



CITIZEN-LED BASIC LEARNING ASSESSMENTS FOR CHILDREN An Innovative Approach

Photo Courtesy : ASER CENTRE, India



Photo Courtesy: Uwezo, Kenya

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? Do they have basic skills like reading and arithmetic? Without these fundamental building blocks it is difficult to move ahead in the education system.

To answer these questions, an innovative approach to measuring children's learning is being implemented in several Asian and African countries, and most recently in one state in Mexico. Using basic reading and arithmetic tools, citizens in 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), Senegal (2012), Mexico (2014) and soon in Nigeria (2015). 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"). The Mexican project is called MIA ("independent measurement of learning"). Since 2012, these citizen-led large-scale assessments have covered over one million children each year across these countries.



Photo Courtesy: Uwezo, Kenya



Photo Courtesy: ASER Pakistan



Photo Courtesy: Uwezo, Kenya

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 at their own pace and scale; the groups come together voluntarily to share and learn. The model was transplanted from one country to another and adapted to suit each country's context.

Hindi Testing Tool, India

कहानी
 बहुत दिनों से बारिश हो रही थी। गाँव में सभी जगह गंदा पानी भर गया था। सभी बारिश के रुकने की राह देख रहे थे। अचानक एक दिन बारिश रुक गयी। सूरज निकल आया। सब लोग खुश हो गये। आसमान में चिड़ियाँ उड़ने लगीं। लोग अपने कपड़े सुखाने लगे। बच्चे भी घरों से बाहर निकलकर खेलने लगे।

कथकल
 राधा के पास एक तोता है। उसकी चोंच लाल है। वह बहुत बोलता है। सब को हँसाता है।

म र थ
 ह श
 ल ब न
 क घ

गाना **खुश**
 मोती **घोला**
 पेर **धूप**
 आलू **किला**
 आग **मोर**

English Testing Tool, India

Story
 Seema is a little girl. Her mother gave her a book. It had lots of stories and nice pictures. Seema reads it every morning on her way to school. She learned many words. Her teacher was very happy. The teacher gave Seema another book. It had more stories. She showed it to all her friends.

Para
 I go to school by bus. The bus has four wheels. It has many windows. It is blue in colour.

e d w
 s c
 g h z
 i q

hand star
 bus
 cat book
 day few
 old
 sing bold

Math Testing Tool, Pakistan

2014 **Math Tools** **2014**

Sample - 1

Number Recognition 1-9		Number Recognition 10-99	
6	2	19	54
1	7	43	66
5	8	35	79
		40	92
3	9	26	80

Ask any 5 from the child, out of which 4 must be correct.

Start from Here

Subtraction		Division
43 - 17 —	66 - 29 —	84 ÷ 7
96 - 49 —	54 - 38 —	75 ÷ 5
61 - 15 —	73 - 25 —	58 ÷ 2
82 - 44 —	37 - 18 —	72 ÷ 3

Ask child to solve any two sums. Both must be correct.

Ask child to solve any one sum. It must be correct.



Photo Courtesy: ASER CENTRE, India

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 each participating country.
- Second, to engage citizens everywhere in understanding their own situation and strengthening accountability.
- 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.



Photo Courtesy: Uwezo Laikipia, Kenya



Photo Courtesy: Uwezo Laikipia, Kenya

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 are enrolled but not attending as well as 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 aim is not to assess grade level competencies but rather to focus on whether children have basic skills.
- 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.