

ASER 2010 PRESS RELEASE

IS THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION MERELY A RIGHT TO SCHOOLING?

January 14, 2011:

The Annual Status of Education Report, ASER 2010 was released in New Delhi today by the Honourable Vice President of India, Shri Hamid Ansari.

After releasing the report, Shri Ansari spoke on the status of education in India.

Dr. Madhav Chavan, CEO Pratham Education Foundation, Dr. Rukmini Banerji, Director ASER Centre, Ajay Piramal, Chairman, Pratham Education Foundation, Dr. Surjit Bhalla, Dr. Yogendra Yadav and Dr. Dhir Jhingran were the other speakers on the occasion.

Conducted every year since 2005, ASER is the largest annual survey of children in rural India. Facilitated by Pratham, ASER is conducted each year by local organizations and concerned citizens. In 2010, ASER reached 522 districts, over 14,000 villages, 3,00,000 households and almost 7,00,000 children.

Every year, ASER finds out whether children in rural India go to school, how well they can read in their own language and whether they can do basic arithmetic. ASER 2010 also included a visit to over 13,000 government schools to assess compliance with those norms and standards specified in the Right to Education Act that are easy to measure.

Key findings:

Enrollment: In 2010, ASER found that 96.5% of children in the 6 to 14 age group in rural India are enrolled in school. While 71.1% of these children are enrolled in government schools, 24.3 % are enrolled in private schools.

Out of school girls: 5.9% of girls in the 11-14 age group are still out of school. However, this percentage has gone down as compared to 6.8% in 2009. In states like Rajasthan (12.1%) and Uttar Pradesh (9.7%), this percentage remains high and shows little change since 2009.

Noteworthy in this regard is the performance of Bihar where the percentage of out of school girls and boys in all age groups has been declining steadily since 2005. In 2006, 12.3% of boys and 17.6% girls were out of school in the 11-14 age group. By 2010, these numbers had declined to 4.4% for boys and 4.6% for girls, showing very little difference by gender.

Rise in private school enrolment: Enrollment in private schools in rural India increased from 21.8% in 2009 to 24.3% in 2010. This number has risen steadily since 2005 when it was 16.3% nationally. Between 2009 and 2010, the southern states have shown a substantial increase in private school enrollments. The percentage of children in private school increased from 29.7% to 36.1% in Andhra Pradesh, from 19.7% to 25.1% in Tamil Nadu, from 16.8% to 20% in Karnataka and from 51.5% to 54.2% in Kerala. Among other states, Punjab

showed an increase from 30.5% to 38%. However, this proportion remains low in Bihar (5.2%), West Bengal (5.9%), Jharkhand (8.8%), Orissa (5.4%) and Tripura (2.8%).

Increasing numbers of five year olds enrolled in school: Nationally, the percentage of five year olds enrolled in schools increased from 54.6% in 2009 to 62.8% in 2010. The biggest increase was visible in Karnataka where the proportion of five year olds enrolled in school increased from 17.1% in 2009 to 67.6 in 2010. Enrollment of five year olds increased substantially between 2009 and 2010 in several other states such as Punjab (68.3% to 79.6%), Haryana (62.8% to 76.8%), Rajasthan (69.9% to 75.8%), Uttar Pradesh (55.7% to 73.1%) and Assam (49.1% to 59%).

Nationally, not much change in reading ability, except in some states: Even after five years in school, close to half of all children are not even at the level expected of them after two years in school. Only 53.4% children in Std V could read a Std II level text.

However, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana and Rajasthan saw an increase in the proportion of children in Std I who were able to recognize letters. There was also an increase in the proportion of children in Std V who could read Std II level text in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Math ability shows a declining trend: On average, there has been a decrease in children's ability to do simple mathematics. The proportion of Std I children who could recognize numbers from 1-9 declined from 69.3% in 2009 to 65.8% in 2010. Similarly, the proportion of children in Std III who could solve two digit subtraction problems decreased from 39% to 36.5% in the same period. Children in Std V who could do simple division problems also dropped from 38% in 2009 to 35.9% in 2010.

Contrary to this trend, Punjab's performance in basic arithmetic has improved over the last few years. For example, the percentage of children in Std II who could recognize numbers up to 100 in 2008 was 56.3%. This number increased to 59.6% in 2009 and to 70.4% in 2010. Similarly, the proportion of Std IV children who could do subtraction increased from 66.9% in 2008 to 81.4% in 2010. The percentage of Std V children who could do division rose from 43.5% in 2008 to 69.8% in 2010.

Middle school children weak in everyday calculations: In 2010, children in Std V and above were asked a set of questions based on everyday calculations. The tasks included calculations from a menu card, reading a calendar, estimating volume and calculating area. Overall, in Std VIII, three quarters of all children were able to do the calculations based on the menu. About two thirds of all children could answer questions based on a calendar and only half could do the calculations related to area.

The questions related to area seemed to be the most difficult for children to solve, even though such problems are usually found in textbooks in Std IV or V. Children in Std VIII in Kerala and Bihar solved the area related questions the best, 79% and 69% respectively.

Tuition going down for private school children: A clear decrease is seen in the incidence of tuition among children enrolled in private schools across all classes up to Std VIII. This proportion has not changed much among children enrolled in government schools, although in states like Bihar, West Bengal and Odisha, where private school enrollment is low, the proportion of children in Std V enrolled in government schools who take tuition classes is high (West Bengal-75.6%, Bihar-55.5% and Odisha-49.9%).

RTE compliance: ASER 2010 found that over 60% of the 13,000 schools visited satisfied the infrastructure norms specified by the RTE. However, more than half of these schools will need more teachers. A third will need more classrooms.

62% of the schools visited had playgrounds, 50% had a boundary wall or fence and 90% had toilets. However, toilets were useable in only half of these schools. 70% of schools visited had a separate girls' toilet, but this facility was useable in only 37% of the schools. 81% schools had a kitchen shed and 72% had drinking water available.

The all India percentage of primary schools (Std 1-4/5) with all teachers present on the day of the visit shows a consistent decrease over three years, falling from 73.7% in 2007 to 69.2% in 2009 and 63.4% in 2010.

For rural India as a whole, children's attendance shows no change over the period 2007-2010. Attendance remained at around 73% during this period. But there is considerable variation across states.

For further information:

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A copy of the report can be downloaded from www.asercentre.org