



GET, SET, ASSESS!

May 2015

Welcome to the 1st edition of the Assessment Unit Newsletter

What we do

We develop assessment tools for:

- ✍ Pratham - to understand learning levels of children in different Pratham programs
- ✍ External organizations/governments - to evaluate effectiveness of their programs and/or policies
- ✍ ASER Centre research projects - designing assessments to understand and/or track children's learning

We develop assessment packs and can provide training and manage implementation for the above too.

We also build capacities internally and of external stakeholders (government, other NGOs etc.) in assessments through workshops.

Why we do it

To understand learning levels of children in different age-groups/grades with respect to a range of subjects and skills.

How we do it

By developing and implementing:

- ✍ Simple tools that are designed across various levels and subjects (Language, Math, Science etc.) and can be used at scale.
- ✍ Both basic and higher level tools for primary and beyond primary level children.
- ✍ Different types of tools - oral, one on one, pen and paper etc.

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New members of the unit

STEFFI ELIZABETH THOMAS

Aka Chocolate Lover

ASER Birthday: April 6th 2015

A post graduate in Economics and an ardent singer, Steffi has been a part of her local church choir for 7 years.

SAKSHI BHAYANA

ASER Birthday: May 15th 2015





Also a post graduate in Economics, Sakshi loves kids and can wake up for an ice-cream even in the middle of the night.







On-going projects



Click on any project name to know more about the project

	Same Language Subtitling (SLS) Study
	Idea-Pratham English Seekho Assessment
	Research and Development, Masuda
	STiR Early Reading Programme

	Assessment of Teaching and Learning in Dhamtari
	Assessment for Multilingual Learning
	Understanding Access and Learning in Secondary Education (KUSUMA)
	Learn out of the Box (LOTB) Assessment

Editorial

Dhamtari Diaries by Nikita Agarwal

One sultry noon, Savitri's mailbox already brimming with emails, saw another email. A very enthusiastic, yet concerned Bhim Singh ji (District Magistrate of Chhattisgarh) had something in mind and the ASER report's Chhattisgarh figures were one of the major drivers behind it. The question "Are children learning and what can the district administration do to make them learn better?" bought the people at the two ends of this email thread to work together not knowing how long this association would be. Soon after, the Assessment Unit at ASER Centre buckled down. What do the children in Dhamtari know? How do teachers look at this problem? What can they do about it? Are classrooms full of activities or are they like traditional classrooms in any other school? Significant questions and a study to help answer all of these, no wonder we named it "Assessment of Teaching and Learning in Dhamtari". The whole team took upon their shoulders like it was their problem and there was no stopping us. Meetings over meetings, visits to Dhamtari, series of pilots and data analysis, and just when a start date would get decided, there were elections or exams or trainings or the ASER release. While the team was busy designing and redesigning multiple versions of the tools for schools, seasons changed from autumn to winter and with the onset of spring, everything around seemed to suggest that we were all set to take this forward. The Assessment regiment boarded the train to Chhattisgarh, a couple of them stepping foot in the state for the first time. It was Sunday when the team was greeted by an excited Bhupendra. He had been sweating it out in Chhattisgarh to make this exercise logistically possible. The ten of us then spent that Sunday practicing our roles as trainers to ensure an efficient training, knowing that we would be doing this for the whole week.

The Monday sun in Dhamtari was gorgeous, a little black dog wagging his tail to see so many faces rise up early. We headed to our training location in DIET Nagri, a one and a half hour journey amidst the calm forests, beautiful enough to keep a sleep deprived Assessment Unit awake. Our entry into the DIET training hall was marked by 130 DIET students singing a Sarasvati prayer, a shout singing activity they seemed to enjoy a lot. Next in line was the District Education Officer drawing interesting analogies to explain that just like paracetamol is not the only solution to all medical problems, children's learning would require a multidimensional approach and the data collected by the DIET students would help find solutions to problems. All of us were then seen making a promise (140 arms lifted up in the air) for genuine data collection.

The five-day training was insightful with a lot of interesting questions, thought-provoking doubts, conversational lunch and tea breaks and lessons for the Assessment Unit to take back with them. Yes! The week was tedious - three-day training and two-day field pilot, yet games, conversations and kids in schools would cheer us up and bring back sunshine at intervals. After a week of sleepless nights and the morning ride to Nagri which would make us run out of superlatives to describe Chhattisgarh's beauty, we saw the day when we would allocate villages to the DIET students. It was war - 130 people fighting to get to their closest village like it's their fundamental right and the unit members managed to surpass this too.

The survey Monday began with frantic phone calls from DIET students complaining about the remoteness of villages. The district government ensured support from all sides and managed to make sure the students reached the assigned schools. Three days in a primary school and another three days in a middle school - recording school infrastructure, classroom activities, School Management Committees work and testing students and teachers. There was going to be a lot of information. Six ASER team members would also make their way to the schools every morning for monitoring. Not very well defined paths, deep forests would lead to the villages. It used to be peaceful, kids in schools, women out in the fields, girls on bicycles, mud houses – yet again Dhamtari's charm was beyond words. Phone monitoring in the evenings, listening to students narrate their experiences, working for immediate problem solving. The team had a lot of useful baggage to take back.

We entered into our third week of engagement with the DIET students. It was time for grading! Drawing from monitoring - the quality of survey and quiz marks, around ten DIET students were selected to help us through children's grading. To keep up with quality, around eighteen teachers sent by the government were assigned the task of grading teacher's assessment papers. After another round of rigorous training, the grading activity began. However, a disappointed three member team parted with Chhattisgarh and reached Delhi with the formats and papers because it needed another round of re-grading. This study had already seen two seasons, it was going to see another one - summer had arrived! The whole team sat down, yet again. A lot of grading strategies were discussed and seven people took to grading for a week. Did we wrap up Dhamtari? Not yet. The team is at it again, glued to their computer screens, analyzing data and getting hands-on experiences on softwares they have never been introduced to.

All of us are eagerly waiting for the results, we know even you are. We will keep you posted!

Good assessment tip #1



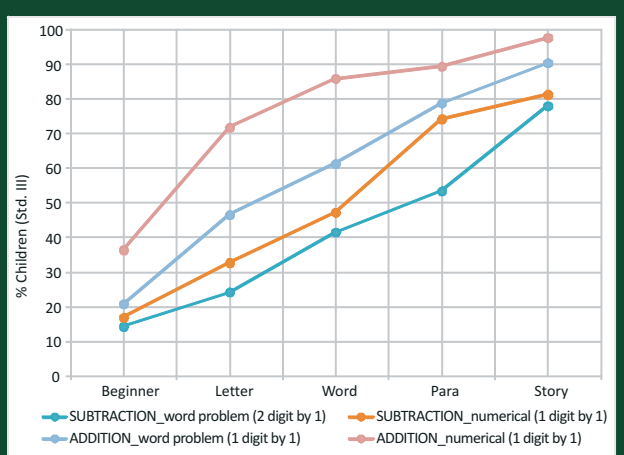
Problem: For any assessment if the children are not familiar with the format of the questions then the results of the assessment will not be very valid. This is because if the child answers incorrectly, we won't know if the child didn't understand what she is supposed to do or actually didn't know the answer. For example, many children in rural India are not familiar with multiple choice questions.

Attempted solution: Giving examples and practice questions to familiarize the children with the format of questions is one way of dealing with such a problem. For instance, in all our pen and paper assessments, the field surveyors explain how to attempt multiple choice questions on the blackboard and illustrated examples are also given in the assessment tool.

Fun fact

The adjacent graph shows the performance of children of Std.III in Dhamtari, Chhattisgarh in solving addition and subtraction problems, and its relationship with the reading level of the children – whatever be the type of math problem, children with higher reading ability consistently perform much better in arithmetic also (story level children perform best on all arithmetic tasks). Readers don't only perform well on word problems (which requires reading) but also, on numerical problems.

This result is not new. A positive relationship between children's reading ability and their performance on arithmetic skills has been observed in the Bihar Assessment 2014 and ASER 2006 and 2007 as well.



What do you think? (Item review)

Following question was given to Std. III government school children as part of a class test.

Q: The figure given below shows Rani's field where she grows wheat.



How much money will Rani have to spend to put a fence around all 4 sides of this field?

- a) Rs. 200 b) Rs. 2,000 c) Rs. 20,000 d) Rs. 2,00,000

Answer the following questions about this item

- 1) What does this item aim to assess?
- 2) Is this a good or a bad item? Give reasons for your answer.

Send in your responses to: getsetassess@gmail.com



Best responses will be published in the next issue!