



# WORLD SINDHI CONGRESS®

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Presented by Dr Rubina Greenwood

Dear Madam Chairwoman,

World Sindhi Congress would like to bring forum's attention firstly to the situation of Sindhi women in Pakistan with particular reference to the right and access to education of indigenous communities of Sindh e.g Kohli Bheels, Meghwars and Kohlis.

It's reported by CIEF that in rural areas of Sindh, the enrolment of the girls is lower than that of boys at the primary, middle and high levels. Reports from civil society groups also note that urban areas of Sindh have observed a sharp decline in women's admissions to colleges, as well as an increase in the drop-out rate due to what students claim is an unfriendly atmosphere in public institutions.

The discrepancy between rural and urban areas is even more marked. Only 7% of women in rural areas are literate, compared with 35 percent in urban areas. Among men, these rates were 27 and 57 percent, respectively. Pakistan's low female literacy rates are particularly confounding because these rates are analogous to those of some of the poorest countries in the world.

Pakistan has never had a systematic, nationally coordinated effort to improve female primary education, despite its poor standing. It was once assumed that the reasons behind low female school enrolments were cultural, but research conducted by a number of international donor agencies revealed that danger to a woman's honour was parents' most crucial concern. Indeed, reluctance to accept schooling for women turned to enthusiasm when parents in rural Sindh and rural Balochistan could be guaranteed their daughters' safety.

Secondly, I would like to bring Forum's attention to the curriculum which is being taught in Pakistani schools. A recent study shows that Pakistani school text books promote discrimination against religious minorities in particular forced conversion of minority girls to a Muslim marriages. The promotion of this pan-Islamic education system is part of a systematic campaign to promote a conservative version of Islam (i.e. Wahabi) which also dictates the exclusion of women from all social and political spheres of society. A 2011 Pew Research Centre study found the Pakistan is the third most intolerant country in the world.

Based on the experience of Sindhi women in Pakistan, the WSC recommends the inclusion of the following points in the Draft Recommendations put forward by the Independent Expert on Minority Issues:

There should be an international independent body which can monitor and evaluate school curriculum which promotes fundamentalist practices and teachings which are inherently discriminatory towards religious minority women in contrary to state Governments as in many cases the state is involved in sponsoring fundamentalist curriculum.

Governments should set up a separate commission on minority women in particularly hard to reach minority groups of rural areas. Such a commission would engage in development and implementation of legislative instruments and would raise awareness among the target population and general public.

Governments should sign and ratify the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women; those who have already ratified should ensure compliance and sincere cooperation with reporting requirements and review processes.

*About The World Sindhi Congress (WSC): WSC is based in the UK, USA, Canada, and Sindh and is one of the most prominent human rights advocacy organizations for Sindh and Sindhis. The main objective of WSC is to create a better understanding within the international community about the persecuted status of Sindhis in Pakistan and about the Sindhi people's struggle for human rights, including the right to self determination. WSC is a registered company in the UK and the USA, and is organized to carry out non-profit activities. For more information, visit [www.worldsindhicongress.org](http://www.worldsindhicongress.org)*

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