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Volunteer Opportunities & Challenges What have we learned?
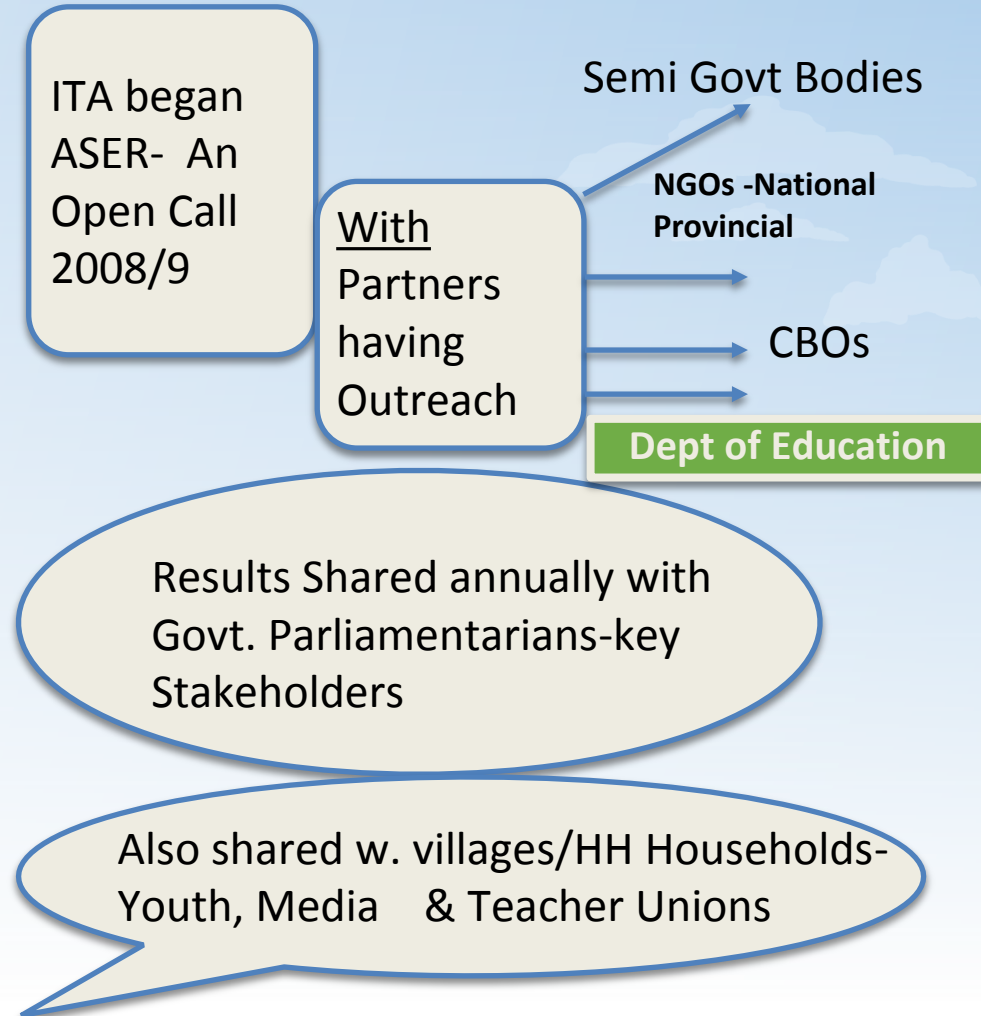Round 3

ASER - A Citizens' Call for Action

- Citizens' agitate about low response of Govt. to high demand for education and learning in Pakistan-a country with unmet MDGs

- A "wake up call" to citizens & parents

- In 2010, Article 25-A made part of the constitution- Education declared as a Fundamental Right for ALL 5-16 year olds- Right to Education (RTE)

- Pakistan a High population country- 200 million & 24 million children (5-16 age) out of school in 8 administrative units

- Citizens push for action on education audit & accountability on multiple fronts: learning, access for equity and social justice

- ASER a citizens' response in 2008- a tool for RTE-mapping coincidently covering the same age group children-5-16 yrs.

- Provinces and federal area passed laws to implement Article 25-A- rules and implementation being framed very gradually

- For Age 5-16 years still 24 million children out of school! and millions more not learning !

Citizens' Roles and Mobilization

Citizens as:

- Critics of *State & Society*
- Investigators-collecting *evidence-knowledge producers*
- Mobilizers
- Open Learners
- Innovators
- Policy Influencers
- Activists for Change
  - *What does not work within? & what more is needed*

ITA began ASER- An Open Call 2008/9

With Partners having Outreach

Semi Govt Bodies

NGOs -National Provincial

CBOs

Dept of Education

Results Shared annually with Govt. Parliamentarians-key Stakeholders

Also shared w. villages/HH Households-Youth, Media & Teacher Unions

Mobilizing Constituencies of ASER through Multiple Information Products

Household

- Survey - Children's Learning Assessment –create spaces for change conversations- building relationships /trust

Village

- Baithaks/Katcheris – Community Gatherings at village level
- Citizen Stories
- Call for Action; Posters ; 'Politicians knocking on the door'

District

- Report Launch /Thematic Card Dissemination
- Creating District Report Cards with Dept. of Education
- Teacher Baithaks; Posters – Videos – Politicians MNAs/MPAs

Provincial

- Report & Thematic Cards Dissemination
- Policy Dialogues ; Media Trainings /Universities /Think Tanks Departmental briefings based on [ASER] data
- Standing Committee on Education – Videos

National

- Report Dissemination
- Policy Dialogues
- Media Trainings /Coalitions – Synergies
- ASER Documentary/ videos

Advocacy – Target Audience

Village Baithaks
- Parents,
- Community
- Youth/Children
- Dept. officials/others
- Occasionally MPA/MNA

Advocacy Tools

District Level Launch
- Government Official
- Teachers/Headteacher
- Teacher Unions
- Youth
- CSOs
- Media

Advocacy Tools

Provincial Level Launch
- Ministries- Standing Committees
- Bureaucrats
- Educationists/Experts
- CSOs
- Media
- Youth/
- Teacher unions
- Judges/Lawyers

Advocacy Tools

National Level Launch
- MNAs-Senators
- Standing Committees
- Federal Government
- Youth
- Media
- Universities /Think Tanks
- Justice Systems
- INGOs/Donors

Advocacy Tools

Opportunities & Challenges of Volunteer Engagement -

- Opportunities far outweigh challenges
- Human Centred initiatives and social movements are built on the conviction that citizens are the primary raison d' (reason to be) for governments and not the other way around
- Armed with this basis of empowerment - movements that have begun on accountability and audits be they in education/learning, gender, health, democratic participation as entitlements
- Purpose is to demystify participation through simple tools that generate evidence to become the basis of accountability and action at multiple levels
- Each of the PAL network countries brings a rich diversity of approaches on how volunteers are mobilised - from multiple citizen spaces - villages-sub-districts- districts

Volunteers have much to gain - as -
 just consumers but producers of knowledge

An open call is made to join a movement that will
- build their capacity to engage with tools-
    - what they mean; how they work-their hard core logic
- how to use them in the homes in villages, in towns,
- how to generate data and report cards - that can be
    - understood and stir action at the local, district,
Provincial and national land global level
the temptation is too much

Not just capacity and capabilities but spiralling into
new opportunities for impact- in multiple spaces

Evidence through expanded footprints & witnesses gives
courage to access multiple stakeholders who are difficult
and intimidating to reach in hierarchical unequal societies
from Parliamentarians, ministers, presidents, senators and
bureaucrats - industry -media and many more

The ideas generate into action at multiple levels

- Numbers count - with 1000s of volunteers coming from multiple identities and platform of different ages and passion the stock is a rich one - as rich as citizens are in any country- who are mobilized for an important task- to assess children's learning levels..

- In Pakistan alone our volunteers represent over 20 organizations who work in the diverse spaces of unknown villages -families holding conversations around various friendly tools

- Multiple actions begin from CLFs to digital learning with children's groups- maths science in learning kiosks to chess clubs- to chalk parho barho to Read India -

- Some succeed some do not but citizens as volunteers have a tough skin they keep rising - again and again

- **Challenges**

- Gender - parity in volunteers

- Conflict, fear and violence, surveillance which keeps some away when many agencies start

- Volunteerism that costs $ 7.5 to cover travel cum food in lieu of 3 days of training

- Do we acknowledge them enough?

- Do we hear all voices? concerns and ideas?

- Do we recognize the additional strengths of volunteers from measurement/assessment to action? do we build on them ?

- Do we recognize their growth - needs beyond ASER rounds?

- Do we have a mentorship program - pairing those who have made it with those who aspire to learn a bit more

- Do we generate a data base much like the ASER data about these volunteers- our ambassadors of learning - Do we look for heroes of ASER - perhaps yes perhaps not..

- Audits and compliance means that we have to corporatize /procure volunteerism - is that good or bad; it means that we have to issue EOIs expressions of interest - panels to select from bids from institutions - and individuals get left out

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Challenges

- *Recruitment*– *Finding committed, active and re-energised volunteers is the key challenge-*

- *We think that the best recruits can be done through existing volunteers. How about asking these great volunteers to tell their friends or someone who has the time, energy, inclination to help out. [Consider saying]: "you do such a great job here, we would love for you to think about who in your group of friends and family... you could refer me to someone"*

- *Consistency of effort and interest across volunteers*– *Another most important challenge is to motivate volunteers and keep their efforts and interest consistent. Volunteers who are continuously helping out and engaged, keep them motivated by assigning volunteer leadership roles, involve them more often and reward them.*

- *Involve the most active volunteers in "Advisory Sessions" to pass on information, get ideas about activities, share successes or topics in order to help them feel empowered.*

- *Transitioning from an older network of volunteers to younger members coming in* – *Sometimes it becomes difficult to transition from a group of older volunteers who are "getting burnt out" to some younger volunteers. The problem is that "a few volunteers who are excited to pass on the torch, others feel they are being replaced." But to keep the program sustainable & effective, it is very important to involve new members.*

- *To resolve this issue, it is suggested that the organization have the older members to train & mentor the newcomers.*

- *Adequate training & communication* – *training the volunteers on the tasks they have to perform is very important. They should know their responsibilities in order to full fill them. If a volunteer isn't performing well, he or she may give up and quit, or they might do more if you only ask or train.*

THANK YOU...!

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