



Photo by Claude Renault

Gender discrimination continues to be an enormous problem within Indian society. Traditional patriarchal norms have relegated women to a secondary status within both the household and the workplace. This drastically affects women's health, financial status, education, and political involvement. Women commonly marry young, quickly become mothers, and are then burdened by stringent domestic and financial responsibilities. They are typically the last members of a household to eat and the last to receive medical attention, often-times causing them to be malnourished. Women also receive less schooling than men. On top of all this, they suffer from unfair and biased inheritance and divorce laws which prevent them from accumulating substantial financial assets. All of these issues combine to make it difficult for women to establish their own security and autonomy within Indian society.

In Rajasthan, several FSD partner NGOs have been instrumental in providing opportunities for women. These organizations build networks among women to create financial self-help groups. They introduce ideas about microfinance, allowing women to participate in management activities. Other local non-governmental organizations implement projects that export the skills of women abroad to generate significant income. Projects have enormous potential to improve the financial and social status of Rajasthani women. Organizing change at a local level and planning participatory action will help to eliminate bias and stereotypes, and generate awareness of the significant gender divide that exists in India.

Internship/Volunteer opportunities in women's empowerment in India include:

- Empower women by helping to create village self-help groups in which women independently create financial institutions that manage profit-making programs.
- Support a Women's Empowerment Project that provides training for members, holds quarterly meetings and provides vocational support. Educate the public about women's issues to ensure local women receive equal opportunities and compensation, while promoting gender sensitivity.
- Support an organization's Community Action for Safe Motherhood program which provides training and ongoing technical support to NGOs on community-based information and service for adolescents. This program educates women on primary health issues so as to combat common health problems. They also work to train traditional birth attendants.
- Assess the success of past women's leadership programs and make suggestions for improvements.
- Assist project that focuses on mobilizing local women to protect natural resources by controlling farmland development, composting, and preserving water.
- Create workshops to introduce micro-enterprises to those in tribal communities; help provide skills training to increase levels of employment and reduce migration; and empower women to create their own income generating activities.

For more opportunities in women's empowerment in India, visit our website or contact us directly.