ASER Survey Training Guidelines





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ASER Survey Training Model

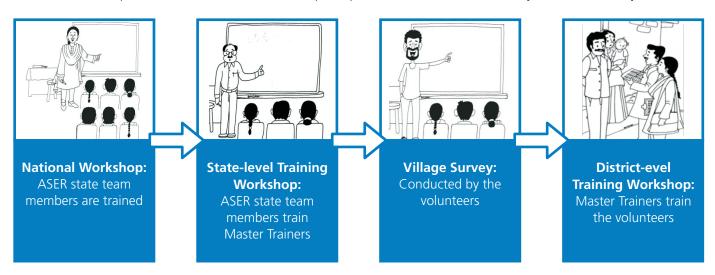
Overview

The ASER survey is conducted in each district of India with the help of volunteers. These volunteers belong to local organizations such as universities and colleges, non-government organizations, self-help groups, youth clubs, government departments, District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), private sector companies, etc. Across the country 30,000 volunteers test 650,000 children each year.

ASER Centre trains these volunteers on the ASER survey process which gives them the skills needed to survey a village, assess children's learning levels reliably and record the information accurately. ASER Centre follows a rigorous three-tier training model that consists of:

- 1. National Workshop
- 2. State-level Training Workshop
- 3. District-level Training Workshop

Standardization in training and survey is extremely important in order to ensure that the data collected is accurate and comparable across districts and states. For this purpose, ASER Centre ensures that the guidelines for the trainings delivered in all three tiers are kept clear and consistent so that each participant is able to conduct the survey in an identical way.



Tier I: National Workshop

Each year the ASER survey begins with the national workshop. The central ASER team, ASER state teams from across the country, representatives from NGOs, participants from other countries, interested independent researchers etc., come together for 6 to 7 days for this workshop. The national workshop usually comprises 4 days of classroom sessions and 2 days of field visits to nearby villages. The main objective of the national workshop is to orient close to 100 participants and thoroughly train all ASER teams on standardized tools, procedures, and processes for the survey. This understanding is checked through quizzes and mock trainings. Planning sessions in the national workshop are crucial for successful roll out of state-level trainings and execution of the survey in every state.

Tier II: State-level Training Workshop

The national workshop process is replicated in the state-level training workshops in every state. The main objective of this training is to prepare the Master Trainers as lead trainers so that they can successfully train the volunteers in their own districts. State-level training workshops are also scheduled for 5 to 6 days with 4 days of classroom sessions and 2 days of field visits. The structure of state-level workshops is kept as close as possible to that of the national workshop.

Tier III: District-level Training Workshop

District-level training workshop is the last tier of the training for the ASER survey. The Master Trainers, trained in the state-level training workshop, now train the volunteers who are to conduct the survey in the villages. On the basis of their performance in the state-level training workshop, a weak and a strong master trainer are paired together. Each pair of master trainers is responsible for the successful execution of the complete survey in one district, including all quality control processes. After the district-level training workshop, the survey is conducted by a pair of volunteers in each sampled village.

National Workshop

Objectives

The national workshop aims to impart complete information about the survey, covering knowledge of content through training manuals, piloting of data collection formats, training on survey and quality control processes, etc. It aims to build capacities for training, management of finances, and planning of state-level training workshops in addition to implementation of the actual survey.



Content Knowledge

- To ensure complete understanding of every step of the survey process among the participants through training manuals and practice sessions; as well as to pilot the training manuals
- To familiarize participants with all assessment tools and data collection formats; also pilot the tools and formats
- To facilitate standardization and communicate the importance of standardization at every step of the survey process, especially in the method of testing of children's learning levels

Quality Control

- To explain and practice the rigorous monitoring and recheck process
- To familiarize participants with the monitoring and recheck formats; also pilot the formats

Capacity Building

- To develop participants' understanding of best practices in training and content delivery, in order to improve their knowledge and performance as trainers
- To build capacity of ASER state teams to train on the survey process, monitoring and recheck process, and finance process

Management of Finances

- To provide an overall view of the flow of funds to various parties (such as government, NGOs, master trainers, etc.) for doing the survey
- To build a thorough understanding of the method of keeping financial records of payments disbursed to various parties for conducting the survey
- To familiarize the participants with the financial record-keeping formats

State Planning

- To provide a platform for planning the roll-out of the trainings and the survey at the state level
- To discuss the roles and responsibilities of each member in the state team
- To thoroughly plan for logistics and prepare for all possible contingencies.

Features of the National Workshop

High levels of rigor, attention to detail and in-depth discussions on learnings from the field are intrinsic to ASER survey workshops. The national workshop is the backbone of the survey. A careful mix of classroom sessions, field visits, quizzes, mock trainings, and planning sessions is designed so that each process can be not only understood theoretically, but also applied in the field, practiced in mock training sessions, and reviewed in the classroom again before the actual roll-out of the survey.

Classroom sessions:

Classroom sessions are designed to provide a theoretical understanding of the survey process, quality control processes, financial planning for the survey, etc. Sessions are held in both English and Hindi and reading material for trainings is also provided in both languages to facilitate understanding among participants. Manuals, role plays, group work, energizers, and power point presentations are used to make the classroom sessions effective and engaging. Discussion on experiences from the field is highly encouraged during classroom sessions to lend a more realistic and comprehensive understanding of the processes.

Energizers:

Energizers are used to enhance audience engagement during or in between classroom sessions. They are make good ice-breakers for people attending the national workshop for the first time, creating a more participative and positive learning environment.

Group activities:

The national workshop caters to more than 100 participants, hence personalized engagement and discussions are often carried out in small groups. During the ASER trainings, trainees are divided into small groups with an assigned group leader for effective flow of ideas, consolidated discussions, and personalized feedback. Group leaders are usually those members who have substantial prior experience of the ASER survey.

Field visit:

One day of the national workshop is devoted to practicing carrying out the actual survey. One more day is devoted to rechecking the villages surveyed on the first field visit day. All participants are involved on both the days. The two field visit days are extremely useful for the participants to get a first hands-on experience of doing the survey and recheck. Most importantly, during these days participants are able to assess their own and each other's strengths and weaknesses in the field. In addition to personal feedback for each participant, group discussions and open forums provide an opportunity to improve on shortcomings.

ASER quiz:

A comprehensive quiz is administered in order to ensure that every participant understands the ASER survey content and process. Post training, additional sessions are organized to fill the learning gaps identified through the quiz results.

Mock training:

One day of the national workshop is devoted to mock trainings on the survey process. Participants are informed in advance about their topics. Mock training sessions are organized to gauge participants' training ability and assist them in improving the same. Participants are assessed by experienced ASER trainers and personalized feedback is given to each participant. This session prepares participants to lead and deliver trainings in the next tier more efficiently and confidently.

Clarification and feedback:

At the end of each session in the national workshop a short feedback and clarification round is conducted to provide additional support, close any gaps and ensure participants' complete understanding of the subject.

State planning:

The national workshop is also a time to finalize the roll out plans for each state, including identification of partners, plans for state-level trainings and calendars for execution of the survey. Experience of the previous years' ASER survey is reviewed, people requirements are identified, partner lists are drawn up, tentative timelines are made, and detailed budgeting is done.

Participant Feedback on the Training in the National Workshop

Feedback is a significant part of the ASER process. Participants' feedback is useful mainly to ensure that trainings can be improved in the future. The feedback collected after the national workshop seeks to evaluate training material, activities during the workshop, training delivery, and some logistics and facilities related to the trainings. Participants' feedback, especially on training material, activities, and delivery is significant to improve overall training effectiveness in the next tiers, that is during the state-level workshops and further during district-level workshops. After the national workshop, feedback was collected from the participants on various apects of the training provided in the survey process session, monitoring and recheck session, finance session, communications session, and the train the trainer session. A summary of a total of 71 reponses has been shown below.

State-level Training Workshop

Overview

State-level workshops comprise the second tier of the ASER survey training model. ASER state teams conduct these workshops in their respective states after the national workshop. The main objective is to prepare the ASER Master Trainers to take charge of conducting the district-level training workshop and thereafter executing the survey in the districts allocated to them. The selection of Master Trainers is largely based on their past performance in conducting the ASER survey (if any), ability to lead and communicate well, and execute and monitor the survey process in a timely manner. Candidates from within the Pratham network and from partner organizations are hand-picked by the ASER state and central teams. Master Trainers are hired by ASER Centre for the duration of the ASER survey. After the state-level training workshop, usually 2 to 3 Master Trainers conduct the training in a district and they remain in that district till the completion of the survey.



Objectives of the State-level Training Workshop

A Master Trainer is given charge of the survey in a district if he/she is able to demonstrate thorough knowledge of all aspects of the survey including survey methodology, quality control mechanisms, budgeting and finances during this training. The key objective of this training is to fully prepare each Master Trainer to confidently lead the survey his/her district. The objectives and format of this training, as mentioned earlier, are similar to that of the national workshop.

- 1. **Content Knowledge:** Training manuals, formats, and tools used are in the relevant regional language so that the content can be understood easily. An ASER state team member uses part of the first day to talk about the ASER survey and explain the survey process. A more detailed discussion on their roles in the process follows this session.
- 2. **Quality Control:** Each master trainer is responsible for collecting the highest quality of data from his/her district. The quality control session is conducted not only to give an understanding of the monitoring and recheck mechanisms but also designed to train participants on how to competently foresee or identify problems in the field, coordinate with ASER state members, and take immediate corrective action.
- 3. **Capacity Building:** The objective is to enhance the training ability of each Master Trainer so that he/she can effectively train the surveyors at the district-level training workshop. Here mock training sessions are the most useful.
- 4. **Management of Finances:** ASER Centre expects strict adherence to procedures for complete and honest recording of finances related to the survey. The Master Trainers are accountable for all funds spent in a district. The finance and budget session teaches them how to manage funds and budgets for their district and use of relevant formats to maintain complete and transparent records.
- 5. **District Planning:** Plans, timelines and budgets for district-level training workshop and survey are finalized by the ASER central team representative and ASER state team members along with the Master Trainers for each district in a state.

Features of the State-Level Training Workshop

Features of the state-level training workshop are largely same as those of the national workshop. However, considering the diversity among states in the country, the method of conducting the activities during the state-level training workshops is customised as required.

Classroom sessions:

Classroom sessions are designed to orient participants on the survey process, monitoring and recheck and finance process. Training is delivered in the relevant regional language, presentations are simpler compared to the national workshop and case studies are used to make the sessions more relatable.

Energizers:

These are used as ice-breakers and help the ASER state teams in building good rapport with the participants.

Group activities:

Participants are divided into small groups with an assigned a group leader for effective flow of ideas, consolidated discussions, and personalized feedback. This activity also encourages learning from peers.

Field visit:

Every element of ASER process is practiced extensively in the field before the actual survey. Two days of the state-level training workshop are reserved for practicing the actual survey and rechecking the villages surveyed, respectively. Villages near the training venue are chosen or these pilots.

ASER quiz:

A comprehensive quiz is administered towards the end of each process and immediate feedback and clarification is provided to the participants. This is helps to ensure that all participants have understood the ASER process and to also more importantly to identify participants who have not obtained the minimal understanding required to conduct the survey. Quiz scores are used by ASER state teams to pair Master Trainers for the district-level training workshops and the survey.

Mock training:

Mock training sessions are designed to build/enhance training capabilities of the participants. It helps the ASER state teams to identify Master Trainers who are likely to require additional support during the district-level training.

District-level planning:

The last day of the state-level training workshop is devoted to developing plans and strategies for the district-level trainings workshop and survey. The ASER state teams share their district-specific field experiences with the participants and preview possible challenges and their solutions.

Schedule of the State-level Training Workshop

It is extremely crucial to strike a balance between conducting a training which is neither too elaborate nor too rushed. Care is taken that participants are able to absorb all content in a cohesive manner and ample time is given for clarifying doubts. Since Master Trainers are the central point for holding the survey together an additional day is planned as required to doubly ensure that they are fully ready for the field.

6-day Schedule

ASER 2014: 6-day State-level Training Workshop Schedule				
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3		
1. Theory: Survey Process	1. Pilot Field Visit: Survey Process	1. Clarification and doubts - Survey Process		
	2. Quiz: Survey Process	2. Theory: Monitoring and Recheck		
		3. Theory: Budgeting and Finance		

Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
1. Pilot Field Visit: Monitoring and Recheck	1. Quiz Revision and Clarifications	1. Revision
2. Quiz: Monitoring and Recheck and Finance	2. Mock Trainings: Survey Process	2. Role Plays

District-level Training Workshop

Overview

The district-level training workshop is the last tier of the training for the ASER survey. The Master Trainers, trained in the state-level training workshop, now train the volunteers who are to conduct the survey in the villages. Generally two ASER Master Trainers conduct the training in a district. Unlike state-level training workshops, the district-level workshop has three key components, viz. classroom sessions, field practice sessions and a quiz. This workshop is usually of 3 days, comprising 2 days of classroom sessions to explain and discuss the survey process and administer the quiz, and 1 day of pilot field practice. After the district-level training workshop, the survey is conducted by a team of two volunteers in each village. The Master Trainers remain in the district after this training for the entire duration of the ASER survey work. They monitor the survey and conduct rechecks after the data collection is done.



Objectives of the District-level Training Workshop

The key objective of the district-level training workshops is to prepare all volunteers to conduct the survey in the assigned villages. Master Trainers organize 2- or 3-day trainings in order to provide consistent and thorough knowledge of the ASER survey process. The objectives of any district-level training are:

- To ensure that the volunteers get a comprehensive and thorough understanding of the ASER survey process.
- To ensure that the volunteers are capable of executing the data collection task in a school and village.
- To apply and check this understanding through a field pilot and quiz. the Master Trainers for each district in a state.

Features of the District-level Training Workshop

Following are the features of district-level training workshops that have been followed across 577 surveyed districts in ASER 2014:

Classroom sessions:

Theoretical information about the ASER process is communicated through classroom sessions, most importantly in the relevant regional language. At the district level, because of erratic electricity supply and unavailability of laptops with every Master Trainer, it is difficult to use a projector during trainings. Hence, survey formats are printed on large flex banners and used as aids in explaining data collection and entry to the volunteers. These banners are in the relevant regional, portable, easy-to-use and cost-effective.

Field visit:

The second day of the district-level training workshop is reserved for the pilot field visit. All volunteers visit the nearby villages to practice the ASER survey process. This is a vital part of the district-level training workshop, because it gives participants an overview of the entire exercise as well as the experience of actually conducting the survey on the ground. The field day is also extremely useful for clarifying all doubts and revising instructions, if needed.

Quiz:

The third day of the district-level training workshop is earmarked for administering the quiz. All questions in the quiz paper are designed on the ASER survey process only. Ideally, every participant is expected to score more than 70% in the quiz to ensure that they have understood thoroughly what needs to be done in the field. Participants who score less than 70% are paired with those who score 70% or more or else they are dropped. After this training, additional sessions are organized to fill the learning gaps identified through the quiz.

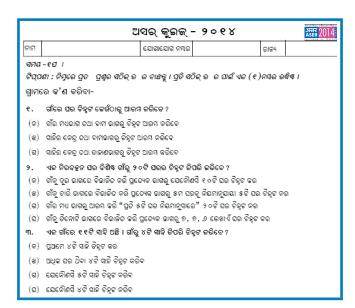
Schedule of the District-level Training Workshop:

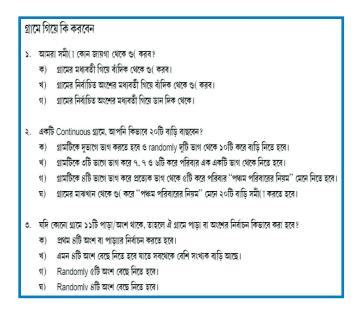
Keeping the volunteers' role in mind, ASER Centre developed 2- and 3-day training schedules for the district-level training workshops.

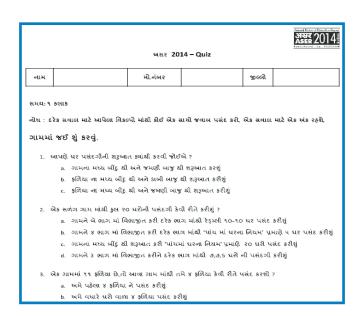
Sample of district-level quiz in four languages: Hindi, Oriya, Bengali, Gujarati

हमें घरों का चयन कहों से शुरू करना चाहिए? गाँव के केंद्र से और बायी तरफ से शुरूआत करेंगे टोले के केंद्र से और बायी तरफ से शुरूआत करेंगे टोले के केंद्र से और बायी तरफ से शुरूआत करेंगे एक सतत गाँव से कुल 20 घरों का चुनाव आप कैसे करेंगे? गाँव को दो भागों में विभाजित कर प्रत्येक अनुभाग से 'हर पाँचवें घर के नीयम के अनुसार 5 घरों के चुनेंगे गाँव को 4 भागों में विभाजित कर प्रत्येक अनुभाग से 'हर पाँचवें घर के नीयम के अनुसार 5 घरों के चुनेंगे गाँव के मध्य से शुरुआत करते हुए 'हर पाँचवें घर के नीयम के अनुसार 20 घरों को चुनेंगे गाँव को 3 भागों में विभाजित कर प्रत्येक अनुभाग से 7,7,6 घरों को चुनेंगे एक गाँव में 11 टोले हैं| ऐसे गाँव में आप 4 टोलों का चुनाव कैसे करेंगे? हम पहले 4 टोले खोनेंगे हम ज्यादा घर वाले 4 टोलों को चुनेंगे हम उथादा घर वाले 4 टोलों को चुनेंगे

d. हम रैंडम ढंग से 4 टोलों को चलेंगे







Schedule of the District-level Training Workshop:

Keeping the volunteers' role in mind, ASER Centre developed 2- and 3-day training schedules for the district-level training workshops.

6-day Schedule

Sample: 3-day district-level Training Workshop Schedule					
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3			
1. Theory: Survey Process	1. Pilot Field Visit: Survey Process	1. Quiz: Survey Process			
	2. Revision and Clarificationss	2. Clarifications and feedback			

