ASER for Tracking Learning in Political Constituencies –
Longitudinal Study On Accountability & Action
(2024-2028/9)

تعلیم کے بدلے ووٹ – ہر پاکستانی کا بنیادی حق
Taleem kay Badlay Vote-Har Pakistani Ka Bunyadi Haq
(Education For Votes- Right of every Pakistani)
INTRODUCTION

Policymaking in education, much like in other areas, has long been the domain of the bureaucrats and politicians in Pakistan mutually agreeing on various types of ‘political settlements’ as combinations of technical evidence and legitimacy often sought from citizen-professional groups such as influencers, civil society, teachers, youth, technocrats comprising important vote banks. Education decision-making about school upgradation, infrastructure, facilities, teachers recruitment and appointments, students’ enrolments to curricula, has historically been dominated by a dual set of actors viz. a) officer cadre or provincial and federal bureaucracies for technical-data, institutional inputs and memory over time, and b) political representatives/ politicians as drivers of decisive voice on the distribution of various combinations of education service delivery among their constituents, from school construction, missing facilities, combo lists of cargo culture goods/services (lap tops, motorcy cles, tablets, SMC powers etc. and other items) to teacher recruitment and deployment. The politicians are hyper-conscious of short power cycles, where visibility of what gets decided and distributed tangibly matters for managing and sustaining voter expectations; the outcomes may often be incidental to the perceptions of ‘short term achievements.

As Pakistan’s democratic institutions are deepened and strengthened with the new government now in place after the 12th General Elections in Feb. 2024, it is imperative to track ‘political settlements’ as they evolve in selected constituencies by various political champions supported in turn by the bureaucratic managers/leaders. These ‘political settlements’ or the political economy arrangements for education/other services can be weak or strong depending on various contexts and geographies. If education outcomes are to be substantively improved, there is an urgent need to move towards a model of constructive political competition. Such an approach will rank politicians according to evidence about the outcomes they produce for their constituent/voter populations rather than mere satisfaction of short-term ‘displays or show and tell’ by elected/favorite political clients or intermediaries. The assumption is that with democratic processes maturing over time the voters with direct access to their voting sites/political parties, are also becoming ‘mature’ about their expectations from their ‘patrons’ with options to exit/shift alliances if not satisfied. In order for such shifts to happen, it is necessary that data and evidence is collected, organized, assessed and

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1 “Political Settlements” is a political economy framework designed by Professor Mushtaq Husain Khan (SOAS, Univ. of London) to understand why policies and institutions that worked well in some contexts achieved poorer results in others. The concept of political settlement, highlights how the distribution of organizational and political power among different classes or groups influences policies and institutions in different countries. The political framework looks at varying outcomes ... explained by the way institutions work in practice...The relative power and capabilities of organizations are therefore important determinants of how institutions work. The distribution of organizational power is defined as the political settlement.
discussed for accountability at the unit of relevance to political organization and competition – within the constituency. This is important in order to benchmark and compare performance of elected representatives, and push for enhanced electoral accountability in education.

**ASER in Political Constituencies 2024-2028**: Against this backdrop, ITA/ASER Teams propose to conduct a survey in selected constituencies to identify access and learning challenges in light of Article 25-A, right to education and highlight various aspects of the political economy of education and learning in Pakistan that need urgent public policy attention. District wise constituency mapping will make it imperative for newly elected political leadership to deliver on their election promises during their term. Constituency mapping on indicators/trends will equip them to make informed and evidence-based decisions for improvement of education, become accountable to their vote banks and in turn, make the educational bureaucracy effective and accountable to the key stakeholders – the children and parents of Pakistan. The twin goals of learning with access for ALL without discrimination cannot be met unless the challenge of public sector attention, political stability, public policy and action are not addressed through the political will.

**CONSTITUENCY BASED MAPPING – THROUGH ASER**

ITA has been a pioneer in this initiative (2013), elements of which were adopted/adapted by Alif Ailaan education campaign. In 2013 election campaigns, education was a priority area highlighted in the manifestos of all political parties. The pressure to make education a priority was generated through various campaigns including “Politicians knocking on the doors” mobilizing politicians during their political campaigns prior to the General Elections. This was conducted by Idara-e-Taleem-o- Aagahi (ITA) and the ASER team in collaboration with Alif Ailaan. The PKND campaign was a 90 second video clip of 15 politicians in rural and urban Pakistan. They were filmed going to their constituents’ households, knocking on the doors to ask about the education temperature/status of that household in terms of whether all eligible children were at school; if they were learning well, and if not in school the politician would take the child to the neighborhood school for enrolment. Subsequently, during the ASER 2014 report launch, ASER Pakistan revealed the assessment findings conducted in 17 constituencies and shared various aspects of the political economy of education and learning in Pakistan that required urgent public policy attention.¹

The second study conducted in 2022 across 4 selected political constituencies

of 4 political resulted in informing the politicians about the crisis on learning and equity and how to use the information for their campaigns. The reports from the study were launched by politicians (national/provincial) in their respective constituencies amidst community members. A shortcoming of the work has been that these were ‘one off’ studies and were not upheld by the political economy analysis, neither tracked over time. As the next upgraded phase, the methodology and approach of the survey will be extended to 08 political constituencies in 2024 for creating accountability at local level by calling out politicians and sharing results for action. This will entail a bold longitudinal study with a mixed methods approach including a baseline survey of strategic political constituencies for the newly elected parliamentarians across different parties and provinces/ICT (8 political constituencies) in 2024 creating accountability for actions on foundational learning. The baseline will be followed up with a midline (2026) and endline (2028) of the same constituencies to track outcomes over time, explore and extend the ‘political settlement’ framework and analysis of ‘patron-client’ relationships backed by evidence. The study will remain focused on the dual interplay of politicians juggling education priorities together with the bureaucratic dispensation/planning and budget disbursements in those very political-provincial and local geographies. Constituency mapping will be done through the maps/GIS of the areas obtained from the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in their respective districts where ASER Pakistan 2023 has already taken place. Sample will be drawn on the basis of the selected constituencies. As shared earlier, the same constituencies/baselines will be tracked in 2026 (midline) and 2028 (endline) to collect evidence on actions taken by the political parties based on their manifesto promises against the results of the ASER baseline in 2024 in the same spaces. Youth enumerators will be mobilized exclusively for this task from the 8 constituencies building their skills as Youth Education Champions/Communicators.

Data thus collected by youth enumerators in strategically selected political constituencies would build their capacity for accountability with responsibility and mission, an empowering aspect of the ASER as a citizen (youth) led social movement. The Political Report Cards by ASER Pakistan would render a strategic advocacy opportunity on accountability and actions for learning annually with baseline-midline and endline tracking report cards. The campaign will remain active up to 2029/30 to be use as an open-source public good.

YOUTH MOBILIZATION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

The program intends to play an instrumental role in creating accountability through citizen engagement along with engaging politicians in a focused and consistent manner for quality education and implementation of Article 25-A.

This will be done by picking ten best youth volunteers from each district involved during the survey and training them for 5 days (Hybrid) on quarterly basis for a series of planned activities to be undertaken in order to hold politicians accountable and also for effective citizen participation. The volunteers will be trained to undertake the following activities:

- Sharing crisp timely results against promised provisions with parents, teachers, media, and politicians through evidence-based dialogues, village/mohalla gatherings, meetings and campaigns etc.
- Strengthening the capacity of local CSOs and media to monitor budgets and procurement processes in the education sector of target districts.

Such activities will not only promote civic participation for education and human development, but will also lead towards improved service delivery, public engagement, resource management, transparency and accountability.

**PROGRAM VISION**

“A world where human rights are realized through education and learning as entitlements without discrimination; where people are empowered to know and claim their rights and those with responsibility are held to account for the realization of those rights.

**GOAL**

To stimulate demand from citizens and thus put pressure on the state/politicians to meet their obligations to provide quality services and build state capability and responsiveness through systematic evidence and community participation

**KEY OBJECTIVES- To:**

1) Generate constituency wise analysis (for learning, access and equity) holding politicians accountable for their relevant constituencies over time.
2) Highlight the challenges and progress of each constituency pertaining to Article 25-A in light of the ASER findings for each constituency.
3) Engage actively with politicians for improvement of quality education by sharing results with them and engaging them in the surveys making them understand the nature of the problem and experience as first-hand encounter with their constituencies or clients, invoking empathy for how gaps in children’s learning affect families and communities.

4) Identify areas where MPAs and MNAs could affect improvement in the state of education in their constituencies, including resource allocation, governance/SMCs, missing facilities improvement, teacher recruitment, private school regulation and data driven decisions.

5) Increase youth involvement through civic education and community engagement, civil society strengthening and fostering community-level monitoring

6) Building linkages for more effective accountability and providing forum to public where they can demand performance, outcomes, lodge grievances, exercising “Citizens’ Voice”.

TARGET AREAS & ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Across Pakistan for selected 8 constituencies of MNAs and MPAs, selection of Constituencies will be done through a direct and consultative process concurrently. ITA seeks to engage with representatives from Education Parliamentarian Caucus (EPC), PIPs, PILDAT, Pakistan Foundation Learning Hub, Tabadlab, Youth parliamentarians, Malala Champions, Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), disability activists etc..

DURATION FIRST ROUND FOR BASELINE OF POLITICAL CONSTITUENCIES

April 2024 – March 202