



मधेश प्रदेश सरकार
शिक्षा तथा संस्कृति मन्त्रालय
जनकपुरधाम, धनुषा

Conference on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Skills

आधारभूत भाषिक तथा गणितीय सिपसम्बन्धी सम्मेलन

जनकपुरधाम, धनुषा, मधेश प्रदेश: २०८२, वैशाख २२

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Save the Children

World Vision

Education in Crisis: The Context in Madhesh

Madhesh Province, home to some of Nepal's most marginalised communities, faces a deepening education crisis with a literacy rate of just 64%—the lowest in the country. Only 55% of women are literate compared to 72% of men, while literacy among children with disabilities is even lower. The 2022 National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA) reported that about 7% of the students continue to remain below basic level in Nepali and Mathematics at Grade 8. Despite national reforms, the learning achievement of students at Grade 3 remains 43.6% for reading and 45.97% for numeracy as reflected in the 2020 National Assessment for Reading and Numeracy (NARN), limiting future opportunities.

In response, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) of Madhesh Province, with support from Street Child Nepal, Aasaman Nepal, and the Hempel Foundation, hosted a one-day Conference on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy. The event brought together over 100 representatives from federal, provincial, and local governments, as well as civil society organisations and development partners, to highlight the urgent need to strengthen foundational learning across Nepal.

“Weak Foundational Learning and Numeracy skills are not only reflected in poor academic performance at specific grade levels, but also contribute significantly to school dropout rates, wasted effort and resources, and long-term educational and training gaps. Strengthening FLN must be the starting point for education interventions.”

The conference featured speeches, presentations, and a panel discussion designed to:

- Present data-driven evidence on the status of foundational learning in Madhesh.
- Share successful, targeted programmes that improve FLN outcomes.
- Identify systemic challenges and propose practical, scalable solutions.

Diagnosing the Gaps: Insights from National Institutions

Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) and the Education Review Office (ERO)

The CDC highlighted a critical lack of alignment and cohesion within the education system, pointing to three key gaps: the curriculum developed by the CDC (intended), the resources and capacities available to teachers for its effective interpretation and delivery (implemented), and the challenges students face in accessing and engaging with the material (achieved). 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, while also addressing the challenges related to climate-induced disasters, political instability, and shortage of qualified teachers.

-Basudev Osti, Curriculum Development Centre

What's Working: Evidence from Active FLN Initiatives

Street of Child Nepal, Save the Children, Plan International, and World Vision showcased evidence-based programmes to improve foundational learning in Madhesh through a range of strategies.

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, grouping them by ability, and conducting targeted activities over 6-10 weeks using local teaching-learning materials to address their specific learning needs.

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

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, further validated by the presentation of the independent evaluator. 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. Effective results and convenient use highlights the potential for scaling TaRL in other areas to boost foundational competencies and enhance the learning outcomes for children.



Save the Children presented their approach to inclusive education utilizing the home-schooling model to support children with disabilities through tailored home visits and trained educators. Despite existing socio-economic barriers, they helped 66 most deprived children access education and life skills boosting their learning outcomes, and social and emotional development.

Plan International shared their approach of accelerated learning integrating TaRL, remedial classes, early childhood development, gender-responsive teaching and community engagement to support the foundational literacy and numeracy.

World Vision presented their Sikai Plus programme designed to strengthen teacher capacity via peer mentorship and promote a joyful and inclusive learning environment through community involvement, resulting in improved enrolment and learning outcomes.

Panel Reflections: Pathways to Systemic Change

The panel discussion highlighted several deeply embedded systemic challenges. However, there was a strong shared understanding and a clear commitment from stakeholders to address and overcome these issues.

- **Scaling Proven Solutions:** As demonstrated by Aasaman Nepal and other major INGOs, there is strong evidence that foundational literacy can be effectively improved from the ground up, through school-based interventions and community engagement. With this robust evidence now available, the responsibility lies with the government to implement, scale, and consolidate these strategies within national education policies. A major barrier identified was the lack of coordination between federal, provincial, and local levels.
- **Teacher Capacity:** Another major issue discussed was the capacity of teachers, their training levels and the resources available to them. One proposed solution was to review the resource allocation to capacitate teachers and enhance the classroom teaching and learning. Investment needs to be directed to the need-based teacher training, effective management of the student-teacher ratio, provision of incentives and adequate teaching resources.
- **Socio-Economic Barriers:** Parental livelihoods, child nutrition, and household responsibilities hinder children's ability not only to attend

school but also to achieve meaningful learning outcomes. Support for remedial programmes, such as Teaching at the Right Level and home-based learning, was discussed as a key response. These should be complemented by targeted efforts to reintegrate the most marginalised children into the education system.



Closing Call to Action

There was clear consensus that tackling the FLN crisis requires sustained, system-wide collaboration. Proven models—such as TaRL, inclusive support for children with disabilities, and participatory learning approaches—must be embedded within government systems and scaled across contexts. Teacher development, data-driven decision-making, and robust feedback mechanisms are equally critical.

The conference closed with a shared recognition: foundational learning is a right, not a privilege. Every child in Madhesh—and across Nepal—deserves the opportunity to acquire the skills they need to thrive.

Media Coverage

1. [Loktantra khabar - "Conference on Foundational Language and Mathematical Skills Concluded"](#)
2. [Merosan tv - "A one-day conference focused on foundational language and mathematical skills was concluded."](#)
3. [Press 4K - "Experts say it is necessary to cultivate experiential learning in children's education."](#)
4. [Colours Online TV Nepal - "A Conference on Foundational Language and Mathematical Skills Concluded in Janakpurdham"](#)
5. [Image Channel HD - Province News at 6 PM, 22nd Baisakh, 2082](#)