

Draft-Press Release

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2011 was launched on January 26, 2012 at the Planning Commission auditorium Islamabad.

Numerous dignitaries from the government as well as the civil society were present on the occasion. Talking on the occasion, Director Programs Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) Baela Raza Jamil gave an introduction to ASER its basis, methodology, as well as findings.

Dr Nafisa Shah, Chairperson National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) gave an appraisal on the current education scenario in Pakistan. She stressed the need for volunteer-led surveys like ASER to create impact on the minds of the young generation of the country, so that they can become future ambassadors of education in the country.

A panel discussion on ASER findings took place in which Dr. Nadeem-ul-Haque - Deputy Chairman Planning Commission- Lead Panelist, Mr. Ahsan Iqbal, MNA PML(N) , Federal Secretary Ministry of Professional & Technical Training, Dr. Zeba Sathar- Country Director Population Council, Asad Umar President ENGRO, Mr. Mazhar Siraj (DFID), and Ms. Nargis Sultana- (FOSI) talked about the ASER findings in details.

Ahsan Iqbal apprised the audience of the need for surveys like ASER to act as a vital tool for policy-makers. Other panelists talked about the trends in education that were depicted by ASER from 2010 to 2011. Dr Nadeem talked about the failure of the public sector management in providing basic services to the citizens. The panelists also stressed on the need to curb the demographic disparities in education to ensure the access to education to all irrespective of caste, creed or location.

The Chief Guest on the Occasion, Minister for Professional & Technical Training Riaz Hussain Pirzada talked about the need for improving the current education scenario in Pakistan. He assured his government's full support to initiatives like ASER, which not only gauge education levels of children, but also lead to active involvement of citizens in the march for education.

For 2011, the data was collected with the help of more than 5000 volunteers as a nationwide citizens' effort on education and learning accountability, in 84 rural districts and 3 urban city districts, covering 2,502 villages, 97 urban blocks, 49,793 households and 146,874 children. The report highlights trends in learning for 5-16 year olds -and access for 3-16 year olds disaggregated by gender. This is the first ASER report that has covered urban blocks as well.

Early Childhood education for 3-5 year olds is also recorded. The highest enrollment in this age group was 51.3% in Punjab and lowest in Gilgit-Baltistan (29.4%) with majority enrolled in government schools. For urban areas this trend is highest in Karachi (68.9%) with majority of children in private schools (Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar).

Of the 6-16 year olds surveyed the rural enrolment trend is 80% whilst out of school persists at 20% comprising of higher number of children who have never enrolled (15% never enrolled and 5.0% drop out). In the 3 urban city districts the enrolment is around 90%.

Girls lag behind boys in enrolment and learning in rural areas. In urban areas the trends for girls is much better than their rural counterparts. In Karachi for instance, among the enrolled children 52.4% were girls as compared to 47.6% boys. Also, 45% girls were found to be able to read simple sentences in Urdu/Sindhi as compared to the 38% boys who could read sentences in Urdu/Sindhi.

The overall rural private sector enrolment accounts for 23%. Of the total enrolment 2 percent study in madrasahs (highest Madrasah enrollment in Balochistan Province (5.2%) and district Bahawalpur in Punjab at 5%).

Not only are families paying for private schools fees but 11% rural households are also paying for tuition centres/preparatory academies. In urban areas this trend is from 31% to 50%. In the rural sample the percentage of government school children taking tuitions is 7.1% vs. private school children which is 24%. In rural districts like Nankana Sahib and Sheikhpura supplementary learning is highest (37%).

The trends of rural non-state private schooling are highest in the provinces/areas of: Gilgit-Baltistan (43%) and Punjab (33%) and lowest in Sindh (10%)

Like 2010 the ASER 2011 evidence is most worrying on learning levels across school systems

47.4% of the children in grade 5 can read Urdu/Sindhi while 52.6% of children completing primary will not be able to read simple grade 2 level stories in Urdu or mother tongue.

40.6 % of the children in grade 5 can read English sentences while 59.4 % of children completing primary will not be able to read simple grade 2 level sentences in English.

37.3 % of the children in grade 5 can do three digit division (grade III level) while 62.7% of children completing primary will not be able to do the simple 3-digit division.

In the rural sample teachers attendance (overall) in government schools is 83% whilst for primary level it is 85% on a given day; the comparable figures for private schools are 89% overall and 83% at the primary level.

The difference across public and private in teachers' presence may be narrowing.

The presence of children continues to be a challenge with 79.7% children present in government schools (rural) on a given day according to the headcount measure and 85.2% in private schools (rural). In the urban sample Karachi was found to have the lowest student attendance rates. Overall student attendance in government schools in Karachi on the day of the visit was 66.5% according to the head count measure.

FATA learning with or without bombs and school destruction

75 % children were found to be enrolled in schools while 25 % were out of school. Among the enrolled 56 % were in government schools, 35% went to private schools while 5.4% were enrolled in madrasahs.

30% children in the 5-16 age group could read story level text in Urdu while 18% could read simple English Sentences. 31.8% were found to be able to do simple 3 digit subtraction sums.

Facilities in government schools have improved most in Punjab followed by KP. In Punjab 80% government schools have a useable water facility and 70% have a functional toilet whereas in KP 59% government schools were found with a useable water facility and 52% with a functional toilet.

Mothers' literacy in rural areas persists at 34.5% compared to 32.3% in 2010 whilst for urban mothers this is 61% (Peshawar) 77% (Lahore) and 82% (Karachi).

2012 is a crucial year for political mobilization due to the upcoming elections as well as for marking the progress towards legislation of Article 25 A as well as its implementation. The ASER 2011 data will inform all stakeholders with specific trends in education that need to be addressed urgently.

ASER 2011 will be intensively disseminating the results from the village to the district and provincial level mobilizing parents, communities, teachers' associations, MNAs/MPAs, administrators, media, bar associations and many research bodies to actively use this data (district by district) for action.

This year's ASER was conducted through partnerships of many organizations with ITA in a coordination role and NCHD as a leading partner across the country. In provinces it has been supported for selected districts by SEF in Sindh, Balochistan Scouts Association in Balochistan and Khwendo Kor in KP. The volunteers come from many professions and colleges with a minimum qualification of Matric/FA.FSC trained for 3 days for the survey that may last 2 -4 days in each district.

Several development partners and INGOs have provided support to ASER 2011. These are the Foundation Open Society Institute (FOSI) Pakistan; the Department of International Development (DFID) UKAID; Oxfam Novib; OXFAM, Dubai Cares and ITA UK.

ASER Pakistan will continue to be conducted each year until 2015 by the citizens of Pakistan to inform our decision makers, planners and citizens themselves on vital trends in rural and selected urban areas regarding whether children are in school or not and if so, what are the children learning of no more than basic grade 2 level literacy and numeracy competencies.

As the nation prepares to ensure that the laws are framed for 25 A Right to Education (RTE) and its effective implementation, reaching out to age group 5-16, ASER provides the annual rigorous support for measuring the impact of data driven decisions in planning and resources for education in Pakistan. For Pakistan time is of essence not just for EFA and MDGs but now also 25 A declared as a fundamental right by the democratic government of Pakistan.