

## Exploring the Applicability of a Rapid Health Assessment in India

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**Abstract :** ASER Centre, the research and assessment arm of Pratham Education Foundation sees measurement as the first stage of action. ASER uses primary research to push and give empirical foundations to policy discussions at a multitude of levels. At a household level, common citizens use a simple assessment (a floor-level test) to measure learning across rural India. This paper presents the evidence on the applicability of an ASER approach to the health sector. A citizen-led assessment was designed and executed that collected information from young mothers with children up to a year of age. The pilot assessments were rolled-out in two different models: Paid surveyors and student volunteers. The survey covered three geographic areas: 1,239 children in the Jaipur District of Rajasthan, 2,086 in the Rae Bareilly District of Uttar Pradesh, and 593 children in the Bhuj Block in Gujarat. The survey tool was designed to study knowledge of health-related issues, daily practices followed by young mothers and access to relevant services and programs. It provides insights on behaviors related to infant and young child feeding practices, child and maternal nutrition and supplementation, water and sanitation, and health services. Moreover, the survey studies the reasons behind behaviors giving policy-makers actionable pathways to improve implementation of social sector programs. Although data on health outcomes are available, this approach could provide a rapid annual assessment of health issues with indicators that are easy to understand and act upon so that measurements do not become an exclusive domain of experts. The results give many insights into early childhood health behaviors and challenges. Around 98% of children are breastfed, and approximately half are not exclusively breastfed (for the first 6 months). Government established diet diversity guidelines are met for less than 1 out of 10 children. Although most households are satisfied with the quality of drinking water, most tested households had contaminated water.

**Keywords :** citizen-led assessment, rapid health assessment, Infant and Young Children Feeding, water and sanitation, maternal nutrition, supplementation

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