

# Capacity building program for survey and research coordinators

## Concept note



**Pratham**

Every Child In School and Learning Well



*Evidence for Action*

## **About ASER**

Facilitated every year since 2005 by the non-government organization Pratham, the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) is an innovative exercise that engages citizens across rural India in understanding and evaluating the outcomes of elementary education. ASER Centre was established in 2008 to institutionalize and strengthen the design and process of ASER and ASER-like initiatives. One of the primary objectives behind setting up the ASER Centre was to build the capacity of individuals and organizations to undertake a variety of activities related to assessment, survey, evaluation, research and communication in key development sectors.

One big learning from conducting ASER over the years has been that ordinary people such as students, citizens' groups, non-governmental organizations or even mid-levels of government have limited access to basic technical knowledge and skills of sampling, survey methodology or statistics. Further, people with both technical knowledge and field experience are scarce and institutions of higher education including the premier universities focus more on theoretical learning. As a result, there is an acute shortage of people and institutions with the ability to generate and analyze evidence or to plan actions based on evidence, particularly at the sub state level.

## **ASER Center's capacity building program – a brief background**

Capacity Building has been at the core of ASER Centre's theory of change. Concerted efforts towards fulfilling this objective were initiated in 2008 with our state team members who are required to mobilize, train and supervise field surveyors, collect and analyze data, as well as disseminate the evidence with a wider audience. These responsibilities require them to be equipped with a full range of skill sets – from knowing the tools for data collection to communication strategies. Hence, to develop their skills, ASER Centre started internal course program, which covered modules on basic statistics, survey methods and communications.

Our internal courses are designed in a manner that allows for real-time application and thereby, improving the effectiveness of work. The first course workshop included 100 days of classroom sessions interspersed with 200+ days in the field. In less than a decade, about 175 working professionals have successfully completed ASER Centre's internal courses program. The curriculum has also expanded and now includes modules on Leadership and Excel.

Through this course, our aim is to equip participants with:

- An understanding of basic statistics and excel;
- An understanding of data collection tools and methods;
- Effective oral and written communication skills;
- Ability to conduct negotiations, trainings and meetings;
- Skills to manage people and projects; and
- Develop a better understanding of self.

In early 2015, ASER Centre collaborated with the ‘Centre for Lifelong Learning’ at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai with the aim to impart the course with academic rigor combined with fieldwork. This was also the first time when the course was offered to participants from external organizations including J-PAL<sup>1</sup> and IDInsight<sup>2</sup>. Between June 2015 and May 2016, a total of 4 workshops were organized and following modules were offered to the participants:

- Applied Statistics and Excel
- Tools for Data Collection
- Communications
- Leadership
- Education System in India
- English Language

The first ASER-TISS Batch completed the course in May 2016 and received a joint ASER-TISS certification. As a part of the course, we also organized several guest lectures and speakers included Prof. Devi Prasad (TISS), Prof Vimala Ramachandran (Director, ERU Consultants and former National Fellow, NUEPA), Avik Chatterjee (OD Alternatives) and Ms. Richa Verma (SocialCops).

## **Target Audience**

The curriculum has been designed specifically for survey coordinators and research associates who are currently engaged in data collection, analysis, dissemination as well as training, supervising field teams, and coordination.

## **Course modules**

Going forward, in 2017, the following modules will be offered to prospective partner organizations:

### *Module 1: Statistics and Excel*

This module is designed to give a broad overview of descriptive statistics. In this module, participants will learn how to compute statistics like percentages, ratios, means, and standard deviation. Expected outcome from this module includes:

- a. Participants understand what is meant by data and the various types of data;
- b. Participants should be able to describe and present data;
- c. Participants learn to use Excel to do basic/intermediate level mathematical and statistical calculations;
- d. Participants learn to organize, analyze and present data using Excel to create charts, graphs;
- e. Enhance intuitive thinking on the issue based on the data available.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://idinsight.org/>

### *Module 2: Tools for Data Collection*

Participants will learn about different tools that are used for data collection, along with strengths and weaknesses of each tool. They will also understand the basics of questionnaire design and will engage in small projects wherein they will design questionnaire on a given topic, collect data and analyze it. Expected outcome from this module includes:

- a. Participants will understand different tools and techniques that are available and sources for primary data collection, along with strengths and weaknesses of each;
- b. Participants will understand the basics of questionnaire design and will be able to design effective questionnaires.

### *Module 3: Communications and Leadership*

There are two main aspects in this module - learn how to communicate effectively using simple and effective tools; and personal development for effective leadership. The module will cover topics such as business writing skills, presentation skills, public speaking, and verbal and non-verbal communication skills, along with understanding self and leading others. Expected outcome from this module includes:

- a. Participants will be able to apply appropriate communication skills across settings, purposes, and audiences; apply written, oral, and visual communication skills and demonstrate positive group communication exchanges;
- b. Participants will establish an intimate understanding of who they are and what are their strengths and weaknesses. They will understand practices of inspiring leadership and will develop a range of leadership skills and abilities such as effectively leading change, resolving conflict, and motivating others.

**Table 1: Topics that will be covered under each module**

<b>Module</b>	<b>Broad Topic</b>	<b>Sub Topic</b>
<b>Statistics and Excel</b>	Describing data	Average, Percentages, Ratios, Percentage change
	Types of variables	Quantitative - Continuous, Discrete. Qualitative - Categorical/ Nominal, Interval, Ordinal, Correlation
	Classification & tabulation of data	Frequency distribution
	Diagrammatic & graphic representation of data	Pie charts, Bar Charts, Histogram, Scatter diagram
	Measures of central tendency	Mean, Median and Mode.
	Measures of position	Quartiles
	Measures of dispersion	Range, Standard deviation, Variance
	Population versus Sample	Definition, difference and usage.
<b>Tools for Data Collection</b>	Introduction to research	Definition of research Research process
	Thinking like a researcher	Defining a research question Case study - group work
	Data collection techniques and Sampling	Primary and secondary data collection.

		Quantitative methods. Introduction to sampling and its types
	Questionnaire design	Biases & errors in questionnaire design. Use of coding lists in questionnaires versus Tick marks and response scales.
	Field piloting of questionnaire	Implementation of the questionnaire on the field Re-design the questionnaire based on field experience
	Processing and data analysis	Descriptive & statistical analysis Presentation of data
	Ethics in research	Norms and ethics followed when conducting a research Things to keep in mind when documenting and disseminating findings
	Report generation & writing	Title page Abstract Introduction Methodology Results Discussion References Appendices
<b>Communications and Leadership</b>	Introduction to communications	Barriers to communications Non-verbal communication
	Speaking skills	Public speaking Presentation skills
	Writing skills	Tips on effective presentation slides Email etiquettes Report writing Formatting
	Self awareness	What are limiting and empowering beliefs Enneagram FIRO-B
	Working with others	Conflict resolution, negotiation skills

### Course structure

Currently, the partner organization can choose one of the following options to avail any or all modules offered by ASER Centre.

Option	Modules	Certification	Duration
<b>6 month ASER-TISS certificate course</b>	All three modules combined	Joint certification by ASER Centre and TISS	6 months i.e. 3-4 workshops spread over 6 months
<i>or</i>			
<b>5 day intensive workshop</b>	Any one module	Participation Certificate by ASER Centre	30 hours per module

## **Methodology**

Since the participants for the course belong to and work in different states, the program will be a combination of contact and distance learning program. Methodology will include small and large group activities, case studies, discussions and self-reflections. At the end of each classroom session, presentations and materials used during the session shall be emailed to the participants.

## **Evaluation**

For each module, participants will be expected to read all the handouts that will be provided to them. They will also be expected to finish all assignments and in case of the first option, they will be expected to appear in the final examination.

## **Faculty**

Our faculty members include project leads of research studies within the organization and have a strong understanding of the contents in their respective modules. In 2015, all faculty members attended a ‘Participative Training Methodology’ course conducted by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences faculty.

## **Investment per participant**

Per participant investment will depend on the following:

1. Total number of participants
2. Whether the organization opts for 6 months course or selects individual module.
3. Cost sharing basis versus complete logistics being taken care by ASER Centre.

### **ASER Centre**

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