



building human rights culture

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On Building Human Rights Culture Breakthrough's Vision, Mission and Strategy

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As this paper is still a work in progress, please do not cite this document without permission. A final version will be made available after Breakthrough completes its strategic planning process in December 2009.

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Introduction

This document lays out Breakthrough's *current* overall approach to and assumptions behind our vision, mission and strategy. The paper is not a description of our campaigns and program areas for external audiences. It describes the team's shared understanding of *who we are* and *why we do what we do* for our upcoming strategic planning process as we prepare for Breakthrough's tenth year of operation in 2010. We hope that this common platform will enable the Breakthrough team, including staff and board, to make informed and strategic decisions about moving forward in these challenging times.

The paper reflects the input of present and past Breakthrough staff as well as Jael Silliman, Program Officer for Women's Rights and Gender Equality at the Ford Foundation, and the following individuals from the University of Michigan: Beth Sullivan, Senior Associate for Advocacy and Policy at the Center for the Education of Women; Robin Coleman, Associate Professor, Communication Studies; and Nick Valentino, Visiting Associate Professor, Communication Studies and Political Science.

What is Breakthrough?

Breakthrough is an innovative and effective transnational human rights organization that deploys multi-media, popular culture, leadership development and community mobilization to promote values of dignity, equality and justice. We use cultural expression to influence and frame the public agenda through a human rights lens. Our goal is to cultivate open and democratic civil societies that are invested in sustaining core human rights values. We envision a global culture where *all* human rights for *all* people are respected, protected and fulfilled.

By ensuring human rights for all, Breakthrough envisions a world where we are able to view one another as human so that each one of us can realize our full potential. In this world, no one is abused, poor, marginalized or oppressed. In this world, individuals and communities are able to participate fully in the processes and policies that ensure their well being, while respecting the diversity and pluralism of their communities.

We believe that our ability to view one another as human (which involves changes in individual attitudes and behaviors) must be accompanied by changes in policies, public dialogue, social structures and cultural norms that cause and reinforce various forms of discrimination and oppression.

We understand that power structures are vested in maintaining the status quo and have far more resources at their disposal. Social change will require sustained and long-term challenges to entrenched social practices, systems and structures, and therefore, Breakthrough makes strategic choices about program areas and geographic focus. To multiply scale and increase impact, we partners with a range of civil society groups, government agencies and the entertainment industry.

Our programs are currently concentrated in the world's two largest democracies, India and the United States, and address a range of issues, including women's rights, sexuality and HIV/AIDS, national security, racial justice and immigrant rights, and religion and peace.

We work through a structure of affiliate offices in each country that determine culturally and politically relevant program priorities and multi-media and education campaigns based on a broader, shared human rights agenda. Our operational style is different from traditional international groups that have a more hierarchical headquarter and field office structure.

We named ourselves "Breakthrough" because the word symbolizes both our *vision* of a global human rights culture where values and norms are transformed to respect all people, as well as our *approach*, which uses cutting edge multi-media and public education tools to transform culture. Breakthrough is a noun, an adjective and a verb and represents our creative and innovative approach to overcoming barriers to social change.

Breakthrough was launched in the fall of 2000 with *Mann ke Manjeere: An Album of Women's Dreams* that articulated women's hopes and aspirations. The accompanying music video, which won several awards, highlighted the true story of a woman's triumph over domestic violence.

Why do we currently work in India and the United States?

We currently work in the world's two largest democracies, India and the United States, which together represent more than one fifth of the world's population. Breakthrough began its human rights programs in India and the United States because the founder is Indian American. As the two countries began to build economic and geo-political alliances, she felt that it was important to build bridges to advance social change. Her knowledge and understanding of the political and cultural contexts of both countries enabled her to develop a unique transnational organizing strategy.

While Breakthrough has often been invited to expand its programming into other countries, we have chosen for the time being to stay focused on India and the United States. We believe that social change requires long-term and sustained interventions to succeed, and we want to ensure that our interventions are effective and have impact, given resource limitations. In addition, we have found many parallels that enable us to cross-learn, share strengths and skills, and develop more effective programs as a result of our transnational identity.

Apart from being the two world's largest democracies, India and the United States share similar strengths and challenges. They are among the world's most diverse, vibrant and pluralistic societies. Their constitutions protect the rights of women, minority groups and marginalized communities and also uphold the ideals of equality, non-discrimination and opportunity for all.

However, human rights face significant challenges in both countries. Minority groups, women and other marginalized communities continue to face violence and discrimination. The growth of fundamentalism and unequal economic structures continually undermine democratic values and fundamental rights. In addition, both countries grapple with the balance between national security and human rights in the face of terrorism, movements for self-determination, and other geo-political realities.

While our programs are geographically focused, our multi-media tools and curricula are viewed and utilized by people from around the world. For example, people from more than 150 countries have played *ICED – I Can End Deportation* - the video game on United States detention and due process. Breakthrough also participates in regional and global networks on human rights, migration, women's rights, HIV/AIDS and related issues as well as the United Nations and other global public policy arenas to share strategies and build solidarity for human rights.

Why human rights?

Human rights provide a dynamic, multi-faceted, yet interconnected way to think about social change. This framework is an important tool to highlight violations and demand redress and accountability for abuses. But human rights can also be a powerful mobilizing tool by providing a vision for a just society and the *promotion* of values of dignity, equality and justice.

Human rights are the closest thing the world has to a global system of values, which provide a moral underpinning as to why all human beings have the right to live with equality, justice and dignity. Human rights are universal and belong to everyone simply by virtue of being human. Each and every person has a right to be human, and there are no exceptions based on religion, caste, gender, class, sexuality, geographic location or any other factor.

In a globalizing world where millions of individuals and communities face discrimination and violence, it is important to have a shared value system that calls on governments, institutions and individuals to respect the fundamental rights of all people. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was drafted in consultation with countries and communities from around the world, represents the basic underpinning of this global ethical set of values.

Human rights can also serve as a political tool for individuals and groups to challenge power relations and organize for change. Human rights are ultimately asserted through the struggles of people for a just social and economic order and have been used by religious, racial and ethnic minorities, women, labor, sexual minorities, indigenous communities and political dissidents to demand the protection of their rights. The recent demands by women for recognition of "women's rights as human rights" and more accountability for gender-based violence is one such example.

Human rights are also located in international treaties and legal obligations that are codified at the level of the United Nations, regional bodies, and in national laws and public policies. These laws are used to provide redress to individuals and communities facing abuse. Advocates also use this body of law to bring pressure to bear on states that are in violation of human rights through public opinion, sanctions, documentation of violations and legal cases. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International are examples of international groups that utilize this approach.

Understanding human rights as a dynamic and evolving paradigm that is the interplay of ethical values, political organizing, and law and policy that constantly changes in response to global circumstances allows Breakthrough to draw on all these facets. In addition, Breakthrough emphasizes three other aspects of human rights in its approach: human rights are part of our every day lives; they are interconnected and indivisible; and they are intersectional.

Human rights are part of our every day lives and each one of us is responsible for their protection and promotion. Eleanor Roosevelt whose famous words form the bedrock of our approach to human rights best captured this idea when she said:

Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world. (Eleanor Roosevelt at the presentation of "IN YOUR HANDS: A Guide for Community Action for the Tenth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." Thursday, March 27, 1958, United Nations, New York)

Human rights are *interconnected and indivisible*. For Breakthrough, civil and political rights, like the right to due process, freedom from torture and freedom of thought and expression, are just as important as economic, social and cultural rights that include the right to food, shelter, health and cultural expression. For many decades, the Cold War and other geopolitical concerns created a schism between these two sets of rights with different countries privileging one set over the other. For Breakthrough, a woman's right to a life free of violence requires access to legal protection as well as adequate housing, employment and community support.

Not only are human rights indivisible, they are also *intersectional*. That means that human rights need to be understood in relation to the multiple identities that each individual embodies. For example, a battered woman may belong to a majority or minority community, may live in a rural or urban context, may be rich or poor, may be a jazz pianist or a nanny, and may be lesbian or heterosexual, an undocumented immigrant or a citizen. Her ability to assert and access her human rights will therefore be mediated through her particular context and identity. Understanding that human rights are intersectional is extremely important for advocates who are engaged in community

organizing and policy advocacy, because effective strategies and solutions need to understand that not all battered women are exactly the same.

What does Breakthrough mean by “building human rights culture”?

The human rights paradigm has enormous potential to advance social change and create just societies because of its normative and evolving nature. Human rights are powerful because they have a global normative acceptance, an international legal structure, and the ability to mobilize individuals and communities for political action.

However, the potential power of human rights as a force for positive change is often unrealized because of overly narrow interpretations. Human rights are invoked when governments perpetrate gross abuses against particular individuals or communities. Human rights are also often perceived as international legal instruments with little enforcement power. In recent times, some of the issues that have received worldwide attention include the use of torture by the United States, genocide in Darfur and China’s oppression of Tibet. The International Criminal Court has been in focus as a new global legal instrument for enforcement purposes.

Breakthrough believes it is essential to highlight and demand an end to systemic violations of human rights, hold governments accountable for their actions and create a strong, enforceable international legal system for the protection and promotion of human rights.

We also believe that it is equally important to demonstrate that human rights are not only about oppression and violence in far off lands but are intrinsic to how we treat one another in our own homes, families and communities. We also believe that the state or government agencies (state actors) are not the only ones responsible for human rights – we all are. And that includes corporations, religious leaders and institutions, health centers, educators and family members (non-state actors).

Breakthrough believes that human rights laws are a necessary but insufficient mechanism for enforcement. We are all familiar with the gap between progressive policies and the ground reality to understand that progressive laws and policies have to be accompanied by community mobilization and cultural change. For example, the United States has strong laws to protect battered women and yet in 2006, their partners killed 60% of the 1,838 women who were murdered. Cultural change that transforms gender relations is therefore an essential component of upholding women’s human rights.

Why does Breakthrough connect human rights to culture?

Breakthrough believes that in order to realize human rights values like dignity, equality and justice for all communities, it is necessary to understand that human rights are an integral part of culture.

While there are many definitions of culture, for the sake of simplicity Breakthrough is laying out two definitions of culture for the purposes of this paper. UNESCO defines culture as *“the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group... it encompasses in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.”* (UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, Adopted by the 31st Session of the General Conference of UNESCO, Paris, 2 November, 2001.)

While culture certainly represents shared norms and values among homogenous groups, it is also “historically produced rather than static; unbounded rather than bounded and integrated; contested rather than consensual; incorporated within structures of power such as the construction of hegemony; ... and constructed through human action rather than superorganic forces.” (Merry, Sally Engle. “Changing Rights, Changing Culture.” *Culture and Rights: Anthropological Perspectives.*)

Since rights and culture are both evolving categories, the relationship between them has been a vibrant, contentious and evolving issue since before the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. There are two broad categories of the relationship between rights and culture that are of relevance to our work, which need clarification before laying out Breakthrough’s approach to rights and culture:

Rights versus culture

The universal application of human rights has been challenged most commonly in the name of cultural relativism. Cultural relativism has been invoked by a range of state and non-state actors to challenge the application of human rights to certain communities or to challenge the validity of specific rights in some cases. For example, certain Asian countries like Indonesia and Singapore have argued that “Asian values” prevent the application of “Western concepts” like human rights to their citizens. But closer examination of these kinds of positions has usually revealed government resistance to accountability for the treatment of political dissidents or other minority groups within their countries. Also, the same governments that label human rights as “Western” have based their economies on “Western economic systems” and encourage consumption of “Western” consumer goods and popular culture.

The cultural relativism argument has been invoked most frequently to challenge the application of some human rights to women. Thus “honor killings,” female circumcision, unequal inheritance laws, barriers to education and the workplace are a few examples of gender-based discrimination and violence that are justified in the name of culture. In each of these instances, it is easy to see how certain voices in patriarchal systems all over the world invoke rights protection for men while denying them to women.

However, the challenge of upholding universal norms while respecting cultural differences and specific circumstances is an ongoing one and applies to any context where we try and create general principles. This is true of national and local laws in any country, as well as international conventions on issues like trade, climate change, and narcotics trade. The application of universal norms is also complicated by the dynamics imposed on marginalized or unequal groups based on race, religion, gender, class, sexuality and

related factors. It is also a mistake to see the rights versus culture dichotomy in absolute terms because both culture and rights are evolving concepts and subject to multiple contestations and interpretations. These issues are discussed in more detail in Breakthrough's approach to human rights and culture.

Right to culture

Over the last two decades, the right to culture has emerged as a strong human rights claim, particularly by migrants, indigenous communities, and racial, ethnic and religious minority groups in nation-states. There are several international treaties that recognize the right of all persons to participate in the cultural life of their choice and conduct their own cultural practices.

The right to culture is an important fundamental right for groups that face discrimination by the majority. Therefore, this right has been invoked by indigenous communities who are struggling to hold on to their lands, their language and their religious beliefs as well as by minority religious groups like Sikhs who challenge helmet laws on the grounds of religious belief. As a result, cultural claims based on religion, tradition, belief, custom or ethnicity are often used in legal proceedings to demand exemptions from particular laws, resist the building of dams or other infrastructure projects that could wipe out a community, or protect particular forms of faith-based expression.

While the right to culture when invoked by a minority community often embodies a form of resistance and struggle, it can also justify reactionary and oppressive forces within that same community. The current debates about women and headscarves in France are one example of this phenomenon where a symbol that oppresses women simultaneously becomes a symbol of resistance.

The Breakthrough approach: Rights as part of culture

For Breakthrough, the creation of social structures that promote values of dignity, equality and justice rests on the successful integration of human rights into the cultural fabric of all societies. We believe that the current debates around rights versus culture and right to culture are limiting and tend to essentialize both rights and culture by making it appear that there is "one" culture and "one human rights." Human rights and culture are integrally intertwined and continually evolving, and therefore, Breakthrough is *building* human rights culture(s). Human rights values can be seen as part of a cultural process within our diverse communities that engage and challenge oppressive practices. Because culture is dynamic, multi-dimensional and complex, social change cannot take place in linear and one-dimensional ways.

It is very important to always remember and assert that culture is not universal, monolithic or static and there is no such thing as *one* tradition or *one* moral perspective. Every culture has mores and practices that uplift human rights values of dignity, equality, justice and compassion as well as practices and beliefs that violate human rights. For example, the Catholic Church is an important voice for immigrant rights in the United States, and churches have provided sanctuary to many migrants in defiance of the United States government. However, the same Church refuses to allow women to serve as priests. At

the same time, there are many Catholics who are anti-immigrant and others who support women's equality. For Breakthrough, this means that members of the Catholic Church will sometimes be allies in advancing human rights, sometimes be obstacles to human rights, and at other times, become the non-state actor that we are trying to challenge, transform or hold accountable for human rights, depending on the context.

As human rights are essentially about restructuring power relations to ensure equality and justice, we must always pay attention to cultural and social hierarchies to identify who is making a culture claim and for what purpose. All cultures have competing voices and understandings, and some voices have more power to be heard than others. In almost all societies, gender, race and class define who has power and who does not with major consequences for those who are disadvantaged. For example, cultural claims that define black men as violent and criminal have led to one in ten African-American men being incarcerated in the United States. A closer examination of the criminal justice system reveals racial discrimination between white and black men in sentencing patterns for similar kinds of crimes. In many instances, culture claims mask an underlying motive to maintain certain systems of power.

Breakthrough sees its human rights programs as one of the many competing voices. Through our interventions we uplift the voices of marginalized communities into public dialogue so that they, in turn, can influence cultural norms and challenge power structures. For example, through our multi-media campaigns like *Is This Justice?* and *What Kind of Man Are You?* we challenge stereotypes about HIV-positive women by placing the voices of married women who are being infected by their husbands into the public dialogue. And through our *Right to Due Process* campaign, we seek to reframe the conversation about immigration from one where "illegals have no rights" to "the need to respect due process and human rights for all."

In many parts of the world, women from marginalized communities have used culture as a means of resistance to the hegemony of dominant groups by insisting on the recognition of pluralism and diversity. While the use of culture can be an empowering tool, women from these groups often find themselves in a double bind when they have to assert their rights in relation to male leaders in their communities who use culture and tradition as ways to maintain patriarchal power relations.

This double bind is exacerbated by the existence of racism and imperialism that can lead many human rights activists or feminists to view the oppression of women in a minority group as an inevitable aspect of their particular culture or religion. For example, a Hindu middle class feminist from India could point to polygamy in Islam as being a negative part of Muslim culture while not seeing the skewed male-female ratio where men far outnumber women as part of Hindu culture (the sex ratio is worse in Hindu communities). Similarly, Caucasian feminists will often refer to dowry related murders as Indian culture while not recognizing gun related female homicides in the United States as part of American culture.

None of us are "outside" of culture, and therefore, it is not useful to create "us" and "them" polarizations. If we understand that we are all part of culture, it also prevents us from

stereotyping and making generalizations about cultures different from our own. Locating ourselves within and naming practices within our own cultural contexts, especially if we come from majority communities or more powerful social strata, is critical to engaging in effective human rights work and laying the foundation of a human rights culture.

Each one of us belongs to several cultures and, therefore, has multiple identities. These identities can be ones we are born with, ones that are imposed on us and ones we choose to assume. This is particularly important to understand because as activists who may be working on one particular human rights issue, we often objectify marginalized individuals and communities and employ simplistic approaches to complex issues. Breakthrough's position on intersectionality is related to this point. For example, I am born a woman and an Indian. In the United States, I am seen as a minority female. I choose to define myself as a feminist and a human rights activist. And these are just a few of my multiple identities. When working on any particular issue, it is critical to remember that all individuals and communities are just as complex and that we should not reduce people to simply their victim or oppressor identity. This is essential to be able to view one another as human.

Culture is an integral part of our humanness and informs our understanding of the world around us. Many human rights advocates view culture in a negative light and as an obstacle to social change. However, as we have begun to understand, culture is multi-faceted and complex, and has both positive and negative aspects. Aspects of culture can certainly lead to human rights violations, but other aspects of culture can be strong building blocks for promoting human rights values. Creativity, innovation, artistic expression, diversity and pluralism are all core aspects of culture and should be celebrated, utilized and integrated into human rights values, strategies and law.

What strategies does Breakthrough use to build a culture of human rights?

Breakthrough seeks to build a culture of human rights through the following strategies:

- We use traditional media, new media, popular culture and other forms of cultural expression to catalyze public engagement, change social norms and influence and frame the public agenda through a human rights lens. By using tools to reach people in environments that are familiar to them, we are able to reach and interact with new and younger audiences and increase support for public policies and community practices that respect human rights.
- We engage in leadership development and capacity building to strengthen the ability of youth, community leaders and nonprofit groups to become effective change agents in their own spheres of operation. Their ability to act as catalysts in their own contexts can lead to more effective community mobilization for promoting human rights.

- We uplift the voices of marginalized communities and place them into mainstream public discourse in order to create greater knowledge and understanding about particular issues and to ensure that their voices are heard in the setting of policy agendas.
- We create innovative partnerships with the entertainment industry, educational institutions, diverse civil society groups and, where possible, government agencies to reach larger audiences and achieve scale. Partnerships also enable us to draw from the strengths and skills of others and leverage resources. For example, by partnering with the entertainment industry, we are able to leverage creative talent that enables us to create more effective media as well as disseminate our campaigns to a wider audience.
- We create discussion guides, curricula and other teaching tools along with our multi-media products, which are disseminated to partner groups and networks, educational institutions and other civil society groups for use in their education and advocacy efforts.
- All our programs are developed through extensive research and consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders including those affected by the issues, activists, academics, community leaders, government agencies and potential audiences.
- We monitor and evaluate our programs through multiple tools to determine the efficacy of our programs and to measure impact. The lessons learned become incorporated into future programming.
- We deploy an intersectional human rights approach to ensure that our interventions reflect the ways in which gender, race, sexuality, religion, class, caste and other factors affect individuals and communities. A holistic and interconnected understanding of issues enables us to create more effective and long-lasting solutions that promote the human rights of all constituencies.
- By drawing upon human rights values we seek to build bridges and connections across multiple issues and identities to create stronger social change movements and better protect the rights of vulnerable communities. In a globalizing world where our destinies are increasingly linked, we need to understand our shared humanity while respecting pluralism and diversity.
- We work closely with allies to ensure that our messages and campaigns resonate with movement goals, and in this way, create an enabling environment for advocacy and public policy efforts that seek to advance human rights.

How does Breakthrough identify the issues that it focuses on?

While Breakthrough's programs and multi-media focus on specific issue areas, all our work is framed within the larger context of human rights. What that means is that we locate the struggles of particular communities as part of a larger, more holistic movement for a culture that values dignity, equality and justice for all its members. We do not believe that some forms of oppression are more important than others – our vision is a world where *all* human rights for *all* people are respected.

In terms of program areas, Breakthrough currently focuses on women's rights in India and on racial justice and immigrant rights in the United States. We identify our issue areas by taking into account the following factors:

- Our subject matter expertise and knowledge of a particular area
- The particular strategies and tactics we need to deploy
- What value addition our particular intervention can contribute to the field
- The length of time it will take to achieve measurable change
- The resources that we can mobilize to advance that particular program area
- Our capacity as an organization to contribute creatively and effectively

Women's rights in India

Breakthrough believes that ending gender-based discrimination and violence is one of the key building blocks to building a culture of human rights. The secondary status of women across the world creates inequality within the most basic unit of the family and this has far-reaching economic, social, political and health impact for all members of society. In India, which has one of the worst male to female sex ratios in the world, we promote the rights of women by spotlighting gender-based violence, discrimination and its relationship to sexuality and HIV/AIDS.

In order to stay true to our mission, we approach our work through an intersectional lens, which means that we pay close attention to how issues of caste, class, sexuality, religion, and location affect women in different ways.

In India we work closely with the advertising and entertainment industry to create multi-media campaigns that are disseminated through TV, radio, print, online, video vans and billboards. Where possible we also partner with government agencies to promote women's rights in public policy and expand our dissemination potential. We also collaborate with national networks to advance the implementation of laws that protect and promote women's human rights and advance shared policy and advocacy goals.

We bring attention to women's rights through mass media while simultaneously developing the leadership of youth and community activists from a wide range of

backgrounds to become agents for change in their own contexts. Our leadership development and community mobilization programs are currently focused in Delhi, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh but we also occasionally partner with groups in other Indian states.

Breakthrough believes that the empowerment of women is essential to advancing women's human rights. We see men as necessary partners in advancing women's rights, and make a point of collaborating with men in our women's rights programming, making sure to include men and boys in our Rights Advocates Training Program as well as in all our outreach and public education efforts.

The Tri Continental Film Festival (TCFF)

Breakthrough hosts an annual film festival that travels across India to educate youth and the general public about human rights issues facing the global south. It has emerged as an important forum that links cinematic production as a communication tool with social struggles and respect for fundamental rights. The TCFF seeks to build bridges through films that show us historical processes and patterns of peoples' movements and the interconnectedness of violations, communities and struggles around the world.

The festival opens in five cities and then travels to educational institutions, citizens' groups and film societies across the country, engaging audiences in debates and discussions on the human rights issues highlighted by the films.

Inaugurated in Argentina in September 2002, the festival traveled to South Africa in 2003, and was hosted in India by Breakthrough in 2004. The TCFF is now an annual platform for human rights cinema across all three continents.

Racial justice and immigrant rights in the United States

Breakthrough became engaged in advancing racial justice and immigrant rights for three primary reasons: the systematic evisceration of human rights in the aftermath of 9/11 in the United States; and the need to promote pluralism and non-discrimination in a globalizing world where large-scale migration takes place for a host of reasons, including economic opportunity, conflict related displacement, family reunification and discrimination; and the need to balance national security concerns with human rights.

Over the past few years, Breakthrough has paid particular attention to the due process and human rights violations associated with immigrant detention and deportation because of the public apathy towards this large-scale abuse of non-citizens. The primary strategies have included new media, including short video documentaries, animations, gaming and social networking. Public education workshops and forums that have combined traditional community education methodologies with performance and the arts, including comedy, spoken word, music and theater, have accompanied these media products. We work closely with national networks on these issues to ensure that our multi-media products advance the movement's policy and advocacy goals.

Our intersectional approach highlights the experiences of women, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender communities, people living with HIV/AIDS and diverse racial and ethnic groups in our campaigns. In addition, we draw connections to racial profiling and national security concerns as well as build alliances with groups working on related human rights issues.

In the United States, Breakthrough is also an active member of the larger movement that seeks to broaden the use of human rights principles and accountability to bear on domestic organizing and government accountability. We engage in a number of field-building activities to advance this movement that include the production of public forums and media like *Why Can't America Have Human Rights?*; convene meetings that explore the use of communication strategies; and build the capacity of other groups to use multi-media tools for social change.

Why does Breakthrough use multi-media and popular culture tools?

The process of social change is influenced by multiple factors and strategies that can range from community organizing, to legal services, public education, advocacy and public policy. Groups choose to focus on particular strategies and issues, and Breakthrough has identified communication strategies such as multi-media and popular culture as one of its primary strategies to advance human rights culture.

Communication processes play a critical role in enabling us to intervene at multiple levels to advance human rights. Through multi-media tools we uplift the voices of marginalized communities and bring attention to the causes and manifestations of discrimination and violence. We generate individual knowledge and awareness and encourage changes in attitude that are more consonant with human rights values. We encourage the development of individual and collective solutions and alternatives to problems, and we catalyze changes in social norms and attitudes by encouraging interpersonal and public dialogue. Last but not least, we place issues onto the public agenda and create support for advocacy and policy change.

We believe that the human rights field needs to utilize multi-media and popular culture more actively in order to achieve lasting change. Over the last decade, dramatic transformations have taken place in the areas of entertainment, media and technology, and these have become an integral part of public life. This is as true of rural communities in India who may watch TV on a shared set through satellite signals as of urban teenagers in the United States, for whom daily life is intimately linked to the internet.

By using multi-media and popular culture tools, Breakthrough can engage new audiences and younger audiences by placing messages into spaces that already have their attention. People's familiarity with public service announcements, video games, music videos and animations can draw their interest while simultaneously challenging them with a different perspective. We are also able to achieve scale and engage large audiences through this kind of intervention.

In addition, popular culture in itself is a persuasive and pervasive medium that unconsciously infiltrates the public imagination. It also has the ability to transcend local cultures even as it emerges from and is tied to specific realities. We therefore speak to particular contexts but simultaneously lift up a broader, more universal set of human rights values. For example, Breakthrough's music video, *Mann ke Manjeere*, is based on the story of a Muslim woman from Gujarat and uses rural images and symbolism but has universal appeal as an inspirational story of a woman who triumphs over domestic violence. Similarly, our video game *ICED*, which focuses on the lack of due process in immigration policy in the United States, reflects the discrimination facing migrants in many parts of the world and has been played in more than 150 countries.

Breakthrough also believes that multi-media and popular culture strategies need to be connected to other interventions to achieve social change. Therefore, all our media products are accompanied by study guides and curriculum and can be utilized by civil society groups around the world for their own public education efforts. In addition, where necessary, our media connects to broader policy agendas in partnership with coalitions working on the relevant issues they represent.

In India, we link multi-media campaigns to leadership development, capacity building and community mobilization at the grassroots level through our Rights Advocates Program. The most effective linkage happened recently with the utilization of video vans accompanied by Rights Advocates to spread the *Bell Bajao* campaign.

In the United States, Breakthrough produces the majority of its media in-house and also builds the capacity of other groups to use multi-media tools more effectively in advancing their specific social justice agendas. We also develop our media tools in close partnership with groups and networks working on similar issues to ensure that we promote shared advocacy and policy goals.

Who is Breakthrough's audience?

Breakthrough reaches out to multiple audiences because of our particular approach to human rights, which embeds our work within culture while simultaneously deploying cultural tools to engage communities.

At the broadest level, we engage the "general public" because we seek to reframe public agendas to uplift human rights values. We reach out to broad constituencies through mass media and Web 2.0 tools while simultaneously attempting to garner the largest possible press coverage of our campaigns and message frame.

We seek to disseminate information and knowledge while changing social norms, attitudes and practices about social justice issues. Our interventions target individuals and communities, as well as the larger social and political environment.

One primary audience is comprised of young people, aged 18 to 35, who are tomorrow's voters, decision makers and shapers of the world's future. Depending on the particular

media and popular culture environment in the two countries of operation, Breakthrough utilizes multiple tactics to reach these communities. Tactics include the Tri Continental Film Festival, music albums, music videos, public service announcements, video documentaries, animations and video games, public forums, theater, comedy, leadership development and community mobilization.

We make a concerted effort to reach out to women and men in multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-racial urban and rural communities from diverse class backgrounds. We incorporate a gendered approach as well as cultural contexts and experiences into both production and dissemination of our media products and educational materials.

A second key audience is comprised of community-based groups and social justice organizations, particularly those working in Breakthrough program areas. In the United States, these include those in the fields of immigration, racial justice and human rights. In India, these include community based groups, non-governmental organizations, colleges and networks of positive people primarily located in two states: Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka, and in the capital city of New Delhi.

Partnerships with these groups enable Breakthrough to create a multiplier effect with key allies in achieving our broader goals of reframing issues through a human rights lens and bringing human rights home. They are also an important audience for our media materials and curriculum as well as our leadership development and community mobilization Rights Advocates Program described in more detail in the next section.

Breakthrough believes that it is important to work across multiple constituencies while being strategic about goals and resources. Cultures and societies are made up of several diverse actors who need to be engaged and mobilized to find effective solutions to complex issues like violence against women or discrimination against minority communities.

What is the Rights Advocates Program? Why does Breakthrough engage in leadership development and community mobilization?

Breakthrough's Rights Advocates Program in India is an intensive leadership development and capacity-building initiative to mobilize youth and communities to challenge unequal power structures, change cultural norms, and bring about and sustain social change within all avenues of social interaction, including the home.

The Rights Advocates Program adopts a rights-based approach that is holistic and multi-layered and builds leadership that can address the complex nature of oppression and discrimination. Our goal is to develop sustainable leaders who have ownership over the process of change, and thus, our program design is participatory and evolving to meet the needs of particular constituencies. An integral part of the program focuses on enabling individuals, especially those who are socially excluded and marginalized, to believe in their own fundamental rights, claim them in their families and communities and become

advocates for change.

The Rights Advocates Program reaches out to diverse communities including corporations, government bodies, media professionals, and youth as well as members of NGOs and community based organizations working with marginalized communities. We include this wide range of groups in our Rights Advocates Program outreach because of our understanding of human rights as universal, indivisible and intersectional, which requires that multiple sectors of society participate in building a culture of human rights.

Breakthrough also seeks to impact authorities and decision-makers who have the resources to bring about change. For example, our public education efforts reach out to police, protection officers, media personnel, teachers, lawyers, medical professionals, corporate groups, senior government officials and non-governmental professionals who provide services to citizens. Through our interventions with these groups we seek to increase knowledge about issues like women and HIV/AIDS and encourage changes in attitudes and practices to promote women's human rights.

For example, two large groups, Citizens Alliance for Rural Development and Training Society (CARDTS) from Karnataka, which focuses on uplifting marginalized communities and Family Planning Association of India (FPAI) from Uttar Pradesh, which advances sexual and reproductive health through family planning methods, have now incorporated gender and women's rights into their core approach and methodology. CARDTS has developed an overall organizational gender policy and FPAI now addresses the intersection of gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS in their service-delivery.

The Rights Advocates Program brings together the strength of multi-media tools with community-based education and mobilization, which deepens the impact of our multi-media campaigns. Our multi-media products are usually accompanied by curricula and discussion guides that are translated into local languages. These resources, along with the creative use of media, culture and experiential learning methodologies make it possible for us to discuss very sensitive topics like HIV, sexuality, gender based violence and caste discrimination in a non-threatening way and yet have an impact. While our multi-media campaigns reach millions of people through multiple channels, the Rights Advocates Program deepens the impact of media messages through sustained in-depth interventions. We believe that in order to transform the underlying attitudes and norms that lead to violations of women's human rights, it is necessary to develop the leadership of large numbers of people who in turn interact with multiple constituencies in defined geographic areas. Therefore, rather than training individuals all over the country or in other parts of the world, we have chosen to focus on two states where we are targeting groups district by district.

The Rights Advocates Program is currently focused on advancing women's human rights with particular attention to gender-based violence, sexuality and HIV/AIDS in the states of Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, and in New Delhi (representing a population of approximately 232 million).

How does Breakthrough determine the impact of its work?

Deep cultural transformation and social change are long-term, non-linear, unpredictable and complex processes. Also, there is no universal consensus on what should be measured and how, and if certain kinds of change are even measurable. Evaluations can include quantitative data of numbers reached through various program interventions and changes in individual attitude and behavior. But how does one measure empowerment, leadership development or an enabling environment for positive policy change?

While recognizing these challenges, Breakthrough employs a range of quantitative and qualitative monitoring and evaluation techniques to determine the efficacy of our efforts to transform individual attitudes and practices, social norms and public dialogue to be more consonant with human rights. Where resources permit, we collaborate with external evaluation agencies to evaluate particular campaigns and programs. Evaluation techniques differ from program to program and from country to country.

The learning and experiences garnered feed into ongoing programs and campaigns and also contribute to the overall field of monitoring and evaluation.

Formative research

Prior to embarking on any campaigns or media development, Breakthrough engages in formative research where we do the following:

1. Review existing research in that particular area.
2. Review actions and campaigns of other groups and government agencies.
3. Identify key challenges as well as multiple perspectives through discussions or focus groups with members of the affected communities and other stakeholders like academics, activists, community leaders, government agencies and potential audience members.

Audience reach

Breakthrough uses audience measurement systems to identify the numbers and demographic information of people reached by our public outreach and mobilization. These include TV, radio, print and online audience measurement tools that examine the following:

- When and how often our advertisements, music or music videos are played on TV, radio or print outlets. (We rely on data provided by Television Audience Measurement (TAM), National Readership Survey (NRS), Nielsen Ratings, and similar industry standards for this information).
- Web viewership and participation through the use of Google Adwords, Google Analytics and online commentary on our website as well as online platforms like Facebook, YouTube, The Hub and MySpace that feature our media. We also

analyze data through our email newsletter that reaches approximately 16,000 readers.

- Estimating audiences reached through press coverage of our programs and media, including blogs and online coverage.
- Video, photographic and written documentation of all Breakthrough presentations at workshops, trainings, conferences, forums and film festivals.
- Use of our materials by other groups including civil society actors, educational institutions, United Nations and government agencies.
- Numbers of media products and curriculum disseminated online, downloaded or in hard or soft copy.

Recall, knowledge, attitude and behavior change (India)

In order to determine the impact of our programs at the individual level, Breakthrough develops baseline studies that generate information on the levels of awareness, knowledge, attitudes and behavior practices of a particular population on an issue of concern in specific geographic areas. The baseline along with the formative research helps us identify the goals and objectives of a communication plan and also allows us to prioritize the indicators that we want to influence through our intervention.

During plan implementation, we conduct midline studies to help us refocus our activities in case we have shifted course or if unanticipated factors are influencing the program. At the end of the campaign or intervention, Breakthrough conducts an endline study that allows us to measure changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices.

Most Significant Change Technique (India)

In order to better ascertain changes in practice as well as the more complex and nuanced outcomes of our community education and leadership development programs, Breakthrough employs a more qualitative and participatory form of evaluation based on the collection and systematic selection of stories that are reported to be a result of Breakthrough's activities. This process is known as the Most Significant Change Technique and it enables beneficiaries and stakeholders to participate in a dynamic and integrated way in defining what constitutes success. (Davies, Rick. "An evolutionary approach to facilitating organizational learning: an experiment by the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh." Wales: Center for Development Studies, 1996. Available at <http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/ccdb.htm>)

Longitudinal panel study (India)

In order to determine the long-term change in Rights Advocates who graduate from our leadership development programs, Breakthrough undertakes longitudinal panel studies that involve tracking an identified set of individuals as a particular sample over a period of some years. The studies ascertain changes in attitudes and practices and enable us to determine the long-term efficacy of our intervention in this area.

The sample includes a diverse range of participants including members of NGOs, HIV-positive people and youth from universities and marginalized communities.

Partner feedback and internal review

We proactively solicit feedback from partners, volunteers, donors and groups using our media and curricula. In addition, we conduct regular program and strategy meetings to define goals, strategies and outcomes where we incorporate learning from prior efforts. Breakthrough also uses pre- and post-surveys along with observation techniques to assess increase in knowledge or to evaluate impact.

Next Steps

Breakthrough's current approach to our vision, mission and strategy will be re-examined and evaluated during the strategic planning process to determine whether these assumptions provide us with the best grounding for the next phase of our organizational growth. We are undergoing paradigmatic shifts at global and local levels and in order to remain creative and effective, it is essential that we explore the implications of these external transformations for our own efforts to build human rights culture.

We have many questions about organizational structure, methodology, geographic focus, strategy and related issues that will emerge with more clarity as we undergo strategic planning. Several of these questions have already emerged from internal discussions and the process of writing this document and we are listing a few here to facilitate our own thinking and reflection. They include the following:

1. Should we stay focused on India and the United States or expand into other countries? Should our expansion be country-specific like our current strategy or should we intervene in regional and global arenas? Should we more proactively address women's rights and migrant rights globally?
2. How do we identify additional program areas? There is great interest within the organization to address issues like climate change and water rights, religion and human rights, poverty and livelihoods, and the rights of sexual minorities. Should the next set of program priorities ensure a United States and India component?
3. Should we build more internal capacity to engage in advocacy and public policy along with our public education and community mobilization efforts? While it is important to work in partnerships with other groups, some within the organization feel that we need to more directly engage in this area.
4. What is our relationship to the field of entertainment education? As we are becoming more visible and recognized for our communications work, do we want to engage more proactively with this field as we do with the broader field of human rights?

5. Should we consider adding a training or production department at Breakthrough? Other NGOs and United Nations agencies continually approach us to produce media for their organizations. Thus far, we have undertaken media training on the use of Web 2.0 tools for United States groups. Should we expand this area to a larger production role and what would the implications be for our current programs? Could this be a revenue generation stream?
6. Is there an effective way to balance deep roots in community and our own leadership and participation in particular issue areas while also building the capacity of other groups to use multi-media tools?
7. Does the current structure of the organization serve our next phase of growth? We pride ourselves on a transnational structure that facilitates culturally and politically relevant programming and emphasizes equality of decision-making across the affiliate offices. Do changes in geographic focus or program focus require rethinking our organizational structure? What about the role of the two Boards of Directors?
8. Technology is changing very fast and multi-media tools are becoming easier to use. Will there soon be a day where every organization is deploying the tools that Breakthrough uses in its campaigns and if that is the case, what is our future role in this area?
9. How will the current financial crisis affect our growth? Are there alternative resources that we can tap into in our two countries of operation? Are there new models of income generation that we should explore?

We are excited about engaging in these and related questions and anticipate that the strategic planning process will provide us with the wisdom and guidance to plan our next steps. Breakthrough is committed to remaining innovative and effective, and we hope that this document will provide us with a strong base from which to begin envisioning our future.

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<http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/PA765/agendasetting.htm>

Social Mobilization:

<http://www.comminit.com/en/node/1558/36>

Social Networks:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Network