

CITIZEN-LED BASIC LEARNING ASSESSMENTS

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 toward 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 Senegal (2012). A pilot is likely in Mexico soon (2014).



The model originated in India in 2005.



In India and Pakistan, the exercise is called ASER, meaning **impact**.



In East Africa, it is called Uwezo, which means **capability**.



In Mali, it is called Beekungo, meaning **we are in it together**.



In Senegal, it is called Jàngandoo, which means **learn together**.

In 2012 alone, these citizen-based large scale assessments covered over one million children in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Citizen-led assessments of basic learning have three primary objectives.

1. To put children's learning at the centre of the debates and discussions on education in their own countries.
2. To engage citizens in understanding their own situation and strengthening accountability.
3. 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.

This family of citizen-led assessments uses rigorous sampling methodologies at household level and generates representative samples of children at national and subnational 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. These initiatives are independent; there is no central 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.

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, those who attend different types 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 reading 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 months of the assessment being conducted.

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION 2012

Citizen Assessments of Basic Learning in South Asia, East Africa & West Africa	ASER INDIA	ASER PAKISTAN	Uwezo KENYA	Uwezo TANZANIA	Uwezo UGANDA	Beekungo MALI	Jàngandoo (Pilot) SENEGAL
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	596,846	216,125	145,564	105,352	92,188	23,149	1,605
Languages in which children were tested	20 languages	Urdu, Sindhi, Pashto & English	Kiswahili & English	Kiswahili & English	English	French, Bamanankan, Bomu & Fulfulde	French, Wolof & Pulaar
National assessment or state/Provincial	National	National	National	National	National	Regional (75 of 703 Communes)	4 Regions

EVIDENCE 2012

Citizen Assessments of Basic Learning in South Asia, East Africa & West Africa	ASER INDIA	ASER PAKISTAN	Uwezo KENYA	Uwezo TANZANIA	Uwezo UGANDA	Beekungo MALI	Jàngandoo (Pilot) SENEGAL
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READING		CAN CHILDREN READ?						
Language in which children were asked to read		20 Regional Languages	Urdu, Sindhi, Pashto	English	Kiswahili	English	3 Regional Languages	French
% Children who cannot read letters	Grade 2	20.3	11.6	7.9	22.5	33.4	47.1	31.3
% Children who cannot read simple words	Grade 3	38.1	20.2	22.3	39.0	54.7	61.2	45.4
% Children who cannot read a simple 4 line paragraph	Grade 3	61.3	57.4	50.6	58.0	79.7	90.8	57.8
	Grade 4	44.5	36.5	26.1	40.5	74.9	83.4	36.6
% Children who cannot read a simple "story" (Grade 2 level text)	Grade 3	78.5	79.9	72.5	73.9	90.5	95.9	73.5
	Grade 4	65.4	63.8	50.4	57.8	7.5	90.8	53.0
	Grade 5	53.3	49.1	31.4	42.5	43.1	89.3	44.1

ARITHMETIC		CAN CHILDREN RECOGNIZE NUMBERS ?						
% Children who cannot recognize numbers to 100	Grade 2	55.6	33.7	21.7	19.2	51.8	65.2	26.1
	Grade 3	39.0	18.6	10.3	9.6	26.7	42.6	11.4
	Grade 4	25.7	10.6	4.3	6.0	12.3	27.1	6.6

ARITHMETIC		CAN CHILDREN SUBTRACT ?						
% Children who cannot do subtraction	Grade 2	73.7	60.2	36.7	33.5	65.5	87.6	82.2
	Grade 3	57.7	39.3	19.6	22.3	40.0	78.2	51.9
	Grade 4	46.5	26.2	11.6	13.9	21.7	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

