

“EDO Education-Bahawalpur Become an Ambassador of ASER”

Case Study Bahawalpur

ASER data is a household based survey which assesses the learning levels of children along with collecting figures about enrolment levels, dropout rates and out of school children. It is this fact based nature of ASER that attracted Executive District Officer-Education, Mrs. Naseem Mansoor in Bahawalpur. Many organizations have worked on education in the district but never have any organization given hard facts and figures about the status of education. This is what pulled Mrs. Mansoor to ASER and she started taking extra interest in the finding of the survey and began using it to form basis of many decisions in the future.

Mrs. Mansoor was first informed of ASER in January when she was briefed about its objectives, focus and outcomes. Soon after she was invited to the Provincial Launch in Punjab on 7th February, 2012 to which she humbly agreed and came to Lahore to attend it. Slowly she started to understand what ASER is, its scale and realized its credibility. Immediately after returning from Lahore she asked the ASER Team to brief her about the specific situation of Bahawalpur. On doing so, and after explaining her many activities that ASER will undertake in the district, she called her staff and told them to educate themselves with ASER findings and also facilitate us in whatever way possible. She said that she wanted to see impact of dissemination of ASER in a tangible manner hence, wanted to ensure that the department acts as a catalyst in all ASER activities.

Mrs. Mansoor was happy to attend the Bahawalpur District Launch as well and even when the District Report Card was being disseminated she made sure that all her department members were present and were educated on findings of ASER. In one of her speeches she said that Annual Status of Education Report, 2011 is a great source of information for the Education Department as it measures enrollment and learning levels of the children. She said “It is an eye opener for all of us and policy makers at district, provincial and national level as it attempts at meeting the educational data gap that exists in our society”. According to her, this report can become a valid source of information that can help the department in making informed policy decisions to improve quality of education. She said that it is not easy for the government to assess ground realities on its own and it is always useful that initiatives such as ASER are working on improving quality of education in a collaborative manner. Moreover, Mrs. Mansoor has asked all her department staff to pick up the points highlighted by ASER and make interventions accordingly.



Thanks to the initiative and interest of Mrs. Mansoor, the Education Department in Bahawalpur is now focusing on developing district targets by looking at problematic areas highlighted in ASER, such as high incidence of out of school children and poor learning levels. In any discussion on education the department staff quotes the ASER figures. Moreover, many staff members have accompanied ASER Team in village Baithaks, listening to the concerns of the communities on first hand basis. Many staff

members are now motivated on their own after learning the ground realities and are making efforts at improving conditions of education. The department is trying to improve enrolment by tackling issues that are discouraging children from attending schools. For example: 1. Rs. 20 monthly school fee – the Department is debating on waiving this fee in the poorest areas of Bahawalpur; 2. Maltreatment of students by teachers – Department is making efforts to monitor teacher behavior thoroughly; 3. Poor quality of teaching – Department is looking into training teachers so that quality of learning is ensured.

It is amazing to see how convincing one person has caused a domino effect in the region, where more and more people have started believing in the cause of improving education in Bahawalpur and have started work on it. Mrs. Mansoor, has truly become an ambassador of ASER as she never gives away a chance to endorse it and we are sure that even after her tenure as an EDO is complete she will continue to spread awareness about ASER to ensure that informed education policy is made that is in sync with the ground realities.

Naveed Iqbal

Bahawalpur