

AN INVITATION TO COVER ASER

TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO UNDERSTAND AND CHANGE CHILDREN'S LIVES IN INDIA

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) is a unique large scale effort undertaken by citizens of India each year to understand and to help in improving the status of elementary education in the country.

The ASER 2008 team appeals to individuals, organizations, institutions, and businesses to join this national effort to create this year's Annual Status of Education Report (ASER). We invite you to cover this survey and be also to be a part of ASER 2008.

UNIVERSAL ELEMENTARY EDUCATION & ASER:

India has almost 200 million children (age group 6 to 14) living in over 1 million habitations. One of India's major goals in this decade is to ensure that all these children are enrolled in school, attending regularly and learning. Government of India has launched Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan - a massive nation-wide program to ensure that this happens by 2010. To support this ambitious plan, since 2004, every Indian citizen paid a 2% education cess, which this year has increased to 3%.

As citizens of India, every year, it is important that we "take stock" and assess how far we have come and how far we still have to go in order to reach the 2010 goals. **ASER** – the Annual Status of Education Report is the nation-wide effort by citizens to take stock of the situation and plan ahead.

HOW IS ASER CARRIED OUT?

ASER is the largest and uniquely participative household survey on elementary education in India ever done by people outside the government. It is facilitated by Pratham and is executed by **local groups in each district**. ASER is funded by contributions from institutions and individuals. In 2007, ASER reached over 720,000 children in 16,000 villages in 567 rural districts in India. More than 20,000 volunteers from NGOs, colleges and universities, youth and women groups participated in this effort. Since 2005, each year, the entire ASER effort from start to finish takes only 100 days.

WHAT WILL BE DONE IN ASER 2008?

ASER is an annual effort. It will go on until December 2010 – the deadline for achieving quality universal elementary education as declared by Government of India.

As in the past years, the attempt in 2008 will be to cover all rural districts in the country. This year, we will look at the following aspects of learning: basic reading, basic arithmetic, ability to read time and understand currency, attendance in school and household indicators.

WHAT DID ASER 2007 FIND?

The State picture

Are all children (6-14) in school?

- 59.7% of children in the age group of 3 yrs-5yrs go to preschool or school.
- Overall, a very high percentage (97.4%) of children in the age group of 6 to 14 are enrolled in school.
- However, amongst girls in the 11 -14 year age group, many states have between 10% to 20% girls out of school.

Are all children (6-14) able to read?

- In Std I 5.4% of all children are unable to read alphabets.
- In Std II, 18.2% of all children are unable to read easy words.
- In Std III, 29.2% of all children are unable to read Std I level text.
- In Std V, 30.6% of all children are unable to read Std II level text.

Are all children (6-14) able to do basic arithmetic?

- In Std I 3.2% of all children are unable to recognize numbers.
- In Std III, 32.4% of all children are unable to subtract (with borrowing).
- In Std V, 40.2% of all children are unable to divide (3 digits by 1 digit).

WITHOUT A STRONG FOUNDATION, WITHOUT THE ABILITY TO READ FLUENTLY AND UNDERSTAND SIMPLE TEXT OR WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO DO BASIC ARITHMETIC, CHILDREN CANNOT PROGRESS FURTHER. THUS IT IS URGENT TO CHANGE THE SITUATION NOW.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF ASER?

Over the last three years, ASER has created major national policy impact by bringing the issue of basic learning in the centre of discussions on elementary education. The national release, in Delhi in all three years was done by Mr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, and was followed by many meetings at state and district levels across the country with government officials and citizens' groups to discuss the ASER 2007 findings and debate the next steps.

ASER has become an important policy input at the national level. It is referred to in *the Planning Commission's Approach Paper to the 11th Five Year Plan 2007-12*. ASER 2006 report was also presented to the Prime Minister.

With the release of ASER 2006, Pratham launched the 'Read India Campaign'. It is a people's initiative to ensure improvement in basic learning and arithmetic levels of all children in the age group of 6 to 14. In each state, the campaign is implemented in a phased manner by working with governments. Where governments cannot serve as a formal partner the campaign works directly with volunteers in each village. Read India campaign follows a set time table so that by March 2009, the goals of the campaign can be achieved.

ASER IS YOUR INSTRUMENT TO MAKE YOUR RESOURCES WORK BETTER FOR EDUCATING THE CHILDREN OF INDIA.

ACT NOW. COME JOIN THE NATIONAL ASER EFFORT

We cordially invites you to join us with one or more of our village surveys, to understand ASER better and experience the work we do first hand. We also look forward to you covering our training, survey and the result of the survey in your esteemed newspaper.

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ASER 2005, ASER 2006 & ASER 2007 REPORTS in full detail are available on OH www.pratham.org.

Each report carries lists of district partners and supporters.

Also see the ASER Discussion Series on the same website.

All donations to ASER are tax-deductible.