

## **IMPACT OF SCHOOLING OF GIRLS ON DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION : AN ILLUSTRATION FROM INDIA**

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*The schooling of children in India has grown several fold, since independence. Creation of education facilities, training of teachers, and an aggressive campaign to build an enabling environment for education of children have significantly contributed to this. But the schooling of girls, particularly during the second decade of life, is still a low priority. The social, cultural religious, economic and political milieu of contemporary Indian societies is largely responsible for this. Longer distances that adolescent girls need to negotiate to reach higher educational facilities from the village, are also an important impeding factor in their schooling. The literacy level of parents is an important contributing factor in promoting the schooling of children, including girls. Economic status of the family/household is less important in this regard.*

*A few years of schooling of women has very little impact on natural fertility (supply of children). This also explains why women with low levels of schooling have higher fertility than that of illiterate women. However, with the further rise in educational attainment of women, demand factors come into play, reflected in a desire for reduced numbers of children. Increased schooling is apparently a major determinant of fertility decline. The NFHS (1992-93) data indicate that there is a threshold level of schooling for India, at about ten years of schooling. Along with schooling of women, a supportive environment is needed to bring a decline in fertility level.*

*Education of women has a linear relationship with child mortality. Even a small improvement in the schooling of women is reflected in declines in child mortality. It is mediated through improvement in pre-natal care of women, increased immunization of children, etc.*

*This study suggests that the schooling of women has a significant influence on the demand for children and fertility regulation. However, to achieve a notable reduction in the fertility level, an appreciable improvement in the schooling of women (to 8 - 10 years) is desirable. It should also accompany other parameters of development and a supportive social environment for change.*