Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2005
Follow-up discussions

Rohit Karnik
Survey carried out by Pratham
Mobilized 20,000 volunteers and funded by hundreds
Carried out at breakneck speed
Some surprising results
- Bihar- Low student and teacher attendance, yet good performance
- Some states thought to be good are not as good at education
ASER - database to test hypotheses, could be viewed in different ways

“The best thing about ASER is that you can take it for a drive. If you see something that intrigues you, you can chase it down. If it makes you think of an idea, the data to test it is at hand. If it does not help to look at it from one angle, you can always try the other side.”

Bihar anomaly-

- More students out of school, so better students in school?
- Better students or teachers?
- Parent interest due to poor economy?
Good idea, but pay attention to detail!

- “I have studied the ASER documents and overall I think it is a great idea. The devil, of course, is in the details, and I am sure there are issues, but mostly surmountable ones.”

The details:

- Simplicity of tests- language comprehension
- Preserve data granularity and detail
- Is sampling good enough?
- Evaluator error- video footage?

Share questions, encourage debate on web
States group based on age/class

- Ordered
  - Kerala, TN, Karnataka, AP, Orissa, Guj., Mah.

- Disordered
  - Bihar, UP, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand

- In-between
  - MP, Chatt., Haryana, Punjab, WB
“Double peak”

- Fresh older children
- Retention
- Children beyond 14
Learning delayed is learning denied

- Ensure no lagging in Std. I & II
- Remedial action Std. III onwards

Surprising results:

- Hesitant “simple paragraph-reader” to “story-reader” requires less than a week of training
- School-level exercises in reading aloud
- Hour-a-day volunteers required
Except Kerala
- 30-50% cannot recognize alphabets in Std. I
- 40-50% cannot read simple words in Std. II

Ensure alphabet learning in Std. I, word learning in Std. II

Pre-school activities
Lant Pritchett
Socio-economist (South Asia), World Bank

- ASER is part of global movements for improving public sector services:
  - Focus on outcomes
  - Local autonomy and accountability instead of compliance
  - External accountability instead of internal
Lant Pritchett
Socio-economist (South Asia), World Bank

- Regular
  - “Annual” survey gives benchmarks of progress in time. E.g. Chile

- Relevant
  - Answers “Why”
  - “Nation at Risk”: 1983 US education report highlighted student weakness compared to Japan and Korea, putting it in context for politicians

- Reliable
  - ASER traded off reliability at local levels in favor of reliable data for India and her states
Dhir Jhingran
IAS Officer

- Tests too broad?
- Increase scope
  - Language ability, word problems
- More discussions with district administrative officials
- Correlate other factors
  - Mother tongue, family background, school quality, private tuition, first introduction of English
The Impact

- Tamil Nadu
  - Statewide reading campaign
- Bihar
  - Summer camp for 3-400,000 girls
- Rajasthan
  - Press coverage, Pratham invited on Planning Commission
- Maharashtra, MP, UP
  - Mobilization of volunteers in “Akshar Melas” to teach Std. 1-II children how to read
- Press
  - ASER is a landmark that moved the focus of education debate to outcomes. Jayprakash Narayan, Financial Times
  - Victory over crab mentality. Gurcharan Das, Times of India
Press

- Jayprakash Narayan, Financial Times
  - ASER is a landmark that moved the focus of education debate to outcomes. Our best are comparable to world’s best, but average is appalling. The potential of the masses remains unused.

- Gurcharan Das, Times of India
  - Victory over crab mentality. Says something about our voluntary movement
**ASER 2006**

- **Focus on sampling, tools and organizational strategy**
  - Add urban sample
  - Oral problem solving, comprehension tasks, reading/writing activities for mothers

- **Involvement**
  - Students, teachers, retired people, etc. involved in ASER 2005 collected and disseminated data, and have started working on improving the situation

- **Understand current situation, and strengthen educational opportunities for children**