Improving Learning Outcomes at Scale: Learning from System-focused Programmes

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Improving Foundational Learning at Scale in India

NIPUN BHARAT

36 states and Union territories
NIPUN Bharat / FLN Mission
50 Million students

Collaboration between NGOs & Government
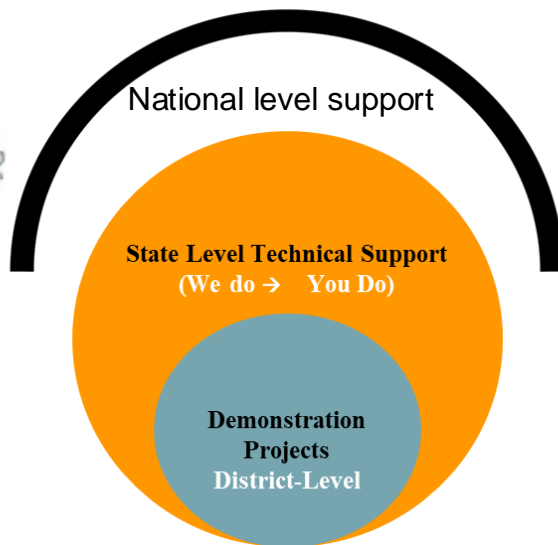
15 States
30 Million students

Government

NGOs

1.PROGRAM DESIGN

2.PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

3.SYSTEMIC REFORM

LLF's Impact: Improving Foundational Learning

National level support

State Level Technical Support
(We do → You Do)

Demonstration
Projects
District-Level

Map of India highlighting: Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Bihar, Assam, Tripura, Odisha, Chhattisgarh

Students	2024	2026
Improved Learning	1.1M*	3M
State-wide FLN Inputs	13.1M	30M

*80% under outcome-based financing
(DIB and variants)

- **Co-creation** in each state
- Modified programs in each **different context**

Scaling Foundational Learning in Haryana

LLF's literacy program scaled from 1 to 7 districts → **Supporting Haryana's FLN Mission state-wide**

DIB   DIB

2018

175 schools

3,500 children

2019

966 schools

11,844 children

2020

3,399 schools

72,913 children

Covid-19 Response: Pivot to a community-based learning program

2021

3,399 schools *(grades 1 & 2)*

164,000 children

2022 2023 2024 2025 2026

Systems reform impacting entire state, as part of a coalition, covering literacy, numeracy and governance initiatives for FLN

~8,600 schools
(All Govt. primary schools in Haryana)

~6,42,000 students

Grade 1: 216,000+
Grade 2: 221,000+
Grade 3: 228,000+

~35,000 teachers

Issues or Challenges that arise   **Ways of Working**   **Lessons Learnt**

- Program Design
- System Reform
- Adoption of new practices
- Capacity building
- Program delivery
- Project management
- Administrative reforms

Program Design

Issues or Challenges that may arise

- Co-creation with multiple government agencies
- Differing viewpoints on pedagogy
  (e.g. structured pedagogy, MLE)
- Budget constraints

Ways of Working

- Relationship building through frequent meetings
- Influencing leadership and sharing successful examples
- Compromise and retry

Lessons Learnt

Map stakeholders to cover all bases.

Define non-negotiables internally.

Use direct approaches to leverage key decision makers.

System Reform

Issues or Challenges that may arise

Ways of Working

Lessons Learnt

Focus on frequent, centralised, census-based assessments

Hierarchical, directive and non-consultative mode

Sharing examples of 'not-worked' from other state contexts

Negotiate for reduced frequency

Regular review meetings

Feedback surveys and process studies

Not an all-or-nothing situation

Work towards most desirable option

Compromise where unavoidable

Challenge of sustaining these practices

Adoption of new practices

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⚠️ *Issues or Challenges that may arise*

⚙️✓ *Ways of Working*

✓ ***Lessons Learnt***

Leadership change

Change in emphasis and urgency

Medium-term MoUs, shared vision and roadmap

Relationship building at all levels

Accommodate a few 'no harm' priorities

Relationships are key.

Understand state and district motivations to leverage support

Some flexibility for additional tasks (80:20)

Talk   **Idea generator**   **Multiple roles**   **Disinterested**

Daughter model   **Tech-focused**   **Aloof**   **Doubts**

Capacity Building

Issues or Challenges that may arise

Ways of Working

Lessons Learnt

Limited time

Overburdened staff

Missing motivation

Mentorship models

Work preferentially with motivated staff

Adopt a layered approach

Support motivated staff to become champions

Program Delivery

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Issues or Challenges that may arise

> Too much data, no prioritisation

> No data-driven decision making

> Data fatigue

Ways of Working

> Data visualisation through dashboards

> Prioritised data items for action points (e.g. High Impact Teaching Strategies - HITS)

Lessons Learnt

Create alignment across all admin layers for prioritisation of a few indicators.

Frequent review meetings to build data culture

Project Management

Issues or Challenges that may arise

Risk of substitution

Getting co-opted; difficult to take a strategic position

Ways of Working

Refrain from taking up routine tasks

'HQ leadership agreement needed' as reasoning

Key Learnings

Regularly monitor actions done for the government system

Keep strategic KPIs in focus

Administrative Reforms

Issues or Challenges that may arise

Ways of Working

Lessons Learnt

Lack of political will and administrative intrepidity
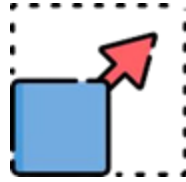
Keep chipping away even when there is limited success

Identify those areas where there is a better chance of success

Good Practices in System-focused Work at Scale

Clear and consistent vision of change

Design for Scale; Demonstrations focused on mainstreaming

Strengthen System Capacity

Non-negotiables on core aspects

Dialogue & Consultation

Data for evidence based follow up & monitoring

Champions & Early Adopters

Coalitions

Practices to Avoid

Substitute Government/Outsourcing Model

Relationship-building only with the top-level

Focus only on innovations; System strengthening is important

Cookie-cutter, one size fits all approach

Don't promise quick results/unachievable targets

Conclusion: Implementation research needed

- Partnership between non-profits and the government has great potential to improve learning outcomes at scale

- Varied 'ways of working' in collaboration with governments, given diverse contexts and complex set of stakeholders; Science and Art

- Important to develop a deeper understanding, **Implementation research in varied contexts needed; What works? What doesn't? In which context? For whom?**