



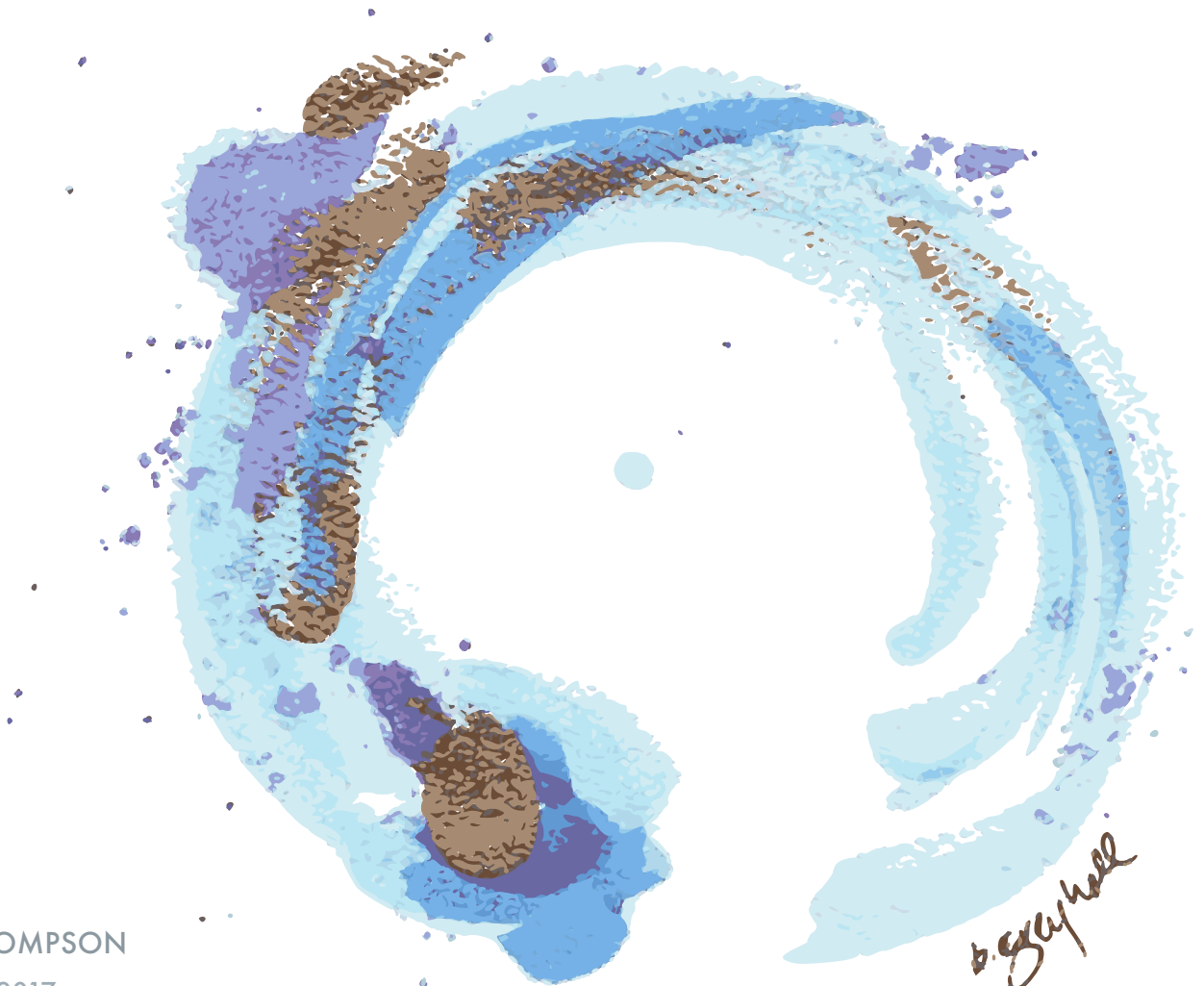
COMMUNITY FOR CHANGE



Azim Premji
Foundation

Featured Organizations: Azim Premji Foundation

AZIM PREMJI FOUNDATION MEETS JOY



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OCTOBER 9, 2017

cvcommunityforchange.org

Artist: Grey Hall Borneman

Azim Premji Foundation Meets Joy

*The core design ideas of the Community for Change are joy, non-obligation, and passion matching.
But perhaps it all boils down to unleashing joy.*

OCTOBER 9, 2017

UNLOCKING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIRLS IN A CULTURE GEARED TOWARD ARRANGED MARRIAGE: THE WORK OF AZIM PREMJI PHILANTHROPIC INITIATIVES

Earlier this fall, Pip and I got to video chat with Lan from India to catch up and connect together from different continents. Some of you may know Lan from CFC and Crosby events.

During our conversation, I stopped Lan mid-stream to ask permission to write a few paragraphs on what he had just told us. Below is my best attempt to encapsulate the power of the work he is doing with the Azim Premji Foundation specifically on education for girls. [The goal of the program is to help their families and communities see the value in their education instead of arranged marriage, which is often seen as the lesser of two evils.](#)

As an addendum, the UN, Int'l Labour Organization and Walk Free Foundation just released the Global Estimates of Modern Slavery this week (Exec Summary attached). Of the 40 million estimated in global slavery, 15 million are estimated to be in forced marriage. This is the first time forced marriage has been included in this report, and with it, the proportion of people on this planet that are slaves comes to 1 in 200.

The work of Azim Premji aims to influence the underprivileged communities so that arranged marriage is not leaned on as the solution for their girls safety and well-being. [Not all arranged marriage is forced marriage, but some of the drivers are the same.](#)

Here's more from our conversation:

Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives is a not-for profit organization that has been working to improve the lot of the underprivileged and the most vulnerable in India. They are after meaningful change at a HUGE scale. Here's an update on one element of their work that took place in the last eight weeks.



THE PROBLEM:

- *43% of girls get married by the age of 17; 20% by 15.*
- *The average age at which they become a mother is 17.*
- *This results in a closure of opportunity and a continuation of being economically dependent her whole life.*

There are many reasons for this, and many possible solutions, but a well-studied solution that resonates worldwide is: *keep the girls in school.*

In order to transform the girls identity in her community and family from an economically dependent household member to an economically independent household member, she needs an opportunity to stay in school. Right now, families may wish to offload their daughters in a respectful and culturally acceptable way as soon as possible through arranged marriage, especially if they are incredibly poor already. But what if, because she had more education and economic opportunities she was no longer a burden? What if, she had the power to “pay back” her family in the way sons are seen to do?

Azim Premji’s work has been to find agency partners at the community level who have trusted relationships with families in the community. The level of trust and acceptance in the slum communities is paramount: without it there is no chance of considering this idea of keeping their daughters in school longer. This is the first step of their work: due diligence.

Once those agency partners are identified and vetted, they are giving support of all kinds and collateral to conduct the outreach in their communities. It is the partners who have the conversation about keeping their girls in school. Since the arranged marriage process starts as early as 12, they are focusing on ages 11-14.

In the past eight weeks since they’ve enacted this program in concert with partners in Hyderabad and Mumbai, they’ve brought over 500 girls who had dropped out back to school.

And, this is just the beginning.

What is the opportunity?

Lan brought an important lever to light:



26% of adolescent girls in the world live in India.

The challenge and the opportunity lay side by side.

Thank you Lan and all of Azim Premji for studying how to effectively move that needle of disempowerment to empowerment, from poverty to vitality, from diminishment to dignity, for 26% of our girls. We know that the generational effect of changing a girls life is also incredibly powerful, so thank you for changing the lives of their sons and daughters to come.

WITH GRATITUDE,

BRYNNE

