

Project Description

GISELE BOLTON

PROJECT TITLE: JUSTICE FOR DISCRIMINATED WOMEN IN WEST INDIA

The Advocacy Project (AP), a 501 (c)(3) organization, is dedicated to helping marginalized communities by forming partnerships with community advocates and recruiting Peace Fellows to help organizations tell their story. Vikalp Women's Group has been partnering with AP since 2011, and is known to be one of the most effective champions for alienated women in West India.

Vikalp Women's Group, established in 1996, seeks to promote and protect the human rights of women, enabling them to lead lives filled with dignity providing security and real life options. The organization engages with the struggles of tribal, rural, and urban women, working collectively to negotiate inequalities and celebrate diversity. Vikalp's signature achievement has been the establishment of two law courts headed by women. There, tribal and Dalit women can seek legal redress on issues such as dowry demands, widow compensation, wife battering, property disputes, and child custody. Over 150 cases are heard a year with 80% of the cases being resolved. The remaining 20% are sent on to the state court system.

As the newest Peace Fellow for AP, I will be traveling to Gujarat, India in June to work with Vikalp Women's Group.

COMMUNITY SERVICE PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

The main objective of my fellowship is to support Vikalp in reaching their aspirations by assisting in the creation of a strong, viable program that AP can support from D.C.

My key involvement will be assisting our partner in reaching the following goals:

1. Expand the Women's Court of Law with two additional courts. Despite the fact that many complaints are brought against men, the Women's Court is gaining popularity. My task for this goal is to secure court locations and obtain funds to sustain this goal.
2. Open three shelters in urban areas that provide refuge to women experiencing domestic violence and harassment based on gender. These shelters will help women understand their rights, assist in finding employment, and provide skills-training referral. Again, my role will be to obtain locations and funding.
3. Continue to strengthen the organization by building the capacity to manage expanded programming. The duties I will perform to reach this goal will include identifying potential donors, hiring additional staff, and organizing staff training.

In addition, I will generate lasting relationships with beneficiaries as well as developing donor proposals. I look forward to working with tribal women artists to create pieces for an advocacy quilt, which will be used to promote the work of Vikalp.

Finally, I will help Vikalp to tell their story utilizing social media and website development by blogging my experiences using profound words, pictures, and film. Also, I will assist in training staff to actively engage in social media to communicate their stories, lengthening their reach to the global community.