

# THE VARITRA EXPRESS

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2020



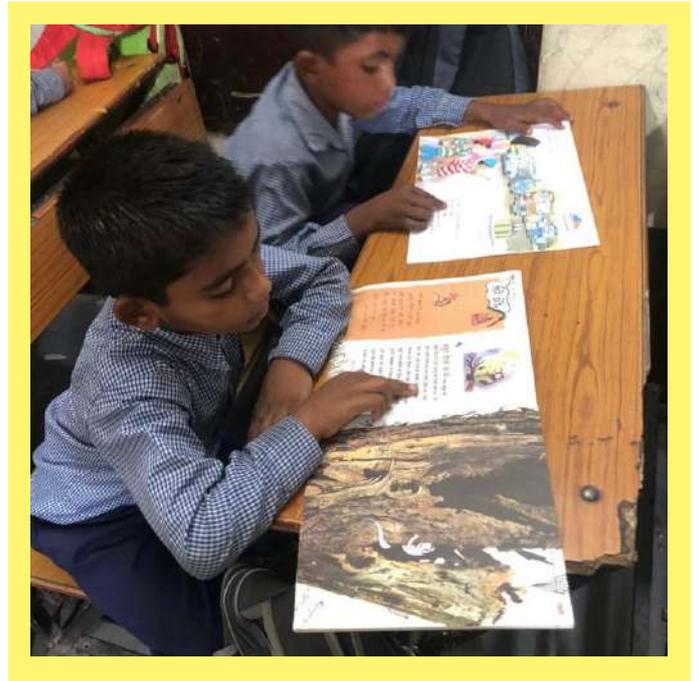
**Varitra**  
FOUNDATION  
CULTIVATING SUSTAINABLE COLLABORATIONS

# Building Bridges During Covid-19

## Varitra's Journey Through 2020

March 2020 has been unforgettable for all of us, and rightly so. What otherwise was known to us as a month of stepping into new beginnings (and in our case, the harsh winter cold fading away) with the school classrooms blooming with fresh energy for the new academic season; the same month this year saw the onset of the global pandemic 'Coronavirus' in India.

Since the very beginning, every activity of ours has played around in-person interaction and regular check-ins with children, parents and teachers. And so, when the schools were declared shut by March end as the whole country went into a lockdown, like any other grassroots organisation, our reactions switched between the confusion around the uncertainty and the frustration of disconnect. Gradually, once we absorbed that the pandemic was here to stay, what otherwise was our normal way of "working" had to be rethought overnight.



## Revisiting our thinking-board

Just weeks after we completed envisioning our new project cycle, we were once again back to our drawing board to rethink our workflow and field strategies. Amidst all this, we were still finding answers to three important questions - **How do we ensure the well-being of our children in these times? How do we reach out to our communities? How do we ensure children continue to learn?** And so we took little steps through the one channel we knew - our ground volunteers and understand the basic concerns that our rural children and teachers were facing.

# E-learning - The 'New Normal'

*Digital Learning & E-learning* have undoubtedly been the buzzwords for the education sector this year. But what has the journey of a rural school been like this year?

The Govt of Haryana (SCERT) and Govt of India (NCERT) were switching to ICT and online resources - something that was a novelty for both rural teachers and children for whom "traditional" teaching-learning until now meant a classroom, a textbook, a blackboard and physical presence of one another. The teachers especially were looking for support.

The first few weeks were clearly a phase of trials and experiments by the rural teachers for whom WhatsApp groups were now classrooms, teaching was capsuled into short videos and homework came through screenshots.

Following our interaction with our partner school teachers, our team began creating simple, easy to follow learning resources which included videos, learning activity and TLM cards and storytelling videos to support teachers as well as parents.

We launched our online platform - E-Paathan where all our resources could be accessible to anyone, at no cost by using common mediums like YouTube and Facebook which were familiar to the govt-school teachers.

.With the support of ABRCs and the office of BEO, Gharaunda as well as school-heads, a daily posting schedule was made where the teachers would share learning activities, flash cards and storytelling videos with the children via WhatsApp.

# But Was This Enough?

While online learning may have become the primary medium throughout this year, the question remained - *what about the several bottlenecks that our rural children were facing?* The very first stemming up from their geography. Varitra works in villages which are primarily agrarian and most govt-school children belong to families of small farmers or daily-wage labourers. Limited data access combined with harvesting seasons entailed online mediums of education being accessible to a very small number of population.

**In July 2020, our team conducted a ground survey across 8 villages in Karnal district. Amongst the 211 children surveyed, we found that more than 60% children had little or no access to online-learning platforms.**



# Making Remote Learning Less Lonely

For Palak studying in standard V in GPS Hasanpur, studying had stopped and a large part of her days would be spent on the field supporting her mother in farming. The story of Palak is one amongst so many others that our team found during our survey. Children, especially girls have been assigned household chores every day as they stay away from school. The current scenario further pushed us to make this content available to all.



**Varitra curated “Offline Learning Kit” - a compact concoction of workbooks, stationery and drawing material for kids.**

**Since September, 3000 rural children across 27 villages have received our offline learning kits.**

Varitra also worked out a supporting structure for children in each village post the distribution of these offline learning kits. Keeping in mind the safety and accessibility, our ground volunteers assist children with these resources. In some cases, the teachers have also actively joined our campaign and used these workbooks as part of their teaching process. Since the offline learning kit was not limited to worksheets but also included drawing materials, it gave children a space for expression and learning at the same time. We also reached out to our peers for support when one such organisation - Shiksharth Sukma very kindly shared their learning resources with us.

# “

*As we move forward in our mission of uninterrupted learning what has kept us going are words from parents like Prakasho Devi from village Dabarki Khurd-*

*“एक समय ऐसा आया जब हमें नहीं पता था कि बच्चे कैसे पढ़ेंगे। इस किताब (वर्कशीट) ने मेरे बच्चों को लॉकडाउन में सीखने को कुछ दिया। बच्चों को हाथ में कम से कम कुछ मिला है और उन्होंने पढ़ाई नहीं छोड़ी।” (There were times when I did not know what to teach the children. The worksheets have given a chance for children to learn during lockdown. The fact that the children had something in their hands ensured learning did not completely stop).*

*“कुछ मैंने भी सीखा है बच्चों के साथ बैठ के” (I too have learnt something sitting with my children’) - she ends with a smile.*



***Our Covid-19 campaign has been possible only due to the generous contributions by our donors who supported our online crowd-funding campaigns, sponsors like Nik Bakers, Chandigarh as well as the unfailing support of District Administration of Karnal. Together, our journey to curate solutions and resources through this Pandemic continues ....***



इतने लंबे समय तक लॉकडाउन और स्कूल बंद रहने के कारण बच्चों की पढ़ाई में मुश्किलें आ रही थी। हमारे स्कूल के सभी बच्चों के पास स्मार्ट-फोन नहीं थे जिसके ज़रिए वे अपनी ऑनलाइन पढ़ाई जारी रख पाएं और न ही सभी बच्चों के माता-पिता भी पढ़े लिखे नहीं थे कि वे बच्चों की पढ़ाई में मदद कर पाएं। ऐसे समय में ये ऑफलाइन लर्निंग किट' बच्चों के लिए काफी मददगार साबित हुई है। अच्छी बात यह है कि इस किट में बच्चों को ध्यान में रखते हुए उनके पठन स्तर के हिसाब से वर्कबुक बनाई गई हैं ताकि बच्चे आसानी से खुद से काम कर पाएं। इस दौरान कुछ माता-पिताओं ने भी इस लर्निंग किट में अपनी रुचि दिखाई है; बच्चों को पढ़ाते हुए अगर उन्हें कुछ कठिनाई आती है तो उन्होंने हमसे पूछा भी है कि ये

सवाल हम कैसे कर सकते हैं। इसकी मदद से कम से कम बच्चों की घर पर थोड़ी-बहुत पढ़ाई में मदद हुई है ....

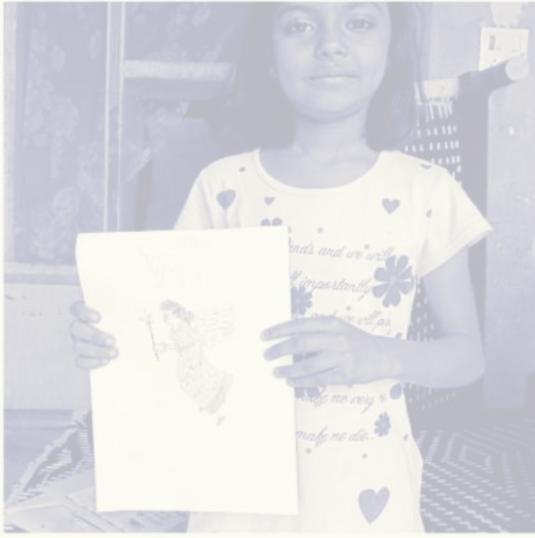
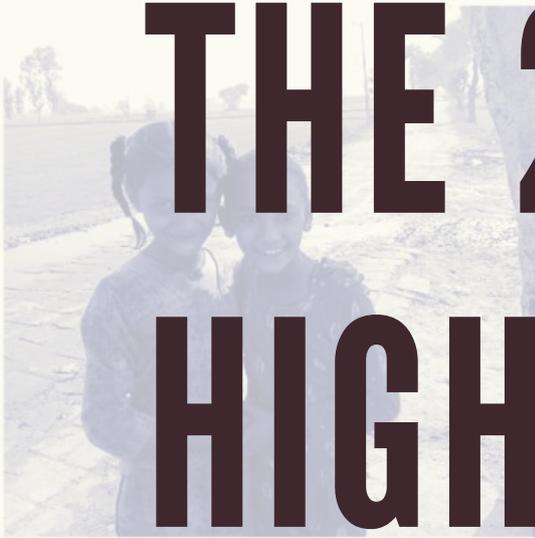


- श्री भगवान सर  
(सरकारी प्राइमरी स्कूल, हसनपुर)





# THE 2020 HIGHLIGHTS >>



Revisiting a year unlike any other . .





## < E PAATHAN

Since April 2020, we at E-Paathan have created **185+** learning videos and over **750+** posts related to Language, Mathematics, Reading & Child Engagement across our YouTube, Facebook & Instagram pages. Our digital platform has now grown into an online repository of learning resources.



## COVID-19 CAMPAIGN >

In September 2020, Varitra joined hands with Karnal District Administration for awareness-building on remote learning and safety of rural children during Covid-19 spread. Together with officials like DC, SDM, DEO, BEO we campaigned amongst parents and rural families on their crucial role in their children's learning at home.



## वारित्रा फाउंडेशन ने ग्रामीण बच्चों के लिए ऑफलाइन लर्निंग किट बांटी

घरौंडा 17 सितम्बर, प्रशान्त कौशिक

कोरोना संकट के दौर में स्कूल बंद हो जाने के कारण ग्रामीण बच्चों को खासतौर पर ज्यादा चुनौतियों का सामना करना पड़ रहा है। ऐसे में अपने कोविड-19 राहत अभियान के तहत वारित्रा फाउंडेशन ने गांव प्रेमनगर में अपनी ऑफलाइन लर्निंग किट का वितरण किया। कार्यक्रम में एसडीएम पूजा भारती ने मुख्य अतिथि के रूप में शिरकत दी। उन्होंने कोविड-19 के समय में बच्चों को सुरक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और शिक्षा पर पूरा ध्यान रखने का आह्वान किया।

वीरवार को प्रेमनगर डेरे पर आयोजित कार्यक्रम में एसडीएम पूजा भारती व वारित्रा फाउंडेशन की सह-संस्थापक ऐषणा कल्याण ने दीप प्रज्वलित करके शुभारंभ किया। मुख्य अतिथि एसडीएम पूजा भारती ने कहा कि इस समय कोरोना संकटकाल चल रहा है, इसलिए इससे



बचाव के लिए अभिभावक अपनी जिम्मेवारी को समझें और सरकार की सभी गाइडलाइनों को गंभीरता से पालना करें। वारित्रा फाउंडेशन के सह-संस्थापक ऐषणा कल्याण और बलजीत यादव ने इस अभियान का शुभारंभ शुरू किया था, उन्होंने वारित्रा लर्निंग किट व इसके उपयोग के बारे में जानकारी दी। उन्होंने कार्यक्रम में उपस्थित अभिभावकों से आग्रह किया कि वे अपने इस बात पर खास ध्यान दें कि घर रहने के कारण से बच्चों की पढ़ाई में

रूकावट नहीं आनी चाहिए। हर किट में पहली से पांचवी कक्षाओं के लिए वर्कशीट्स, स्टेशनरी एवं ड्राइंग मटेरियल दिया गया है, ताकि बच्चे शिक्षा से जुड़े रहें। संस्था का यह अभियान अभी करनाल जिले के 15 गावों के सरकारी प्राइमरी स्कूलों में चल रहा है और इन लर्निंग किट का वितरण पूरे सितंबर में किया जाएगा। वारित्रा फाउंडेशन जनवरी 2018 से ग्रामीण सरकारी स्कूलों के साथ सक्रिय रूप से काम कर रही है।

## < DAAN UTSAV 2020

Varitra raised more than five lakh rupees through online & offline fundraisers during the Daan Utsav 2020 which helped us reach out to 3000 rural children with our Offline Learning Kits.

## FARMERS SAFETY CAMPAIGN >

In April 2020, Varitra provided Covid-19 safety essentials to 1000 farmers during the harvesting season in collaboration with the local *Mandi* Association in Gharaunda block, Karnal district.

All the masks distributed during all of Varitra's Covid-19 campaigns were hand-stitched by rural women.

## किसानों व खेतिहर मजदूरों को मास्क वितरित किए

■ किसान और मजदूर हमारे समाज के सबसे मजबूत स्तम्भ

हरिभूमि न्यूज ▶▶ घरौंडा



लॉकडाउन में फसल कटाई व बिक्री के इस महत्वपूर्ण समय में हमारे किसानों और खेतिहर मजदूरों की सुरक्षा सबसे ज्यादा मायने रखती है। वारित्रा फाउंडेशन की ओर से एक हजार किसानों और खेतिहर मजदूरों को मास्क एवं सेनिटाइजर वितरित किए गए।

किसान सुरक्षा अभियान/" नामक इस पहल की शुरुआत वारित्रा के संस्थापकों ऐशना कल्याण एवं बलजीत यादव द्वारा करी गयी है। वारित्रा के इस अभियान में उनका साथ घरौंडा मंडी एसोसिएशन से सुशील गर्ग, व वारित्रा के वालंटियर्स रोहित भंडारी, विभोर, देवेन्द्र शर्मा, अमित जांगड़ा, बलिनद्र आदि दे रहे हैं। संस्थापक ऐशना कहती हैं यह ऐसा समय है जब किसान अपने साल भर की

घरौंडा। लोगों को जागरूक करते संस्था के संस्थापक। फोटो: हरिभूमि

मेहनत की पूर्ति होते देखते हैं। ऐसे में उनके स्वास्थ्य एवं सुरक्षा को सुनिश्चित करना हम सबकी नैतिक जिम्मेदारी है। बलजीत कहते हैं इस महामारी के समय जरूरी है समाज का हर पहलू साथ मिलकर चले। किसान और मजदूर हमारे समाज के सबसे मजबूत स्तम्भ है। वारित्रा अपने छोटे से अभियान के द्वारा यही सुनिश्चित करना चाहती है। एक एहम बात यह है कि इस अभियान में दिए जाने वाले मास्क ग्रामीण महिलाओं द्वारा बनाये गए हैं जिससे उनकी आर्थिक मदद भी होगी।



# < BACHPAN 2020

For Children's Day, Varitra collaborated with Christ University, Bangalore for virtual celebration of talent and representation. Children across various parts of India participated in a diverse range of Art, Craft and Literary events, workshops and contests organised by Centre For Social Action.

# IWSEN 2020 >

Earlier this year, our co-founder Ayesha Kalyan was selected as a co-founding member of Indian Women Social Entrepreneurs Network (IWSEN), a support network in collaboration with Amani Institute and ANDE India & officially launched by the U.S. Consulate General, Chennai.





## < WELCOMING AMBASSADORS

20 dynamic youth leaders across education, business, media and non-profit sectors joined our organisation as Varitra ambassadors to share ideas & expertise to support our growth and journey in various capacities. Head to Varitra website to know more.

## CAMPAIGN TEKDI >

Pre-lockdown, we had began 'Tekdi' - a dialogue-based campaign on quality education, enrolment and drop-out ratio in our partner villages and reached out to Sarpanches, school teachers, SMCs, Aanganvadi workers, SHG members and parents.





## < STORIES OF CHANGE

Varitra began its online human storytelling series called 'STORIES OF CHANGE' and shared our changemakers stories across social media in the hope of inspiring more youth to explore their inner leadership.

## PAUSE FOR A CAUSE >

COVID - 19 did not waver the spirit of four young girls - Kavya, Seeya, Jiya and Divija from Shiv Nadar School (Gurgaon) who went on to raise more than Rs. 45,000/- through bake-sales and online fundraiser to help digitalise a rural library.

SHIV NADAR SCHOOL GURGAON

## COOKIES FOR A CAUSE

Each proceeding shall help us create rural libraries in Haryana with Varitra Foundation



TO PLACE ORDERS, CONTACT US AT  
+91 7827508275

# WHAT'S NEXT AT VARITRA?

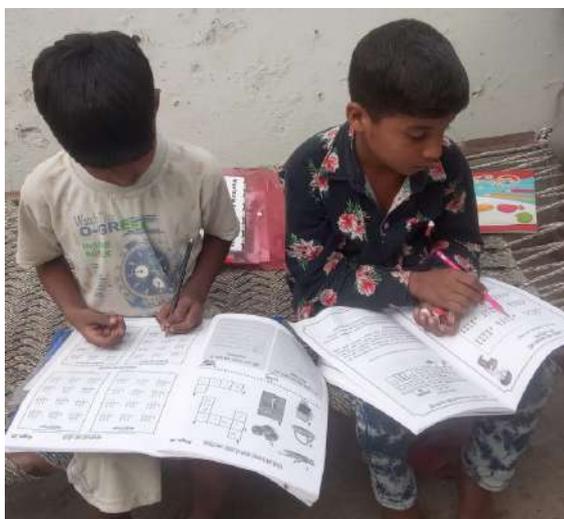


Creating offline support systems at village level to help primary school children with basic numeric, language & reading competencies as they continue learning at home during Covid-19.

“

Launching Varitra's blog to keep you updated about our work and also share our stories & experiences in the field of education & gender. An unfiltered space for storytelling & learning. Stay tuned!

”



Continue creating open source bi-lingual content for E-Pathan and Varitra Resource Hub (available on Varitra website) in hope to support other grassroots organisations.



Visit us at - [varitra.com](http://varitra.com)