

1,902 ASER partners

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"Namaste, I am [name] from [organization] in [district], and I am xx ASERs old".

Every year, the ASER roll out in the field begins around September with state level training workshops for master trainers, one or two from each district in the state. Some come from ASER partner organizations and others from Pratham. There's usually a mix of those who are four, five, or six "ASERs old" and those who are brand new, and this novel way of introducing themselves quickly separates the veterans from the 'freshers'.

So where do all these people – around 1,000 master trainers and 25,000 volunteers each year – actually come from? An incredible variety of partner organizations conduct ASER each year. From the Department of Sheep Husbandry in Kargil to Google in Gurgaon; from IIT Rourkee to Our Carrom Club in Manipur; from District Institutes for Education and Training (DIETs) in Chhattisgarh to the Tejas Mahila Mandal in Nagpur; from Deutsche Bank staff in Hyderabad to high school students all across Arunachal Pradesh. These are the institutions that visit 300,000 households and meet 700,000 children each year. Year after year, they make ASER possible.

Given the basic calculation of close to 600 districts x 7 years, one might expect the total number of partners to date to be higher still. But ASER has been fortunate to partner with organizations with a steady presence across multiple districts and even multiple states. For example, Kudumbashree in Kerala has participated in ASER from its inception in 2005, and 'did' ASER in the entire state single handedly for six consecutive years. Then there's Nehru Yuva Kendra, the network of youth clubs whose huge presence across rural India has facilitated ASER every year in multiple districts across ten states.

Many organizations have participated in ASER more than once, and more than 10% - 200 organizations –are veterans of four or more ASERs. Of these, 18 have been ASER partners every single year, from 2005 to 2011 (see box). More than a third of these are located in Jharkhand.

ASER has found twice as many partners in Maharashtra than in any other state, testimony in part to the vibrant presence of colleges and non government organizations, but also due to Pratham's long history and extensive network in the state. On the flip side, there are states and districts where every year there's a long struggle to find partners, and state ASER teams have on occasion come up with creative solutions. In Kargil, the only people willing to travel extensively around the district were personnel from the Department of Sheep Husbandry, who were pressed into service three years in a row. In Arunachal Pradesh, where colleges and NGOs are few and far between, students from government secondary schools have been regular ASER volunteers.

Across India, some fascinating patterns emerge in terms of the type of organizations that do ASER. In Haryana, the ASER partner lists are heavily populated by colleges, and NGOs are sparse; whereas in Jharkhand, the situation is exactly the reverse. In Nagaland and Meghalaya, ASER is conducted mainly by students' unions, and in Rajasthan, large numbers of B.Ed colleges have joined in.

The increasing participation of DIETs across the country is a very welcome trend. In 2007, all DIETs in Andhra Pradesh were instructed by the State Project Director (SPD) to participate in ASER, but since 2008, they have voluntarily chosen to do so – and have conducted the survey across the entire state for five years in a row now.

Veteran ASER partners

Institutions that have participated in ASER every year, from 2005 to 2011:

Abhiyan, Jharkhand

Akshara Foundation, Karnataka

Consumer Unity and Trust Society, Rajasthan

EMBARK Youth Association, Karnataka

Gram Jyoti Kendra, Jharkhand

Grassroot, Tamil Nadu

Jawahar Jyoti Bal Vikas Kendra, Bihar

Jiral College, Odisha

Khaira College, Odisha

Kudumbashree, Kerala

Lohardaga Gram Swaraj Sansthan, Jharkhand

Lok Prerna Kendra, Jharkhand

Mahima College, Odisha

Malenadu Education and Rural Development Society, Karnataka

Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra, Jharkhand

Sahyogini, Jharkhand

Samajik Parivartan Sansthan, Jharkhand

Sankalp Bahuuddeshiya Prkalp, Maharashtra

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Other states, too, have seen increased participation by DIETs over time, with a total of 48 of them in 9 states taking part in ASER 2011. Given that the ASER exercise is about engaging citizens in producing and thinking about evidence related to outcomes, getting current and future teachers to participate in an assessment of basic learning outcomes may contribute more towards improving 'quality' in elementary education than centrally mandated policy directives ever could.

In the coming years, a major challenge for ASER Centre will be to find ways to systematically build on these relationships with partners, not an easy task given their number and geographical spread, but a critical one if assessment is to lead to action. From 2012, we hope to engage in deeper collaborations with at least some of these institutions in the core areas of capacity building, research and assessment.

Table 1. ASER partners 2005-11, by state and type of institution

State	Type of partners who participated						TOTAL
	DIET	TTC	Univ / College	School	NGO	Other	
Himachal Pradesh	4	1	23	2	14	5	49
Haryana	0	0	38	3	10	3	54
Punjab	1	6	13	11	15	15	61
Uttarakhand	0	0	20	0	33	0	53
Jammu&Kashmir	1	4	14	0	2	3	24
Tamil Nadu	0	0	12	0	64	0	76
Kerala	7	0	0	0	1	0	8
Andhra Pradesh	22	0	0	0	2	1	25
Karnataka	0	0	5	0	58	1	64
Gujarat	0	0	22	0	116	3	141
Rajasthan	0	16	17	0	51	14	98
Odisha	3	1	82	1	23	2	112
Chhattisgarh	8	0	0	0	40	0	48
Madhya Pradesh	0	0	2	1	153	3	159
Maharashtra	0	11	83	5	281	3	383
Uttar Pradesh	1	0	13	2	148	2	166
Bihar	0	0	0	0	117	0	117
Jharkhand	0	0	0	0	43	0	43
West Bengal	0	0	24	0	21	2	47
Assam	1	0	7	0	39	5	52
Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	6	13	14	0	33
Manipur	0	0	6	4	12	6	28
Meghalaya	0	0	7	0	6	2	15
Nagaland	0	0	2	0	11	19	32
Tripura	0	0	1	0	9	1	11
Sikkim	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
ALL INDIA	48	42	397	42	1283	90	1902
	3%	2%	21%	2%	67%	5%	100%