India works actively to address these challenges through its extensive grassroots presence. With 65 Community Library and Resource Centres across India, each covering more than 20 villages in its radius, READ India currently reaches over 1,300 villages. Nearly 60 per cent of the beneficiaries are youth. This widespread network enables READ India to support communities effectively, strengthen local livelihoods and promote safety and dignity for rural workers and their families.

Dr. Geeta Malhotra

Chief Executive Officer, READ India



Distribution Drive at Hajar