

Libby Abbott's project description:

As a 2008 Peace Fellow with Advocacy Project, Washington DC, I will be going to Kathmandu, Nepal this summer to work with a local NGO (Uterine Prolapse Alliance, or UPA) on a project for women's reproductive rights and health. Uterine prolapse occurs when the muscles of a woman's pelvic floor become weak and can no longer hold the uterus in place. In early stages of uterine prolapse, a woman's uterus simply slips out of position and begins to descend through the vaginal canal; in more advanced stages, the uterus descends almost completely through the vaginal canal and the entire cervix may protrude out of the woman's body. Although women who suffer from uterine prolapse (UP) experience pain while walking, sitting and doing work, etc., many women suffer the condition in silence, afraid to speak up about an issue that is considered private and shameful in much of rural Nepal. Data on the condition in Nepal is still preliminary, but estimates suggest that UP prevalence rates could be anywhere from 10-40% on a national level. Doctors in the field are finding that some women have suffered from this condition for almost half a century without telling a soul.

The Uterine Prolapse Alliance (UPA) in Nepal has recently come together with the agenda of calling attention to this important public health issue. As Peace Fellow with AP (a US-based partner of the UPA) I will be sent into the field to work shoulder-to-shoulder with representatives from the UPA as they lay the foundations for this groundbreaking international campaign. My tasks will include helping the UPA produce a regular newsletter to brief constituents about the scope of the problem in Nepal and to help raise further awareness in Nepal and abroad, investigating the logistics of advocating for and implementing a large scale treatment surgery program, networking with Nepali student groups, women's government representatives, and other potential grassroots groups in order to expand support for the campaign, and facilitating the coordination of various national and international organizations in the context of the Alliance.