# Foundational Literacy and Numeracy in Primary Schools

## Why in news?

With India's 132$^{nd}$ rank out of 191 countries in the Human Development Index 2021, there is a need to focus on the nation's education, especially the foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary schools.

## What efforts were taken over the years?

- **International efforts** - The 1990 World Declaration on Education for All at the Jomtien Conference affirmed the right of all people to education.
- **NEP 2020** - [The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020](#) states that a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy will be set up for attaining universal foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary schools.
- It also aims to identify state-wise targets and goals to be achieved by 2025.
- **Role of civil societies**- There are many innovations in the civil society space, such as by Gyan Shala, Saksham, the Central Square Foundation, Room to Read, and Akshara.

## Efforts to Promote Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

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| **Shiksha Karmi Project (1987)** | • To tackle teacher absenteeism in remote villages in Rajasthan<br>• Involves active involvement of the local communities |
| **Bihar Education Project (1990s)** | • To give a fillip to the universalisation of primary education<br>• It developed a 10-day residential in-service training for teachers, called the Ujala module |
| **Lok Jumbish or Peoples Movement for Education for All (1992)** | • Launched in Rajasthan to provide a thrust to innovations<br>• Laid emphasis on civil society partnership and demonstrated successes, especially in tribal districts |
| **Unni Krishnan v. State Of Andhra Pradesh (1993)** | • Made the right to education for children up to age 14 as central and fundamental |
| **District Primary Education Programme (1994)** | • To transform the quality of primary education |
| **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2001)** | • Universalisation of elementary education |

## What are the challenges?

- Communities view understaffed and ruined schools only as election booths.
- Improvement in school infrastructure, uniforms, toilet access, water and textbook availability, classroom processes remain a challenge.
- Lack of direct funds to schools, teacher vacancies, allocation of non-teaching tasks to teachers, etc. are other issues.
- A systemic way of recruiting good teachers and establishing teacher development institutions is still absent.
- Poor governance affects the effectiveness of face-to-face or digital teacher development initiatives like Nishtha, Pratham's Read India campaign, etc.

## What is the need of the hour?

- **Community connects** - To achieve the objective of foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary schools, we need to focus on community connects and parental involvement.
- The Panchayati Raj, Rural and Urban Development Ministries can work on community connect and make learning outcomes a responsibility of local governments.
- **Decentralisation of funds -** Providing decentralised funds to schools with the community overseeing such funds may aid in achieving the NEP objective.
- **Use of technology** - The Sampark Foundation uses audio battery-operated sound boxes and innovative teaching learning materials.

- It has launched a TV, which helps teachers use lesson plans, content and activity videos and worksheets to make classes more interactive.

## Quick facts

## The Education for All Programme

- Launched in 1990 with contributions from various foundations, international and non-governmental organizations, mass media and five intergovernmental agencies including the
  - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
  - United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
  - United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
  - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
  - World Bank
- The International Consultative Forum on Education for All was established as an interagency body to guide and monitor follow-up actions to the World Conference in Jomtien.
- The forum with its secretariat is located at UNESCO headquarters in **Paris**.

## References

1. [The Hindu│ Where no child is left behind](#)
2. [United Nations│Outcomes on Education](#)