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'20% rural students lack books'

Only one in 10 had access to online classes, finds September's ASER survey

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

About 20% of rural children have no textbooks at home, according to the Annual State of Education Report (ASER) survey conducted in September, the sixth month of school closures due to CO-VID-19 across the country.

In Andhra Pradesh, less than 35% of children had textbooks, and only 60% had textbooks in Rajasthan. More than 98% had textbooks in West Bengal, Nagaland and Assam.

In the week of the survey, about one in three rural chil-dren had done no learning activity at all.

About two in three had no learning material or activity

Learning hit

Some highlights from the Annual Status of Education Report's September survey:

- 5.3% of rural children aged 6-10 years are not enrolled in school this year, in comparison to just 1.8% in 2018

- Around 20% of rural children did not have textbooks at home by September

- About 70% of rural

children did some learning activity. Of these, only 11% had live online classes

- Less than 36% of rural children received some learning materials or activities from the school. Almost 75% of such school interaction was via Whatsapp

given by their school that week, and only one in 10 had access to live online classes.

However, it's not always

about technology; in fact, levels of smartphone ownership have almost doubled from 2018, but a third of children with smartphone access still did not receive any learning materials.

Although the Centre has now permitted States to start reopening schools if they can follow COVID-19 safety protocols, a majority of the country's 25 crore students are still at home after seven straight months.