ASER 2014

- ASER is an annual household survey to assess children’s schooling status and basic learning levels in reading and arithmetic.
- One government school in each sampled village is also visited.
- The survey is facilitated by Pratham but carried out by a local organization or institution in each district.
- This year 243 DIETs have partnered with ASER. The rest of the partners are colleges and universities as well as NGOs.
- ASER 2014 is the 10th report.

Some basic facts about ASER 2014

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

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- 500 + institutions/organizations
- 1000 + master trainers
- 16497 villages visited
- 25,000 volunteers participated
- 341,070 households reached
- 569,229 children surveyed

The annual ASER survey is larger than the NSS survey rounds.
Are children going to school in India?
96.7% of children (in the age group 6-14 years) are enrolled in school in rural India.

This is the 6th year in a row that enrollment rates have been 96% or above.

Visit to a government school on any random day in September, October or November shows that about 71% of enrolled children are attending school on that day.

However there is a lot of variation in daily attendance across states.
What type of school are children going to? Changes over time?

For the age group 6 to 14, private school enrollment has been rising year on year.

Enrollment in private schools

But there is a great deal of variation across states in levels and pace of growth over time.

% Children (Std I-VIII) enrolled in private schools: Selected states

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odisha</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High private school states

High private tuition states
Are older girls going to school? Do they stay in school?

% Girls (11-14) currently not enrolled in school
ASER: 2006-2014
Selected states

Rajasthan
Chhattisgarh
Uttar Pradesh
Bihar
Jharkhand
Odisha
West Bengal
Gujarat
All India

2006: The states shown here were the states where the % of out of school girls (age 11-14) was higher than 10% in 2006.

2014: Except for Rajasthan and UP, the figure has dropped close to 5% for many states. And it is staying low.

Bihar has the steepest decline from 17.6% in 2006 to 5.7% in 2014.
What are schools like?
Are school facilities improving?

15206 government schools with primary sections were visited as part of the ASER 2014 survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Schools</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complying with Pupil-teacher ratio norms</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complying with Classroom-teacher ratio norms</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>72.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midday meals being served on day of visit</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>85.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary wall</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playground</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>65.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% of small primary schools (those with enrollment less than 60) has gone up from 27.3% (2010) to 36% (2014).

% Schools with drinking water available
72.7% (2010) to 75.6% (2014)

% Schools with useable toilets
47.2% (2010) to 65.2% (2014)

% Schools with useable girls’ toilets
32.9% (2010) to 55.7% (2014)

School facilities show improvement over time.
Are children learning?
How well can children read in 2014?

Reading levels: All India (rural)

% Children enrolled in different grades who can read Std II level text (or higher)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>All children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Std III</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std V</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std VIII</td>
<td>74.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Of all children enrolled in Std V, about half cannot read at Std II level.
- Reading is a foundational skill.
- Without being able to read well, a child cannot progress in the education system.
How much have reading levels changed over time?
Std V reading levels over time: All India (rural)

For children enrolled in government schools in Std V, apart from a decline in reading levels between 2010 and 2012, reading levels over time are “low” and “stuck”.

- Reading levels in Std V in private schools are also not high.
- The gap in reading levels between children enrolled in government schools and private schools seems to be growing over time.
What can be done to improve basic reading in primary school?

Grades: Std III-V

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Beginner</th>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Para: Std I level</th>
<th>Story: Std II level</th>
<th>Total%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Std III</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std IV</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std V</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Look at reading numbers for Std V: (Similar patterns in other grades too)

Two main points:

- % Children who can read at Std II level (or higher) is about 48%
- The rest of the children are at different levels:
  - Close to 20% children can only read letters or not even that
  - 14% can read words but not sentences.
  - 19% can read sentences but not longer text.
- Each of these groups need special and specific attention.

Some thoughts:

Teaching from the grade level text book is not helpful for these children UNLESS they can read and understand.

Need to start from the child’s level. Need to use appropriate methods to help them progress.

Grouping by level & not by grade can make teaching efficient and effective for acquiring these basic skills quickly so that further progress can be made on the foundations that are built.
What can be done to improve basic reading in early grades?

Early grades: Std I-II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Children in Std II who cannot even recognize letters as yet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What do these figures suggest?

Not being able to recognize letters in Std II suggests that the child did not learn much in Std I.

- How can we make Std I more effective?
- Can the best teacher in the school be assigned to Std I?
- Can clear & realistic learning goals be clearly stated?
- Can schools work with parents to achieve the clearly stated goals for Std I?

By end of Std II children should be able to read simple sentences easily.

Schools need to be supported to achieve this basic goal.
Do children recognize numbers in early grades?
Std II & Std III - Trends over time : All India (rural)

Early years are very important. This is when basic skills should be acquired. Without strong foundations in early years, children cannot progress.

This graph shows that
(a) A growing proportion of Std II children do not know numbers 1 to 9 in Std. This means that they are not learning them in Std I.
(b) Increasing numbers of children in Std III do not recognize numbers till 100. This means that they did not pick them up in Std II.

Strong focus is needed in Std I & II to ensure that basic skills are built in these early years.
What about basic operations in Std III and above?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>% Children who can do subtraction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Std III</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std IV</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std V</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Without basic skills in place, it is difficult for children to cope with grade level content. Knowing numbers and operations is needed before tackling higher content. Therefore teaching from the grade level textbooks, leaves many children behind.

- Special focus, time and attention is needed to help children in Std III-V and Std V-VIII learn the basic and foundational skills in maths. With strong foundations they can progress further.

Half of all children in Std V have not yet learned basic skills that they should have learned by Std II.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>% Children who can do division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Std V</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std VI</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std VIII</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Close to half of all children will finish eight years of schooling but still not have learned basic skills in arithmetic.
How much do children gain over time?
Std III-VI: % Children who can do subtraction
Trends over time: All India (rural)

Let us follow different cohorts over time as they move from Std III to Std VI.
Four cohorts are shown: those who were in
- Std III in 2008
- Std III in 2009
- Std III in 2010
- Std III in 2011

Relatively speaking, the oldest cohort (those who were in Std III in 2008 and in Std 6 in 2011) have the best performance.
The performance of each subsequent cohort is worse than the one previous to it.

The “learning curve” is flat. This means that after the early years in school, there is not much gain in learning.
What can be done? What should be done to improve learning?

**Std I & II:**
Strong focus is needed in Std I & II to ensure that basic skills are built in these early years. There are **55 million** children in this age group.

Children need to be encouraged to speak, to discuss, to express their opinions and to solve problems together. By the end of Std II, children should be able to at least
- Read simple sentences
- Write their own thoughts
- Comfortable with numbers & operations at least up to 100

**Std III, IV & V:**
DISE 2013-14 indicates that there are about **80 million** children in this age group. Immediate attention is needed to help many of these children in these grades quickly acquire basic skills. Without basic skills, they CANNOT progress in school.

- Schools need to make time for helping children catch up
- Clear, focussed and achievable learning goals needed
- Entire system needs to be geared to make this happen
- Parents must understand what the learning goals are

Immediate and urgent action needed to ensure that every child can meaningfully complete elementary education.

**EVERY CHILD IN SCHOOL AND LEARNING WELL**
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For more information:
See asercentre.org for all ASER reports
See pratham.org for how learning can be improved.

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