

Media release:

Private sector and civil society collaborate to transform education and support the Government of India's NIPUN Bharat Mission

Up to 4 million children across India to benefit from LiftEd, an initiative to foster learning and innovation in FLN (foundational literacy and numeracy) launched by a coalition of leading CSR, philanthropic, and non-profit education partners.

Jan 24, Mumbai: On International Day of Education, leaders across private sector and civil society have come together to launch LiftEd (Learning and Innovation in FLN to Transform Education) an initiative that will impact the lives of 4 million children in India across 5 years. With all partners working together to achieve these results, the diverse coalition that powers LiftEd is strengthening India's education ecosystem, unlocking young India's potential, and improving life chances for millions.

The Government of India has identified foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) as an 'urgent and necessary prerequisite to learning' and in 2021, launched the landmark [NIPUN Bharat Mission](#) to equip every child aged 4-10 with FLN skills by 2026-27. Recognising that collaborative action from the private sector and civil society can act as an 'impact multiplier' to bolster the government's commitment to furthering India's education goals, LiftEd brings a vibrant and diverse mix of education experts together to improve FLN in India, raising up to USD 20 million (INR 166 crore).

LiftEd is anchored by founding partners such as Atlassian Foundation, Bridges Outcomes Partnerships, British Asian Trust, the Maitri Trust, Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, Reliance Foundation, Standard Chartered Bank, UBS Optimus Foundation, and USAID. The British Asian Trust is the programme leader and Central Square Foundation and Dalberg Advisors are design and technical partners.

Given that FLN is understood as the ability to read and understand basic text and solve basic mathematical problems by the end of grade three, it is the cornerstone on which a child's learning journey is built. Over 5 years, LiftEd's ambition is to strengthen these 'building blocks' of learning through a dual approach: on-ground and at-home interventions.

LiftEd's on-ground education partners are working with state governments and school facilitators in five geographies (Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi NCR, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar) to train them and build their capacity to improve FLN levels for public school children across grades 1-3. To achieve results at scale, working with stakeholders who influence education is critical and helps the education partners – Kaivalya Education Foundation, Language and Learning Foundation, Peepul, and Pratham Education Foundation – take a 'systems change' approach. As such, training block and district officers, school principals, and teachers enables LiftEd to positively impact more lives across a sustained period of time, as each person trained can have a ripple effect reaching several batches of students.

In parallel, LiftEd has also launched an EdTech Accelerator to develop digital solutions to improve FLN for low-income students in India. Eight innovative partners – Amira Learning, Chimple, Ei Mindspark, Pratham Education Foundation, Rocket Learning, Sesame Workshop, ThinkZone, and Top Parent – have been chosen to be a part of the EdTech Accelerator following a rigorous selection

process. They are working towards developing high-quality and contextually relevant solutions focused on the bottom of the pyramid, and are receiving dedicated support in the form of mentorship, capacity building workshops, and funding through the Accelerator.

Since LiftEd is designed to incorporate principles of outcomes-based financing – collaboration, scale, innovation, and a razor-sharp focus on measurable outcomes – it puts transformational impact for children at the heart of its focus.

Quotes from the coalition of global partners:

Mark Reading, Head, Atlassian Foundation, said, “We’re inspired by LiftEd because it incorporates many of the elements we believe can have an incredibly positive impact on education outcomes: a focus on impact, rather than activity, active government involvement, and the scaling of proven approaches, delivered by a first-rate team. We look forward to LiftEd and its partner organisations delivering life-changing FLN outcomes for millions of children across India.”

Amit Shah, Investment Director, Bridges Outcomes Partnerships, said, “We’re hugely excited about the potential of LiftEd. By working to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills at a systems level, we believe it can have a transformative impact on the lives of millions of children in India over the next four years, while also helping to shape the future of education in the country. LiftEd is also a great example of the power of partnerships in creating and scaling effective solutions to some of our most pressing challenges. Bridges is delighted to be able to contribute what we’ve learned from over a decade of delivering outcomes-based projects, and we’re really grateful to our partners on the SDG Outcomes initiative for helping us to bring this pioneering collaboration to life.”

Bharath Visweswariah, Executive Director India, British Asian Trust, said, “LiftEd will strengthen foundational learning skills for millions of children, setting them up for success later in life. By steering this initiative from conception to implementation and convening a coalition of experienced global partners, the British Asian Trust has created an opportunity to strengthen foundational learning in a scalable and sustainable manner. Applying our learnings from previous successes in education in India, we recognised the value of aligning with the Government of India’s goals, embedding a systems-change approach and unlocking the power of technology early on.”

Luke Aspinall, CEO, the Maitri Trust, said, “LiftEd aligns closely with Maitri’s strategic goals to improve primary school systems and foundational literacy and numeracy attainment, offering significant opportunity to make meaningful improvements in learner outcomes on a large scale. The initiative’s focus on systemic shifts, tying changes within the education system back to their subsequent impact on the child, could prove game changing for future systemic capacity building programmes. With ambitious targets to positively impact 4 million children, we believe joining this collaborative initiative will accelerate progress far beyond what we could achieve in isolation.”

Prachi Jain-Windlass, Senior Director, India Programs, The Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, said, “The Michael & Susan Dell Foundation is proud to partner with LiftEd consortium, which is a bold ecosystem initiative to improve and mainstream foundational literacy and numeracy outcomes in government schools. This will be the first development impact bond where the nonprofit organisations involved are achieving outcomes by building capacities in the government school system rather than implementing interventions directly. The Dell Foundation has always been supportive of such innovative projects which help the system achieve outsized impact on the lives of children. We look forward to the success of all the partners embarking on this journey.”

Jagannatha Kumar, CEO, Reliance Foundation, said, "Providing children a strong start to their learning journey ensures them a bright future where they can fully realise their potential. Reliance Foundation shares this vision with all the consortium partners who have come together to launch LiftEd to foster learning and innovation in foundational literacy and numeracy. Bringing together the consortium's collective strength and experience and aligning with the Government of India's NIPUN Bharat, LiftEd could prove life-changing for millions of children across India."

Karuna Bhatia, Head of Sustainability, Standard Chartered Bank India & Global Business Services, said, "As a company whose Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) ethos includes investment in development of the regions where we operate, being a part of LiftEd is a clear pathway towards our goals. Through this unique initiative, we will strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy, identified as the highest priority of the education system by the Government of India, for millions of children across India, generating far-reaching, long-lasting impact."

Dhun Davar, Head of Social Finance UBS Optimus Foundation and Head of Social Impact & Philanthropy, India and Middle East, said: "In our experience, outcomes-based finance can be a powerful way to improve learning outcomes for millions of school children around the world, including India. Building on a strong track record of outcomes contracts in education in India, we are delighted to come together with our partners to launch LiftEd and strengthen basic numeracy and literacy skills using both classroom-based and home-schooling tools."

Veena Reddy, Mission Director, USAID/India, said, "Around the world, USAID supports quality education and literacy programs, paving the way for a more equitable and prosperous global future. In India, USAID partners with the government, civil society, and private sector to promote innovative and scalable solutions that will have local reach and can have global impact. USAID is pleased to support LiftEd to invest in the future of India and the world."

Shaveta Sharma-Kukreja, CEO & MD, Central Square Foundation, said, "LiftEd resonates closely with CSF's core mission to improve FLN outcomes at scale in India, both in schools and at home. A key component of LiftEd is nurturing the development of high-quality EdTech solutions through the EdTech Accelerator. Among the numerous EdTech organisations in India, only a small proportion focus on foundational learning, and even fewer are built for low-income users. The LiftEd Accelerator adopts a unique approach to solving this by catalysing the supply of diverse, innovative EdTech solutions and by galvanising demand for at-home learning, hence meaningfully contributing to achieving NIPUN Bharat's learning goals."

Dayoung Lee, Partner, Dalberg, said, "While the pandemic exacerbated India's learning crisis, there is now an extraordinary window of opportunity to accelerate outcomes on foundational learning through the government's NIPUN Bharat Mission. LiftEd rides on this momentum to scale effective school-based solutions and innovative home-based EdTech solutions. Dalberg is excited to be a part of this ambitious initiative – unprecedented in raising the stakes for outcomes while working through government systems. I believe it is our best shot at achieving impact at scale."

PARTNERS AT A GLANCE

Founding partners:

Atlassian Foundation, Bridges Outcomes Partnerships, British Asian Trust, the Maitri Trust, Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, Reliance Foundation, Standard Chartered Bank, UBS Optimus Foundation, and USAID.

Design and technical partners:

British Asian Trust (Programme Leader), Central Square Foundation, Dalberg Advisors

Education partners:

On-ground: Kaivalya Education Foundation, Language and Learning Foundation, Peepul, Pratham Education Foundation

At-home: Amira Learning, Chimple, Ei Mindspark, Pratham Education Foundation, Rocket Learning, Sesame Workshop India, ThinkZone, and Top Parent

Evaluation partners:

On-ground: ConveGenius Insights, Development Solutions

At-home: Educational Initiatives, Sambodhi, Prof Tarun Jain (IIM Ahmedabad), Principal Investigator on the EdTech Accelerator evaluation studies