Transforming Lives Through the Power of Books
Room to Read believes that World Change Starts with Educated Children. We are transforming the lives of millions of children in low-income communities by developing their literacy skills and nurturing a love of reading, so they can pursue a fulfilling, quality education that prepares them to contribute to their families, neighbourhoods and the world. Because our programs can be replicated, localised and sustained by governments, we are uniquely positioned to effect long-lasting, systemic change.

Ending Book Deserts and Amplifying Voices
Stories affect how we live our lives, see other people and think about ourselves. Today, millions of children are growing up with their faces, stories and cultures absent from the pages of books. Together with thousands of local authors and illustrators, Room to Read has published over 3,200 original and adapted children’s books and distributed over 32 million books that engage young readers with characters that ring true to them.

In high-income communities, every child has an average of 13 books; in high-poverty communities there is one book for every 300 children. The Julius Baer Foundation and our partners in Hong Kong and beyond have made it possible for Room to Read to develop and distribute books that amplify the voices and stories of their readers, and support families in engaging their children on the path to literacy. To further the education and life prospects for at least 2,000 children in Hong Kong’s marginalised, low-income communities we will:

• research the extent of ‘Book Deserts’ and the feasibility of starting a multi-year literacy project;
• assess, fund and implement a children’s book publishing, distribution and family engagement program, creating 10 new
book titles and adapting at least another 10 books from our global book collection; • address unmet literacy needs that put children at greater risk of inter-generational poverty; and • nurture connections with high net-worth individuals to implement this pilot project and ensure its future.

Facts and figures: Hong Kong
• Hong Kong has one of the top five public education systems in the world, with 12 years of free, equitable schooling for all, and teachers, parents and communities who participate in and are invested in student success.¹
• However, more than 27,000 K-12 students who do not speak Cantonese or Mandarin face significant disadvantages in Hong Kong.² Many of these children lack access to early childhood education or reading materials at home and are thus excluded at an early age from a world-class education system, making it difficult to reach the standards required for progression.
• 180,000 children aged 0–18 were living in poverty in Hong Kong in 2015.³
• The child poverty rate for South- and Southeast Asian children aged 0–15 was 32.5%,³ exceeding that of the region’s overall population (25%).
• Hong Kong’s child poverty rate is significantly higher than that of other high-income countries: Denmark (3.7%), Great Britain (9.8%), Australia (15.1%) and the United States (21.2%).³
• Research shows that poor local language skills can limit the ability of students to excel in school and integrate successfully into society.⁴ At primary and secondary levels, these students tend to underperform in literacy tasks and/or have a low opinion of their own reading and writing skills.⁵⁶

For more information about Room to Read: www.roomtoread.org

² The Hong Kong Council of Social Service. 2013. Poverty situation of South and Southeast Asian Ethnic Minorities.
⁶ Loper, K. 2004. Race and equality: A study of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong’s education system. Centre for Comparative and Public Law, Faculty of Law, The University of Hong Kong.

“Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection, we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience.”

Rudine Sims Bishop, Professor Emerita of Education at Ohio State University