



कर्णाली प्रदेश सरकार
सामाजिक विकास मन्त्रालय
वीरेन्द्रनगर, सुर्खेत, नेपाल

Conference on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Skills

आधारभूत भाषिक तथा गणितीय सिपसम्बन्धी सम्मेलन

कर्णाली प्रदेश, वीरेन्द्रनगर, सुर्खेत

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Introduction

The National Assessment for Reading and Numeracy (NARN, 2020) reported that only 8.41% of students met grade-level proficiency. Alarming, 10.20% of Grade 3 students could not read a single word correctly. According to the National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA, 2020), 67.9% of Grade 8 students were below basic proficiency in Mathematics, and 41.2% fell short in Nepali. Furthermore, NASA showed a continued decline in performance in Nepali and Mathematics in 2022 compared to 2018. Karnali ranked lowest among the provinces, with learning indicators significantly below the national average. Evidence from these national studies underscores the urgent need for foundational learning-focused interventions to improve learning outcomes and ensure equitable, quality education.

Conference Overview

- Emphasise the importance of Foundational Literacy (FLN) and Numeracy skills in the early grades
- Share insights from national assessments related to reading, numeracy, and student achievement
- Present effective FLN practices across systems, communities, and classrooms
- Advocate for prioritised FLN interventions through a panel discussion

Key insights from the presentations

Speakers from the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) highlighted ongoing efforts to strengthen education in Karnali, while noting persistent restricting challenges such as limited resources, a shortage of trained teachers, and low parental engagement. Afterwards, the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) went on to explain that there is a clear disconnect between the intended curriculum, teachers' capacity to implement it, and actual student learning. Finally, Education Review Office (ERO) shared the data from NASA 2022 and NARN 2020 which reinforced the urgent need for targeted interventions of parental involvement, sufficient and well-equipped classrooms, teacher training and student-centred learning programs.

Proven FLN Interventions

Street Child presented its evidence-based Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach, which focuses on strengthening teacher capacities on effective TaRL implementation through training and mentoring support. This approach, targeting both out-of-school and in-school children in Grades 3-5, involves assessing students,



TaRL Implementing Process



1. Identifying students' learning levels through assessment



2. Grouping students based on their learning levels



3. Implementing 6–10 weeks of TaRL activities



4. Assessing students' progress and linking it with regular classroom activities

grouping them by ability, and conducting targeted activities over 6-10 weeks using local teaching-learning materials to address their specific learning needs. This method, implemented under the Build the Basics programme, which aims to reach 36,000 children over three years, has already shown significant improvements in FLN outcomes. In the first year of intervention, literacy proficiency (story and lesson comprehension) increased from 43.1% to 85.7%, while numeracy (division) rose from 3.2% to 43.3%, providing clear evidence of the approach's effectiveness. This method has received appreciation from the local government, teachers and students for its ability to ensure sustained foundational learning through tailored interventions and use of locally available and low-cost materials. The approach has proven particularly effective for children across grades 3-5, including migrant workers and those with disabilities, underscoring the need for ongoing support and continuation of the approach.

Save the Children presented its Home-Schooling approach and Plan International shared its One Home, One Reading Corner approach. These presentations emphasized the importance of family and community engagement, particularly through nurturing home learning environments to boost foundational literacy and numeracy skills along with their emotional and social development. Together, these interventions offered powerful, real-world evidence of what works to accelerate the learning outcomes.

Panel discussion

Panelists from MoSD, Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD), National Association of Rural Municipalities in Nepal (NARMIN), Gurbhakot Municipality, and Chaukune Rural Municipality acknowledged the current efforts in improving FLN from their respective agencies while also recognising the systemic challenges to achieve the expected outcome.



Key discussion points

Challenges

- **Limited resources and opportunities:** Persistent lack of resources, teacher training and mentoring hinder effective implementation of curriculum.
- **Resistance to pedagogies:** Resistance to need-based teaching and learning instruction, the use of appropriate materials, and their proper implementation in the classroom, remains a barrier.
- **Coordination issues:** Weak inter-governmental coordination results in inefficiencies in planning, implementation and monitoring.



Solutions

- **Focus on foundational learning:** Prioritizing teaching and learning interventions through policies, guidelines, and plans aimed at developing foundational learning skills in early basic education.
- **Teacher training and mentoring:** Ongoing emphasis on improving teachers' capacities through training and mentoring to support effective rollout of student-centered, need based teaching and learning strategies.
- **Collaboration and mobilization:** Focus on intergovernmental coordination, inter-agency cooperation and parent-community involvement for a more inclusive approach.
- **Accountability and reporting:** Push for clearer accountability and better reporting mechanisms to track progress and aid effective allocation of resources.

“This has been an important event in Karnali as it initiated discussion among local, provincial and central level stakeholders. There have been efforts to improve learning outcome by various stakeholders, but result has not been achieved as per the efforts put in. All the stakeholders must be serious in this regard.”

-Hon. Minister Ghanashyam Bhandari, MoSD

Learning outcomes in Grade 10 and 12 are very low in Nepal and it is deeply connected to the foundational skills in literacy and numeracy. Improving the learning outcomes at this level will have impact over the overall learning outcomes.

-Tuk Raj Adhikari, CEHRD

Teachers continue to adopt the traditional methods of teaching, limiting themselves to textbooks while children belonging to the poor economic background struggle to access books and stationary materials. To address these and other challenges at the local level, we have drafted a 10-year Education Strategy but significant budget goes into teachers' salary, limiting the budget available for their skill development and other areas.

-Maiya B.K., Gurbhakot municipality

We implemented TaRL and the results were very encouraging, following which we allocated budget for its continuation. We are eager to continue the approach in our schools, but we lack technical skills. I request the concerned organization to support this initiative.

-Tekendra Bahadur Buda,
Chaukune rural municipality



Media Coverage

Online Khabar: [“Basic Language and Mathematical Skills Improvement Conference in Surkhet.”](#)

Sajha Bisanee: [‘Conference on Improving Linguistic and Mathematical Skills’](#)

Nepal Press: [‘The conference for the improvement of foundational linguistic and mathematical skills.’](#)

Ekantipur: [‘The basic linguistic and mathematical skills of the student are weak.’](#)

Ajakoshiksha: [‘Karnali Province held a conference on basic linguistic and mathematical skills: Everyone expressed concern about the need to improve learning achievements.’](#)