



# JASS

*Strengthening & sustaining  
women's organizing power*

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# Annual Report 2007



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## Summary

JASS ended 2007 on a high note, with an exciting range of regional and global strategies and partnerships in place, with new resources received and more on the way in support of what has finally become our primary mission: building the collective power of women to advance equality, justice and sustainable development. In many ways, we are all amazed by this success, which is the product of much hard work plus good timing. In the first eight months of 2007, we struggled with too many commitments and too few resources as we continued, with a great deal of uncertainty, through our transition from multi-purpose social justice consulting group. By September, the tide was finally turning and here we are!

It is clear that JASS' women's movement-building initiative (or MBI) – *Imagining and Re-building Feminist Movements for the Future* – is addressing both urgent needs and great opportunities: needs for strategic political analysis, for rejuvenating moments of reflection, and for old-fashioned face-to-face skill-building and organizing in combination with the latest in communications technology. Launched in 2006, the initiative took shape during 2007 in three regions: Mesoamerica, Southeast Asia, and Southern Africa, with plans to connect young grassroots activists in the US in 2008. From Indonesia to Mexico to Malawi, JASS is engaging with groups of women's organizations to strengthen skills, build bridges and alliances, and popularize and spotlight their often invisible work of consciousness-raising and community-building to transform the attitudes, behavior and policies that perpetuate inequality and injustice. The response from individual women, from women's organizations, and from established and new funding partners has confirmed that this is a timely and effective intervention. JASS moves into 2008, therefore, in partnership with dozens of women and organizations working on vital issues from healthcare in Africa to state repression in Mexico.

A significant accomplishment of 2007 was the growing leadership role of JASS regional teams in directing and implementing programs, particularly in Southeast Asia. JASS regional operations – to be further consolidated in 2008 – build upon and are grounded in the organizations and track-records of women in the JASS community. (See the appendix for more details on the individuals and organizations involved). Specifically:

- **JASS Southeast Asia** is coordinated by Nani Zulminarni and Dina Lumbantobing through their organizations in Indonesia: Pekka, Jakarta and PESADA, Medan;
- **JASS Mesoamerica** draws together the work and organizational relationships of Mariela Arce (CEASPA), Malena de Montis (FODEM), Patricia Ardon, (SiNERGIA N'oj) and Mayela Garcia, CIDEM; in 2008 some of the funding for the region will be channeled through Sinhergia;
- **JASS Southern Africa**, at this early stage, is coordinated closely with Shamillah Wilson, Everjoice Win and Hope Chigudu.

In October 2007, JASS bid farewell (in one sense) to Cindy Clark, acknowledging her crucial role in building the organization and looking forward to ongoing collaboration through AWID and as an informal advisor to the JASS Mesoamerican team. Her departure had the bittersweet effect of accelerating the transition process. Meanwhile, JASS welcomed several new team members. (See the appendix for more on each one.)

- Alejandra Bergeman, Program Associate (Texas, soon to move to DC), providing support for JASS work in Mesoamerica, Southeast Asia and the US, among other roles;

- Annie Holmes, (San Francisco) who moves from being our trusty consultant to an almost full-time position as Communications Manager, expanding our ability to produce and share new knowledge generated by this exciting work through our website, publications, etc, liaising with gay and lesbian groups; and playing a big role in fundraising;
- Ana Ahern, Communications Associate, (Honduras), producing on-the-spot digital documentation (video and stills) and connecting with young women's organizations and aspirations, as well as updating the website;
- Jan Mozee, (DC), our part-time Bookkeeper and Finance Associate.

Joanna Kerr has played a vital role as a strategic and organizational advisor, and is key to our fundraising success throughout 2007. Lori Heise and Timothea Howard provided valuable advice that moved out transition forward. We are very excited to have Srilatha Batliwala as Board Chair, while co-founder Valerie Miller continues to play an integral role particularly with Mesoamerica. And thanks to all of the board for your moral support and advice throughout the year.

By year end, 75% of the approximately \$1-million budget for 2008 had been raised, a first in the organization's history. Funds have been committed by Hivos, ActionAid International, OSISA, the Global Fund for Women, the Stephen Lewis Foundation, the Government of Norway, Mama Cash and an anonymous donor. We continue to pursue a number of strong funding prospects. While all these funding partners have been valuable in many ways, Hivos and Ireen Dubel warrant particular recognition for their willingness to take a risk on us and to invest crucial resources and support, paving the way for other donors.

As we enter 2008, our success brings into focus organizational challenges that must be addressed in order for us to rise to the occasion. We need to: 1) strengthen JASS governance and accountability by reshaping our board and expanding its role, guided by Srilatha; 2) refine our financial and administrative systems to ensure careful monitoring and use of resources; 3) develop communication, management and coordination systems among both the core and regional teams; and 4) define an organizational system that supports semi-autonomous work in each region at the same time that it enhances cross-regional learning and exchange – all of this to be guided by a clear collective vision and common principles.

As part of our organizational-strengthening process, valuable questions emerged from Lisa and Nani's meeting with all of the senior leadership of Hivos in September and will form the basis for ongoing e-dialogue with the JASS community at large in 2008:

- Where does JASS, as an NGO, get its legitimacy and mandate to be in the business of movement-building? Who is JASS to be working in all of these regions at such a deep level of political work? (interventionist tendencies?)
- What is JASS' specific role in the institute and then in the follow-up?
- What about the current context in particular lends itself to movement-building?
- How does JASS sustain the momentum for movement building after the excitement generated by meetings like Panama and Johannesburg?
- Who sets the agenda? How are participants selected?
- From JASS' perspective, what precisely is movement-building? What are the elements that go into movement-building? A critical historical moment can motivate action; we can't always predict anger in the moment. How does passion factor into this project? How do we rekindle it?

- How does JASS manage the question of who gets credit for actions we facilitate and mobilize? (We need to be careful about who gets recognized for such things as the Observatorios.)

What follows are highlights of our key activities in 2007. We look forward to sharing a more thorough assessment of their impact in the coming months.

## Highlights

### Mesoamerica

Implemented with multiple partners, including Feminist International Radio Endeavor (FIRE) based in Costa Rica

- First edition of “La Petatera” newsletter, focusing on the November ’06 elections in Nicaragua, is published in January and distributed to over 60 activists and many more allies in the region; enthusiastic feedback hails the unique analysis of the regional context and of movement-building as well as the exciting vision of *Las Petateras* – Women Crossing the Line.
- Valerie Miller and Maria Suarez (FIRE) develop the first concept note for the Sea Change Feminist Leadership Schools, based on needs assessment generated by the Panama workshop; their design meeting in Provincetown, January 30-31, is held in conjunction with the writing of “Alas de Mariposa”, a feminist theatrical work, with Costa Rican folksinger, Guadalupe Urbina, who dedicates a song called *Mar de Cambios* to our joint effort.
- The Costa Rica planning meeting in early March combines JASS team planning, a strategy session for the Observatorio de Transgresion Feminista/ Women’s Transformation Watch (Women Crossing the Line), a mapping of education efforts and sharpening of the Sea Change concept note, with input from experienced feminist educators from long-time regional women’s training efforts including UNAM-Guatemala, Las Dignas – El Salvador, and Puntos de Encuentro – Nicaragua, plus the JASS regional team comprised of feminist popular educators.
- Taking advantage of feminists gathered from across the region, Costa Rican feminists host a well-attended discussion about women and free trade in the region; FIRE broadcasts a radio discussion on the impact of free trade on women; Costa Rican allies later credit this event and broadcast with helping to motivate subsequent mobilization by women against CAFTA (see below).
- Second Observatorio de Transgresion Feminista accompanies the *Gathering of Women in Resistance* convened by Mexican feminist alliances in support of women on the frontline against state repression in the city of Oaxaca, April 26-29; the Watch, coordinated with FIRE, generates international solidarity (from women Nobel Laureates among others) and media attention, including broadcast of *Radio Petatera*;
- Second edition of “La Petatera” newsletter is published in July, focusing on the Oaxaca gathering; again, it is distributed to hundreds of activists.
- *La Petatera* website is further developed and updated.
- The third Women’s Transformation Watch mobilizes participation, media output and solidarity in support of the broad-based Costa Rican campaign working to mobilize citizens to vote “no” in the referendum on the ratification of the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), September 29.
- The regional JASS team planning meeting and Sea Change gathering in Mexico City, October 9-13, generates a timeline and rich reflection about the Petatera strategy thus far, with in-depth discussion about the Observatorios; the meeting concludes with a firm mandate

for JASS to expand its role and with a clear strategy for 2008 with the *Petateras*; JASS regional team further defines core principles for operation and decisionmaking.

### **Southeast Asia**

Carried out by JASS in partnership with PEKKA and PESADA

- The feminist movement-building institute for 35 young women grassroots activists from Indonesia and Timor Leste, June 18-22, in Jakarta, deals with taboo subjects of sexuality and generates demand for JASS to provide further training in community organizing, popular communications and feminism; for many participants, this is an inspiring first exposure to feminism.
- The institute sets in motion a follow-up plan to convene an intergenerational dialogue to enable young women to communicate and build more effective ties with seasoned feminist leaders; this does not take place in 2007 due to limited resources but is planned for 2008.
- Planning proceeds for a seven-country Southeast Asia Regional Institute, April 2008, and for setting up the JASS SE Asia Regional Office based at the PESADA office in Medan, Indonesia, to be co-directed by JASS associates, Nani Zulminarni and Dina Lumbantobing.

### **Southern Africa**

In partnership with OSISA and ActionAid

- Building on six months of in-depth consultations and planning, a four-day strategy meeting is held in Washington, DC, September 4-7, to define and launch a three-to-four-year process of leadership, organizing and movement-building focused on women and HIV/AIDS; participants include Sisonke Msimang of OSISA, Everjoice Win of AAI, Joanna Kerr representing Stephen Lewis Foundation and, from JASS, Annie Holmes, Lisa VeneKlasen, Ana Ahern, and Shamillah Wilson (hired as JASS-Southern Africa Regional Coordinator).
- The movement-building institute, Johannesburg, November 19-22, with 25 Southern African women living with and active on HIV/AIDS, is an enormous success (see comments below) and generates a mandate and clear plan for training, organizing and global advocacy in 2008.

### **North America**

Currently building partnerships

- April 19-21, Toronto, Cross-border Dialogue with 35 participants is co-convened with Toronto-York Labour Education Centre (Jojo Geronimo) and with Grassroots Global Justice (GGJ), a US-based alliance working mainly with communities of color; while this activity is carried out under **JASS' Economic Rights and Citizen Action program, (subsequently woven into the movement-building work and no longer a stand-alone program)**, the organizing provides a vital opportunity to build relationships with grassroots activists in the US, particularly young women, and leads us to Alejandra Bergemann; the relationship with GGJ – a lead organizer of the US Social Forum – is crucial in enabling JASS to play a visible role and co-host workshops there.
- Attending US Social Forum for JASS in June, Cindy, Valerie (and Alejandra as Fuerza Unida):
  - run a JASS workshop on popular education (in collaboration with Domestic Workers United, Center for Immigrant Families, Fuerza Unida, Project South, GGJ, Afro-Eco and others);
  - hold a workshop on *Rebuilding Women's Movements Across All Boundaries* to lay the groundwork for US movement-building institute with grassroots women activists in 2009;

- host a mini-Women's Transformation Watch with FIRE and Maria Suarez; FIRE generates numerous radio interviews and an article in which US women leaders share what "crossing the line" means to them.

### **Other Movement-Building**

- AWID - Money and Movements:
  - Cindy edits the final 2<sup>nd</sup> report and Annie develops two-pagers on *Where's the Money for Women's Rights?*
  - JASS holds a joint panel at the Grantmakers Without Borders conference, May 8, NYC with AWID and Central American Women's Fund, "*Money and Women's Movements*";
  - June 27-28, Lisa participates on the International Planning Committee for AWID's 2008 Forum on Movement-Building;
  - September 27 - Cindy co-facilitates Money and Movements Dialogue for Latin America in Brazil.
- Nobel Women's Initiative:
  - five JASS associates participate in NWI's first conference, *Women Redefining Peace: Middle East and Beyond*;
  - Lisa continues to collaborate with NWI regularly as an advisor; NWI lobbies donors to support JASS and is crucial in securing Norwegian funding;
  - NWI acts on their standing commitment to provide high level support for the Observatorios with three declarations of support and press work.
- National Center for Advocacy Studies (NCAS), Pune, India:
  - On hold as NCAS staff re-organize but partnership is expected to take shape again in 2008.
- International Budget Project:
  - Lisa concludes her membership on the Civil Society Budget Initiative advisory board at a meeting in Amsterdam in September, and is invited to serve as an advisor in 2008 to their Gates-funded initiative to support citizen budget work on healthcare issues.

### **Knowledge Generation and Communications**

- *Making Change Happen 3: Power* is translated into Spanish;
- *MCH 4: Power and Strategies* nears completion;
- *A New Weave* second print-run is made available;
- *Women Navigate Power* is published with Action Aid and launched on September 6 at Busboys and Poets venue in Washington, DC; over 60 people attend, purchase books and continue to show an interest in JASS;
- A working relationship is established with the members of Women's Studies Department at George Washington University, as research partners to provide periodic back-up research and short concept notes on key issues related to feminist movement-building;
- Video of Southern African workshop by Ana Ahern posted online, generating a wave of enthusiastic responses : <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYKVzuBlf10>

### **Short-term Contracts**

- DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence model alliance-building collaboration, to be completed in early 2008;
- Co-facilitation of Equal in Rights Workshop (Valerie Miller and Atila Roque) at World Social Forum in Nairobi;
- Production of an economic literacy manual for trade unions and citizen activists with the Solidarity Center to be completed in 2008, based on collaboration with JASS in Serbia, 2005-06.

### **Institutional Development**

- JASS moves offices in February;
- The organization's first audit is completed;
- Lisa and Nani's fundraising trip to Europe (Oslo, Stockholm, Amsterdam and London) helps to consolidate our relationship with Hivos, enables Norwegian Ministry funding and builds new relationships, as well as enabling Nani and Lisa to fine-tune the JASS story and move beyond the image of JASS as a DC-based effort;
- Fundraising continues, and grants are finalized with Hivos (international and Southeast Asia), ActionAid International, OSISA, the Global Fund for Women, the Stephen Lewis Foundation, the Government of Norway and an anonymous donor;
- Joanna Kerr is contracted for advice on assessing JASS, refining governance and a range of other strategic decisions;
- A new Program Associate, Alejandra Bergemann is hired, as well as new Administrative Assistant, Jan Mozee; and Annie Holmes on a close-to full-time basis as Communications Manager.
- Lisa meets with JASS-Mesoamerica to consolidate the regional team and advisors, and to sharpen the mission, strategy and regional decision-making in line with the focus on women's power.
- The SE Asia strategy and organizational plan is refined through virtual and face-to-face meetings with Nani and Dina;
- Southern Africa regional capacity is expanded with the hiring of Shamillah Wilson and with plans to establish a formal advisory group;
- Lori Heise and Timothea Howard provide advice on organizational needs and board reorganization; Srilatha Batliwala agrees to become co-chair of JASS board and will help lead the reorganization in 2008.

#### **Feedback from Southern African participants**

What a revival!! Thank you all for bringing us together and letting us explore the potential within. ...Just the beginning of a process.

*Gcebile Ndlovu, Regional Coordinator (Southern Africa), International Community of Women Living with HIV and AIDS, Swaziland*

Thank you so much....for such an eye opening experience.

*Patience Mandishona, Gays and Lesbian of Zimbabwe (GALZ)*

Hey!! am so excited, I don't know where to begin from!!! Firstly, I am definitely not the same person since I came back from the women's movement building session. ... Next piece of good news is that our Board has recognised the need for inclusion of women's issues and has created the position for a Regional Director of Women's Leadership and Empowerment (!!!)

*Miriam, Network of Zambian People Living with HIV/AIDS (NZP+)*

## People and Organizations

### JASS community members – some new – involved in the movement-building initiative

#### **Mariela Arce**

Currently the director of CEASPA (the Panamanian Center for Social Research and Action) and an active leader in the Panamanian Women's Alliance, Mariela is known throughout Latin America for her innovative popular education and participatory democracy work, and trained many popular educators regionally through ALFORJA. Among other roles, Mariela is a member of the National Council of Women; an advocate with the Panamanian Women's Alliance; the former coordinator for ALFORJA, a regional popular education training network; and an advisor to UNIFEM and other donors on women's human rights and development.

#### **Patricia Ardón**

Trained as an anthropologist, Patricia has extensive experience in development, focusing on a variety of issues impacting Central America. She worked in CRS in the early 70s and was the regional representative of Oxfam UK for Mexico and Central America. Regional Representative for CEDPA until 2005, Patricia holds various advisory positions within diverse local, national and regional organizations. She is currently the director of Sinergia No'j, JASS' institutional partner, which is also affiliated with the National University.

#### **Roxana Arroyo**

A feminist lawyer and human rights activist, Roxana Arroyo is an expert on women's human rights, and a researcher with an emphasis on violence and discrimination against women. She trains women's groups, as well as members of the judicial and legislative branches, on the topics of human rights and international law. Roxana is also a university professor, teaching courses on law and gender, ideology and culture, and epistemology.

#### **Ana Luisa Ahern**

JASS' new Communications Associate grew up between Honduras and Washington, DC; is fluent in Spanish; and co-founded OYE, the **Organization for Youth Empowerment** in El Progreso, Honduras. In addition to a 2004 Bachelor of Arts degree from Barnard College, she has taken numerous practical courses in IT and photography. Ana Luisa spent a summer in rural Brazil working with Amigos de las Americas on a community service public health project, planning and leading workshops on nutrition, HIV/AIDS, and community sanitation. Since September 2004, she has lived for most of the year in El Progreso, working on OYE projects.

#### **Alejandra Bergemann**

Born in México, D.F., Alejandra spent two years doing grassroots organizing with Fuerza Unida in San Antonio, Texas, empowering women workers and building political consciousness in the broader community. She joins JASS as Program Associate, with a particular focus on Mesoamerica.

#### **Cindy Clark**

Cindy has worked closely with numerous coalitions, NGOs and community groups in the US and Latin America to strengthen their ability to connect citizen engagement with long-term human rights advocacy strategies. As JASS' Program Associate, Cindy worked closely with the JASS-Mesoamerica team, and remains an advisor the Mesoamerica program. Lead researcher and key

facilitator in the partnership with AWID on Money and Movements, Cindy has now joined AWID full-time to continue this work, along with feminist movement-building. Prior to working with JASS, she was the Program Coordinator for Women, Law and Development International. She lived in Chile for four years where she worked with PARTICIPA, an NGO dedicated to promoting participatory democracy. She has a Bachelors degree in International Relations and Economics and a Masters in Human and Organizational Development.

### **Mayela Garcia**

An active leader in the Mexican women's movement for 20 years, Mayela is currently the General Coordinator of CIDEM, a Mexican women's organization in Veracruz which carries out a variety of educational, research and action-oriented projects dedicated to women's empowerment, leadership and reproductive rights. As a trainer and advocate, Mayela has extensive experience working with grassroots rural and indigenous women, as well as girls and youth. Her work has focused on women's reproductive rights and political participation and, in recent years, women in Chiapas in particular. Known throughout Latin America for her committed leadership and grassroots experience, she is a member of a number of national and international networks on women's health and reproductive rights, sustainable development and women in radio.

### **Malena de Montis**

A highly regarded Nicaraguan feminist, with a doctoral degree in education from the University of Massachusetts, Malena founded the Center for Democratic Participation and Development, CENZONTLE, and the Women's Development Fund FODEM/CENZONTLE, NGOs that empower poor women through financial, business, and citizenship support and education. This work earned her the Central American award for Best Practice from INTERCAMBIO. Director of CENZONTLE for 13 years, Malena remains on the Board of both organizations. A pioneer in the Autonomous Women's Movement and founder of the Women's Coalition in Nicaragua, Malena has participated and spoken in numerous meetings and conferences around the world and has published a great deal on issues of women and development.

### **Annie Holmes**

A filmmaker and writer from Zimbabwe, Annie has worked with JASS on a consultancy basis for several years as editor and, in the case of *Women Navigate Power*, as writeshop co-facilitator and writing coach. After literature degrees in South Africa, she co-headed Zimbabwe Publishing House's editorial department, where she helped to launch a Women of Africa imprint. Later, she established **Pemba Productions** and went on to produce more than thirty television series and documentaries in Southern Africa, including a number on women's rights and HIV/AIDS. In 2001, she moved to the US to enroll in an MFA writing program in California. As of January, Annie plays a role as JASS Communications Manager.

### **Dina Lumbantobing**

A trainer and consultant, Dina brings a wealth of experience in women's economic and political empowerment and organizing. Dina co-founded **PESADA** (Sada Ahmo Association), a Sumatra-based NGO that develops women's economic development through women's credit union groups, health projects and political education for women and children. Dina also coordinates the Learning Forum for NGO Capacity Building and has produced two books on the struggle of women in politics in North Sumatra: an account entitled *Political Labyrinth* and a guide for teachers on integrating gender and reproductive health in teaching. Together with Nani, Dina heads JASS Southeast Asia.

**Maria Suarez**

Costa Rican organizer, educator and feminist inspiration, Maria Suarez is the co-director of FIRE, JASS strategic partner in the region. Among her many roles, Maria is involved in the Women's No Campaign to stop the free-trade agreement in Costa Rica and also founded and co-coordinates Alas de Mariposa (Wings of the Butterfly), a musical production and education and organizing effort to spotlight women's often-invisible contributions to society and science over centuries. Professor of Communications at the University of Denver in Denver, Colorado, Maria also taught at the Institute for Further Education of Journalists in Sweden. As a human rights activist and literacy teacher in the 1970s and 80s, Maria coordinated grassroots education in El Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras

**Shamillah Wilson**

A South African feminist living in Cape Town, Shamillah formerly directed AWID's Young Feminist Leadership Program, and works closely with numerous HIV/AIDS, youth and women's organizations around the Southern African region. She plays a key role as JASS Southern Africa's regional coordinator.

**Nani Zulminarni**

**PEKKA**, the "Women-Headed Households Empowerment Program" that Nani founded, organizes thousands of women in eight Indonesian provinces to build their vision for change along with their networking and advocacy skills. The organization reaches more than 300 poor villages and 10,000 families. Nani is also the chairperson of The Center for Women's Resources Development (PPSW) and a member of the executive committee of two regional networks - the South East Asia for Popular Communication Program (SEAPCP) and the Asia South Pacific Bureau for Adult Education (ASPBAE). A JASS stalwart at regional and international levels, Nani leads Southeast Asia regional activities alongside Dina.

*Compiled by Annie Holmes, Alejandra Bergemann and Lisa VeneKlasen, January 2008*