

CASE STUDY OF VILLAGE GHALLADER OF DISRICT MARDAN

Situation Context:

The village Ghallader is located in Mardan District about 25km South-East of Mardan city. Although boasting a modest population of 6000 villagers, the village is severed from adjacent areas by an acute lack of transportation. The villagers use tongas(horse carriages) and rickshaws(chinchi) . The village population primarily comprises of Afridi & Yousafzai tribes. Most of the villagers are daily wage earners, who work as day laborers- in the main town of Mardan, Shiekh Maltoon or in the nearby marble factory. The current services of village education, as well as health & hygiene are appalling and it appeared that the population lacks awareness on most basic issues of well being. As a result common diseases like flu, fever, and malaria hepatitis are common in the area. The village population presently faces the problem of non-availability of qualified doctors, lack of education facilities, poor sanitation as well as extremely appalling sewerage facilities.

ASER Strategy: Diagnosing the Problem

ASER team with the ambition to reach the most deprived, to bring forth the voices unheard and the marginalized targeted Ghallader in order to sensitize the people about the current situation about education and learning that they are facing, and to motivate them for action. With this aim the ASER team began informal discussions with the community, which included the village elders, the women, as well as the children. A noticeable trait about the conversations was the low level of awareness among the majority with regards to the importance of education. Some did have an understanding of their basic education needs but still felt helpless in taking action. An elderly man met us and acknowledged the plethora of problems in education which continue to plague the village, but he acknowledged that on a personal level, he was helpless to bring about any meaningful change.

During the ASER team's visit to the local high school, the Head Teacher apprised us about the problems he faced everyday in delivering the basic Right to Education to the community. He acknowledged that the children had lack of proper class rooms and furniture they had to sit on the bare ground due to cloistered space and an acute lack of furniture. Due to this, many students avoided coming to the school, and instead preferred going to other schools which were far from the village. As a result a lot of students did not show

up in the SSC/matriculate exams since the examination centres were out of their reach. The community felt helpless in their conversations feeling that only the government or some divine providence can resolve the issues of education in the village.

Time for ACTION!

The ASER team had rightly perceived that the main malaise of education was an acute lack of ownership, as well as no communication amongst the community members to search for a remedy for their problems. The ASER gatherings are conceived with this in mind only providing a common platform for sharing information and mobilizing the stakeholders for possible action – the baithak is also a platform for potential activists for education. The initial contacts with the community proved to be very helpful, and their response was very positive. They were interested in education, good health facilities as services needed for normal life style; they were ever ready to help us, and more importantly themselves.

The ASER team took advantage of the gathering and immediately requested the Head Teacher to call an SMC meeting to review the poor conditions of education as per ASER 2011 survey findings for the village.

The first reaction of the SMC was utter shock at the findings being presented by ASER. They were astonished to know the status of learning and education in their village, and started blaming the government for completely neglecting them. In this way, the first task of ASER was achieved which was to bring the people out of their comfort zone, and instigate them for meaningful action. At this juncture, one of the SMC members, a retired government teacher stood up and said that he was ready to play his part in education awareness, and volunteered to teach the children in the school to bring them up-to-mark. Gradually, each member of the SMC started to give his feedback on what could be done to improve the education conditions in the village.

However, ASER evidence seeks concrete action. Therefore, ASER team put forth the agenda of sustained community action for improving the conditions of the school. This was an extremely novel idea so that instead of blaming each other, the SMC agreed to work together and develop a coordinated school development plan. They immediately began to mobilize local resources to enable them to provide mats, water coolers and educational charts to the school. This was a totally novel idea never discussed in the village prior to that day- a wakeup call had been triggered for the first time; the community was actually ready to take ownership of the school and their children's learning . Not only that, they were also ready to take action to improve the local conditions in their village. .

Conclusion: Action, Reactions and Repercussions: A New story on the Horizon

ASER is primarily about creating ownership of education condition based on the local data gathered and this was achieved amazingly in Ghallader. In fact, the community was so much sensitized that one of the SMC members agreed to perform duty as a volunteer teacher, responsible to bring out of school children to the school. The community and the SMC were motivated to prepare a school development plan for the betterment of the school in their village based on their own resources. This depicted how a community can go from we do not know to **WE CAN** bring change once we know where we stand' Yes, Government is indeed responsible to provide free and compulsory education, but it is the Citizens who are indeed the ultimate guardians of education and learning for their children. It is all about access to hard evidence through very simple tools, feeling responsible, and taking ownership of Education.