

A State Consultation

Holistic Development and Future Education of Children



29th February 2024, Jaipur



Introduction

Education is the fundamental right that empowers and equips individuals with knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities. It also enables us to make informed decisions and contribute meaningfully to society.

As per U-DISE 2021, the total projection population of children aged 3-18 years in Rajasthan is 2.58 crore, out of which only 1.55 crore (i.e. 60%) children are enrolled in 1st to 12th standards.

The new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to address the many growing developmental imperatives of our country. It proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of the education structure, including its regulation and governance, to create a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of SDG4. The Policy lays particular emphasis on the development of the creative potential of each individual. It is based on the principle that education must develop foundational capacities of literacy and numeracy and cognitive capacities, such as critical thinking and problem solving.

Considering the necessity of understanding and discussing the new education policy, a one-day state level consultation was organized by Rajasthan Bal Adhikar Sanrkshan Sajha Abhiyan (RBASSA), DASHAM in association with UNICEF at State Resource Centre, Jaipur on 29th February 2024. The objectives of the consultation were:

- Enhancing understanding of partner NGOs on the new national education policy 2020.
- Understanding Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN), the core element of NEP.
- Discussing the significant role of partner NGOs in developing a plan for the effective implementation of NEP in their respective geographical areas of the State.

Proceedings

1. Welcome and Introduction

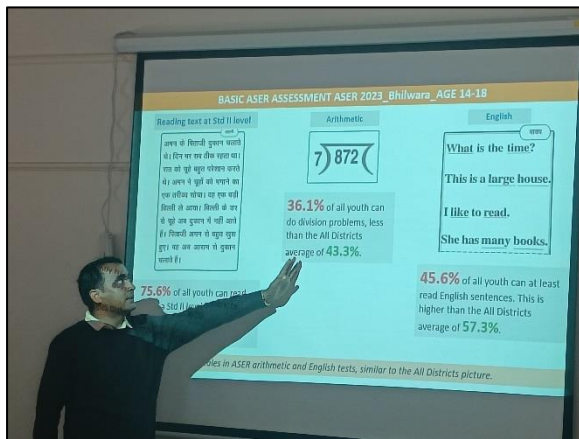
The consultation commenced with a warm welcome by Mr. Shiv Nayal, Antakshri Foundation, and Manish Singh, Manjari Sansthan. This was followed by a briefing of the participants on the agenda, motivating the partner NGOs for effective deliberation on challenges faced in the execution of the new national education policy and feedback on strengthening the same. Partner NGOs working on education and child rights are required to understand Foundational Literacy and Numeracy to strategize their contribution to its effective implementation at the grassroots level.

A total of 58 participants included adolescents, representatives of partner NGOs and representatives of UNICEF.



2. Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), Rajasthan Findings-2022

Mr. Ramkrishan, Pratham NGO built the context of education status in Rajasthan through presentation. The study was based on the enrolment, reading, basic arithmetic in children, and the status of school basic facilities.



The findings highlighted that 98% of children aged 5-16 years are enrolled in schools including government and private, which increased in government schools from the year 2014. About 56% of children aged 3-4 years are enrolled in the Anganwadi Centres, while 30% of children of this age group are not enrolled anywhere. The basic reading testing revealed that 14.2% of the 3rd standard, 38.2% of the 5th standard, and 71.5% of the 8th standard were able to read. The basic

arithmetic tool testing showed that 13.3 % of the 5th standard, and 35.7% of the 8th standard can do basic arithmetic calculation. Thus, there is a need to push Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) along with basic education application-based skills, and accountability on teachers and administration will be helpful in the effective implementation of FLN.

3. FLN Global and National Perspective

Ms. Amrita Sengupta, Education Specialist at UNICEF, discussed that SDG 4.2 target is to bring on track early childhood development, care & care, and pre-primary education by 2030. Therefore, FLN is the crucial component included in the new education policy. Since Neuroscience says that 85% of the human brain develops by the age of 6 years, smart investment in education which works on the rate of return, means earlier the investment greater the return.

Our highest priority must be to achieve universal Foundation Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) in primary school and beyond. The rest of the policy will be largely irrelevant for such a large portion of our students if this most basic learning (reading, writing, and arithmetic at the foundational level) is not first achieved. The outcomes of the FLN include oral language development, decoding, reading fluency, reading comprehension, and writing. In Rajasthan, the District Project Management Unit (DPMU) and Program Management Unit (PMU) have been established for the implementation of FLN.



4. Overall Perspective of National Education Policy

Mr. Pramod Pathak, a Freelancer Educationist, shared that the National Education Policy was established in 2020, and came into effect during the 2023- 2024 academic year. The policy targets the age group from 3 to 18 years children including preschool and foundation, primary, middle, and secondary level.



The curriculum focuses on goals, competencies, learning, and outcomes. The highest priority is to achieve Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) by all students by Grade 3 by the year 2027. On a pilot basis, about 5000 schools have been taken for the vocational training for the children of 6 to 8th standards. Creativity and critical thinking to encourage logical decision-making and innovation among students rather than rote learning methods. Promoting multilingualism and the power of language in

teaching and learning. For the students of 3rd, 5th, and 8th standards the capacity based monitoring system will be adopted. The teacher's training and management are also a component of the policy. He also highlighted that public spending on education in Rajasthan was 4.43% of GDP till 2017-18 (HRD report of a standing committee on HRD 2020).

5. Parental Education and Adolescent

Ms. Manjari Pant, SBC Specialist at UNICEF, discussed that the government of India has brought education in a structured format through the National Education Policy and Foundational Literacy and Numeracy. She emphasized that the learning of a child starts with parents, family, and surroundings. From survival to thriving, from saving lives to meaningful lives, parents play crucial roles in shaping the future of their children.

Parenting is a process of raising children in a healthy environment, empowering and supporting them to become responsible adults across the lifespan. However, there are common dilemmas & challenges faced by parents including understanding parenting in the new age, first generational learner parents, self-confidence, time & prioritization, perception of role boundaries, and community norms around the expression of love and care.

She shared the experience of CSOs led communication initiatives in Rajasthan for enhancing interactions among children and parents at their homes. These comprised an activity calendar with QR codes, learning corners, whatsapp groups, story reading, storytelling, community melas, workbooks, and profile folders. As parents, we all need to change ourselves with technological learning, respectful communication, listening, and responding for their betterment.



She also requested the participants and NGOs should reach out to the children and their families by developing learning corners at their homes to enable communication, interactions, and discussions on different points among children and parents.

6. Suggestions for strengthening the National Education Policy

The participants including young people and representatives of the alliance partner NGOs were encouraged to share their suggestions for strengthening the national education policy and their role in their respective geographical areas. These included:

- Creating a state-level forum where teachers, government officials, and policymakers together can discuss, plan, and develop strategies for effective implementation of NEP.
- Organizing annual connect of the alliance for reflections on experience related to community mela, storytelling, and other activities.
- It is crucial to prioritize teacher capacity building, therefore government should execute comprehensive training programs regularly.
- UNICEF should conduct a study on the execution of FLN and NEP in the rural areas of Rajasthan through the alliance partner NGOs for six months.

- Recognising that Rajasthan has a long history of implementing innovative programs to improve foundational learning. Efforts are needed to collate the available knowledge and resources and develop a repository.

7. Vote of Thanks

Toward the end, Mr. Shiv Nayal expressed gratitude through a vote of thanks. The consultation helped have interactive and fruitful deliberation related to FLN and NEP. Among the partner NGOs all are working on child rights, while some are working on education. However, the NGOs would explore the opportunity for contributing towards the effective implementation of new education policy for a brighter impact on the lives of children, especially in the rural areas.

