

Angel Xpress Foundation



A Review

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PREFACE

It must be said at the outset that it was a unique and gladdening opportunity for this reviewer to make visits to the garden literacy centres and view the varied processes of Angel Xpress Foundation's (AXF) work with the under-privileged children of Mumbai.

To document all the nuances and various dimensions of this 5-year enterprise for public good is a complex task indeed. One had to look into and reflect upon the aspects of community resources, garden spaces and park keepers, volunteer commitment and trainings, children at the centres, pedagogy routines, life skills and co-curricular activities, central office leadership and database organization, and sponsorship and funding needs, NGO networks and the culture of citizenship.

A reading of the Annual Report 2015-2016 and the founder's note sets the tone for the transparent work ethos of this foundation. The leadership has encouraged a federated approach to management of all the *free learning* centres where volunteers teach as per their competency and comfort and the centre managers take independent day to day decisions concerning the centre's functioning .

To bring out AXF's vision , philosophical inspiration and support as well as capture its dynamic functioning ; long hours spent on desk review , a few centre visits and sampling interviews may not do full justice to all the mental and physical work and the spirit of volunteerism that has gone into 5 years of AXF work .

Nevertheless I hope that the comments and observations made in the report find resonance with the AXF stakeholders.

Tara Srinivas

Place: Mumbai

Date:

I: BACKGROUND & PROCESSES

1.1 Analysis & Review of the Vision, Mission and approach of the work of AXF

There are about 1200 BMC schools distributed across Mumbai city. But sadly there is a steady decline in enrolment rates and retention rates in these schools. This despite education being free of cost and about 27 free items being given to students which include uniforms, books, raincoats, school bags etc. Even the infrastructure is compliant with the Right to Education (RTE) policy. A very significant amount of tax payer's money is spent on upkeep of these Govt. schools which are in the wards supervised by 166 counselors. Still quality of Municipal Education suffers and parents are shifting children to expensive English medium schools. The main reasons cited by various surveys indicate lack of quality education and teaching systems.

It is against this backdrop that Angel Xpress Foundation's garden literacy and tutorship movement is a remarkable one that stakes claim to public spaces to connect different classes of people in the cause of active citizenship. It encourages and seeks out well educated adults and youngsters from the neighborhood, with time and an inclination to promote social good, to spend specified hours tutoring children from working class backgrounds, who are studying in BMC schools. A significant number of children are from Hindi or Urdu language medium schools as also from Marathi medium.

The main components or "pillars" of this movement are evident and seen to be as follows:-

Community Resources: The material resources include the garden area, and storage space, provided in the public gardens and spaces. Any other resources provided to the children by the community i.e. snacks, fruits, clothing, toys, stationery, other learning materials et al.

Volunteer teachers: from the neighborhood: the routine volunteers, who are the mainstay and take classes on a regular basis with the focus on Maths and English. The guest volunteers who teach music, art and craft and drama. And inputs provided by dentists and general physicians for health checkups.

The Vision and Mission of AXF: which aims to draw out the caring society to seek meaning in the uplift of the eager and needy in the education segment which is approx 60 - 70% of the child population of Mumbai thereby contributing to the citizenship movement.

Stated in words from the Annual Report (AR: 2015-16) *"To Progress the daily lives of underprivileged children in Mumbai while guiding them towards an improved future"*

I.II Suitability in the current context:The focus subjects are Maths and English which are suitable and pragmatic choices for today's generation. As given the reality of today's world English is the social capital that all children must have in order to strive for equal opportunities. And a sound foundation in Maths is an asset for any skilled job or management task to be done effectively. It is widely accepted that Maths leads to higher order problem solving skills and rational analysis as a general principle.

In the backdrop of the recent articles from Times of India (Annexures 7 & 8) wherein annual sample surveys of Education Quality Index (EQI) show a decline in Maths and English results, and where enrolment ratios are dropping rapidly in Marathi, as well as Hindi and Urdu medium schools of BMC, the efforts of AXF in these subjects stand validated.

A careful perusal of the documents of base-line and end line assessments (AR: 2015-16) show a steady and incremental progress from base level 1 to level 3 or 4. It is evident that the time span taken by most children to reach level 4 is about 3 years at the centre as per my testing of reading, speaking and writing fluency with the sample groups. It is to be noted here that AXF's efforts at tutoring BMC children could lower the rate of drop outs from the BMC schools. This in itself is a social service as it is a well-known secret that poor parents with their low income / one job household economic status get into *painful* debt sending their children to fee paying private schools cherishing the hope for a better future for their children.

A cautionary note:Since this is pitched as a "tutoring model" which reinforces fundamentals, the managers of this innovative project would do well to have and maintain good communications with the BMC school of origin. A municipal school teacher is well paid on a government scale and must not abdicate her responsibility of teaching the children, her wards.

From my observations however it is clear that AXF is seized of this matter and therefore emphasis is rightly placed on giving the child personal care and attention, a sense of warmth and trust, daily access to green well-kept parks, a sense of confidence with life skills coaching. Exposure to exciting and novel activities and excursions and annual day events also add to the confidence building of the under-privileged student. The list of these extra-curricular activities is long and varied i.e. **DaanUtsav, Meditation techniques, movie and museum visits, Shlok recitation, X mas Celebrations, Diwali celebrations, Grace Day celebrations etc.**

I.III Pedagogy Model:The pedagogy that has been followed for the past 2 years, doesn't aim to mirror the school curriculum or follow the same techniques and routines. So, overt discipline, completion of portions, and overhanging threat of fear and punishment does not exist. Attendance does fluctuate and simple reminders are given to parents and peers to come regularly for better learning.

The multi-grade and multi-level groupings are very effective as proven by the Rishi Valley Satellite schools model where on completion of level 1 a child moves to level 2 and so on. Here the focus is on proficiency and not age. AXF worksheets and notebooks and syllabus sheets are used for each level of Maths and English and the volunteers follow the routines. The syllabus is designed in-house and distributed to all centres.

Teaching is done (as per my observations) in these centres with an eye on imparting a sound foundational grasp of the 2 subjects and does not use too many new teaching-learning materials or teaching gimmicks.

English Lessons focus on	Reading, writing, speaking & conversation, spelling & grammar, drama, role play and songs. Tutors correct the mistakes on worksheets, practice books and the children acknowledge and re-do their work. Tutor-volunteers encourage students with symbols of stars and Good /Ok and Well done sign offs.
Maths lessons focus on	Teaching Tables, writing and reciting them, simple addition, double digit etc. Subtraction- single, double etc. Long division with lots of repetition of problems and practice. Word and sentence problems introduced in higher learning groups. Geometry: with drawings and hands on activity.

AXF mentions this as Experiential Teaching in the AR: 2015-16, in the sense that it has proven to be effective and good teachers vouch for this classic methodology as a Good Practice. It is also noted that a keen observation from a volunteer tutor Marco has spurred changes in pedagogy, from the initial years. His remark coming from the perspective of another culture about children needing to strengthen their problem solving skills and learning to learn independently has led to tutors taking a much more inter-active route and enquiry based teaching vis-a-vis their teaching routines. This has been incorporated into the tutor training modules as well.

I.IV Comparison with similar models: the project model that is most similar to AXF would be the OASIS project in Bhopal run by Mr. Pradeep Ghosh and Mrs. Ghosh. It is called the Museum School project wherein children from the worst served slums are brought to unused, but well-kept Museum gardens in Bhopal in buses and tutored for 2 hours by volunteers drawn from colleges mainly and some retired teachers and museum officials. Though community in this case, willingly helped with teaching learning materials, financial need was always an issue for daily food and snacks and petrol for bus journeys. Care and wellbeing of children was highest priority here as many children came from violent home cultures where child neglect was rampant. Child profiling showed that many children were

regular school absentees who stayed at home to look after younger siblings while their parents were at daily wage work.

Other models can be mentioned in the matrix below for some aspect of similarity:

Sl.No.	Name of Program/Project	Methodology
1	Avehi Abacus	Coaching and tutoring children in Life Skills with a different curriculum from the school. Special Flipcharts created to teach family life, cultures from different countries around the world, and “Understanding adolescent growth”, which included changes in their anatomy, hormonal changes, menstrual hygiene and mood swings. Time: After school hours on one day of week. Place : In- school
2	Rishi Valley Satellite schools	Here the MGML teaching –learning materials were used where groups of children learned together or independently working on individual curriculum cards. Peer sharing was encouraged. The movement from one level to another was termed “Learning Ladder “. Problem solving skills were actively promoted.
3	Centre for Learning Resources, Pune	In house Municipal School project for English fluency, with a strong listening to “ <i>language</i> ” component.
4.	Magic Bus, Mumbai and Karjat	Life skills through football: projects in slums, BMC schools as well as Orphanages and Children’s homes. Public playground spaces was made ready and accessible to nearby under – served children as recreation and focus activity in the evenings or early mornings bringing discipline and fitness into their lives.
5	Paragon Trust (Liz Mehta)	In school project in 6-7 BMC schools with strong emphasis on teacher training and reading & writing skills for children. (Foundational skills)
6.	Kamala NimbkarBalBhavan, Phaltan,Satara	Independent low fee paying school. For classic foundational methodologies and effective bi-lingual teaching in Marathi and English through Good Practice Pedagogy. The school has a printing press that prints children’s creative writing and art work also to circulate among interested communities.

II: CAPACITY BUILDING

II.I Review of Volunteer training and profile of volunteers

The following is as per the discussions and feedback I had with Anubha Sharma, CEO AXF on the various trainings that have been initiated.

Induction sessions for new volunteers who join mid- year are conducted one on one by the center head, after that the volunteer is supervised by a veteran volunteer for mentoring for some time before being assigned a group.

Training sessions on philosophy of teaching at Angel Xpress as well as implementation of curriculum are held at app 3 month intervals by in- house trainers both for new volunteers as well as for the existing ones to share expectations and end goals for curriculum implementation and whatis working effectively in terms of methodology for teaching gleaned from sharing during center interactions. (conducted by in-house trainers)

Experts (Outside trainers) are often invited to give sessions on making tutors more effective as teachers - e.g. making teaching more effective with storytelling, bringing drama into the classroom, addressing behavioral issues in the classroom, teaching life skills through drama, VedicMathematics, team building workshops - working towards a common goal. At least 4 to 5 outside trainers are invited every year to offer sessions to which volunteers from all centers are invited to attend.

Some recent training sessions were held by PrashantChawla of Accelerate (bringing drama and fun into classrooms), GeetanjaliKaul (making the classroom more interesting through storytelling), VarshaMoraniMakhija, Child Psychologist & Counsellor on handling the adult selves around kids and handling behavioral issues), Sheetal Mehta of Eureka's Activities has conducted sessions on making Maths more fun through Vedic Maths.

AXF is planning to start extensive sessions with SwaroopSampat on teaching life skills through drama this year. Last year there were several sessions on the Pratham curriculum held with Prathamtrainers; this year AXF's own trainers are taking volunteers through similar sessions. (A profile of volunteers is given in Annexure 2).

This variation in the training menu needs to be lauded as it introduces new energy into teaching routines which oftentimes get tedious for both tutor and learner.

III: SYLLABUS, ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION METHODS

The syllabus which is clearly enunciated in the AXF English Framework Manual is a very lucid learning milestones document. It lays out the teaching pathway month by month for levels from E –0 (no knowledge of English at all) to E– 5 (proficiency in reading , writing ,speaking)

The reviewer found this being followed diligently by the volunteers for the month that was indicated and it is a hard –core transaction guide. The Grammar matrix - guide is also being followed. Units’ tests are conducted for the portion taught and this is a Good Practice of Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE). The assessment is done midway through the year for each level and results are termed Mid – line assessment (*Formative assessment*).

The End line assessment gives the real result of the extent and quality of the student’s learning (*Summative Assessment*). At present students are not being marked for skills other than the academic subjects. However AXF definitely does profiles of children in a non-formal manner and tries to provide them opportunities to develop their skills like music, sports, and fine arts. Associations with professional individuals or groups have been made to train students in various skills. However CCE at a later stage can include non- academic talents of students in a modified format.

For Maths too,the levels range from A B C D E F & G. There are 4-5 Maths concepts in each level starting from Level A – introduction to numbers, place value etc. and going up in complexity to Level F – which includes geometry, algebra and statistics. This graded sequential learning is a very tried and tested methodology and in AXF AR: 2015-16 is referred to as **“Experience driven curriculum “**. This is a good practice that one sees in Quality schools and pedagogies. The IT syllabus was not transacted as per my visit schedule.

The results of 30 children passing the Std. X board exam with many scoring above 80% are very encouraging to all stakeholders. It is well known that much of the drop out happens at this stage of secondary education in Mumbai as well as in Maharashtra State.

However AXF does not have quantitative data on student scores before and after joining the AXF tuition centres to showcase the progress of these students. Their assumption not documented, is that most of the students at std X level who passed were very weak in their basics when they enrolled into the centres.

IV: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The AXF Mission seeks to bridge the divide between the quality of foundational learning in BMC schools and in private schools. It is clear that this movement is based on persistent trust in the spirit of social good and volunteerism. This is a road less travelled at least in the Indian context. That it has been sustained from 2012 to 2017 January (5 years) is a big collective learning for all educators and stakeholders alike.

However there are some issues and challenges that need to be looked into and the following are my suggestions / recommendations :

- a. A reserve pool of volunteers needs to be created as absenteeism of volunteers places a dual and ad-hoc burden on other tutors to teach a merged group. It would be useful to rope in internees or assistant volunteers to visit centres on a regular basis and link up with B.Ed.colleges or social work departments for the needful.
- b. The managers of this innovative project would do well to maintain good communications with the schools of origin and its Head Teachers.
- c. Assured sources of sponsorship and funding would greatly ease the smoother functioning of the centres and ensure continuity
- d. Scaling up of the program would lend it more visibility and out-reach and attract more volunteers and colleges to contribute
- e. The compiling of child profiles with professional assistance would help in understanding the family and living environment of the children and would be very useful in later research for any policy advocacy by AXF with its rich experience in hard-core ground work.
- f. Once AXF ensures a more robust stabilization and continuity of volunteers they can further explore specific training partners for Maths TLMs (NavNirmiti), or on inquiry based learning techniques from HomiBhabha Centre for Science Education (HBCSE).

It is to be noted here that starting new centres and expanding the model is not an easy process and requires much effort, and networking, as was the case with the Powai AXF centre which took 2 years to launch.

To sustain volunteer interest some kind of incentive also needs to be given to the 250 volunteers, apart from collective recognition of their services to the community of students. Sponsorship and funding would also ensure ease of admin duties, data management and networking activities like visits to parental homes, child profiling, school and college contact sessions etc.

In conclusion I would like to state that the AR: 2015-16 is a very transparent document and most of my findings , based on my centre observation visits, book-look, discussions with volunteers, children , and central leadership are similar to those stated in the Annual Report .

Annexures

Annexure- 1

Field Visit Schedule

Sl.No.	Day and Date	Place of visit	Timings
1	Friday January 6th	Brahmakumari's Muktananda Garden, Santacruz West	9.30 am to 11am: Observation of multi-level groups of English teaching and learning. 11am -11-30 am: interaction with E-4 (high level) group 11.30 -12 noon: Discussions with 2 Maths Volunteers, Aditya Chatterjee and Ms. Uma, joined by Indriyajit Sethi and Anubha Sharma 12 noon – 12.30 pm: Discussions and sharing with volunteers Aparna, Nidhi and Tushita (Centre head) Discussion continues with Anubha upto 1.15 pm on key issues faced by Angel Xpress.
2	Tuesday, January 10th	Swan Mills Garden, Sewri	10 am -11am: Observation of English multi grade sessions for 70 children. 11am to 11.30: discussions with 2 volunteer teachers, Shilpy and Nidhi. Dance Practice for Annual Day of Grace
3	Tuesday, January 17th	Tilak Udhyan, Juhu, next to Ecole Mondial School	2.30 pm to 3.30 pm: batch #1 of 80 children for Maths sessions: tutoring and mentoring 3.30pm to 4.30 pm: Batch #2 of 80 children for Maths
4	Saturday, January 21st	Bandra Fort Amphitheatre	Annual Day Of Grace : 6 pm onwards All 10 centres participated.

Annexure-2

Questions posed to volunteers:

1. How many hours a week do you give to this tutoring program of Angel Xpress Foundation (AXF)?
2. What are your qualifications, and interests?
3. Do you feel you are duplicating the school routines?
4. What is the different element or environment that you provide to these govt. school children?
5. Does the class attendance fluctuate and what keeps them coming here year after year?
6. Do you carry the administrative load for overall organization of curriculum, syllabus, space etc.?

Cross section of volunteer-teacher's replies and responses

(Voices of Volunteers)

Mrs.M: I give 2 hours a week for Maths. I am a computer engineer. I stay close –by to the centre. These children give me so much energy.Iam not able to commit more than this, as home responsibilities exist. I am a home manager. My hobby is teaching these children and I take no calls on my mobile at the centre when I teach here.

Ms. A: I am a student of B.Com. I love teaching Maths to these very receptive children. It is fun.

Mrs. S: I teach Maths 4 hours a week. I am a professional tuition teacher teaching various subjects to students from prestigious schools like UtpalSanghvi and JamnabhaiNarsjee. Many students from the elite schools come to me to pass their exams. But these children ask me all sorts of questions, they want to know many things and absorb information, they want attention, they want care and they have the same mental ability as the elite children. But sadly do not have the same opportunities – My passion is to help them get a good foundation and focus in studies.

Mr. X: I am a student from Xaviers and I came here to teach for my course credits but stayed on to teach Maths long after my course duration. I study Media Studies but I love Maths so I come here to share my love of Maths and teach it to these kids,2 hours a week.

Mrs. S: I am here almost 5 days a week as I am centre -head. Today is English. I stay next door

to the garden centre. I am a qualified MBA advertising and communications and a stay at-home mom till I found the Angel Xpress. I teach English, life skills and Maths too when volunteers are absent. In this centre we self -fund for the daily snacks. We fund raise in our building and with our WhatsApp group of friends. Children come here for the warm and affectionate environment and they learn without fear. These garden spaces are so beautiful. We get the syllabus and curriculum from the AXF central office. As you can see the children sit in different level groups as per their fluency in English and there is one volunteer teacher per group.

Mrs. D: I am here at this Udhyan 6 days a week, sometimes even on Sundays for play activities and games. I am a Chartered Accountant, ex NRI and now that I am in India Mumbai, this is my life. My whole family joins on Sundays. As you can see I handle much of the admin matters of this centre and oversee about 160 children who come in 2 batches every day.

Mrs. N: I am a house-wife. I am a graduate and good at English .I enjoy teaching these children .They are so warm and affectionate and grateful for every little assistance given to them. I find joy and meaning in this work. The syllabus and all other admin tasks are looked after by centre managers and heads.

Mrs. V: I am a Maths volunteer but I help with students problems in Marathi as well when their school gives them homework or exams approach. I also coach students for std. 9 and 10th board exams.

Mrs. G: I coach young children in basic English, the E-0 and E-1 levels. As you can see I am a senior citizen and I need my walking stick to get here.

Ms. S and Ms. Y: We are both sisters and we are good at Maths and Urdu. We have been tutoring at this centre for 3 years now. We stay nearby. We are students of B.Com and CA respectively. We are paid a stipend to do this. We are very happy and comfortable to be here.

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Notes:The responses from the volunteers, (most of whom did not know I was doing a review) collaborates with what the CEO and founder of AXF Anubha Sharma had already stated both in her initial discussions with me as well as in all the info –videos of AXF that are on You-tube: that 85% of volunteers are stay-at home well qualified mothers, and the rest are graduate students, retired teachers and professionals who want to share their education and skills for a worthwhile cause. A few due to the long hours and admin responsibilities are being paid a

salary and some others are in need of compensation for their tutoring time.

These profiles are of core volunteer- teachers but there are also other students from schools like EcoleMondial, GatewaySchool,and NMIMs College etc. who teach AXF children dancing,rubiccube, mental games, singing, and boardgames. AXF attracts other kinds of ad – hoc volunteers too. So, even the volunteer community has assumed a web-like architecture with its reach and connectedness and is very dynamic.

Despite this AXF faces 3 main challenges: 1. it does need a volunteer reserve pool as volunteers need and do take a vacation or an emergency break or move to other paid jobs. 2. Quality training of volunteers in effective pedagogical methods and 3. Creative incentives for volunteers to keep their interest alive in the routines of the AXF cause.

NB: The method of interview used here is the rapid direct sampling as it was not possible to do a structured group interview for 200 plus volunteers who are located across various city wards. Also a reviewer cannot be too intrusive upon the teaching time of a volunteer teacher who has allotted a specified time for this activity.

Garden centers: a snap shot profile



Muktananda Garden SantaCruz West

On the day of visit children were distributed into 6 multi-level multi- grade groups for English learning. The groups were as follows :-

- E-0 --- New learners --- nil
- E-1 --- Three letter words --- 2 groups
- E-2 --- small sentences and initial grammar --- 2 groups
- E – 3 --- good reading and spelling skills 1 group
- E – 4 --- Fluency in speech and general writing--- 1 group

When a volunteer is absent the groups are merged as was the case on the day of visit.

This is one of the earliest garden centres that were started by AXF and due its location and management by public –private partnership it has a spacious and vibrant and verdant ambience. The shaded area is large and sufficient storage space is also provided to store the boards, text books, teaching - learning materials. Many children were seen wearing T shirts and tags of AXF. The time –table is English for Monday, Wednesday and Friday and Maths for Tuesday and Thursday question and answers on daily English usage. In a third it was children describing pictures on fixed as per convenience and consensus of the volunteer tutors.

On the day of visit the main techniques of tutoring was seen to be short grammar lessons written on the black board for children to copy into their notebooks. In another group it was interactive a chart in halting English and encouraged to be unselfconscious about their spoken English, accent or grammar. In some groups children were using work sheets and files and in others note books, provided by AXF free of cost.



Swan Mills Garden : Sewri

On the day of visit there were five groups for English as per the following levels:-

E- 0 --- Beginners --- 1 group

E-1 --- three letter words writing and reading & meanings and initial speech --- 3 groups

E-2 \$ E-3--- Grammar and initial fluency---1 group (*combined batch*)

E-4 --- Fluency in reading and speech --- NIL

This centre has been in existence for the past 2 years and it explains why the E -4 level is not yet reached. The centre- head takes on many admin related tasks, the utmost priority being given to coordination of volunteers for the daily tutoring classes and the daily snacks for the children.

This Swan Mills garden centre is a well

maintained and charming space which has a spacious playing field and three large headed areas and well watered flowering plants. The children learn under the shaded areas comfortably. The watchman's cabin is the storage space for the teaching –learning materials of AXF, and the park extends its opening hours especially for AXF tutoring classes so the din of lay public is not present. This is an indicator of the good relations between the park keepers and AXF admin.

There are approximately 6-8 volunteers for the English batches and 6 volunteers for the Maths batches. Many variations in teaching styles can be observed as expected from a volunteer group of older, young and mid- thirties volunteers. But it can be stated here that this shows a positive diversity instead of imposing a very standardized structure on the “spirit of volunteerism”. As per the desk review that was done by me I am informed that “interactive teaching is fully recommended and encouraged for all volunteers” and it is a non-negotiable. This can be seen in all the centres.

There were no worksheets or folders in this centre and the children were using notebooks for copy writing from the board with interactive questioning afterwards. The syllabus is given from the central AXF office. Children were very assured of themselves, placed the mats and

blackboards and set up class. The prayer in all centres is the same; it is very simple one for the well-being and happiness of all and is not specific to any culture or community as children from all communities are present.

There is a warm and comfortable ambience here with orderly sitting and learning spaces. Children seem to come from working class backgrounds (Mill area drivers, dhabha cooks, house painters, house maids, and primarily domiciled in the area for long). Most of the children walk a distance time of 5-7 minutes to get to the centre and study in nearby govt. or govt. aided schools.

There is a session of circle time that this centre does with the students and child information comes through this activity and one severe case of a bruised child was handled after a visit to the parental home. This ties up with the vision of AXF where under-privileged children feel warm, accepted and cared for by more fortunate adults of the community around, thus reinforcing the concept of a "caring community" that does not look away when they see a child in distress.



TilakUdhyan : Juhu

This garden centre is a smaller space than the above two garden centres and has 160 children in 2 batches coming in 5-6 days a week. 7 groups of children were being tutored in various levels of A, B, C and D for Maths on day of visit. Level A and B were dealing with Addition and Subtraction with different difficulty levels, single, double and triple digits. Another group was doing long division, homework given on worksheets of AXF. A fourth group was involved fully and enjoying geometry - angles and pie charts. A sixth group was busy doing sums from the

standard IX and X text books with the volunteer tutor busily coaching them for forthcoming exams.

All the volunteers seem competent and qualified and fully absorbed in the teaching of a subject universally perceived as difficult and as the centre head puts it each volunteer is allowed to teach as per their own style as long as the children are learning without fear and in a comfortable and interactive way. This seems to be happening!

There is a whole cupboard full of teaching – learning material: Flash cards, abacus, counting beads, text books, note books, work sheets, games etc. etc. This centre has a much smaller space and therefore the noise levels from one group filters into the next, but the whole group seems to have a coping mechanism in place to filter out this noise. Yet if they could get one more canopy or shaded area that would bring in a more comfortable seating and learning space.

The strategy of hiring two additional volunteers from the community, who are proficient in urdu is a very commendable one as it increases the comfort level of Urdu medium students who are a significant number and these lady volunteers are also role models of higher learning and good education.

The appearance of many of the children at this centre suggests low to subsistence level household economy. And in the short time available to me when I spoke to the children about their home scenario (rapid profiling) I found that average household number is 5 persons and in many cases mother is a single parent.

Annexure - 4



ANNUAL DAY OF GRACE

The annual day was an extremely well-coordinated and enjoyable event and around 700-800 children from all centres were present and the performances of dance, drama, role play, and compering talent were drawn from the 10 different centres. The amphitheater was packed to capacity with children, volunteers, invitees, mentors and guests. This in itself is a huge achievement and needs to be lauded for the efforts, time and energy that volunteers, CEO and leadership must have put into the annual event.

The CEO founder 's opening remarks made it clear that AXF vision is to sensitize the privileged students and community to take up tutoring and mentoring of less

fortunate children as 70% of India's child population were not getting quality education and the culture of "looking away " must stop. Starting from the first centre at Bandra with 18 children AXF had grown to 10 centres and approximately 900 children and 250 volunteers.

The other partners associated with AXF are: L&T, Voltas, and other corporate entities, Gateway School Chembur, EcoleMondiale School Juhu, and Billabong school Malad and other volunteers from colleges and Management Institutes.

Annexure - 5

Learning Centre Locations:

Bandra (W) - Promenade end Opp. Mannat

Timings: 5:30 – 6:30 pm

Andheri (E) – Mahakali. ALM Park

Timings: 9:00 – 10:00 am & 5:00 - 6:00 pm

Santacruz (W) - Rajesh Khanna Garden, 17th road

Timings: 7:45 – 8:45 am

Sewri– Swan Mills Garden, next to Ashok Garden

Timings: 10:30 – 11:30 am

Santacruz (W) - Muktanand Park, Saraswat Colony

Timings: 9:00 – 10:00 am & 10:00 – 11:00 am

Malad – At Billabong Malad

Timings: 2:45 – 3:45 pm

Santacruz (W) - Rajesh Khanna Garden

Timings: 5:00 – 6:00 pm

Powai– Hari Om Nagar, behind Hiranandani hospital, besides the gurudwara, oppAyappa Temple, **Timings:** 10:30 – 11:30 am, 3:30 – 4:30 pm

Juhu– TilakUdyan, near EcoleMondiale School

Timings: 2:15–3:15 pm, 3:30 – 4:30 pm

Colaba – Shiv Shakti Nagar (Opp.Badhwaar Park)

Timings: 10:30 – 11:30 am, 3:30 – 4:30 pm

News Paper Clippings

Enrolment in BMC schools falls, maximum in Marathi medium

Students Shift To Pvt English Institutes

Hemali Chhopia & Vinamrata Borwankar | TNN

Mumbai: The city's civic corporation, which runs the largest pool of Marathi schools, ironically has the maximum number of students in its Hindi-medium schools. Population in Urdu-medium schools is a close second and enrolment in Marathi schools is a distant third. The parody of free education is that no one is signing up for it.

Overall, student population in the city civic schools is falling and locals are choosing other schools over public institutes. Data procured by RTI activist Jeetendra Ghadge found the economic and demographic change in the education landscape. "For long, the middle class Maharashtrian has hoped to get good quality public education. But the BMC has failed them," he said.

Rising aspirations, the currency for an English education and the perception that a private school is better, has been putting parents off civic institutes.


Founder of the NGO Pratham, Madhav Chavan said, "This is an all-India phenomenon. Only those who have no other option, the less educated and the economically very backward are sending their children to BMC schools." The numbers reflect that.

When student numbers were falling, in 2015-16, the budget allocation for education was Rs 2,501 crore. Praja's recent report on the state of municipal education in Mumbai had revealed that the annual dropout in Marathi-medium schools was high as 13%.

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Year	Marathi	Hindi	Urdu	English	Total
2012-13	81,216 385	1,21,380 238	1,02,726 208	33,559 51	4,32,744 1,295
2013-14	69,330 375	1,13,794 235	97,893 206	34,099 52	4,07,422 1,270
2014-15	63,335 368	1,10,871 235	97,336 205	34,949 52	3,91,772 1,232
2015-16	59,802 351	1,07,214 231	96,172 204	35,754 55	3,76,791 1,231

■ No. of students | ■ No. of schools | Source: BMC



Poor quality of education hits BMC enrolment, says Praja

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It also pointed out that the declining numbers was in spite of the per capita cost of every student being comparable to that in private schools.

In 2014-2015, the BMC had a per capita spend of Rs 59,375, which remained similar at Rs 59,115 in the 2016-2017 budget estimate. Researchers at Praja said that the enrolments have been hit by the poor quality of education in the civic schools. "Over 89% of respondents tell us that they would move to a private school once they can afford it. So they are unhappy with the quality being provided to them. The enrolments in Urdu and Hindi mediums have declined much lower than in Marathi as the immigrants could be sending their children to BMC schools because they don't have a choice," said Milind Mhaske, project director, Praja.

The headmistress of a Marathi-medium civic school said that enrolment in all schools had taken a hit. "In Hindi- and Urdu-medium schools, there still is a lot of bogus reporting of students. If one visits these schools very regularly the ground reality will be different," she said on condition of anonymity.

Ramesh Joshi, who heads the Brihanmumbai Mahapalika Shikshak Sabha, the BMC teachers' union, said that it was the pull of English education that had caused the dip. "There is a general perception that going to a school and learning in the mother tongue is not good enough and one must study in an English-medium school to succeed. Due to this, several parents send their students to private English-medium schools even if it pinches their pocket. This is very unhealthy," he said.

1. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/enrolment-in-bmc-schools-falls-maximum-in-marathi-medium/articleshow/56724302.cms>

2. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/70-of-middle-school-kids-in-rural-areas-cant-do-division/articleshow/56655077.cms>