Capacity building for assessment literacy

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In India, according to the 2013 Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), over 96 percent of Indian children ages 6 to 14 are enrolled in school.

In many countries, the current MDG for education has almost been reached.
...But in many countries, basic learning is often well below policy expectations

Being in school does not seem to imply that children are learning:

- According to the 2013 ASER survey in India, more than half of 5\textsuperscript{th} graders are three or more grades behind in reading

- Similar trends can be seen in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Mali, Senegal and Pakistan (Uwezo; ASER Pakistan; Beekungo, Jangandoo)

The crisis of “learning” has to be tackled – by policy makers, teachers, parents, others.
Governments have focused on measuring and delivering inputs

In many developing countries,

- Many decades of work on access and enrollment. Focus on inputs and outlays, not on outcomes. Government usually produces data on inputs and expenditures.

- Not much of a history of thinking about or doing much on the issue of children’s learning. Assumption is that schooling will lead to learning.

- There is not much of a tradition or culture of measurement especially of outcomes. Neither is there a practice of looking at large scale evidence for informing policy.

- Large majority of parents of children currently in school are illiterate or have had very little schooling.
The problem

Many different metrics and methods are available to assess learning outcomes at scale.

Learning assessment data needs to be understood and acted upon. Producing data does not guarantee action.

All of these have a common goal: to bridge the gap between policy and practice.

This means that they should bridge the gap between *policy makers* and *practitioners*.

However, little evidence to suggest that LO data does in fact influence policy – as the ACER systematic review also suggests.
Needed: new paradigms for measurement

- We are moving towards a new set of goals for the new MDGs. These goals must include basic learning for all children.

- New paradigms for measurement will be needed in countries where the learning crisis is most acute and where the culture of measurement is weak. These methods and models for measurement must lend themselves easily to action for improvement of learning.

- Therefore, these models need to communicate with those who can take action (policy makers, teachers, parents), but are not assessment experts. How to help them see and ‘feel’ the problem for themselves?
The ASER model: 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-mystifying research and assessment**

**Enabling analysis based on evidence**

**Demanding accountability & working out collaborations with government**

**Linking assessment and analysis to action**
How can this be done?

Example 1: Citizen-led assessments

- The citizen-led assessment model, adapted for use in 8 countries so far, uses simple indicators and a rigorous methodology to communicate to a wide variety of stakeholders, from policy makers to parents.

- The objectives of the model – putting learning at the centre of the agenda - drive decisions about what, who, when and where to measure. Every assessment model is built around its own answers to these questions.

- The ASER survey has been central in communicating the problem of low learning outcomes. Clear impact on policy visible.
These countries assess basic reading and arithmetic ability for more than a million children each year.

The model originated in India in 2005.

In India and Pakistan, the exercise is called ASER, meaning impact.

In East Africa, it is called Uwezo, which means capability.

In Mali, it is called Beekungo, meaning we are in it together.

In Senegal, it is called Jàngandoo, which means learn together.
How can this be done?

Example 2: ‘Policy to Practice’ workshops

Offered by ASER Centre to a wide range of audiences including senior, mid range government officials; NGOs; teachers, others.

Three core elements:

- **Understand a policy** (selected depending on the audience)
- Use simple indicators to **collect your own evidence** on whether policy goals are being met
- Compile, discuss, **identify possible actions**.
**NGOs and Colleges**

- NGOs, DIET and Cluster Resource Teams, DIET Jashpur's teachers and Cluster Academic Coordinators

**Government Schools**

- SCERT Haryana
- NGOs and colleges
- NGOs and Govt. School Teachers
- Colleges

**Colleges**

- NGOs, BIPARD

**University Students**

- D.ED and M.ED students of Malwa Central College, Ludhiana
- Doon University students, NSS coordinators and NSS students

**Key workshop elements:**

- Typically 3-5 days, depending on audience
- Offered as a standalone module or a series
- Common structure, customizable content
- Field component is non-negotiable
- Very successful in showing how to collect and use evidence to plan action
Concluding thoughts

- In the run up to 2015 and beyond, access + learning will likely be at the centre of the international agenda for education.

- However, in many countries, the scale of the "learning deficit" is vast. Currently large proportions of children completing primary school do so without even basic skills in place.

- Local country/context specific initiatives that build on and develop existing capacities are fundamental to achieving these goals.

- Capacity building efforts should encourage countries in the global South to develop metrics, measures suited to their own contexts and capabilities.
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