

“Nomads’ children enroll in Schools, ASER facilitates”
Case Study Rawalpindi

As per ASER 2011, Rawalpindi has about 5% children out of school. From all of this, 3.2% are dropouts and 1.8% has never ever been enrolled. A large number of nomads and tribes are living into different slums across in the outskirts of Rawalpindi District. Many of these are Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as a result of calamity of earthquakes and floods.

In one of the ASER village “Lehri Brahma” in Kahota, is about 74 km from Rawalpindi city. The village is highly inhabited by *Pathan* nomads and their families who were displaced during the 2005 Earthquake. These families work as labor on daily wages or as domestic help in the nearby vicinities. Their children are mostly involved in collecting garbage and trash from dumping grounds near the Kohat city. These families live in pathetic conditions and their youth is usually involved in criminal activities.

It was during the visits that the ASER Team made for the baithaks that we realized that in this village a substantial number of children were out of school. When we met with the influential people of the slums we found out that children were a good source of income for their parents hence, sending them to school was not a viable option for the poor community living in the area. A small portion of the children were sent to a nearby Madrissa but that too not on regular basis.

ASER Team decided to intervene and held a baithak to discuss the advantages of education. Many parents still remained reluctant about sending their children to school as they said that they were extremely poor and did not have enough resources to send their children to schools. ASER Team educated the community that government schools are free and they even provide free text books for children. Hence, money should not be the determining factor here. Parents just had to be convinced to let go off the nominal income that the child brought home from picking garbage.

The first encounter did not go so well and hence, we decided to leave and return some other day to convince the parents again. A few days later we revisited the village again and this time we took TMA volunteer Rawalpindi and two influential people from the village with us. We explained the advantages of education again to the community and the TMA volunteer also tried his best to convince the community. He tricked the community by saying that the District Government had decided to send all the slum dwellers out of the city due to health problem and only those families whose children are enrolled in Government Schools will be asked to stay. This news spread like wild fire in the whole community and soon everyone was keen to enroll his or her child in school.

We contact the Head Teacher of Govt. Elementary School “Lehri Brahma” Kohat and requested him to enroll all the children from these slums. Next day there was a big crowd outside the school and almost all nomad families along with their children were present. After two days we spoke to the Head Teacher of that elementary school just to confirm about the enrollment of children’s and he revealed that about 23 new children including females were enrolled in the past two days.

It might seem unethical that the ASER Team tricked the nomads into sending their children to school but we had no choice as we were faced with a deadlock. Besides, the trickery was for the sake of a long term good and was part of the struggle for Right to Education. Hence, we are happy that because of the small trick we played around 23 children have secure futures.