

THE ASER TESTING PROCESS

■ OVERVIEW

It is important to be in the right frame of mind when assessing children. We are not going to the village to “test” children or to be evaluators.

We want to find out what children can do comfortably in terms of reading and arithmetic. Therefore our objective is to find out the highest level the child is comfortable in.

Given this objective, it is essential that children are relaxed and not worried about how they are going to perform. A friendly conversation with the child prior to testing always helps to befriend the child and create a more relaxed atmosphere.

Often family members and neighbours gather together to watch how the child is doing. This could potentially create tension for the child. The surveyor should make sure that the child is not getting pressured, by speaking in a friendly way to her/him and also to those who are watching. If possible, one person should talk to the other people present while another works with the child.

Encourage the child. Be patient. Give the child ample time to read, to think and to solve. The attempt in the ASER survey is to establish the highest level at which the child can do different tasks comfortably. You may need to take a child through the series of tasks until you can decide where he or she is really at. Practice and familiarity with a task improves the child’s performance.

For example: The child first starts with trying to read the easy paragraph. You find that she is reading very slowly and haltingly. Ask her to read words from the words list. See if she is able to read words easily. If not, take her to the list of letters. If she is able to read letters with ease, bring her back to the words. If she can read the words comfortably, then bring her back to the original paragraph. It is very possible that now she can read the paragraph much more easily than she was doing before. Familiarity and practice have improved her performance.

Make sure that when we listen to children read, answer questions or do arithmetic we are not simply looking to catch mistakes. Appreciate and understand the attempt that the child is making!