

LeapForWord

Non profit Trust registered under Bombay Public Trust Act, 1950
Registration Number – E25680

This document is a bi-monthly newsletter of LeapForWord.

(A) 1st Year of circulation (B) Academic Year: **2009 - 2010**
(C) Period: **July 15th - September 30th** (D) Newsletter Number: **1**

DISCLAIMER:

The information presented in this document is based on the data collected by LeapForWord during the course of its operations. This data is collected (*and will be collected in future*) **ONLY** for the following purposes:

- 1) To understand the Ground Realities thereby enable LeapForWord to customize its deliverable
- 2) Measurement of the Impact.

LeapForWord **DOES NOT** intend to present this data to point out deficiencies **if any** in the prevalent system.

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

*Nelson Mandela, anti apartheid activist &
Ex-President of South Africa.*

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

- **Reason for a newsletter:**

Sometime last month, LeapForWord entered into 3rd year of its existence. It is extremely heartening to see what was merely an idea few years back, transform into action. Moreso, because in each of these last 3 years, LeapForWord has managed to reach out to more people than in the previous year.

The Effort is still very modest but has witnessed some very encouraging results in its short life, making us believe that it may not be very long before LeapForWord truly justifies its purpose of existence.

If survival is indeed the greatest challenge, then with utmost humility, LeapForWord acknowledges that it was the unconditional co-operation from various quarters that helped The Effort stand up to this challenge. The co-operation has come & keeps coming in multiple forms – good wishes, advice, time, effort or money.

This newsletter is a token of our acknowledgement and an expression of our intent to communicate with all our well-wishers and share regular updates of this fascinating journey called LeapForWord.

- **Objective of this newsletter:**

Each Newsletter will be a recap of all the actions undertaken in the previous 2 months. This communiqué will as far as possible provide a brief & an objective summary of all LeapForWord projects – **School, Rural Youth & Urban Youth**

Since this is the first newsletter, we felt that a preamble to each of the projects was necessary; hence the document has turned out to be longer.

We would appreciate any suggestions to help us communicate with you better.

Regards,
The LeapForWord Team

PROJECT UPDATES

D) SCHOOL PROJECT:

This project is a long term developmental effort targeting students of vernacular medium state run/aided schools.

Objective:

On completion of schooling, our students are expected to speak English as good as any of their private English medium school contemporaries.

Duration:

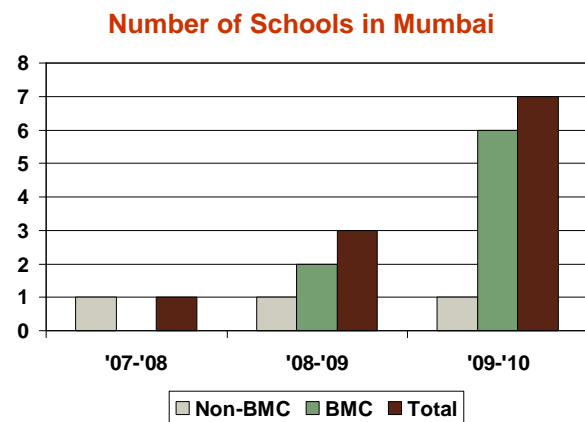
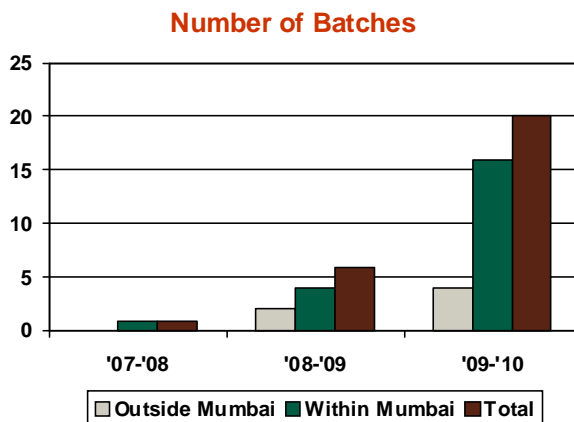
LeapForWord^A initiates contact with students when they are in Grade V and accompanies them through their **6 years** of schooling until they finish their SSC.

Methodology:

Each session of 1 hour is conducted thrice every week during regular school hours^B. These sessions are conducted by trained teachers using structured content.

Progress:

- In the academic year '07-'08, The Effort initiated the school project with Holy Family School (*Marathi Medium*) as our maiden & only batch



- In the academic year '08-'09, The Effort conducted 5 batches across Mumbai & Shirpur.
 - Access was granted to our first MCGM^C school namely Chakala Municipal School. Sessions were started for 2 batches of grade V students in this school
 - Simultaneously the rural school project was started at Shirpur^D for 2 batches of grade V students across 2 educational institutions which are hostels for tribal students (*1 for boys & 1 for girls*)

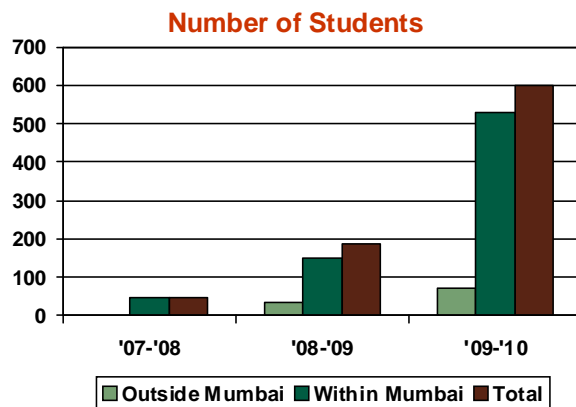
^A: Henceforth referred to as 'The Effort'

^B: Only in Mumbai. At Shirpur, sessions are conducted after school hours

^C: Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (also known as BMC)

^D: Shirpur is a taluka in Dhule district of Maharashtra state

- In the current academic year ‘09-‘10^E, the Effort has undertaken classes for 20 batches across 7 schools in Mumbai & 2 educational institutions in Shirpur
 - In Mumbai, 4 new schools and 12 additional batches have been added while in Shirpur, 2 additional batches have been added.
- For the first 2 years (‘07-‘09), classes in Mumbai schools were conducted only on Saturdays, however beginning current academic year, The Effort has got official permission to conduct classes during regular school hours in municipal schools^F.
- The Effort reaches ~ 600 school students through this project.



Measurement of Value Added:

In order to measure the value added to the students, The Effort has introduced the concept of ‘**BASE LEVEL MAPPING**’ starting this academic year^G.

- As the name suggests, Base Level Test^H assesses students at the beginning of the academic year, to measure their entry level knowledge of English.
- The **same test** is administered 2 more times during the year (*mid-year & end-of-year*) and results of all 3 tests will be compared at an individual level to exactly measure the absolute value added during the year.
- Base Level Test for the current batch of Grade V students assessed students in the following areas:
 - Identification of Alphabets
 - Reading words falling under different categories: 3 letter unbreakable words, longer breakable words, Complex words
 - Paragraph Reading
- Base Level Test is distinct from periodic subject tests that will be conducted in the class (*~12 subject tests will be administered during the course of the academic year*)

^E: 3rd year of The Effort’s operations

^F: Sessions at Holy Family School continue to be conducted only on Saturdays

^G: Academic year ‘09-‘10. Currently only for Grade V. One new grade will be added every following year

^H: Conducted for each student

Results of the BASE LEVEL MAPPING TEST¹ are as follows:

A Number of students who took the Base Level Test

	BMC	HFS	Shirpur
Total	346	56	30

B Results in terms of absolute Numbers

	BMC	HFS	Shirpur
Cannot identify alphabets	131	1	2
Cannot read Words	162	13	13
Can read words	53	42	15
Total	346	56	30

D Breakup of those students who can read words in Percentage

	BMC	HFS	Shirpur
Simple Unbreakable Words	31%	62%	80%
Simple Breakable Words	47%	21%	0%
Complex Words	22%	17%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%

C Results in terms of Percentages

	BMC	HFS	Shirpur
Cannot identify alphabets	38%	2%	7%
Cannot read Words	47%	23%	43%
Can read words	15%	75%	50%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Increasing Complexity →

Simple Unbreakable Words	Simple Breakable Words	Complex Words
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Student Profile:

In addition to the Base Level Test, we profiled some of our Grade V students across Municipal schools (Mumbai) & Shirpur.

The findings² are as follows:

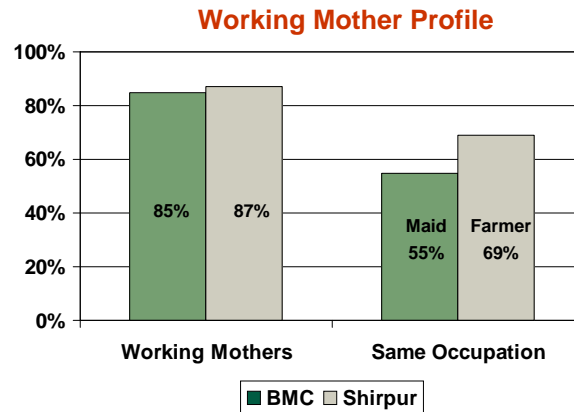
A) Family Background:

- On an average, our Grade V students across Mumbai & Shirpur have 2-3 siblings
 - In Mumbai, the average number of siblings is 2.3
 - In Shirpur, average number of siblings is 2.5
- A significant percentage of our students across the 2 locations have working mothers
 - In Mumbai, ~ 85% of the mothers work outside the home
 - In Shirpur, ~ 87% of the mothers work outside the home

¹: Beginning of year Base Level Test. Total of 432 grade V students took this test. HFS = Holy Family School

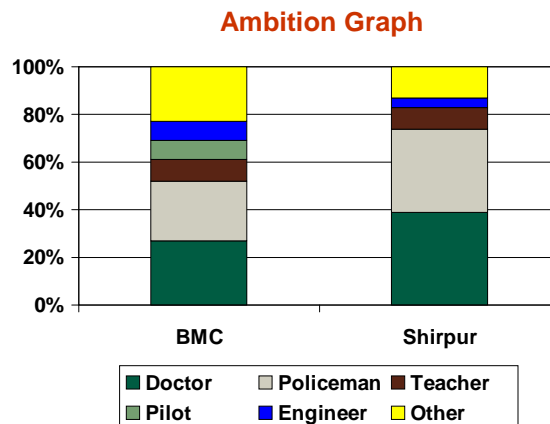
²: Student profile findings based on a sample size of 77 students in Mumbai & 23 students in Shirpur

- Most working mothers of our students in Mumbai are housemaids (~55%), while in Shirpur the most common occupation is farming (~69%)



B) Ambition:

- Doctor & Policeman are the top 2 ambitions of our students across the 2 locations
 - Doctor: Mumbai (27%), Shirpur (39%)
 - Policeman: Mumbai (25%), Shirpur (35%)



- One of our students at a Mumbai school wants to become the Chief Minister when he grows up
 - It certainly wouldn't harm The Effort if one of its students indeed grows up to become the CM of a state

Other Updates:

- Printing of books for the current academic year^K has been completed
 - Total of 660 books have been printed for distribution in the current academic year
 - These books will be distributed to all our students by mid-October
- The Effort started its first Library Project at Holy Family School for Grade VII students in the current academic year
 - To inculcate the habit of reading amongst the students, a small collection of popular English story books has been distributed amongst the students
 - A team of 4 students^L will act as librarians for a period of 1 month each
 - After assessing the impact of this year's project, The Effort will consider rolling out the library project across all its schools beginning next academic year.

Potential Challenges:

The School project maybe confronted with the following challenges in the current academic year

Challenge # 1:

- Lack of time might not allow completion of the intended curriculum for the current academic year
 - BMC schools in Mumbai were closed for the entire month of August due to Swine Flu & Ganesh Chaturthi Celebrations.
 - These schools will again be closed for ~3 weeks in October on occasion of Diwali
 - The current level of English amongst grade V students^M is way below expectation, forcing us to start the course with introduction to Alphabets thereby taking up additional time & effort.

Intended Action:

- The Effort will not push the teachers to complete the curriculum even if this means spill over of this year's course into the next year.
- Only if the teachers believe that the students have got their basics right and when results support this belief would we move ahead with further course content.
- However if permitted by the BMC, The Effort is willing to conduct classes during vacations and make up for the lost time.

Challenge # 2:

- Delay in appointing new teachers for the school project (*Mumbai*) might have an adverse impact on the start of the youth project
 - The school project has a requirement for 3 full time paid teachers, however 'The Effort' has thus far managed to get only 1

Intended Action:

- The management team will continue to make up for the deficit by conducting the classes themselves

^K: Books have been printed for Grade V & VI

^L: A new team will be appointed each month

^M: Based on the Base Level Test results

- The Effort has undertaken an active recruitment drive, by approaching degree night colleges in the city to identify students^N who might be interested in taking up the offer
- If the situation persists beyond October, we will adjust the Youth batch timings so as to compliment the school project
 - However this might result in the youth batch extending beyond the stipulated time frame

Challenge # 3:

- Complete funds required to execute the school project are yet to be generated.
 - Entire year's salary for only 1 teacher has been arranged.

Intended Action:

- The Effort will continue to reach to individuals & corporates in the coming weeks to raise the required resources
- However, if resources continue to fall short, costs will be brought down by hiring lesser than required number of teachers

II) RURAL YOUTH PROJECT:

This project is a short term intensive effort targeting financially challenged college students/drop outs^O.

Objective:

Our students are expected to be competent & confident to consider those opportunities which till date remained unexplored due to inability to speak English.

Duration:

Each batch is conducted for a period of ~ 4 months. Sessions of 3 hour each are conducted 3 times every week

Methodology:

Teaching is technology assisted based on structured content. Candidates are screened on 2 parameters before being admitted into the program.

- **Financial ability** - Only those who cannot afford Private Spoken English Coaching Classes are admitted
- **Entry Level knowledge of the language** – All interested candidates after qualifying on the above parameter, are judged on their existing levels of spoken English. There is an expected cut-off (minimum & maximum) beyond which candidates are not enrolled

Past Record:

Till date The Effort has conducted 2 rural youth batches.

- In AY^P '07-'08, 1st batch for 11 rural youth was conducted in Shirpur
- In AY '08-'09, 2nd batch for 40 rural youth was conducted at St.Xavier college^Q, Mumbai

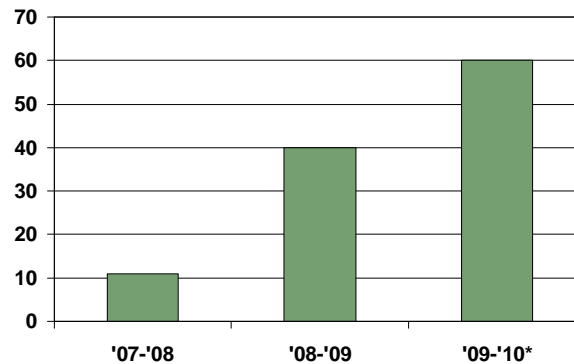
^N: Till date, vacancies were highlighted only through the internet.

^O: Atleast HSC pass

^P : AY = Academic Year

^Q : 40 youth from 4 districts of Maharashtra had come together for a residential course at St.Xavier College

Number of students reached



Progress:

Preparatory work for the next rural youth batch has been encouraging, and the Effort expects to start the project on time.

- The Effort plans to conduct **2 rural youth batches** in the current academic year
 - Most likely these batches will be conducted across 2 locations: **Kalyan & Kalwa**
 - Though The Effort intends to reach **60 participants** through this project, exact number will be known only after the screening of interested candidates.
 - Both the batches are likely to commence from **1st week of November**, with classes being conducted 3 times a week.
 - The structural support for this project is being lent by another non-profit called **REAP** (Reach Education Action Programme) which does extensive work in these areas.

- Significant amount of content for the rural youth batch has already been prepared, however The Effort will invest energies over the next 1 month to refine it further based on the feedback from the participants of the last rural youth batch.

- Candidates clearing the language program will be provided training in Basic Computers (*MS office*) if required, however this training will be outsourced.
 - A computer training institute which is close to the identified locations and offers services for a discounted fee has been identified

III) URBAN YOUTH PROJECT:

This project is a medium term developmental effort targeting financially challenged night college students.

Objective:

Our students are expected to be English ready to stake claim to jobs commensurate with their educational qualification

* : Target for the AY '09-'10

Duration:

Each batch is conducted for a period of 6-8 months spread over 2 years^R.

- Students enrolled into the program are from 2nd year Degree College. In **Phase I** which lasts 3 months, these students undergo sessions in Fundamentals of the language
- In **Phase II** which again lasts for 3 months, the same set of students undergo sessions in Advanced language learning. Phase II is conducted when the candidates are in their Final year and approaching graduation.

Methodology:

Interested candidates are screened based on 2 parameters before being admitted into the program – **Financial Ability & Entry Level knowledge.**

Each session is of ~ 3 hours and is conducted every weekend on the college premises. Sessions are conducted by volunteer trainers based on structured content with the aid of technology

Past Record:

The Effort has conducted 2 Urban Youth batches between the academic years '07-'09. Both these batches were conducted at St.Xavier night college, Mumbai. ~ **42 students** were reached through these 2 batches

Progress:

- Effort's 3rd batch will be conducted at St.Xavier Night College. Preliminary discussions in this regard with the college authorities have been conducted
- Though the classroom sessions are expected to start from 1st week of November, screening of interested candidates will begin after the Diwali vacations
- Similar to the rural youth project, significant amount of content has already been prepared, however energies will be invested over the next 1 month to refine it further based on the feedback of our students from the previous 2 batches

Potential Challenges for the Youth Project (Urban & Rural)

Challenge # 1:

- If the number of interested candidates in the rural youth batch is not sufficient, 2 batches would need to be consolidated into 1 thereby resulting in inconvenience for few participants and a possible increase in the project cost^S

Intended Action:

- The Effort will wait till the 2nd week of October, to get an idea of the number of interested candidates
 - If the number of candidates are less, The Effort might consider teaming up with REAP to actively canvas the scheduled batches
 - Currently REAP has offered to spread the word through its vast network of volunteers / teachers

^R: In the first 2 editions, batches were conducted only in 1 phase.

^S: Traveling expenses incurred by participants of the rural youth batch is reimbursed by The Effort

Challenge # 2:

- Complete funds required to execute the youth batches are yet to be generated, however the resources generated thus far will allow the Effort a lead time of 1 month thereby commencing both the projects

Intended Action:

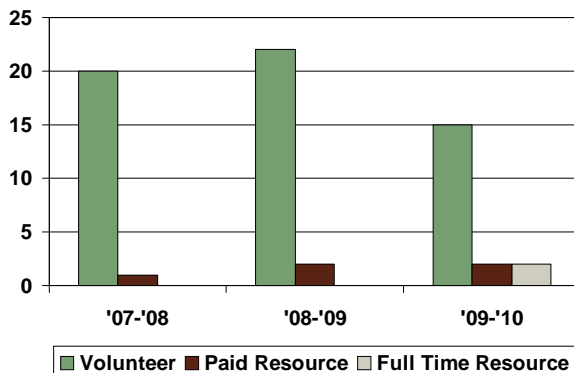
- The Effort will continue to reach out to individuals & corporates in the coming weeks to raise the required resources
- However, if resources continue to fall short, costs will be reduced by eliminating the intended technology use in the rural project

IV) LeapForWord TEAM

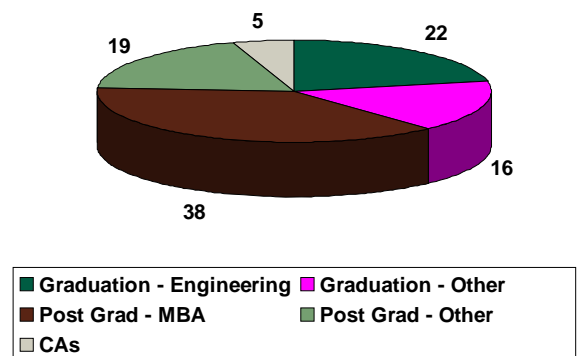
- LeapForWord now has a healthy mix of Volunteers, Paid & Full time resources^T.
- Till date, ~ 40 people have devoted their time to The Effort under different projects.
- First year of operations was completely volunteer driven
- The Effort hired its first non-teaching resource during the academic year '07-'08
- The Effort hired its First teaching resource during the academic year '08-'09
 - **One of our own students from the 1st rural youth batch was hired as a teacher for our rural school project**
- In the current academic year, the effort has hired a teacher for its Mumbai school project, taking the total number of paid teachers to 2
- Additionally 2 members of the management team now work full time for the effort

^T : Volunteer = Offers some part of his /her **Free Time** towards the activities of The Effort.
 Paid Resource = Offers services to The Effort for a Fee / Remuneration. Could be **Part or Full Time**
 Full Time Resource = Works full time for the Effort with no remuneration

Team Strength



Volunteer Profile in %



V) SUMMARY:

- The Effort is well placed to Initiate & Execute^U all its planned projects for the current academic year, the scale however will largely depend on the resources generated.
- The Effort will invest significant energies in the current academic year to introduce atleast some amount of Sustainability^V from next academic year onwards.
- Though the school project has moved towards a 'Paid Teacher Structure', the Effort will continue to create avenues for volunteer participation
- Activity to get the necessary Tax Benefit for donations has been hastened and some conclusive results on this front are expected by December
- The Effort will continue investing energies in improvising content and automating measurement of results
- Despite being the first year of registration, the Effort intends to adopt 'Best In Class Financial Accounting Standards'
 - Assistance on this front has been offered from the industry which the Effort will take from time to time

^U: Extent of Execution will depend on the availability of resources

^V: The Effort will self-generate atleast some portion of the budgetary requirements and reduce the dependence on contributions

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