








Wilima Wadhwa, ASER Centre/Pratham, India
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Available evidence shows that being in school does not automatically translate into learning





Being in school does not seem to translate automatically into learning:

- According to the 2014 ASER survey in India, more than half of all Grade 5 children cannot as yet read even at Grade 2 level. Basic math is even worse. (ASER = Annual Status of Education Report)
- Similar trends in other countries too.

Till now the focus has been on schooling rather than learning. **Schooling** is easy to define and easy to measure. Now the focus is shifting to learning – both nationally and internationally. **“Learning”** is tough to define and difficult to measure.

A variety of assessments available for developed countries. But developing countries are just starting the process.

In developing countries.....

- ✦ There has been several decades of work on access and enrollment. Governments usually produce data on inputs and expenditures. Their focus has typically been on measuring and delivering inputs and infrastructure and not on outcomes.
- ✦ School enrollment levels are high and rising. Assumption is that schooling will lead to learning. Hence not much work has been done on the issue of children's learning (either measurement or interventions for improving learning). Curiosity and capability not well developed for understanding and improving learning.
- ✦ Large majority of parents of children currently in school are illiterate or have had very little education. They understand schooling" but not "learning".
- ✦ There is not much of a tradition or culture of measurement especially of outcomes. Neither is there a practice of looking at large scale evidence for informing policy, planning or implementation.

The challenge of measuring learning

Existing learning measurements (measures, methods and mechanisms) have evolved over time in developed country contexts based on their needs and capabilities.



But ...are such models immediately appropriate, relevant or useful in current developing country contexts?

Purpose: Today learning measurements in developing countries have the huge responsibility of being "game-changers" and not simply play a supporting role in the education system.

The new assessments in developing countries MUST lead to changes in mind-sets and in national priorities in order to move children's LEARNING to the centre of the stage in educational thought, practice & decision-making.

Methods/measures/evidence should be able to help policymakers, practitioners and parents :

- Understand the need to look beyond schooling to learning
- Identify the challenges faced by children for learning
- Enable immediate action based on data at different levels

For change to happen...

- ✦ Flexibility: Countries are different – curricular expectations, languages, etc. They must define their learning goals based on their ground realities for a key set of domains at each stage of schooling.
- ✦ Ownership: Learning goals need to be straightforward and transparent so that everyone in the country – schools and communities, teachers and parents – know what these goals are and work towards achieving them.
- ✦ Universality: The goals are for ALL CHILDREN. Not just for children who are enrolled in school, or attend school regularly or go to certain types of schools.

For measurement to feed into policymaking and changes in the classroom, these elements have to be built into the architecture of assessments and into plans of how data will be used once it is generated and is available.

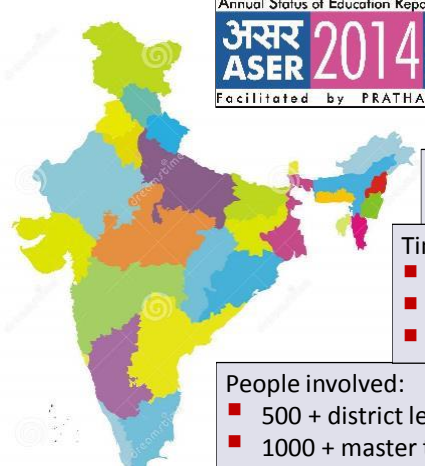
Citizen led assessments are different (1)

Contextual factors & ground realities in developing countries

Where?	All children may not be enrolled in school. Many may attend unrecognized private schools or other kinds of schools. Daily attendance in school is variable.	<p>Decisions & design elements in citizen led assessments</p> <p>To reach <u>all</u> children we must go to the <u>household</u>. All children cannot be found in schools.</p> <p>Focus on few <u>basic skills</u> for all rather than on subject wise grade level outcomes for each grade</p> <p>Children who cannot read cannot do written tests. <u>Oral one-on-one</u> individual assessment is the only option for a majority of primary school children.</p> <p><u>Simplicity</u> of tools useful in engaging wide range of people in understanding children's learning.</p>
What?	Basic learning outcomes are far below grade level for many children currently enrolled in school.	
How?	Even after several years of schooling, many children may not have acquired foundational skills like reading. Without reading, a child cannot progress.	
Why?	Majority of parents of school-going children in India do not have any/much education. They understand schooling but not "learning". Need to de-mystify "learning" to take parents "along".	

Citizen led assessments are different(2)		असर ASER
Contextual factors & ground realities in developing countries		
Unit? Level?	In India, in elementary education, the unit for planning, allocation and implementation is the <u>district</u> . There are 600+ districts in India.	To make data useful, ASER estimates are generated at <u>district</u> level (also state & national levels).
Scale?	India is a big country. To capture & sustain national attention and to represent all children, <u>nation-wide</u> coverage was needed.	ASER is a <u>national</u> household survey that has been done every year. On average ASER reaches 560 districts & 650,000 children annually.
When?	To bring about a significant change in national priorities and mindsets, <u>frequent, timely and current</u> assessments were needed.	In India, ASER has been done <u>annually</u> for 10 years. Data is available for the current school year. Report is always released like clockwork in mid January.
Who?	Improving schooling & learning is not only the responsibility of the government. Widespread & large scale engagement & participation by <u>citizens</u> is essential to change policy & practice.	In every district, a <u>local organization or institution</u> conducts ASER. 25,000 citizens participate each year.

Example: ASER in India – Scope & Scale



Reach:

- 577 rural districts
- 16497 villages visited
- 341070 households reached
- 569229 children surveyed

Cost:

- ~ 1.2 million USD in 2014

Time Frame:

- August: Kick off
- Sept-Oct-Nov: Field work
- Mid Jan: Report released

People involved:

- 500 + district level organizations
- 1000 + master trainers
- 25000 + volunteers

Sampling:

- 30 randomly selected villages in each district
- 20 randomly selected households per village
- All children age 3 to 16 in the household

ASER national survey in India has been done every year - 2005 to 2014.

Citizen led assessments in 6 of the 12 other countries have been scaled up to the national level.

Example: ASER reading tool from India

Grade 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।

Grade 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।

Reading is a basic foundation skill. Without learning to read, a child cannot progress meaningfully through school.

ASER 2014: All India rural % Children enrolled in different grades who can at least read Grade II level text

Grade	%
III	23.6
V	48.1
VIII	74.6

After 5 years of schooling only half can read. Not much change since 2005.

Letters

म र ड
ह च
ल ब न
क य

Common words

मौसी
पैर झोला
किला
आग मोर

- This tool is in Hindi. Simple tools also for maths.
- In ASER 20 similar regional language tools are used.
- Each child is assessed one on one/individually.
- The highest level that the child can read is recorded.
- Other citizen led assessments in Africa & Asia have similar tools for assessing reading and arithmetic.

Example from India: Impact of ASER on policy

Evidence: % Children who can do subtraction. Cohorts over time: Grades III-VI. ASER All India (rural)

Std 3 Std 4 Std 5 Std 6
— Std 3 in 2009 — Std 3 in 2010
— Std 3 in 2011

Data shows: Learning levels are low. Learning trajectories are flat over time & each subsequent cohort doing worse than previous cohort.

Policy change: National & State

2008: Allocations by central government for district annual work plans for “learning enhancement”
Reading as a foundational skill accepted by government.

2011: 12th Five Year Plan stressed:

- Measuring learning in schools
- Improvement of basic skills

In 2013-14 & 2014-15 almost all states have done assessments (some have ASER like tools). Also embarked on learning improvement interventions.

2014 onwards: Widespread discussion of ASER in formulation of New Education Policy

Every year with ASER, there is:

- Widespread media coverage
- Public debate in many forums
- Questions in Parliament

Example: Impact of ASER on practice

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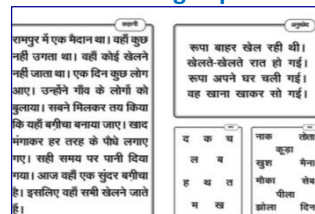
Evidence: ASER data for state of Bihar for Grades 3, 4 and 5

Std	Not even letter	Letter	Word	Level 1 (Std I Text)	Level 2 (Std II Text)	Total
III	26.2	28.3	13.8	10.0	21.8	100
IV	12.7	22.6	15.6	13.4	35.6	100
V	9.7	14.7	13.0	14.6	48.1	100

Acknowledgement/Awareness: State govt sees the problem & decides to act.

Assessment: ASER tool used by schools to assess children in Grade 3, 4 & 5

Action: Learning improvement program –Teaching at the Right Level



Similar state wide programs in several states. JPAL evaluations of effectiveness of such programs conducted.

- Children grouped by level rather than by grade in each school for two hours a day during school day.
- Teachers allocated to group rather than by grade.
- Instruction by group using appropriate methods & materials
- Quick progress in basic reading & maths

Example: Impact of ASER on community engagement

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10 years of ASER data show that children are not learning.

10 years of Pratham's Read India program has demonstrated that simple, scalable and cost effective interventions can be used to achieve fast gains in basic reading and math.

“Lakhon mein Ek” (1 in a million) campaign. Launched in November 2015, the goal was to reach out to a 100,000 communities (villages/urban wards) across India and engage them to understand the problem, take ownership, and do something about it.

What we did: Provided simple materials to volunteers in the village to **test all children**, **compile** the information into a **report card** which was displayed in the village for the community to see and discuss.

January 2016: reached 152,000 communities with 300,000+ volunteers involved in assessing 10 million + children in their own villages.

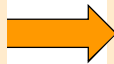
Next steps: “Reading week” conducted in 25,000 villages. Children worked in groups to learn to read and do basic Math with the same village facilitators.

Concluding thoughts

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Learning assessment data for developing countries needs to be relevant & appropriate for bring learning to the centre of the stage and for providing information that is **actionable** for improving children's learning.

In order to identify and implement actions to improve children's learning, we need to **assess where children are today** and build from there, rather than assess where we think they ought to be.



- Where are children?
Many are not regularly in school
- Where are they relative to the curriculum?
Many are several grade levels behind
- Where are they with respect to foundational skills?
Many have not acquired basic skills even after several years in school. If a child cannot read, pen-paper tests will not work.

Evidence should be relatively straightforward to generate & to comprehend. Only then can it lend itself to action.

Data needs to be **easily understood by those who must act** – whether policy makers, teachers or parents. Start simple. Tools & interventions can evolve over time as children make progress & as capability in the country rises.

Other citizen led assessments

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For more information about ASER in India:
ASER Centre/Pratham
www.asercentre.org
www.pratham.org
contact@asercentre.org

Wilima Wadhwa:
wilima.wadhwa@asercentre.org

