



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

Report Title: Teaching Advocacy: Learning from the stories and struggles of street youth in New Delhi

Name: Rachel Madris

Other Team Members:

Program: EL Education Program

Trip Dates: 07/08/2012 - 08/29/2012

Location Visited: New Delhi, India

Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 01

Project Summary: I have always been a firm believer that “knowing is not enough, we must apply. Willing is not enough, we must do” (Goethe). As a teacher, it is often incredibly hard to realize the task of both teaching skills and information and helping students apply and act upon what they learn. My goal for this fellowship was to learn how to teach advocacy. In order to do that, I had to spend time with children who have experienced exploitation and learn from them how to best advocate for change.

This past summer I travelled to India to volunteer with Salaam Balaak Trust, an organization that works with former street youth and children who have been child laborers. Salaam Balaak loosely means, “saluting the spirit of the child” and this ethic is infused in all of the work that they do. I taught an English class to a group of older boys who are preparing to start a technical training program and throughout our time together they shared their stories of survival with me. The boys taught me that first step towards becoming an advocate is to listen. Working with street youth at Salaam Balaak Trust has inspired me to share their stories with my students and work to advocate for change.

Throughout my time in India I explored the questions: How do power inequalities make exploitation possible? How do people cope with inequity? What would be the best way by which I can advocate for the rights of other people? The new insights I gained from working with the students at Salaam Balaak Trust will help me to empower my students to apply their knowledge in order to become real activists.

Career Impact: *Allowed me to learn firsthand about child labor and the struggles of street youth and how to best advocate for them.
*Gave me the opportunity to experience Indian culture, learn Hindu language, and teach non-native English speakers.
*Revitalized my passion for service learning and renewed my commitment to cross-cultural learning.
*Challenged me to listen to difficult stories of struggle and face extreme injustice.
*Inspired me to teach advocacy and work for social change within my own classroom.

Classroom/Community Impact:*Students will read interview transcripts from the fellowship and view images from my work with Salaam Balaak Trust, which will help to inform the development of an authentic advocacy project.
*Students will be able to write emails to the students at Salaam Balaak trust asking them questions about their experiences and sharing their own stories.
*My colleagues and I will develop an interdisciplinary unit that incorporates my findings from the fellowship and has a focus on teaching social justice and advocacy.
*The school community will participate in a presentation of learning where students will share their advocacy projects.

Open Response: *Students will begin the year by reading the novel Sold as well as transcripts of interviews with former street youth in order to help them develop an advocacy project.
*Possible advocacy projects will include: creating a public service announcement, blog, newspaper article, letter to the editor, letter to a politician, performance, or a public display of support, such as a day of silence.
*Students will present their advocacy projects to the school community and to local NGO’s that work to end homelessness, abuse and child labor both in New York City and abroad.

Quote: The first step towards becoming an advocate is to listen. Working with street youth at Salaam Balaak Trust has inspired me to share their stories with my students and work to advocate for change.

Photos:



The boys at Apna Ghar, one of Salaam Balaak Trust's shelters for street youth



Many children are forced to work at a young age, like this boy selling bangles.



The boys getting ready to teach me how to play cricket!



Visiting another NGO that works with street youth in a Sufi Village



Holding up the Taj Mahal



The whole Apna Ghar family after our cricket match



Afternoon English class



Women cooking lunch at a Sikh temple. Many street children eat their meals here.