



BUILD A LIBRARY

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT - 2019

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About Varitra Foundation

Varitra Foundation is a youth-led organisation setup with a vision to "Transform Rural Education System by Creating local change-makers". A Sanskrit word, meaning umbrella "Varitra" symbolises collaboration and synergy of ideas and efforts to make way for collective ownership and maximum impact.

Varitra works on 'Whole school Transformation' model where it currently works in 15 villages of Karnal district on Infrastructural strengthening, BaLA painting, Library set-up, Reading Program, Remedial learning through Learning Enhancement Centres and Student leadership-building. Through Varitra Foundation, we are also empowering local rural youth into becoming change-makers and help to transform education in their villages. We focus on youth leadership-building helping youth in self-awareness and career path-creation.



About the Founders

Varitra was founded by Baljeet Yadav (TISS Mumbai & DU alum) and Ayesha Kalyan (St. Xavier's & XIC Mumbai alum) in Jan 2018 who previously worked with Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai as CSR professionals. Baljeet and Ayesha both have their roots in rural Haryana and have always been enthusiasts about the cause of Education, Women Empowerment & Youth leadership. Their passion to ensure quality education for every rural child and curb this cycle of deprivation drove them to quit their jobs in Mumbai relocate to Haryana. Today, they are actively working towards reviving government schools in backward and remote villages of Karnal district. The founders have been awarded Wipro Seed Fellowship, Edumentum Fellowship, Changelooms Leadership & Learning Fellowship, GP Birla Fellowship for Women Leaders and Gratitude Network Fellowship over the past two years.

About Build A Library

OBJECTIVE

To help set-up a safe reading space in school and create student-centric environment through reading, peer activities and Behavioural change interventions.



The benefits of fostering a reading habit early in a child's life are hard to overstate. From building and strengthening vocabulary and language skills to aiding with creative thinking, reading is one of the easiest and best activities available to teach children a range of new skills.

Some of the key benefits of reading include: Building self-regulation | Learning empathy | Improving concentration | Exposure to diverse and differing perspectives and situations than one's own.

Project Background

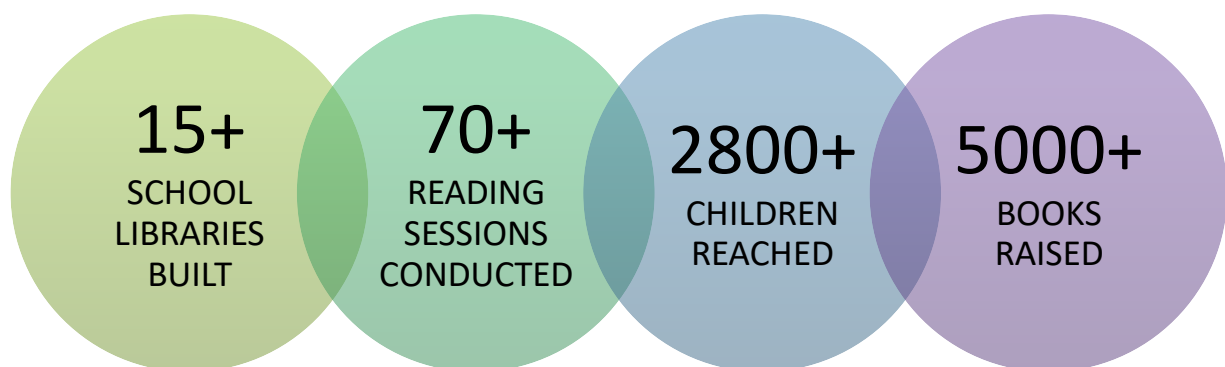
When we started working in rural government schools across 15 villages in Karnal district in 2018, Varitra observed that the students in most of our partner schools had either no access to books and therefore no culture of reading while a few partner schools had books but lacked reading space. These villages are located on Haryana's Yamuna Belt which faces extreme economic and social backwardness. Majority of students are first generation school-goers and lack quality learning opportunities.

However, looking at the motivation and energy levels of the students in these schools, we envisioned an opportunity to work directly with them. Varitra decided to work on reading, writing and speaking abilities which inspired us to give shape to the our School library project.

Our journey of building libraries began with a small question - **Can every school has a safe, child-centric reading space?**

'Build a Library' is one of the core projects of our organisation where we regularly work on introducing innovative methods to help our students build readership. Varitra set up 15+ school libraries its partner schools over the period of one year.

Here is a brief overview of our Library program :



What is in our Library?

Varitra believes that every child has unique personality therefore we need books which suit their unique individual preferences. We have thus tried to curate a collection of books from a diverse range of publishers to reach out to all kinds of child readers.

Each Varitra library consists of at least 300+ bi-lingual (Hindi & English) story-books, knowledge books, poem books/cards, children magazines, wall posters and display materials.



Varitra Reading Program

We believe that reading and thinking go hand in hand in shaping us as individuals and through the library, we can provide that opportunity in rural schools. The school library set up by Varitra is an open space for all the students and teachers to read, explore and imagine. However, post creating libraries, Varitra strongly felt a need to go beyond just physical set-ups.

In 2019, Varitra introduced Reading Program in all its partner schools to create a healthy reading environment by strengthening the reading skills of students. The program structure includes reading sessions which are conducted on weekly basis in all the partner schools and focus on 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students. The sessions are facilitated by Varitra core team members and trained volunteers.

Our curriculum includes read aloud, story-telling, individual and peer reading. These have been curated to boost excitement and engagement among the students towards books. Once a student has access to a different kind of books, he or she can explore and discover their reading interests and every student feels engaged and understands better. Varitra also works on curiosity-building and self-expression among students through activities. Along with enhancing reading skills among the children, we have also been working on inculcating basic skills like listening, speaking, writing and mind-development of the children.

Varitra Library Management Committee



Library Management Committee (LMC) is a group of students who lead library-related activities during read aloud and other activities of library. The objective of LMC is to build and promote student-led environment in the school by working closely on the leadership skills of a group of students. Each LMC typically comprises of 5 to 12 students depending on the size of the school.

All library activities like lending & return of books, book-keeping, library cleanliness and maintenance are administered by the Student Library Management Committee.

Key Activities In Library Program

Varitra conducts weekly reading sessions in partner schools which include read-aloud, poem & story-telling, digital story-telling and peer reading. Each session also includes individual reading time for students to develop silent reading skills.

READING SESSIONS

READING ACTIVITIES

Varitra conducts innovative reading activities which include Newspaper reading, story-writing, vocabulary-building and language exercises, art & craft activities, best out of waste. Our aim is to build a child-centric and creative and space within the school library.

Varitra also works towards building awareness and critical thinking among the school children on relevant social and self-development issues like gender sensitivity, identity, confidence-building and value-based education in order to ensure their physical, mental and emotional health as well provide a learning-friendly environment in the school.

BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE

The LMC members and Varitra team meet on regular basis where Varitra works on fostering leadership-skills and team-building. The LMC members also work on new ideas to help improve their library continuously.

MONTHLY LMC MEETINGS

BEST READER CHART

Appreciation is an integral part of our work. We believe that young people efforts must be appreciated. Our best reader chart celebrates the reading milestone achieved by our students. Best reader chart is designed to map the reading progress of each member like if one student completes books reading 1 to 50 in a series so their name will be located in best reader chart. This has been prove very helpful for us to create new reader through a goal setting journey. Any students, who completes 50 books, we provide an offer to students to share their book story in a form of written/oral with the help of facilitator.

We believe any unused or discarded materials specially books can be put to right usage. Varitra connects those in need with those who can help - by way of books. We organise regular Book Donations Drives locally and in other cities. Till date, Varitra has raised close to 3000+ books from Karnal, Gurgaon & Delhi. Each book raised by us becomes part of school or public library.

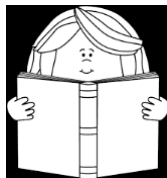
DONATION DRIVES

What Next?

OUR GOAL - To create a strong reading environment in rural government schools and help children build better language proficiency and leadership skills

FOSTER READING

Children are getting accustomed to reading and are exploring different genres. They are participating and responding to the reading sessions and are showing a shift in their listening and speaking skills as well

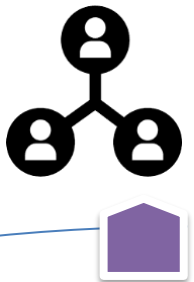


BUILD ACCESS

Children have access to a functional safe learning space in school in the form of their library and are exploring it on regular basis

SUSTAINABILITY

A strong community of local volunteers has been built who are regularly running reading sessions in School or Community and are supported by them. Student readership is positive.



SYSTEMIC CHANGE

The library is managed by children and is operating on regular basis. A dedicated reading time has been allotted by the school and the teachers adopting innovative initiatives for a strong reading environment.

मेरी बात | Stories from the Field



Meet Ankush. He currently reads in Class 5th in Govt. Middle School Khora Kheri, Karnal.

Ankush says, "Since the library in our school has become functional, I have learnt a lot of new things. I love story books and enjoy reading different kind of characters in stories. I have read so many new stories. I also learnt not to make fun of any child and be respectful to my classmates. I love my school library and enjoy my School even more. My Library Didi is always ready to listen to my chit-chats and secrets and encourages me to be a good human being always. In my Library, I feel loved."



Tannu is reading in class 5th in Govt. Middle School Khora Kheri Karnal. A bright and intelligent student, she is always eager to participate in Library activities.

Varitra team once asked Tannu about her dream in life and she excitedly responded, "I want to become a doctor when I grow up". We then asked, "How?" and she said "With a lot of knowledge that I will get through the books in my school library". Tannu loves how library is a non-judgemental space where all students sit together, read together and take part in all the activities as equals. Tannu wishes to read all the books available in her school library one day.

PHOTO GALLERY



Visitors at Library



A New Varitra Library



Our Happy Readers



Book Fair



Borrowing & Lending



Peer Reading Activities

ANNEXURE

ANNEXURE 1 - List of Publishers and Collaborators

- **Pratham Books** - Pratham books is available in Hindi, English for four reading levels among children and also very helpful to start reading to each age group of children
- **Eklavya Books** – Eklavya books are suitable for first-time readers and are well liked by students
- **National Book Trust & Children Books Trust** - Both NBT & CBT books are fitting for grade 6 to 8 students.
- **Monyati Initiatives** – Monyati Initiatives, a German organisation was the first organisation to collaborate with Varitra on building libraries
- **Goonj** – Goonj supported Varitra through one of our Book Donation Drives and donated a wide range of academic and non-academic books
- **Rotary Club** – Rotary Club supported Varitra in setting up two libraries
- **Books For All** – Books For All team provided a diverse genres of reading material for children and grown-ups
- **Share A Book** – Share A Book has recently collaborated with Varitra for 10 libraries and is providing us with children books and reading materials

ANNEXURE 2 - List of School Libraries set-up by Varitra Foundation

- 1) Govt. Primary School Hasanpur
- 2) Govt. Primary School Gudha
- 3) Govt. Primary School Faizalipur Majra
- 4) Govt. Primary School Tatarpur
- 5) Govt. Primary School Prem Nagar
- 6) Govt. Primary School Dabarki Khurd
- 7) Govt. Primary School Rasulpur Kala
- 8) Govt. Primary School Peer Badoli
- 9) Govt. Primary School Barsat
- 10) Govt. Primary School Kutail
- 11) Govt. Middle School Khora Kheri
- 12) Govt. Middle school Pingli
- 13) Govt. Middle School Sadarpur
- 14) Govt. Middle School Dabarki Kala
- 15) Govt. Senior Secondary School Garhi Khajur
- 16) Gharaunda Government Girls Sr. Sec School

ANNEXURE 3 - School-Wise Library Data

INSERT TABLE