



Prof. Jacqueline Bhabha
FXB Center for Health and Human Rights
651 Huntington Avenue, 7th Floor
Boston, MA 02115 USA

November 17, 2013

Ref: H/WRGSRes 24/23

Yury Boychenko
Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights
Women, Human Rights and Gender
Palais de Nations
CH 1211 Geneva 10

Dear Mr. Boychenko,

On behalf of the François-Xavier Bagnoud (FXB) Center for Health and Human Rights, we appreciate the opportunity to submit the following written evidence on the link between child marriage and educational achievement in India, per H/WRGSRes 24/23.

Founded in 1992 through a gift from the Association François-Xavier Bagnoud, the FXB Center works to protect and promote the rights and wellbeing of young people in extreme circumstances worldwide. The Center uses an interdisciplinary health and human rights lens to build a conceptual and empirical basis for realizing rights inherent in protection of children and empowerment of adolescents and youth trapped throughout the world in grave poverty and deprivation, harsh oppression, major disaster, and war. Through research, teaching, advocacy and targeted action, our work focuses on changing the modes and structures which continue to consign children and adolescents throughout the world to conditions of oppression, abuse, exploitation, and exclusion.

As the Director of Research at the FXB Center, I have two ongoing studies in India examining the link between female empowerment and access to quality education. The *Shanu Project*, the study on which this evidence is based, is an ongoing initiative on the education and empowerment of adolescent girls in rural India in partnership with the Self Employed Women's Association, a 1.2 million member Indian women's union. Based on a 376 household survey and focus groups across five villages in North Western Gujarat, this submission provides evidence that early marriage and the narrow classification of adolescent girls' potential on the basis of their marriage prospects seriously impacts girls' ability to access their right to education. This in turn results in structural disadvantages in the labour market and financial dependency, and the deleterious consequences that flow from each of these deficits. The second project "*Champions*", adopts a positive deviance approach to the study of gender equality. The Champions project is a participatory study that examines female second year college students from low caste illiterate families. The study seeks to identify the infrastructural and social triggers that enable these first generation learners to succeed educationally where the vast majority of their cohort fail.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this evidence.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Bhabha", is written on a light-colored rectangular background.

Jacqueline Bhabha

Director of Research, François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights
Professor of The Practice of Health and Human Rights
Jeremiah Smith Jr. Lecturer, Harvard Law School
Adjunct Lecturer on Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School
University Advisor on Human Rights Education, Harvard University