

Breakthrough: building human rights culture



Photo: Congressman Delahunt, Mallika Dutt, Congresswoman Lowey, Nicole Kidman

On Wednesday, October 21, 2009, Breakthrough's Executive Director Mallika Dutt testified at the hearing on violence against women conducted by the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs' Subcommittee for International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight.

Mallika joined Ambassador Melanne Verwee of the Office of Global Women's Issues at the U.S. Department of State and UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman in supporting the International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA) and seeking the commitment of the United States government to a comprehensive strategy to reduce violence against women and girls. Mallika asserted the need to invest in women and provide resources globally, and she testified:

In villages and towns in every corner of the world, women are challenging social and cultural norms and laws that made them second-class citizens ... Through strong leadership and local partnerships across a range of actors, the International Violence Against Women Act could have a direct and immediate impact on saving the lives of millions of women and girls.

Mallika also spoke of the significant impact of Breakthrough's most recent multimedia campaign, *Bell Bajao! (Ring the Bell!)*, which calls on men and boys to take a stand against domestic violence in their communities. Our television, radio and print ads have reached more than 130 million through strategic partnerships with the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and the government of India's Ministry of Women and Child Development. Thousands have participated in community mobilization events and workshops, and thousands more have shared their stories of "ringing the bell" on our website and blog (www.bellbajao.org), empowering others to take action in their communities to bring domestic violence to a halt.