

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ASER South Asia, a hub of the People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network, comprising ASER Bangladesh, ASER India, ASER Nepal and ASER Pakistan, will host a webinar on "Understanding foundational numeracy: South Asian perspectives on ICAN, a new global tool" on August 10, 2020. This 90-minute webinar will begin at 6:15pm Nepal time.

The panelists for the webinar include Asif Saleh, Executive Director, BRAC Bangladesh; Rukmini Banerji, CEO Pratham; Shehzad Jeeva, Chairman The Inter Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC) Pakistan; and Marguerite Clarke, Senior Education Specialist, World Bank, New Delhi. The discussion will be chaired by Ramya Vivekandan, Senior Education Specialist, Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

The ASER approach to measurement that originated in India, catalysed by the non-government organisation Pratham in 2005, has resonated across the Global South. In these 15 years, it has been adopted and adapted by organizations in Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, Mozambique, Botswana); America (Mexico and Nicaragua); and Asia (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal). In 2015, these organizations came together to establish the PAL Network in order to advance our common agenda on ensuring that all children acquire at least basic reading and arithmetic skills. Together, PAL Network members reach and assess more than a million children.

Today, the importance of measuring foundational reading and numeracy in early grades is widely acknowledged, and is reflected in indicator 4.1.1(a) of the global Sustainable Development Goal for education (SDG 4). However, tracking progress towards this goal has been hampered due to lack of data: none of the existing large scale assessment models like Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) are able to generate comparable data on children's foundational skills in early grades. In 2018, PAL Network members took on the challenge of developing such a model.

[ICAN](#) is an open-source, robust and easy-to-use tool that assesses foundational numeracy and is available in 11 languages. For South Asian contexts, the tool is available in Urdu, Hindi, Nepali and Bangla as well as in English.

South Asia is the only region that does not already have a common assessment. The webinar aims to advocate for a common regional tool that can be used in diverse contexts (school, household, refugee camps etc) and is particularly important in the post COVID era when we will see learning loss and increasing equity gaps. As the world grapples with defining the 'new normal' in the wake of COVID-19, tools like ICAN can provide rapid, cost-effective, easily scalable mechanisms that can help to understand how best to support children's learning.