



ASER

Annual Status of Education Report

A large scale, annual, household based, citizen-led initiative to measure children's learning outcomes in India

Ranajit Bhattacharyya

ASER Centre – Pratham, New Delhi, India

Status of education in India in 2006

- In 2006, school enrollment of children (age 6-14) in rural India was above 90%.
- Available figures showed that there was a primary school either in or within one kilometre of 94% of habitations in the country.*
- These are impressive achievements for a country like India.

However, despite high enrollment, what was the status with respect to children learning?



Enrollment is high, but what about children's learning ?



- By 2006, Pratham had worked with children for more than ten years. We found that basic skills like reading and arithmetic were weak. But this issue was not getting adequate attention at local, state or national level.
- National and international policies did not refer to children's learning. Focus still on inputs.
- New govt. in India in 2004 talked about "outlays to outcomes" but no report on outcomes was forthcoming.
- 2% Education cess (tax) for elementary education imposed in 2004

Nuts & bolts decisions

<p>What to measure?</p>	<p>While children need to learn many subjects and at different levels, ASER decided to focus on two fundamental and foundational skills – reading and basic arithmetic.</p> <p><i>Highest level in the ASER reading tasks is at Grade 2 level. In arithmetic the highest level is at Std 4/5 level.</i></p>
<p>Who?</p>	<p>All children age 5 to 16 are given this “floor” test.</p>
<p>Where?</p>	<p>The assessment is done in the household so as to get a representative sample of all children (children enrolled in government schools, in private schools, in other kinds of schools and children who are not enrolled in schools).</p>
<p>Unit?</p>	<p>All elementary education plans in India are made at the district level so it was important to generate estimates of children’s learning at district level.</p>
<p>Scale?</p>	<p>To make a national impact, it was decided to aim to survey all rural districts in the country and also do the assessment annually.</p>

ASER coverage 2006-2013

Every year since 2006, ASER has reached:

- More than 550 rural districts
- About 15,000 villages & schools
- Over 320,000 households
- Between 500,000 to 600,000 + children
- Nearly 1000-1200 trainers
- Approximately 25,000 volunteers
- Nearly 500 partners



ASER 2013 domains

Children were asked

- Enrollment status
- Type of school
- Tuition status
- Tuition fees

Children (aged 5-16) were tested

- Reading
- Mathematics

Information was also collected on

- Household characteristics
- Village information
- School information
- Mother's education
- Father's education



ASER Reading tasks

READING TOOL: HINDI

Std II level text

राजू नाम का एक लड़का था।
उसकी एक बड़ी बहन व एक
छोटा भाई था। उसका भाई
गाँव के पास के विद्यालय में
पढ़ने जाता। वह खूब मेहनत
करता था। उसकी बहन बहुत
अच्छी खिलाड़ी थी। उसे लंबी
दौड़ लगाना अच्छा लगता
था। वे तीनों रोज़ साथ-साथ
मौज-मस्ती करते थे।

Std I level text

रानी नदी किनारे रहती है।
नदी में बहुत मछलियाँ हैं।
रानी उनको दाना देती है।
वे सब मजे से दाना खाती हैं।

Letters

म र ड
ह च
ल ब न
क य

Words

गाना खुश
मौसी
पैर झोला
किला
आग मोर

ASER reading tasks are available in the medium of instruction of schooling in the state. Tool developed after textbook analysis of all Grade I and II textbooks for all states. Each child is marked at the highest level the child can comfortably read.

ASER Arithmetic tasks

BASIC ASER TOOL FOR ARITHMETIC : SAMPLE



Number Recognition 1-9	Number Recognition 11-99	Subtraction (2 digit with carry over)	Division (3 digit by 1 digit)
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; height: 40px; text-align: center;">७</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; height: 40px; text-align: center;">९</div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 60px; height: 40px; text-align: center;">७५</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 60px; height: 40px; text-align: center;">७८</div> </div>	$\begin{array}{r} ५१ \\ - ७५ \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} ७१८ \\ \hline \end{array}$
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; height: 40px; text-align: center;">१</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; height: 40px; text-align: center;">४</div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 60px; height: 40px; text-align: center;">१२</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 60px; height: 40px; text-align: center;">२७</div> </div>	$\begin{array}{r} ८४ \\ - ४९ \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} ७९७ \\ \hline \end{array}$
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; height: 40px; text-align: center;">५</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; height: 40px; text-align: center;">७</div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 60px; height: 40px; text-align: center;">४९</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 60px; height: 40px; text-align: center;">९२</div> </div>	$\begin{array}{r} ४७ \\ - २९ \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} ८९७ \\ \hline \end{array}$
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; height: 40px; text-align: center;">५</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; height: 40px; text-align: center;">२</div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 60px; height: 40px; text-align: center;">२७</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 60px; height: 40px; text-align: center;">२२</div> </div>	$\begin{array}{r} ४५ \\ - १८ \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} ४५७ \\ \hline \end{array}$
Ask the child any 5 numbers, out of which 4 must be correct.	Ask the child any 5 numbers, out of which 4 must be correct.	Ask the child to solve any 2 subtraction problems. Both must be correct.	Ask the child to solve any 1 division problem, which must be correct.

THIS ASSESSMENT TOOL IS USED IN ASER (ANNUAL STATUS OF EDUCATION) EACH YEAR

ASER arithmetic tool has also been developed after analysis of all state textbooks. The ASER tool is a progressive tool; the child is marked at the highest level s/he can reach.

Note : In most Indian states, children are expected to do this kind of numerical subtraction problem in Grade II.

Note : In most Indian states, children are expected to do this kind of numerical division problem by Grade IV.

Are children in India reading?

**Table 4: % Children by class and READING level
All schools 2013**

Std	Not even letter	Letter	Word	Level 1 (Std I Text)	Level 2 (Std II Text)	Total
I	47.3	32.3	12.6	4.4	3.6	100
II	23.1	33.4	20.8	11.8	11.0	100
III	12.7	25.0	22.2	18.5	21.6	100
IV	8.0	17.6	17.9	21.5	35.1	100
V	5.0	12.6	14.2	21.2	47.0	100
VI	3.0	9.0	10.8	20.1	57.1	100
VII	2.0	6.3	8.2	17.0	66.6	100
VIII	1.4	4.5	5.5	14.3	74.2	100
Total	14.1	18.5	14.4	15.8	37.2	100

How to read this table: Each cell shows the highest level in reading achieved by a child. For example, in Std III, 12.7% children cannot even read letters, 25% can read letters but not more, 22.2% can read words but not Std I level text or higher, 18.5% can read Std I level text but not Std II level text, and 21.6% can read Std II level text. For each class, the total of all these exclusive categories is 100%.

For example:

- After 5 years of schooling, **about half** of all children still cannot read at levels expected of them in Grade II.
- By the time children have been in school for 8 years, **one out of four children** is still struggling with reading.

Impact – last couple of years

- **Enormous media coverage - print, TV and electronic; national and regional; English and regional languages. Huge increase in visibility of the issue of children's learning and need to focus on outcomes.**
- **Clear impact on national policy and planning documents. Examples: Current XII Five Year Plan, Economic Survey of India, Annual Work Plan guidelines for elementary education from the central government.**
- **Efforts by some states to rethink assessment and instructional strategies. Examples: Bihar instructional goals based on ASER levels. Rajasthan doing ASER type testing.**
- **Substantial increase in the international visibility of the household-based, citizen-led assessment model.**

ASER's – international impact

ASER was mentioned in:

- UNESCO's 11th Global Monitoring Report
- World Bank Symposium: Assessment for Global Learning
- Brookings Institution-UNESCO Learning Metrics Task Force
- Save the Children paper on The Right to Learn



Spread of the ASER approach

ASER's innovative model of citizen-led, annual household survey of basic learning has been adapted for use in six countries – Pakistan, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Mali and Senegal. Currently pilots in Mexico.

Unique “south-south” model that focuses on basic learning for all children using easy to use and easy to understand methods and measures. Perhaps this model is useful for contexts where there is not much of a culture for measurement and where outcomes, especially learning outcomes have not been focused upon before.

This family of citizen-led assessments now carry out annual surveys to answer this one question: Are our children learning? Over a million children each year are surveyed each year by this group of initiatives.





For more information or to contact us please visit:

www.asercentre.org | www.pratham.org

www.facebook.com/ASER-Centre | www.asercentre.blogspot.in

contact@asercentre.org | info@pratham.org