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## Developing Literacy Skills Through FLN Programme Among The Students Studying In Inclusive Schools

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**Abstract:** The Government of India has implemented transformative schemes to bolster education, emphasizing foundational literacy skills. Initiatives like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the NIPUN Bharat Mission aim to ensure proficiency in language (reading and writing) for students in Grades 1 to 3 by 2026-27. This study assesses the advancement of literacy skills under the NIPUN Bharat Mission in Varanasi, involving 77,109 students across 1,009 government schools during the 2023-24 academic session. Assessments conducted from July to December 2023 reveal significant progress in literacy skills, with proficiency rates rising from 25.11% to 81.86% over this period. These results highlight the effectiveness of targeted interventions and the scalable potential of the NIPUN Bharat Mission.

**Index Terms-** FLN, Literacy Skills, NIPUN Bharat, Foundational Literacy, etc.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Government of India has introduced various flagship schemes and programs to enhance education across the country, with a primary focus on literacy skills. These initiatives aim to improve enrollment, funding, scholarships, quality education, research, and teacher recruitment while increasing the number of institutions. Key programs like the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) are part of the efforts in school education, particularly targeting literacy development. The policy highlights that without literacy skills, other educational objectives cannot be fully realized. To address this, the Government of India launched the National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, also known as the 'National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy' (NIPUN Bharat), on July 5, 2021. This mission, implemented by the Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSE&L) under the Ministry of Education, aims to achieve its objectives by 2026-27, with States and Union Territories playing a critical role in its execution, especially in building literacy proficiency.

### Key Features of the Foundational Literacy Skills Programme

- Developing foundational literacy skills to reduce dropouts and improve transition rates.
- Promoting activity-based learning and innovative pedagogies to enhance literacy education quality.
- Empowering teachers through capacity-building programs focused on literacy instruction.
- Fostering holistic child development across physical, socio-emotional, cognitive, and life skill domains, with literacy as the core foundation.
- Ensuring equitable and inclusive quality education, where literacy development is deeply connected to various language skills (e.g., reading comprehension, writing fluency).

## Major Challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing learning crisis in literacy, with prolonged school closures disrupting early language education. According to UNICEF (2022), 92% of Indian students lost at least one language ability, severely impacting reading and writing skills. The World Bank estimates that around 50% of children in India lack foundational literacy skills by Grade 5, making it difficult for them to meet grade-level expectations in language proficiency. The National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2021, conducted by NCERT, highlighted declines in language outcomes in many states, with particular emphasis on reading and writing deficits. By 2022, only 20% of Grade 3 students met grade-level expectations in reading. States like Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar showed improvements compared to 2018 levels, while others, including Himachal Pradesh and Kerala, faced greater learning losses in literacy. A 2023 report by the Institute for Competitiveness, with support from USAID and Room to Read, found that only 37% of Indian students partially meet global minimum proficiency in literacy skills. Only Lakshadweep meets global proficiency standards among all states. Girls lag behind boys in literacy skills, placing them at a disadvantage in language-based learning.

## Government Interventions

To address these challenges in literacy skills, the Government of Uttar Pradesh has aligned the NIPUN Lakshya with the state's unique requirements and conditions, adapting it to suit the educational landscape of the region, with a strong emphasis on language proficiency. To achieve foundational literacy skills, the Government of Uttar Pradesh, under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, has adopted a special action plan called Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) programme implemented by the State Project Office, Lucknow, prioritizing literacy components. As part of this plan, every year, primary school teachers are provided with a four-day training program focused on foundational literacy skills (e.g., reading and writing in Hindi). A special teacher guide, referred to as Sandarshika, has been prepared to achieve the NIPUN goals for literacy. This guide provides a day-wise methodology for teaching language skills to students from grades 1 to 3. Teachers are instructed to conduct teaching activities as per this methodology and document students' achievements in literacy tracker formats during the teaching process. Additionally, every school is provided with a NIPUN chart where the dates of achieving various literacy skills by each student are recorded to track their academic progress throughout the year. For a student to be considered NIPUN in literacy, it is mandatory to assess their performance using the NIPUN Lakshya app, and the child can only be declared NIPUN through the app. The literal meaning of NIPUN is someone who performs a task with great efficiency and expertise, particularly in literacy tasks.

## II. NEED OF THE STUDY

The NIPUN Bharat Mission, implemented through Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan in the Uttar Pradesh, specific Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) initiative, introduces structured tools like the NIPUN Lakshya app, teacher training, and the Sandarshika guide to address these gaps. Yet, there remains a critical need to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions in real-world settings, particularly in educationally challenged regions like Varanasi, where diverse socio-economic and infrastructural factors influence outcomes. The absence of comprehensive, localized studies assessing the impact of these initiatives on literacy skill development, especially in inclusive school settings, creates a knowledge gap. This study addresses this need by examining the progress of literacy skills among 77,576 students across 1,009 government schools in Varanasi during the 2023-24 academic session. By analyzing data from baseline, midline, and endline assessments, it aims to provide evidence on the efficacy of the FLN program, inform policy refinements, and contribute to scalable strategies for achieving NIPUN Bharat's literacy goals, ensuring no child is left behind in foundational language proficiency.

**Objectives of the Study:** To develop the Literacy Skills through FLN Programme among the students studying in Inclusive schools

### III. METHODOLOGY

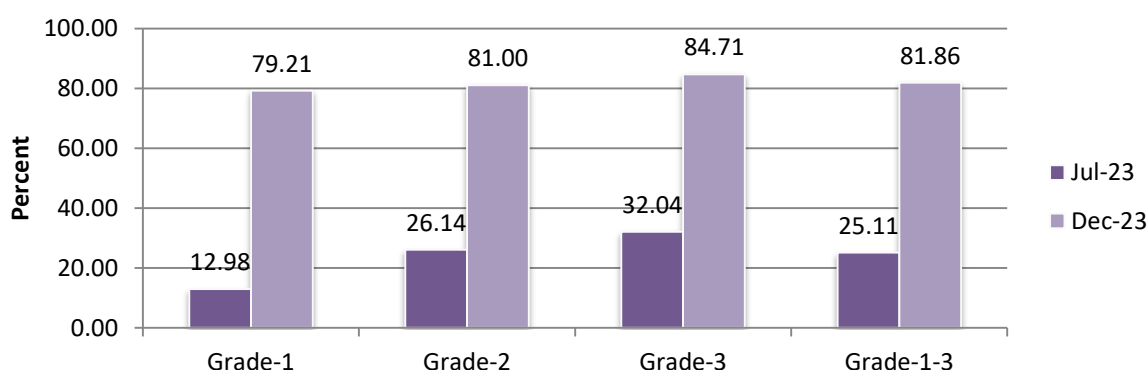
The study evaluated the progress of literacy skills under the NIPUN Bharat Mission in Varanasi district by collecting data on key variables related to student proficiency in foundational literacy (Hindi language proficiency). A five-day teacher training program was conducted at the Block Resource Centers to enhance their understanding of foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) skills. The training included a comprehensive 25-week structured FLN-based curriculum, which teachers were required to implement in their classroom instruction over the subsequent 25 weeks. The population consisted of all 77,576 students enrolled in Grades 1 to 3 across 1,009 government schools in Varanasi, supported by 6,808 teachers. A purposive sampling method was employed, selecting the entire population as the sample to ensure comprehensive coverage of students in the target grades. The Baseline Assessment, conducted in July 2023, included a sample of 77,576 students to establish initial literacy proficiency levels. Midline Assessments, conducted monthly from August to November 2023, involved a sample size ranging from 76,689 to 78,283 students, capturing ongoing progress in literacy skills. The Endline Assessment in December 2023 assessed a sample of 77,109 students. Data were gathered via Google Forms, with teachers assessing students in Grades 1 to 3 using the NIPUN Lakshya app to determine literacy benchmarks. The Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) program, tailored by the Uttar Pradesh State Government under Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, incorporated regular monitoring by Academic Resource Persons (ARPs), monthly school visits, and corrective guidance to enhance literacy skill development. Teachers used the NIPUN Lakshya app to assess students' performance on these variables, ensuring standardized data collection. The statistical technique applied was percentage-based analysis, a descriptive statistical method, to calculate the proportion of students achieving literacy skills across the baseline, midline, and endline assessments.

### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**Table-1 Proficiency in literacy skills grade wise**

Month	Grade -1		Grade -2		Grade -3		Grade -1-3	
	Assessed students	Achieved students	Assessed students	Achieved students	Assessed students	Achieved students	Assessed students	Achieved students
July-23	18385	2387	31742	8296	27449	8794	77576	19477
Dec-23	19036	15078	30973	25088	27100	22956	77109	63122

**Graph-1 Proficiency in literacy skills grade wise**

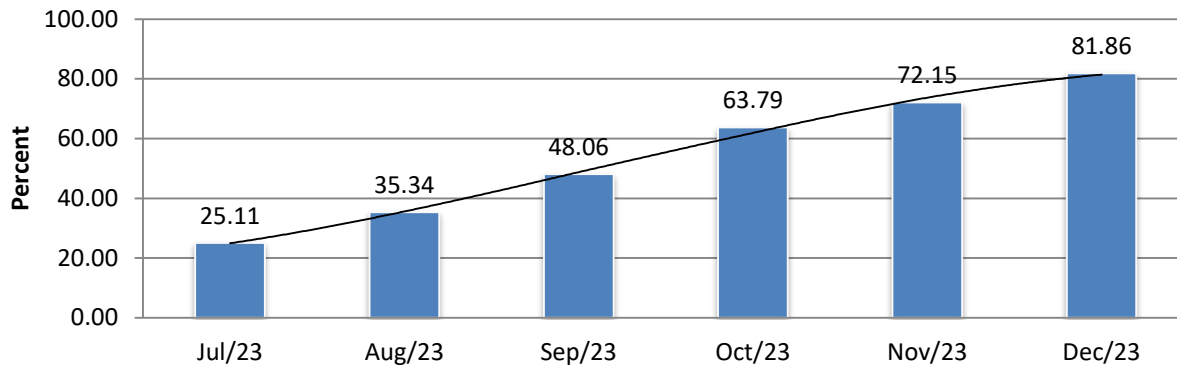


The data in Table-1 and the accompanying graph highlight the progress of grade 1, 2, and 3 students in literacy under the NIPUN assessment. In July 2023, proficiency percentages for these grades were 12.98%, 26.14%, and 32.04%, respectively. By Dec 2023, these figures had significantly increased to 79.21%, 81.00%, and 84.71%, demonstrating substantial improvement. The result shows remarkable improvement in overall proficiency from July 2023 to Dec 2023 after completing the FLN programme:

- **Grade 1:** 79.21% of students (+66.22%) could read simple five-word sentences.
- **Grade 2:** 81.00% of students (+54.86%) could read a 45-word paragraph fluently at 45 words per minute and answer 75% of comprehension questions correctly.
- **Grade 3:** 84.71% of students (+52.67%) could read a paragraph fluently at 60 words per minute and answer 75% of comprehension questions accurately.

**Table-2 Proficiency in literacy skills month wise**

Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
25.11%	35.34%	48.06%	63.79%	72.15%	81.86%

**Graph-2 Proficiency in literacy skills month wise**

From the above table-2 and graph the data was calculated on monthly basis of Grade 1, 2, and 3 students in literacy under the NIPUN assessment. The significant improvement was recorded from grade 1 to 3, 25.11%, 35.34%, 48.06%, 63.79%, 72.15% and 81.86% respectively from July 2023 to December 2023 after completing the FLN programme. The result also indicates that the remarkable improvement was found in the month of September 2023 (48.06%) to October 2023 (63.79 %). The finding of the present study indicates that the impact of the FLN programme is helpful in improving literacy skills among the students and fulfilling the objective of the study.

The findings underscore the transformative impact of the NIPUN Bharat Mission and the tailored FLN program on literacy skill development in Varanasi's government schools. The overall proficiency in literacy increase from 25.11% in July 2023 to 81.86% in December 2023 aligns with the mission's goal of achieving universal foundational literacy by 2026-27. Notably, the grade-wise improvements- peaking at 84.71% for Grade 3, highlight the program's efficacy in addressing early-grade vulnerabilities, where baseline levels were lowest (12.98% for Grade 1). The sharp monthly gains from September to October (15.73%) likely reflect the intensification of classroom implementation post-summer break, allowing teachers to apply the 25-week curriculum more consistently. Comparative analysis with national benchmarks (e.g., NAS 2021, where only 20% of Grade 3 students met reading expectations) positions Varanasi's outcomes as exemplary. Limitations include the reliance on self-reported teacher data via Google Forms and the NIPUN Lakshya app, which, while standardized, may introduce minor reporting biases.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study affirms the resounding success of the NIPUN Bharat Mission in elevating foundational literacy skills among 77,576 students in Grades 1 to 3 across Varanasi's 1,009 government schools. Through a rigorous FLN program-bolstered by teacher training, app-based assessments, and continuous monitoring, literacy proficiency surged from a modest 25.11% at baseline to an impressive 81.86% by December 2023, with grade-specific gains exceeding 50% in reading and comprehension benchmarks. These outcomes not only counteract the exacerbated learning crisis from the COVID-19 pandemic but also propel Uttar Pradesh toward NEP 2020's vision of equitable, proficiency-based education.

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