LitWorld
Be the Story.

2023 Annual Report

www.litworld.org
LitWorld strengthens children and communities through the power of stories.

Imagine a world where every young person, regardless of their circumstance, has the opportunity to explore their identity, express their dreams, discover and tell their story.

LitWorld partners with grassroots organizations, both locally and around the world, to support social-emotional learning (SEL). Together, we deliver creative, skill-building, arts- and literacy-based programs adapted to fit the unique needs of the communities we serve.

Since 2007, we have partnered side-by-side with more than 50 global organizations and institutions. We have reached hundreds of thousands of children and community leaders in over 30 countries through our in-depth LitClubs and LitCamps programs, and tens of millions with our advocacy campaign World Read Aloud Day® (WRAD).
Dear LitWorld Friends and Family,

January marked my one-year anniversary as Executive Director of this lovely, first-rate organization. And as I sit here now, I muse on how to capture, in just a few short paragraphs, all that LitWorld accomplished in 2023. After a few months with the organization, I sat down to add a handful of words to the 2022 annual report: to express my desire to honor the mission and history of LitWorld, while also building a road map for expanded impact. I expressed how honored and joyful I felt to be asked to join the team, and today, 15 months later, I continue to harbor those same feelings.

As I read through this report, I am struck by what we were able to do in one short year. Perhaps what I am most proud of is how quickly the team coalesced. The LitWorld staff grew from three to seven, and we have all worked hard to ensure that the goals for the program materialized.

This year, we leaned into developing and hosting programming for our local communities. We launched the LitWorld book vending machine design and curriculum. We hosted a series of local LitFests, filled with skill-building, arts- and literacy-based activities, and book giveaways, thanks to Penguin Random House, Scholastic, and Simon & Schuster. With a revised curriculum, we launched our pilot LitClubs in New York in collaboration with The Children’s Village. We also laid the groundwork for program evaluation, employing a culturally responsive social-emotional learning (SEL) and literacy growth matrix with the support of SEED Impact.

World Read Aloud Day® (WRAD), a worldwide event and advocacy day launched by LitWorld in 2010, continued to expand and grow. In 2023, WRAD:

- reached over 64 million people through our online WRAD campaign;
- empowered our global partners to engage over 11,000 people in WRAD celebrations;
- streamed virtual reading sessions to over 400,000 viewers in real-time through our partnership with Scholastic and Storyvoice.

In 2024, we look forward to placing our first book vending machines, growing the work and the impact of our international partnerships, and expanding LitClubs throughout New York City. We are excited to see what our pilot evaluation reports tell us, and to start down the road of our 2024-2026 strategic planning process, which we will build with our board of directors, partners, and stakeholders.

Throughout this journey, I, along with this amazing team, have been driven by a passion for nurturing the wisdom of children, a commitment to the acumen of our community partners, and the knowledge that every story is our most valuable asset. I am incredibly thankful to the entire LitWorld family, and so deeply proud to see LitWorld grow into a global powerhouse of ingenuity and impact.

Sincerely,

Caitlin M. Cassaro
Executive Director
Our award-winning, child-centered programs are designed to develop each of the 7 Strengths that are inherent in every child and are vital to social-emotional development. These programs encourage self-expression, community, and confidence, using literacy as a tool and pathway for self-empowerment.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) consists of developing skills to manage one’s emotions, build positive relationships, make safe and responsible decisions for oneself, and handle challenges constructively and ethically. The need for this type of support has never been greater.

Our 7 Strengths model is the foundation for LitClub, our flagship program and the bedrock of our work. This and all LitClub-based programming builds young people’s social-emotional skills while supporting their literacy development.
In 2023, LitWorld laid the groundwork for program evaluation, employing a culturally responsive, social-emotional-learning (SEL), and literacy skill-building growth matrix with the support of SEED Impact. LitClub program participant growth is evaluated using the SEED Impact Ladders™ Being, Doing, Relating, which tie directly to our 7 Strengths.

**LITCLUB IMPACT SNAPSHOT:**

**BEING**

“I did not have confidence before I joined LitClub, maybe it was [more like] 20 percent. I used to feel shy to answer questions in class but now I feel proud to be in the LitClub. I don't cover my face anymore when I am speaking. I didn't speak English the way I do now [and] it's all thanks to LitClub.”

- Emmanuel, LitClub member, Reach All Zambia, Zambia

**DOING**

“LitClub gave me hope [for a] better future, It gave me hope that life doesn’t stop because of poverty, or because you’re too young to make a difference. No amount of fear, grief, or difficulty should stop us from following our dreams and making them a reality.”

- Princess, LitClub member, Project Pearls, The Philippines

After participating in TeensClub, Princess went on to co-create a community action plan to provide health care education for girls. She’s now a LitClub Mentor, and is pursuing a degree in Psychology.

**RELATING**

“Until he was 12 years old, all of the kids at Adrian’s school avoided him because he suffers from a bone disease. This all changed when he joined a LitClub at their local museum, Museo Rayo. Adrian is creative and imaginative and he bonded instantly with his fellow LitClub members, including other students from his school. [This] safe space allowed them to break down the fear and confusion that was holding them back from connecting. Now Adrian is bursting with confidence as the top student in his school, and still never misses his weekly LitClub sessions now as one of its mentors.”

- Jhoanna Gomez, Program Coordinator, Museo Rayo, Colombia

**2023 NUMBERS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3,000</th>
<th>11,500+</th>
<th>64 MILLION+</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>weekly participants</td>
<td>books delivered</td>
<td>people reached through World Read Aloud Day®</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| 15 | 13 | 190 |
| community programs partnerships | countries engaged | LitClub programs |

| 82 |
| new libraries created |

| 11,500+ |
| books delivered |
LITCLUB

An in-depth literacy and empowerment program that takes place during and after school hours in which participants write and share stories, build community, and develop as resilient change-makers and leaders. LitClubs support social-emotional learning (SEL) and deliver creative skill-building, arts- and literacy-based programs, adapted to fit the unique needs of the community. We offer LitClubs locally and internationally to moms and caregivers, children and teens, including gender-specific groups.

LITCAMP

LitWorld’s LitCamp programming facilitated in collaboration with our international partners is a truncated version of our LitClub; programming that takes place during the summer months/school breaks for children and teens, including gender-specific groups.

LitCamp programming in the United States is a literacy-based program in partnership with Scholastic. This program combines ongoing lessons with an interactive summer camp approach for Pre-K through 8th grade students, and is available in English and Spanish. This dynamic format suits in-person, hybrid, and digital delivery, and is available directly through Scholastic.

WORLD READ ALOUD DAY®

LitWorld founded World Read Aloud Day® (WRAD) in 2010 in order to celebrate the power of reading aloud. Since then, WRAD has evolved into a global movement involving millions of readers, writers, and listeners from around the world.

INNOVATION PROJECTS

A select group of program partners that run in-depth LitWorld programming, and collaborate with LitWorld to test new ideas and programs. These projects are designed to solve the unique needs of the collaborating communities. These Innovation Projects map out culturally responsive ways to ensure young people and caregivers have the ability, should they desire, to engage freely and fully in LitWorld programming.
Partnership Model

LitWorld’s network of on-the-ground global partners are what makes our work possible, and brings our programs to thousands of children and their communities around the world.

LitWorld activates, amplifies, and connects community-based organizations to achieve depth and scale. We prioritize building trusting and collaborative relationships to ensure we meet the unique needs of each community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Museo Rayo</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican DREAM</td>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Un Mundo</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
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<td>Centre for Development</td>
<td>India</td>
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<td>Kenya Connect</td>
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<td>Kenya Education Fund</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
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<td>Rift Valley Reading Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hogar Luceros del Amanecer</td>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
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<td>Seeds of Hope Foundation</td>
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<td>Project Pearls</td>
<td>The Philippines</td>
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<td>Ready for Reading</td>
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<td>Art of a Child</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Children’s Village</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reach All Therefore Zambia</td>
<td>Zambia</td>
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2023 Program Highlights

LitWorld’s programs provide space for joyful learning, self-expression, community-building, and social change. Here are just a few highlights from our work in 2023 that your generous support has made possible:

World Read Aloud Day®

From Australia to Zambia and everywhere in between, people worldwide celebrated the magic of reading aloud for LitWorld’s 14th annual World Read Aloud Day® (WRAD), marking one of the most significant celebrations yet.

Thanks to our sponsors—Outskirts Press, Penguin Random House, Scholastic, and Simon & Schuster—we reached over 64 million people through our online WRAD campaigns.

We empowered our global partners to engage over 11,000 people in WRAD events and celebrations. We held our very first WRAD-a-thon, featuring over 19 Scholastic authors and guest readers from nine countries. Read-alouds were streamed live via Storyvoice, reaching over 400,000 readers and 12,000 classrooms.
In 2023, our signature program, LitClub, continued to make a profound impact on local and international communities.

This year, we partnered with 15 community programs across 13 countries to lead 190 LitClubs with over 3,000 weekly participants!

A STORY FROM CENTRE OF DEVELOPMENT, INDIA:

“Nisha [has been] a member of the Moon LitClub since 2018. Her father passed away when she and her 3 sisters were all so young. Her mother and grandmother work hard to fend for the family; selling vegetables and doing cleaning work in the homes of well-off families. After joining the LitClub, she became expressive and made friends with all the members.

She loves to write and helps her friends in the LitClub to write when they find it difficult. Since her mother tongue is Marathi, she puts in extra efforts to improve her Gujarati, and she now speaks Gujarati fluently with her friends. She likes all the activities of the LitClub and is eager to go to the LitClub every week.”

- Prasad Chacko & Meera Rafi, Program Coordinators, Centre for Development, India
The LitWorld team hosted a series of day-long activities we call LitFests at schools in the Bronx and Brooklyn, where students enjoyed in-person, interactive read-aloud sessions, created their own WRAD bookmarks and paper crowns, and selected new, culturally responsive books to kickstart their home libraries.

LitWorld brought the lessons learned from its international program partners to pilot local LitClubs. At the start of the 2023-24 school year, we launched LitClubs in New York City in partnership with The Children's Village. We opened the school year with three weekly clubs serving an average of 50 children.

LitWorld is excited to expand this program in more school locations and community centers in the coming year, and to share the impact of this local program and 7 Strengths curriculum at the end of the school year!

“Your generosity has made a significant difference in the lives of our students. The books you donated will provide them with endless hours of enjoyment and learning, and the memories of the read-alouds and activities will stay with them for years to come.”

- Dr. Shenean N. Lindsay, Superintendent, New York City Department of Education, District 17
LitWorld works with a select group of program partners that not only continue to run in-depth LitWorld programming, but also collaborate with LitWorld to test new ideas and programs that are designed to solve the unique needs of their communities. These Innovation Projects map out culturally responsive ways to ensure young people and caregivers have the ability, should they desire, to engage freely and fully in LitWorld programming.

INNOVATION PROJECT SNAPSHOT

Leaders of Tomorrow, Un Mundo, Honduras

One of our nine Innovation Projects is Leaders of Tomorrow. With Un Mundo, LitWorld collaborated on creating a training program for teens and mentors to support them in leading LitClub sessions for children in their communities. The leaders showed increased confidence and leadership abilities, as well as strong peer relationships, pointing to growth in our three SEED Impact Ladders™—Being, Doing, Relating.

Expanding Activities

The teen leaders collaborated to expand the existing LitClub curriculum, and visited LitClub spaces to organize themed activities. Every month, with the support of mentors, the teens prepared new activities tackling themes such as climate change, women's health, and cultural identity.

The teen leaders chose themes based on the needs observed in their communities, aiming to engage a wider audience beyond their LitClubs, and worked to involve teachers, local leaders, and children.

Advocating for Students

Due in part to the support from LitWorld, Un Mundo made a significant impact in 2023 by successfully influencing legislation in their region of Honduras, "La Cuenca del Río Cangrejal." The participating community secured the signing of a municipal school safeguarding policy, ensuring access and support for girls in school, and promoting reading and special education programs as part of the curriculum.

This legislation stemmed from projects focused on gender inequality, political initiatives, and human rights-themed months, led by a group of young leaders who emerged from LitClubs. This achievement will have a positive effect on nearly 39,000 students in the area.
2023 LitWorld

Team & Leadership

Team

**CAITLIN M. CASSARO**
Executive Director

**DEANNA GONDEK**
Program Associate

**CHRISTOPHER LALL**
Program Mentor

**MARIYA OHULCHANSKA**
Program Coordinator

**AMBER PETERSON**
Director of Program Innovation

**HANNAH POLAUF**
Communications Associate

**ANXHELINA PRENIKA**
Director of HR & Operations

**YAMILETTE RIVERA**
Operations Coordinator

**MONICA VALENTIN**
Manager of Program Operations

**GIGI VERKAIK**
Director of Development & Communications

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Founder

Pam Allyn
2023 Financial Highlights

2023 Final Audit Pending

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL PROGRAM INCOME</th>
<th>$989,864</th>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES</td>
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<tr>
<td>PROGRAMMING</td>
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<td>FUNDRAISING</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>GENERAL OPERATIONS</td>
<td>26%</td>
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</table>

Because of the generous support of our donors, in 2023 we were able to:
- support international program partners to deliver 190 LitClubs to over 3,000 participants, approximately 50% of participants in gender-specific programming for girls;
- launch New York City LitClub pilot program, kicking off in three locations with 50 participants;
- purchase first Book Vending Machine for 2024 installation;
- give over 11,500 books and build 82 libraries;
- engage partners in World Read Aloud Day® (WRAD) celebrations, events, and virtual readings with over 411,000 participants, and reach over 64 million people worldwide.
Thank You to Our Generous Supporters

We are beyond grateful to all of our dedicated friends and supporters who make our work possible every day. You are vital to LitWorld’s story and to the thousands of stories our LitKids dream, write, share, and tell.

Thank you to our 2023 Sponsors:
Thank you to our 2023 Supporters:

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And to the many, many others who have donated throughout the year to strengthen and grow the LitWorld mission.