Pratham: “Every child in school & learning well”

- Since 1996, Pratham has worked with children who have been “left out” or “left behind”.

- It was relatively easy to bring children to school. But to add ‘value’, accelerated learning was the only way.

**CHALLENGE : At local level in communities & schools...**
Do we really know our children?

- **Parents** “send” children to school and are concerned about “inputs”. Parents often over-estimate what children can do (JPAL study)

- **Teachers** “teach” the course for the grade level. Teachers often over-estimate what children can do (SchoolTELLS)

- **Schools** usually not structured to identify or to help those who fall behind.

**Learning delayed is learning denied.** Children need to learn satisfactorily at the right time to make adequate progress through the education system to complete at least the elementary stage.
High level policy positions

UNIVERSAL ENROLMENT

- MDG goals refer to universal enrolment
- India’s national goals (SSA) refer to universal enrolment, retention and reduction of social and gender gaps.
- In India, from school/village level to state & national level enrolment numbers are collected frequently, published and discussed.

UNIVERSAL LEARNING?

- MDG goals - No definition or reference to children’s learning goals
- National (SSA) goals are broad ....“education of satisfactory quality relevant for life”.... “learning enhancement”
- In India, govt measurements of learning levels come out every few years.

Challenge: At micro & macro level ...
How to bring learning to centre of stage? Progress, equity?
Can children read?

What can we do at ground level?

Simple assessment tool was useful for instruction. Also for engaging parents and teachers about what to do.
How effectively can the reading level of this class be “accelerated”? 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading level</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Mid Point</th>
<th>Final</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Story&quot; (Grade 2 level text)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Para” (Grade 1 level text)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words</td>
<td>Mallika, Balvinder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>Ashish, Ajit, Sanjay, Salim, Nuzhat, Sanjib, Farida, Meera,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not even letters</td>
<td>Usha, Madhav, Ron, Balaji, Chandra, Sunita, Vivek, Brij, Pushpa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teacher listens to each child read one by one using the simple tool. She knows where each child is beginning and also the distribution of the class. How effectively can she help to make all children to become “readers”? 
What can we do at village level: Mobilizing communities

Discussion in small groups in each hamlet:

Local people help in making the hamlet report card.

Report card focuses on whether child goes to school & on whether child can read simple text and do basic arithmetic

“Demo” class run in the village for 4-5 days to show how children can learn to read quickly

Big meeting in village to discuss hamlet & village education report card.

Attended by parents, villagers, village committee members, headmaster and teachers:

100-150 people attend especially if the hamlet level discussions have been held well

Agree on next steps...

On what can be done in village

Start action.

Track measurable changes in children’s learning & in school functioning
From evidence to action...

**ENGAGE AND EVALUATE**
- Generate curiosity
- Encourage participation
- Engage via simple activities
- Use basic tools & methods
- Generate your own data

**UNDERSTAND EVIDENCE**
- Digest information as it is being generated close to the ground
- Move from anecdote or personal experience to aggregate picture

**COMPARE WITH PROVISIONS**
- Local demands for information about plans & provisions
- Push for institutional mechanisms for linking govt and citizens

**THINK ABOUT SOLUTIONS**
- What can we do as citizens?
- Local strategies, common goals, collective involvement

**DE-MYSTIFY ASSESSMENT**
- Enable analysis based on evidence
Going to scale: Key decisions

**INPUTS ARE EASY TO MEASURE**

Measurement of schools, teachers, infrastructure is relatively easy.

These are visible and do not change much over time.

Regular data collection for these variables happen annually and at every level by the government.

**OUTCOMES ARE DIFFICULT TO MEASURE, especially LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- What to measure: basic, grade level
- Who to measure: all or sample
- When to measure: once, periodically
- Where to measure: school, home
- Who will measure: external/internal

What will be done with the data?
How quickly will it be available?
ASER decisions: 1. What to measure?

MANY CHOICES

- Same test to all children regardless of which standard they are in OR different tests to children in different standards?
- Which subjects? Some or all?
- Speaking, reading, writing?
- Pen & paper test/group or oral test and individual testing?

ASER DECISIONS:

- Same test to all children.
  Why? Because large number of children do not even learn the basics
- Only reading & arithmetic each year.
  Why? To keep it simple and fast
- Individual one-on-one testing
  Why? Reading cannot be done in a group.
ASER decisions: 2. Who to measure?

MANY CHOICES

- Some classes/age groups or all classes/age groups?
- Cover all clusters/ blocks or districts?
- All children in a district or block or a sample of children?
- Select from all children in a geographical area or set of schools or only from children who are in a particular program?

ASER DECISIONS:

- All children tested from age 5 to age 16.
  Why? Because over 50% of 5 year olds are in school in India. By 14 many children have not finished Std 8.
- Survey done in all rural districts.
  Why? So that it can be useful in planning and implementation at district level.
- Sample of children from each district.
  Why? Reasonable sample can give reliable estimates & fast to do.
SEVERAL CHOICES

- Once a year?
- Several times a year?
- Once every few years?

ASER DECISIONS:

- Once a year in October or November.

Why? Middle of school year in most states and schools have “settled” down.

Done every year so that progress can be reviewed. ASER experience suggests that there can be big changes from year to year in basic learning outcomes. Since planning is done every year, review of progress should also be done every year and results available before the next year’s plans are made.
ASER decisions:  4. Where to measure?

**SEVERAL CHOICES**
- In school? In all government schools? And in private schools?
- In the community or home?

**ASER DECISIONS:**
- **Children tested in the community or at home.**

**Why?** Because ASER wants to get a representative sample of children in a district. There are 3 kinds of children:
- Enrolled in govt school
- Enrolled in private school
- Currently not enrolled in school

All of these kinds of children can only be found at home.

ASER does not cover children who do not live at home or are in some other place at the time of survey.
ASER decisions: 5. Who will measure?

SEVERAL CHOICES

- Internal teams? Teachers?
- Internal teams? DIET faculty, students? Cluster, block or district officials?
- External teams? Research agency? Citizens? Local organizations?

ASER DECISIONS:

- Ordinary people. Local organizations or institutions in each district.

Why? According to SSA guidelines, community participation is welcome and local organizations and institutions should be part of planning and review process in the district Annual Work Plan process.

Also all Indian citizens pay 2% education cess for elementary education and so should know how their money is being spent.
Summary

- Covers all children in the age group 5-16, not just those in govt schools: ~700,000 children reached each year
- Engages ordinary citizens. Simple to do, to analyze and to understand. ~25,000 local volunteers each year
- No delay between data collection and results. 100 days from survey to report
- Inexpensive to conduct in terms of both money and manpower. ~US$1,500/district
- Provides trends over time and comparisons of key variables across units. 8 year time series

Clear impact on national policy and planning documents.
Huge increase in visibility of the quality issue.
Efforts by some states to rethink assessment and instructional strategies.
The citizen-led model is now in use in 7 countries, >1 million children in 2012.
ASER Centre
www.asercentre.org
sbhattacharj@ gmail.com