

PRESS RELEASE

The ninth Annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2013) released in New Delhi, 15 January 2014

The Annual Status of Education Report, ASER 2013 was released in New Delhi today by Shri Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission. This is the ninth annual report.

ASER is the largest annual household survey of children in rural India that focuses on the status of schooling and basic learning. Facilitated by Pratham, in each rural district ASER is conducted by local organizations, and institutions. ASER 2013 reached 550 districts and close to 16,000 villages, 3.3 lac households and 6 lac children in the age group 3-16.

Every year, ASER finds out whether children in rural India go to school, whether they can read simple text and whether they can do basic arithmetic. In 2005, 2007, and every year since 2009, ASER has also included a visit to one government school in each sampled village. Since the implementation of the RTE Act in 2010, school visits in ASER have included indicators of compliance with those norms and standards specified in the Right to Education Act that are easy to measure. In 2013, ASER visited 14,724 government schools.

ASER 2013: KEY FINDINGS

Enrollment in the 6-14 age group continues to be very high, with more than 96% of children enrolled in school. The proportion of out of school girls in the 11 to 14 age group has declined since last year.

Overall, enrollment numbers remain very high. Over 96% of all children in the age group 6 to 14 years are enrolled in school. This is the fifth consecutive year that enrollment levels have been 96% or more.

At the All India level, the proportion of girls in the age group 11 to 14 who are not enrolled in school dropped from 6% in 2012 to 5.5% in 2013. The greatest progress is visible in Uttar Pradesh, where this percentage dropped from 11.5% in 2012 to 9.4% in 2013. However, in Rajasthan the proportion of out of school girls age 11 to 14 rose for the second year in a row, from 8.9% in 2011 to 11.2% in 2012 to 12.1% in 2013.

Nationally, there is a slight increase over 2012 in private school enrollment. The proportion of children taking paid private tuition classes has also increased slightly since last year.

For the age group 6 to 14, there has been a steady increase in private school enrollment from 18.7% in 2006 to 29% in 2013. The increase in private school enrollment since last year has been very small, from 28.3% in 2012 to 29% in 2013.

There are wide variations in private school enrollment across rural India. In Manipur and Kerala more than two thirds of all children in the 6 to 14 age group are enrolled in private

schools. Less than 10% are in private school in Tripura (6.7%), West Bengal (7%), and Bihar (8.4%), although these numbers have grown substantially since 2006.

As with private schooling, the incidence of private tuition varies across states. In Tripura and West Bengal, more than 60% of children in Std. I-V take paid private tuition. This proportion is high in Odisha, Bihar and Jharkhand also. But in Chhattisgarh and Mizoram, less than 5% of children in Std. I-V take paid private tuition.

The proportion of children in Std. I-V who receive some form of private input into their schooling (private school, private tuition or both) has increased from 38.5% in 2010 to 42% in 2011, 44.2% in 2012 and to 45.1% in 2013.

For the first time, ASER 2013 measured the amount families pay for a child's private tutoring. Nationally, 68.4% of Std. I-V government school students who go to private tutors pay Rs. 100 or less per month. Among private school students of Std. I-V, 36.7% pay Rs. 100 or less per month and the same proportion pay between Rs. 101 and Rs. 200 per month for private tuition.

Since last year no significant improvement is visible in children's ability to read.

At the All India level, for Std. III, the proportion of children able to read at least a Std. I level paragraph has risen slightly from 38.8% in 2012 to 40.2% in 2013. This increase is mainly coming from improvements among private school children. Among Std. III students in government schools the proportion of children able to read Std. I level text remains unchanged from 2012 at around 32%.

States which show steady improvement in reading ability among Std. III students since 2009 are Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab.

Nationally, the proportion of all children in Std. V who can read a Std. II level text remains virtually the same since 2012, at 47%. This proportion decreased each year from 2009 to 2012, dropping from 52.8% in 2009 to 46.9% in 2012. Among Std. V children enrolled in government schools, the percentage of children able to read Std. II level text decreased from 50.3% (2009) to 43.8% (2011) to 41.1% (2013).

In 2013, states in which more than 60% children in Std. V in government schools could read a Std. II level text were Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Mizoram and Kerala. Over time, reading levels among government school students in Std. V students have shown improvement in Jammu & Kashmir and Gujarat.

Children are still struggling with basic arithmetic.

At the All India level, no change is observed since last year in the proportion of Std. III children who are able to solve a two-digit subtraction with borrowing. This level of arithmetic is part of the curriculum for Std. II in most states.

In 2010, 33.2% children of Std. III in government schools could at least do subtraction, as compared to 47.8% in private schools. The gap between children in government and private schools has widened over time. In 2013, 18.9% of Std. III students in government schools were able to do basic subtraction or more, as compared to 44.6% of Std. III children in private schools. Despite these differences, overall levels across the board are worryingly

low.

Nationally, the proportion of all children in Std. V who could solve a three-digit by one-digit division problem increased slightly, from 24.9% in 2012 to 25.6% in 2013. Typically, this kind of division problem is part of the Std. III or Std. IV curriculum in most states.

Among Std. V children in government schools, 20.8% children could do this level of division in 2013. The figure for private schools is 38.9%. In arithmetic, a large fraction of children are lagging several years behind where they are expected to be.

In 2013, over 40% of government school children in Std. V in three states, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Mizoram could do three-digit by one-digit division problems.

SCHOOL OBSERVATIONS: During ASER 2013, 14,724 government schools with primary sections were visited across rural India.

Teacher attendance holds steady, but student attendance drops.

Teacher attendance in both primary and upper primary schools shows no change over the 2012 level of 85%. But student attendance shows a slight decline, especially in upper primary schools from 73.1% in 2012 to 71.8% in 2013.

The proportion of “small schools” in the government primary school sector is growing.

The proportion of schools with a total enrollment of 60 students or less has increased steadily since 2010, from 27.3% in 2010 to 33.1% in 2013. This means that almost a third of all government primary schools in India are “small schools”. In Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Meghalaya, Manipur and Mizoram this figure is higher than 60%. Eight states show an increase of more than 10 percentage points in the proportion of small schools in the period since 2010.

Compliance with most measurable Right to Education (RTE) norms continues to grow.

The proportion of schools that comply with RTE pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) norms has increased every year, from 38.9% in 2010 to 45.3% in 2013.

The proportions of schools with an office/store, a playground, and a boundary wall have increased slightly over 2012 levels.

With respect to drinking water in schools, ASER observations include not only if there was provision for drinking water but also if drinking water was available on the day of the visit. Overall, the percentage of schools with no drinking water facility has declined from 17% in 2010 to 15.2% in 2013. In seven states, more than 80% of schools visited had both the facility and drinking water was available. These states are Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Kerala and Karnataka.

Since 2010 there has been a significant increase in the proportion of schools with a useable toilet, from 47.2% in 2010 to 62.6% in 2013. In 2010, 31.2% of all schools visited did not

have a separate toilet for girls. This number has declined to 19.3% in 2013. The percentage of useable toilets for girls has also increased from 32.9% in 2010 to 53.3% in 2013.

Over the last three years, there has been a steady increase in the provision of libraries in schools that have been visited. The All India figure for schools with no library provision dropped from 37.4% in 2010 to 22.9% in 2013.

During ASER 2013, nationally, mid-day meal was observed being served on the day of the visit in 87.2% of schools. This year, in 14 states, mid-day meals were seen in more than 90% of schools visited.

The guarantee of education is meaningless without satisfactory learning. There are serious implications for India's equity and growth if basic learning outcomes do not improve soon.

Since 2012, the policy framework in India for elementary education is changing. The focus is shifting to learning outcomes.

The 12th Five Year Plan document, in its chapter on its education, states that education policy "...will place the greatest emphasis on improving learning outcomes at all levels."

**From Box 21.1
Targets for the Twelfth Plan:**

Improve learning outcomes that are measured, monitored and reported independently at all levels of school education with a special focus on ensuring that all children master basic reading and numeracy skills by class 2 and skills of critical thinking, expression and problem solving by class 5.

Additional guidelines are being issued by SSA for the planning process for 2014-15 school year, which directs states and UTs to plan and implement interventions to ensure learning enhancement in children.

The challenges ahead relate to planning, implementation and tracking by states:

- How will learning goals be articulated for different levels?
- What concrete plans will be put in place for implementing these goals?
- How will implementation take place?
- How will progress be tracked?

Given the changing priorities in education policy and the shift in focus to learning outcomes, we hope that in the next few years there will be much better news to report on children's learning.