

Peace Fellows to Sow the Seeds of Change in 14 Countries

River gypsies in Bangladesh, carpet weavers in the Atlas mountains of Morocco, genocide survivors in Rwanda, and Roma artists in Lithuania - these are among the 18 communities that will host Peace Fellows from The Advocacy Project (AP) this summer.

The Fellows began heading out on assignment last week after attending AP training in Washington (below), and several are already blogging about their work. "I am both excited and nervous, as I have never done anything like this before," writes Tooni Akanni, a graduate student at New York University who will work on the wrenching issue of child sacrifice in eastern Uganda. 230 graduates from [61 universities](#) have served as Peace Fellows since the program began in 2003.



At the training for 2012 Peace Fellows in Washington, DC

Ms Akanni and the others will profile their hosts through blogs, quilts, photos and video. They will also build demand for IT and social networking. This is particularly important for four new AP partners that are seeking publicity for their work: the [Ain Leuh Weavers Cooperative](#) in Morocco ([Laura McAdams](#), Washington University); Initiatives for Human Rights, in Rwanda ([Mallory Minter](#), Fletcher School); the Subornogram Foundation in Bangladesh ([Matthew Becker](#), New York University); and the Roma Community Center in Vilnius, Lithuania ([Elise Filo](#)).

AP has asked all Fellows to help their hosts identify long-term goals for social change, which AP can then support from Washington. [Alex Kelly](#) (Georgetown) and [Rachel Palmer](#) (Michigan) will work with [BASE](#) in central Nepal on forced child labor. [Ms Akanni](#)'s host, the [Gideon Foundation](#), is working in Uganda on the draft of a law to outlaw child sacrifice. [Alicia Evangelides](#) (Columbia) will be working at Vikalp, a group that supports tribal women in the state of Gujarat, India.

[Laura Burns](#) (University of Denver) will be working with [SATIIM](#), a Mayan

organization in Belize that is trying to prevent an oil company from drilling in a national park. [Katie Hoffman](#) (Georgetown) will be helping the [Kinawataka Women Initiatives](#) to recycle plastic in a Kampala slum. [Claire Noone](#), also from Denver University will be working at a multiethnic women's center in Srebrenica, Bosnia, scene of the 1995 massacre. The center is run by [Bosfam](#), a long-time AP partner.

Several Fellows will help their hosts to challenge damaging cultural practices. [Megan Orr](#) (University of California) is working with [Kakenya Ntaiya](#), who has banned female genital mutilation from her girl's school in Kenya (photo, right). [Heather Webb](#) (New York University) will explore the connection between early marriage and uterine prolapse during her fellowship with the [Women's Reproductive Rights Program](#) in Nepal.



Relaxing at Kakenya's Center for Excellence, Kenya

Three Fellows will work on human rights in the Middle East. [Thayer Hastings](#) (Washington) and [Nur Arafah](#) (Columbia) will volunteer on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian divide - with the [Alternative Information Center](#) in Israel and the [Democracy and Workers Rights Centre](#) in Ramallah. [Caroline Risacher](#), from Strasbourg, will help Fakhteh Zamani, an outspoken advocate for Azerbaijani detainees in Iran who works from Vancouver.

Three Fellows will work on disability in Bangladesh, Vietnam and Uganda. [Adam Kruse](#) (Luther College) will help [BERDO](#) to expand a microcredit program for the blind in southern Bangladesh. [Dane Macri](#), from Windsor University in Canada will help the [Gulu Disabled Persons Union](#) to address the scandalous lack of services for the disabled in northern Uganda. [Jesse Cottrell](#) (Columbia University) will work at the [Association for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities](#) in Vietnam, which is exploring the link between climate change and disability.

In selecting Fellows for these tough assignments, AP looked for adaptability, experience, and a knowledge of IT and social media. Sometimes, however, the most important qualification may be the gift of friendship. Beba Hadzic, who heads Bosfam in Bosnia, is an inspiring leader. But on July 11 (the anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre) she will also be a grieving aunt, looking on as the body of her nephew is reburied.

In servicing this year's Fellows, AP will draw for the first time on a network of quilters in the US and Ireland, who are standing by to help several Fellows produce advocacy quilts (left). Earlier this spring, AP organized an exhibition of 11 partner quilts at the UN which attracted 80,000 visitors. Another exhibition is planned for early 2013.

AP will back up this year's Fellows from Washington with a team of tech-savvy interns - Laura Jones, Thomas Arnold, Sara Allen, Andrew Ireland and Peter Dougherty - under the direction of AP's Program Manager Karin Orr, who herself served as a Peace Fellow in Peru in 2010.

- Fellows raise their own funds. **Please donate!**
- [Meet this year's fellows](#)
- Follow the **blogs**, subscribe and add a comment
- **See how fellows live, through their videos**