

CITIZEN-LED BASIC LEARNING ASSESSMENTS FOR CHILDREN

An Innovative Approach



School enrollments are rising in countries across South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. In some countries, like India, over 96% of children are in school. Universal schooling is a goal that is accepted by global bodies, national governments and local communities. Every country has strategies to ensure that all children are enrolled in school; families, communities and schools have been working towards universal enrollment. Now, the critical question facing us is: are children learning?

To answer this question, an innovative approach to learning assessment has been implemented in several Asian and African countries. Using basic reading and arithmetic tasks, these countries have begun to assess for themselves what their children are able to do. The model began in India in 2005 and has been adapted for use in Pakistan (since 2008), Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda (2009), Mali (2011) and recently Senegal (2012). In India and Pakistan, the exercise is called ASER (which means "impact"), in East Africa it is called Uwezo (which means "capability"). The Mali effort has been named "Beekungo" (meaning "we are in it together") and in Senegal it is called Jàngandoo (meaning "learn together"). In 2011 alone, these citizen-based large scale assessments covered over one million children in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

The assessments use rigorous sampling methodologies and generate representative samples of children at national and sub-national levels. The tools are designed to be simple so that parents, teachers, schools, communities and ordinary people understand the findings and can conduct the assessment themselves. Together, these efforts provide large-scale, annual, easily understandable indicators of children's ability to read simple text and do basic arithmetic operations.

Unlike other large-scale learning assessments, this approach is led by citizen groups and has emerged from the global South. Interestingly, these initiatives are independent; there is no international coordinating body. They have evolved organically and the groups have come together voluntarily. The model was transplanted from one country to another and adapted to suit each country's context.



These citizen-led assessments of basic learning have three primary objectives. First, to put children's learning at the centre of the debates and discussions on education in their own countries. Second, to engage citizens everywhere in understanding their own situation and strengthening accountability. And third, to promote government, parent and citizen action to improve children's learning. These assessment efforts thus aim to influence education policy and practice from the ground up.



A set of core principles guide the design and implementation of the model in all participating countries:

- Household-based rather than school-based sampling is used in order to ensure that all children are included: children who have never been to school, those who have dropped out, and those who attend different kinds of schools (public, private, religious and others).
- A test, usually at the Grade 2 level, is used to assess basic abilities in reading and arithmetic for all children in the age group 5-16 years (in some cases 6-16 or 6-18 years). The same test is used for all children. Each child is assessed one-on-one. In all participating countries, the attempt is to assess children using local and regional languages.
- The assessments use methods, measures, tools and procedures that are easy to use and simple to understand. This is done so that many different kinds of people can engage and participate. Ordinary citizens volunteer to conduct the survey and disseminate the results.
- The measurement is annual and is conducted at scale. The sample is representative at national and sub-national levels.
- Results are available quickly. Parents get instant feedback as they observe their children being asked to read or do arithmetic. Each year's findings are aggregated and placed in the public domain within days or months after the assessment is conducted.



Citizen Assessments Of Basic Learning In South Asia, East Africa & West Africa			ASER INDIA 2011	ASER PAKISTAN 2011	Uwezo KENYA 2011	Uwezo TANZANIA 2011	Uwezo UGANDA 2011	Beekungo MALI 2012	Jàngandoo (Pilot) SENEGAL 2012
SAMPLE DESCRIPTION	Age range of children assessed		5-16 years	5-16 years	6-16 years	7-16 years	6-16 years	6-14 years	6-18 years
	Sample size of children tested		633,465	105,860	131,971	114,761	101,652	23,149	1,605
	Languages in which children were tested		20 languages	Urdu, Sindhi & English	Kiswahili & English	Kiswahili & English	English	French, Bamanankan, Bomu & Fulfulde	French, Wolof & Pulaar
	National assessment or state/Provincial		National	85 out of 145 Districts	National	National	National	Regional (75 out of 703 Communes)	4 Regions
READING			CAN CHILDREN READ?						
Language in which children were asked to read			20 Regional Languages	Urdu/Sindhi	English	Kiswahili	English	3 Regional Languages	French
EVIDENCE	% Children who <u>cannot</u> read letters	Grade 2	16.6	10.9	5.2	27.9	38.3	47.1	31.3
	% Children who <u>cannot</u> read simple words	Grade 3	31.4	22.7	18.5	19.5	58.4	61.2	45.4
	% Children who <u>cannot</u> read a simple 4 line paragraph	Grade 3	59.8	58.8	47.0	41.3	83.7	90.8	57.8
		Grade 4	40.3	40.7	21.2	40.4	62.5	83.8	36.6
	% Children who <u>cannot</u> read a simple "story" (Grade 2 level text)	Grade 3	81.3	83.0	72.6	58.1	91.7	95.9	73.5
		Grade 4	66.0	69.2	48.8	55.6	79.0	90.8	53.0
		Grade 5	51.9	52.6	28.2	41.0	57.3	89.3	44.1

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ARITHMETIC			CAN CHILDREN RECOGNIZE NUMBERS ?						
EVIDENCE	% Children who <u>cannot</u> recognize numbers to 100	Grade 2	53.5	37.7	17.6	19.8	61.8	65.2	26.1
		Grade 3	34.4	22.5	7.6	13.8	24.9	42.6	11.4
		Grade 4	21.0	14.0	2.5	7.8	7.2	27.1	6.6
ARITHMETIC			CAN CHILDREN SUBTRACT ?						
EVIDENCE	% Children who <u>cannot</u> do subtraction	Grade 3	70.1	62.5	35.4	44.7	84.0	87.6	82.2
		Grade 4	51.6	43.1	16.9	30.6	31.9	78.2	51.9
		Grade 5	39.0	30.2	9.1	19.8	21.6	64.6	37.6

For more information and results:

ASER in India : www.asercentre.org

ASER in Pakistan : www.aserpakistan.org

Uwezo East Africa : www.uwezo.net

Beekungo in Mali : www.omaes.org

Jàngandoo in Senegal : www.lartes-ifan.gouv.sn

