



JASS

Annual Report 2008



Strengthening and Sustaining

Women's

Collective Organizing

POWER



Mission

JASS strengthens the voice, visibility, and collective organizing power of women to create a just and sustainable world for all.

A global community of justice activists, scholars and popular educators in 27 countries worldwide, JASS (Just Associates) works from a feminist perspective to transform norms, institutions, policies and decision-making processes in both public and private spaces of power. Our shared analysis and strategies are shaped by an intersectional perspective on power, integrating race, class, sexuality, location and other factors. The web of relationships bonding the JASS community, along with the local-to-global affiliations that each of us brings, constitutes a key political resource that enables JASS to multiply impact and to strategize with agility.

Core Strategies

Strengthen women's activist leadership

JASS supports and expands women's leadership and political participation by providing the analysis, skills, tools and connections for women of all walks of life to leverage collective citizen power.

Support strategic action

JASS promotes and fortifies women's organizing to respond to urgent political opportunities, and to build bridges and flexible alliances across barriers such as agenda, age, location, class, and ethnicity.

Develop and use communications for movement-building

JASS shares communication skills and creates fresh multimedia messages and strategies to connect women and to influence public opinion, in order to make women's rights and feminism relevant and appealing, and the transformative roles of women more visible and valued.

Generate knowledge about movement-building

JASS harvests, refines and shares practical and conceptual learning about building movements for social change, with and for women's rights activists and for all those concerned with development and equality.

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From the Director's Desk



In 2008, the JASS ship set sail. Though we decided to focus solely on women's collective power in 2006, it was the investment, over many prior years, in political ideas, skill-building, and relationships across many countries that carried

us forward so quickly. This year – 2008 – even we as JASS staff were startled by the momentum and creativity that the process unleashed.

To understand our achievements and challenges in 2008, it's worth recapping why we decided to focus on women's voice, visibility, and collective power in the first place. By 2005, it was clear that, from Mexico to Indonesia to Zambia to the U.S., women were organizing to confront a new set of challenges: extreme economic instability; shrinking access to justice and basic services from governments pared down by deregulation and privatization (and now by debt); increasing control by religious conservatism, corporate interests, and drug cartels; and growing levels of unchecked violence by gangs, random strangers, and intimate partners. In this changed environment, women's rights and justice agendas – which generally benefit everyone – had become invisible and marginalized.

And today it is clearer than ever that women need to leverage the power of our numbers, as the majority of the planet, to have the necessary clout to push

back, to make lives better and more democratic for all of us. As you read this report, we hope you will encounter, in action, some of JASS' principles for building collective power:

- Recognizing and reorganizing ourselves around our diversity, as defined by class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, location, age, etc., which are the ever-shifting sources of inequality and privilege amongst us and also the key to our strengths and complexities as a collective;
- Creating safe spaces for reflection, confidence-building, exploring taboos, and deepening our political analysis, because consciousness – what we and others think and believe – is the heart of change;
- ORGANIZING, ORGANIZING, ORGANIZING: old-fashioned face-to-face relationship-building, action-oriented community organizing, one woman at a time;
- Amplifying local organizing with on-line organizing, putting media in the hands of women, to connect us and to spotlight women's perspectives and action;
- Reclaiming and redefining feminism as a personal and political way to understand the inequality and internalized oppression that affect everyone – and as a big vision for changing norms and institutions for the benefit of all and of the planet;
- Bridging distances between rural and urban, activists and scholars, and deliberately engaging with women in other social movements;

- Promoting an alternative model of leadership judged by the ability to negotiate conflicts among us and to sustain collective, flexible action – not by the ability to lord over others;
- Ensuring that the most affected women move into the lead.

The year concluded with three exciting and previously unimaginable occurrences: the first face-to-face global gathering of the growing JASS community of movement-builders and allies from 27 countries; a doubling of the funding from our steady donors and a large, unique contribution from the Dutch government; and, lastly, the election of the first African-American President of the United States, Barack Obama. These events affirmed some of JASS' core beliefs:

- The mobilizing appeal of hope – if your heart is in it, you're unstoppable;
- The power of numbers and community organizing as an unbeatable political strategy;
- Difference matters and must be at the center of our conversations and organizing.

It was an uplifting end to a great year. Thanks to all the amazing women, men and organizations who give their time and passion so generously to this endeavor and to the many institutions that have invested their resources.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joanne Vank'.

People



Strengthening
and Sustaining
**Women's
Collective
POWER**



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Open Society Initiatives for Southern Africa

Mama Cash

Global Fund for Women

Irmis Foundation

Many individuals and friends who generously share their time and connections

JASS

Mesoamerica







JASS Mesoamerica

The Petatera Vision: A New Social Fabric

We envision weaving a more just and equitable social fabric that places women's multiple roles and feminist values at its heart. Given the challenges of the current context, we need more than just 'networks', which are too loose. They have too many holes and are only connected at a few specific points. By contrast, the petate is a weave that takes shape in a smoother, more powerful, and diverse way because it combines threads from multiple directions. This articulation of diversity – various strands woven together around a common objective – is what builds strength, resistance and also flexibility.

~ Petateras

Petateras for me means a space for exchange, for reflection, for intimacy and conspiracy amongst women to transform the world – we want a new world where men and women can participate equally.

~ Aleyda Teran, Panama

Beginning with the idea of *transgresión feminista* – translated as women's resistance and daily forms of civil disobedience, and understood as “women crossing the line” – JASS Mesoamerica continues to blaze a new feminist path, co-creating with the alliance of Petateras a political understanding and strategy for transformation from the inner and personal realms through to the regional and global.

JASS launched the movement-building initiative in Mesoamerica in 2006 with a gathering of diverse urban and rural leaders, including feminists, indigenous women, trade unionists, and women from other social movements. This group produced a powerful analysis of the impact of economic restructuring and political conflict on women, society and governments, and a vision for weaving anew the devastated

social fabric, integrating feminist values of reciprocity and caring. Inspired by the metaphor of the petate (woven mat), the women took on the name of Petateras and began to weave together powerful, flexible sets of alliances and a regional strategy that was immediately put into action.

For JASS Mesoamerica and the Petateras, 2008 brought a process of reflecting on, deepening, and intensifying the Observatorios de la Transgresión Feminista or Feminist Transformation Watches. The Observatorios continued to accompany and spotlight women's activism during key political moments – from free trade policy decisions to presidential summits – garnering a regional and international hearing and support for women's perspectives and actions. Much knowledge was gleaned from the Observatorios about doing and publicizing feminist movement-

building on the ground, and this new understanding was shared with other regions at the JASS Cross-Regional Movement-Building Dialogue at the end of 2008. Other priorities in 2008 were formalizing the Sea Change Feminist Leadership School that will be launched in 2009, building the JASS Mesoamerica team, and continuously refining mechanisms for collective decision-making in the face of urgent action demands.

Context

As market-focused global policies consolidate privatization and shrink and shift the role of governments in Mesoamerica, alliances between drug barons, organized crime, elites, and military leaders are creating a state of lawlessness, impunity and widespread violence. Self-proclaimed leftist parties – such as the Sandinistas in Nicaragua – trade women’s reproductive rights in order to win votes among conservative forces. Along with pervasive economic insecurity, women are threatened by ever rarer forms of gender-based violence. Skillful activists and movements in the region organize to confront their governments on a range of state actions: the dismantling of public services and the privatization of basic resources; corrupt practices and impunity; electoral fraud and weakened citizen participation; increasing militarization; and, (reverting to previously denounced forms of authoritarianism), the use of state violence to repress protest.

Femicide – the systematic murder of women for political reasons because they are women – is a reality in many countries in Mesoamerica. Paramilitaries, drug cartels and organized crime use sexual violence, threats and even the murder of women to maintain control, with no effective intervention by the authorities to stop them. Violence against indigenous women, both inside their communities and by the state, is often hidden, while feminists and other human rights advocates are harassed and intimidated.

At the same time, women’s movements in this region are among the most creative, strategic, and courageous anywhere. The vibrancy of social movements and the history of political organizing in the region

provide opportunities for the scaled-up, sustained engagement and mass mobilization of marginalized women. Women’s rights activists are now at the forefront of broad agendas dealing with corruption, secular government, and free-trade; here, gender equality and women’s roles are recognized as central to democracy and development.

“Women have been the indisputable heroes of social resistance struggles – it is the voices and activism of women that sustain the majority of social movements – but their recognition, visibility and leadership still lag far behind what their active participation merits. In the context of rampant crime in which we currently live, women turn out to be the most vulnerable to repression.”

~ Daphne Cuevas, México



Observatorios

For women, building a different society requires “transgressing” existing norms – resisting, pushing the envelope, crossing the line –in both private and public spheres, to overcome the confines of oppression and discrimination. But women’s social and political actions and contributions are often invisible to the public eye, just as women’s priorities have almost disappeared from public agendas. As an alternative political organizing and media strategy, the Observatorio de la Transgresión Feminista is activated in critical moments when women and feminist groups in Mesoamerica urgently require international in-person and virtual solidarity to strengthen, make visible and protect women’s actions and struggles in increasingly repressive and dangerous contexts.



I would like to propose that any state, any government that persecutes feminists and speaks against feminism threatens all feminists. This transcends borders. It concerns all of us who call ourselves feminists and all Latinamerican women. We have to condemn and repudiate this. It’s happening now in Nicaragua, but who’s to say it won’t happen in our countries? Who are we up against? Neoliberal and patriarchal governments. What are we thinking? That it won’t happen to us?

~ Roxana Arroyo, Costa Rica

JASS partners with the Nobel Women’s Initiative (NWI) in the Observatorios to draw greater public and media attention to women’s actions, while the ongoing alliance with Radio Feminista ensures connections with women across the globe. In 2008, JASS collaborated with the Petateras, NWI, and Radio Feminista to mobilize and sustain five Observatorios.

Nobel Women’s Initiative’s Declaration of Support for Dora Maria Tellez

“As women and as Nobel Peace Laureates, we are deeply concerned about news from Nicaragua that Dora Maria Tellez, former Minister of Health and legendary Sandinista commander, has launched a hunger strike to protest and halt steps by President Daniel Ortega to rescind the legal status of the political party she co-founded, the MRS Party (Movimiento Renovación Sandinista). We salute her courage and commitment to protect basic political freedoms and support the call to action mobilized by women and civil society across the region ... This move by the Ortega government is one of a succession of restrictions over the last two years to suppress democratic liberties, harass human rights defenders and deny political, reproductive and sexual rights.

“We concur with the words of internationally acclaimed Nicaraguan poet, Giaconda Belli, who states that “She [Dora Maria] has emerged in the midst of the multitude ... to demonstrate that liberty is non-negotiable and that, in the face of injustice, silence and passivity do not have a place ...

“We ask concerned citizens to join hands with the many Nicaraguan human rights, feminist and peace activists to express solidarity with Dora Maria Tellez and her important actions by contacting Nicaraguan Embassies around the world demanding that the government of President Ortega respect the human rights and democratic principles he swore to uphold when he became President.”



Honduras Anti-Corruption Hunger Strike

A virtual Observatorio accompanied the anti-corruption hunger strike (May 2008) led by feminists, civil society members, and public prosecutors to bring an end to impunity and rampant government corruption in Honduras.

Permanent Observatorio Nicaragua

Following a series of repressive actions on the part of the Ortega government, and the persecution of nine feminist leaders for their work in defense of women's reproductive rights, the Petateras saw the need to launch a permanent Observatorio to monitor the ongoing situation in Nicaragua.

International AIDS Conference

A cross-regional Observatorio took place when Mesoamerican allies joined eight JASS Southern Africans at the high-level IAC (August, Mexico City). Radio Feminista's coverage of women's perspectives at the IAC included interviews with young women from JASS Southern Africa and a live broadcast from JASS' first Cross-Regional Dialogue, held at the same time. Here, participants exchanged experiences on the impact of HIV/AIDS on women's lives, drawing from their respective contexts to discuss both the challenges and the strategies women are using, such as demands for access to holistic health care.

Nicaragua is the first country in Latin America where infection among adolescent women is higher than that among men. We live in societies with widespread ignorance and inadequate sex education, where policies are tied to the church. Politics, religion and economics are fundamentalist. The HIV/AIDS epidemic among young women is a direct result of these fundamentalisms that we feminists have been fighting for ten years.

~ Ana María Pizarro, Nicaragua



Americas Social Forum

JASS, the Petateras, Radio Feminista and women grassroots activists from the US – 15 women in total – organized two workshops and an Observatorio at the III Americas Social Forum (Guatemala City, October 2008), the largest gathering of social movements

and progressive activists in the Americas. The JASS and Petateras workshop – “Rebuilding Women’s Movements across All Borders” – gave grassroots organizers from the North a chance to share stories with their sisters from the southern part of the Americas across boundaries of language, geography, age, race, and class. Discussing organizing in different contexts, the workshop focused on women’s migration experiences and on leveraging the collective power of migrant workers who send remittances to their home countries.

A group of Guatemalan Petateras convened the Observatorio to monitor the inclusion of women’s issues, voices and agendas throughout the ASF. Voice recorders in hand, JASS delegates attended sessions on topics from organizing domestic workers in the US, to violence against women in Guatemala’s 30-year internal armed conflict, to indigenous people’s resistance in the face of environmental degradation. Dozens of women came to Radio Feminista’s booth in the Media Center to publicize their issues on the radio. Of the more than 200 workshops, panels and other activities at the forum, it emerged that 72 were organized by feminist and women’s organizations or were centered on women’s issues: an indication of the organizing power and solidarity among women’s groups in region.





Summit of Iberoamerican Presidents

An Observatorio accompanied “Tu Silencio También Nos Atropella” (“Your silence also violates us”), a dramatic action strategy during the summit (held in El Salvador, October 2008) to spotlight the staggering rates of femicide and violence against women throughout the Americas. Organizers seized the opportunity to attract regional and international media attention (including AP and CNN features) while the heads of state were in town. On the morning of October 30, protestors threw thousands of dolls, covered in red paint, onto a busy San Salvador street. Young women dressed in white, their faces painted, held up signs citing rates of murder, rape, and other acts of violence against women.



Harvesting Lessons from Observatorios

Because the Observatorios de la Transgresión Feminista have proved uniquely effective in mobilizing regional collective action, JASS Mesoamerica – with the Petateras, Radio Feminista and other allies – undertook to document and analyze this political strategy in depth, drawing on the first three Observatorios (spotlighting Nicaraguan elections; Women in Resistance in Oaxaca; “NO” to CAFTA in Costa Rica). The process of reflection and analysis (sistemización) yielded new insights and confirmed some underlying assumptions.

- The Observatorios demonstrate the importance of a careful analysis both of contextual forces and of the dynamics of power amongst allies, in order to address not only visible forms of power but also those that operate behind the scenes, such



as the web of patriarchy that works quietly and insidiously to shape people’s consciousness and worldview.

- In this historical moment, feminist change strategies and actions such as the Observatorios require a deeper understanding of the state and the misuse of democracy. Corrupt forces use state power to push their own economic agenda and repressive policies, at the same time that they undermine government capacity to regulate the economy or defend the rights of workers, women, and indigenous communities.
- The Observatorio strategy affirms that the struggle for women’s rights forms an integral part of the struggles of all for dignity and justice; it is not separate from other social movements, not a diversion from other efforts, but vital to the entirety of politics and transformation. The feminization of poverty is structural and affects everyone. There can be no peace if half of the population is subject to violence, and no democracy or respect for rights if half of society cannot hold public office or political positions or even lead social movements, simply because they are women.
- One of the greatest challenges for activists is how to deal with the internal tensions and controversies that arise from political work. Among women, difficulties in negotiating power must be confronted and new styles of leadership embraced. In organizing the Observatorios, women have responded to these challenges of personal power and transformation, working together to establish a climate

of safety, respect, and trust that allows conflict to surface into frank, reflective, self-critical, and loving discussion.

- The Observatorios represent “glocal” action in practice, weaving together local/national mobilizations with international communications, outreach and alliances that spotlight the voices of the frontline.

To continue to build inclusive forms of collective power, the challenge in mobilizing Observatorios is to expand the organizing effort to include an ever broader range of women; to address power and privilege within the alliances involved; to communicate knowledge and agendas in accessible and compelling ways; and to follow up the efforts supported so far to sustain the political engagement.



Encuentro de Petateras

Thirty women, participants in the Petatera confluence since its inception in Panama in 2006, reunited in August in Antigua, Guatemala, to strengthen their bonds and common vision, deepen their understanding of the forces affecting women's movement-building in the region, and reflect on the lessons learned so far through the Observatorios strategy. They planned strategies for upcoming Observatorios in El Salvador and Guatemala, and continued to refine the vision and plan for the Sea Change feminist learning and action strategy, with women involved in feminist popular education throughout the region.

The Petateras provide a great opportunity to rethink cultural, political and social transgression, a feminism that goes beyond the simply binary, a more self-critical feminism.

~ Adriana Palacios, Nicaragua

Transgression means breaking with canons and stereotypes. We're educated for domesticity, trained to learn and respect the rules and, in this way, reproduce the patterns of socialization and domination. We feminists work to break these rules in order to promote social change – to create a society that is more equitable in terms of gender, ethnicity and class.

~ Walda Barrios, Guatemala

Each one of us has lived through a personal revolution and this is what drives us to push for social transformation.

~ Oaxacan activist



Cross-Regional Activities

The JASS Cross-Regional Movement-Building Dialogue in Cape Town, South Africa was an opportunity for Petateras to share their experiences and analyses with women from Southern Africa and Southeast Asia. The high level of political mobilization in Mesoamerica is an inspiration to women from other regions who quickly adopted newly coined terms such as “confluence” and “interactive autonomy.” At the AWID Forum that followed, the Petateras and JASS Mesoamerica organized workshops and panels, including one on the Observatorios as an action strategy for feminist movement-building. They also participated, with JASS support, in the staging of the play *Labyrinth of the Butterflies*.



JASS-

Southern

Africa





WOMEN DELIVER
GLOBAL conference
19-20 October 2007 London
United Kingdom

HIV Positive Women
at Decision Making Table

TAC
The National Commission on
Truth and Reconciliation

JASS Southern Africa

The energy unleashed by the first JASS gathering in Southern Africa – a regional movement-building institute in November 2007 – swept through 2008, generating an extraordinary wave of activities.

Those of us involved in this JASS Southern Africa process, many with years of experience, are completely astounded by the impact and momentum generated by this project. The women involved are themselves surprised by the changes they feel being part of this. While very different from one another, they have established strong enough mutual support, solidarity and respect to enable us to gain new political insights and take leadership risks. As JASS staff and support, we are scrambling to keep up with their ideas, interests and desire for action. Participants have taken ownership of the process with a speed and to a degree that we did not anticipate, with a group of participants strategizing independently of JASS staff for the International AIDS Conference in July, for example, and requesting a JASS banner and other promotional materials to reach out, share and network.



This kind of organically-grown campaign is both unexpected and exciting, and has influenced the direction of JASS as an organization as a whole.

~ Lisa Veneklasen

Comparing JASS' approach with one-off, 'drive-by' workshops, the self-named JASS movement-builders (JMBs) emphasize the value of engaging in an ongoing process. A group of apprentice facilitators was identified early on and, as the core team, participates in intensive training and plays a growing role in planning, designing and implementing activities. By means of emails, surveys, blogs, and reflection sessions at gatherings, JASS participants give concrete examples of the ways in which JASS activities have

empowered them, and how they have discovered and used their own voice and leadership. The JMBs' growing confidence is evident in their active participation in regional and international conferences, including the African Feminist Forum, International AIDS Conference, and AWID Forum. The concepts, practical skills and knowledge they have gained have changed the way that they see the world and how they operate in their organizations, communities and families. This has not always been easy. Particularly for the young women, stronger leadership is not often welcome and their knowledge and confidence has created new kinds of conflicts and challenges. JASS has responded by establishing mentors to support women in conflict negotiation.

JMBs' Voices

I used to think that feminists were against men but now I understand that to be a feminist doesn't mean you are against anyone; it means that you are fighting for the rights of women.

~ Irene Vasco Cossa, Mozambique

It's important to realize that you are not the one who is going to come up with a solution on your own but that the solution is going to come from all of the people, the facilitators and those who you are facilitating.

~ Nkhumi Tshivhase, South Africa

We say all women are equal and exercise the same rights – but we find women top brass oppressing women grassroots. Instead of PhD – Pull Her Down – we need PhU – Pull Her Up.

~ Londiwe Msibi, Swaziland

When I talked about the difference between a leader and a boss, the head of our organization didn't show that she'd heard but since then she has started to come and consult us: "Do you have any ideas?"

~ Participant

WILDAF wanted to present a paper to parliament about the conflict between customary and legal systems around the age of majority. The November workshop helped me to see that to be effective we needed alliances, to work with other women.

~ Mercy Mwandunga, Zambia

People come to organizations for help in meeting their immediate needs. How do we transform that engagement around needs into broader political organizing?

~ Shamillah Wilson, South Africa

I was sterilized without my consent. But I was silent and all the other women were silent. When I brought it up, we decided to make sure that the government heard about what was happening in the community: "Why are they sterilizing all the HIV positive women in Namibia?" This was a strong move for me. If I hadn't come to the JASS workshop, I wouldn't have done it.

~ Esther Sheehama, Namibia

I work with a mixed organization, with both men and women represented in the leadership. Even though the majority of leaders are women, when a man made a decision in a meeting, we'd agree. But from the time I joined JASS, I found that I can disagree with men. One of them said, "What have you been learning? Why are you no longer afraid?"

~ Irene Vasco Cossa, Mozambique



Context

Most countries of the region gained their independence in the 1960s, some as a result of brutal liberation wars. With political independence came hopes of peace, stability and democracy, but instead the reality has too often been conflict around the distribution of resources and power. Economic and political inequality and conflict fuel ethnic differences, which had been manipulated by colonial powers to control people. Despite holding a great deal of the world's most needed natural resources – or perhaps for that very reason – Africa continues to confront increasing poverty, collapsing states, corrupt leaders, external manipulation, ethnic conflict and natural disaster. Multinational mining interests control the valuable resources of the region, while trade liberalization imposed by global financial actors, combined with dumping of food as 'aid,' has decimated small farmers, most of whom are women. Today, the region suffers some of the world's most drastic food/land crises, leaving whole sectors of the population starving.

The capacity and will of many governments to protect basic rights and provide the minimal needs for development have been so diminished by international institutions that women are left more vulnerable and insecure, often consumed by survival needs. Development aid is still the primary source of many countries' GNP, and dominance of development NGOs has tended to smother national and local civil society ('NGO-ization'). Women's rights are often challenged as a Western threat to African tradition, and traditional authorities wield significant power

over women's lives. This dovetails with the explosion of conservative evangelical protestant churches in limiting women's choices.

HIV/AIDS has unmasked and unleashed deep misogyny, sexism and racism. Feminists find themselves pitted against other justice agendas, with tensions between women living with HIV/AIDS and women's rights organizations. Misguided policies and programs, particularly the ABC model ("abstinence, be faithful and use condoms") failed to factor in the intimate dynamics of gender inequality, while home-based care programs further exploited women's caregiving role, letting governments and the international aid community off the hook for providing even the most basic healthcare. The result has been an overburdening of women, increasing their health risks while decreasing their productive capacity to generate income and food for their families and communities.

While it is spawning communities run by grandmothers and child-headed families, HIV/AIDS has also sparked new forms of organizing and mobilization by women, particularly young women, who are HIV-positive. The long-taboo subjects of transactional sex and sex workers, along with sexual orientation, are now on the table. While massive, informal, community-based networks of market women, burial societies, and savings clubs engage poor

women in large numbers, they are mostly disconnected from institutionalized gender work. Many African feminists and women leaders are eager to find ways to reinvigorate and rebuild women's movements across all sectors. Southern African women have a lot riding on whether governments respond to their voices and protect their basic rights and freedoms. Building organized and effective women's movements is motivated by the immediate needs for schools; reproductive health services and HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention; decent jobs; access to credit, resources and clean water; and police and justice systems that protect women from violence on the street and in their homes.



Leadership Training

In February 2008, JASS held a four-day workshop on leadership for movement-building for nine women from six countries, selected from among those who attended JASS Southern Africa's initial November 2007 institute. The group focused on popular education methods, political analysis, strategy skills, conflict and negotiation, and the core values and behavior associated with movement leadership.

We want to move away from calling ourselves 'trainers' because our approach to knowledge, action and change is much more political and dynamic. We're not delivering knowledge to those who don't know – we are generating knowledge collectively from our personal and political experiences, with new ideas and how-tos woven in. The process forges relationships between women that are critical for movement-building, and the knowledge guides our collective action rather than solely developing us individually.

~ Lisa Veneklasen

In December 2008, the JASS Southern Africa core team of political facilitators came together for a four-day intensive training and strategic planning workshop. While political skills are clearly vital to movement-building, activists also need to plan programs and manage resources effectively. The workshop engaged each woman as both participant and facilitator, and included a session with renowned popular educator, Shirley Walters. Participants also strengthened writing and documentation skills, as they refined the regional plan and defined core team roles and responsibilities.



Building Malawian Women's Movements

In 2008, JASS Southern Africa launched a multi-year political capacity-building initiative to strengthen the grassroots leadership and community organizing power of women who live and/or work with HIV/AIDS in Malawi, at least 50% of them young women, aged between 22 and 35. The first steps were a participatory needs assessment in July (carried out by JASS board member, Hope Chigudu, and JASS Southern Africa Program Associate, Azola Goqwana) covering much of the country and many groups, and a follow-up out-reach, alliance-building and recruiting visit by Azola and Southern Africa Regional Coordinator, Shamillah Wilson. From this research, JASS decided to work with a range of organizations with deep influence and reach at local level, rather than with a single, national partner. The workshops, planned for early 2009, will support these local women activists, new leaders and their organizations to 1) organize other women to work together to solve real problems in their communities and, at the same time, change social attitudes; and 2) give themselves and others the confidence and information to demand rights and resources, and to question the prejudice and taboos that prevent healthy living. Down the line, the goal is to build the advocacy capacity of Malawian women to pressure local and national government to make development resources accessible and to deliver on laws that support the rights of women and HIV+ people.

"I was abandoned by my husband as soon as I disclosed my status. It has been five years now and I don't know whether he is alive or dead. A year after he left, his parents threw me out of our matrimonial home and gave it to his brother."

"We were faithful women staying at home but the men went out. See where they landed us."

"This Malawi experience has shown me gaps in our education system which does not prepare us for coping with unexpected possible shifts in our lives. We tend to assume that once we define our goals we live happily thereafter!"

~ From JASS interviews with Malawian women, July 2008





Action

International AIDS Conference

The JASS delegation of seven Southern Africans and five Mesoamericans gained first-hand knowledge about the politics and actors dominating global decision-making on HIV/AIDS and made their voices heard at the International AIDS Conference (IAC). JASS Southern Africa facilitated a workshop in the Global Village, featuring their digital stories and gathering a lively audience of over 60 women and men from all over. Two of the JMBs spoke on three different panels at the official conference; Martha Tholanah took part in a press conference on Zimbabwe crises, women and

AIDS; and the delegation participated actively in various sessions. Important meetings included one with Helena Hofbauer, director of the International Budget Partnership, to explore possible training on budget tracking on public health and HIV/AIDS, and a (much photographed!) conversation with Stephen Lewis.

At JASS' first Cross-Regional Dialogue, held in tandem with the IAC, participants from Southern Africa and Mesoamerica compared strategies and experiences. In addition to recording interviews with strategic partner Radio Feminista (www.radiofeminista.org/agosto08/notas/audios.htm), the JASS delegation's daily blogs prompted further, online debate.



We have lesbian women being attacked, raped, beaten up, and murdered because of their sexuality. There are no policies at all that protect these women within our country. Mainly, this is fueled by the criminalization of same sex relationships.

~ Patience Mandoshina, Zimbabwe

One of the most important moments of the conference for me was to see Patience up there, talking in front of all those people, so confident, having her voice heard.

~ Azola Goqwana, South Africa

African Feminist Forum

In September 2008, five JMBs participated in the Second African Feminist Forum in Kampala, Uganda, along with JASS board member Hope Chigudu. Entitled “Feminist Power, Agency and Resistance: New Visions for a Revitalized Continent,” the forum addressed pressing issues from sexual and reproductive choice, to violence and discrimination against women, particularly LBT and HIV-positive women, to the benefits and challenges of including men in the feminist movement.

JASS has opened up a variety of different spaces for us to attend in Africa and internationally. At the AIDS Conference in Mexico, we presented our digital stories (a great improvement in that we produce them ourselves and are learning technology, rather than having others speak for us.) We pulled a crowd with our singing – in other words, we used different creative means to make our presence felt. We got to meet key actors, such as a face-to-face meeting with Stephen Lewis, as well as some of the Mesoamericans involved in JASS and the Petateras. Then, five of us went to the Second African Feminist Forum, where we were able to represent young Southern African women and to discuss with older women. How do we integrate the issues of all generations, understand the struggles of earlier feminists and our own, and acknowledge the differences? How do we complement each other and work together?

~ Patience Mandishona, Zimbabwe

JASS Cross-Regional Movement Building Dialogue and AWID Forum

In November 2008, 14 JMBs participated in the JASS Cross-Regional Movement-Building Dialogue (CRMBD) in Cape Town, South Africa. JASS Southern Africa taught the others an adaptation of a South African struggle song, which has become a JASS anthem: “My mother was a kitchen girl/ My father was a garden boy/ That’s why I’m a feminist, I’m a feminist, I’m a feminist.” The Southern African group took enthusiastic part in JASS’s mini-tech camp on the day after dialogue, learning how to blog and use Facebook and Skype to improve their communications and organizing.

The CRMBD was scheduled in tandem with the Association of Women’s Rights in Development (AWID) Forum. Three workshops focused on the experiences of JASS Southern Africa, while two JMBs Martha Tholanah and Sindi Blose – presented on plenary panels. JMBs shared the task of staffing the JASS booth, which was a hub of networking activity throughout.



Communications

With intensive input at the May workshop and the mini tech camp in November, JMBs are making increasing and creative use of new media, wherever access allows. Texting on cell phones remains the most common, affordable and reliable means of communication on the continent, so developments in handheld devices bode well for feminist organizing, along with radio. At the request of the JMBs, JASS produced a banner, very popular T-shirts (Women Crossing the Line), and bookmarks, to enhance visibility. JASS Southern Africa videos and digital stories, along with an energetic new audio-visual tool on Power, HIV and Women, can be viewed at www.justassociates.org/videos.htm.



Telling Our Stories

JASS convened a five-day training and advocacy workshop with a South African feminist IT group, Women's Net (Johannesburg, May.) The group – fourteen JMBs from seven countries – learned communications skills through a hands-on digital-storytelling process that demonstrated how the personal can be very political, and how audiovisuals can support organizing and advocacy efforts. Each woman produced a short film using images and sounds, with her own voice narrating: highly significant when others so often speak for African women living with HIV. Technology access and skills were also much appreciated, with two participants using computers for the very first time. The products have ongoing value: participants continue to screen and discuss their digital stories at gatherings such as AWID and International Aids Conference, stimulating deep discussion among women and mixed groups about the gender inequality and HIV/AIDS. To watch the digital stories, see www.justassociates.org/videos.htm.





Multiplying Impact

To expand the movement-building process, a smaller group of young women and more experienced organizers became part of the regional team as apprentice political facilitators. This is one way in which the process is being passed, in thoughtful stages, into the hands of young, HIV-positive women themselves.



JASS

Southeast

Asia





JASS Southeast Asia



In 2008, JASS Southeast Asia (SEA) blazed two paths: one strengthening young activists and organizers from Indonesia and Timor Leste, and the other launching the JASS movement-building initiative with women from eight countries, a first step towards regional alliances and action.

If you are an activist, a movement person, it doesn't matter where you are. JASS wants to invest in leadership of women who can really build a movement to make change, rather than form NGOs or a network. JASS wants to create a space where you – young and energetic, with a vision – can build your character, leadership, capacity to contribute to change.

~ Nani Zulminarni, Indonesia

Grounded in partnership with local organizations and individuals, JASS SEA is co-directed by Indonesian feminist popular educators Dina Lumbantobing and Nani Zulminarni, both renowned for their path-breaking work linking massive grassroots organizing with advocacy at local and national government levels. JASS SEA is hosted within the offices of JASS

partner PESADA, a North Sumatra-based women's rights and economic justice organization. Early in 2008, Niken Lestari joined the team as program coordinator, bringing her tech skills and boundless energy into the mix. JASS SEA also benefits from partner organization PEKKA's popular communications team.

Key threads wove through debates over this intense and busy year, particularly the capture of local government and politics by extreme religious groups. Then, sparked by the many faces of diversity – age, nationality, class, rural/urban, sexuality – JASS SEA has found creative ways to put principles of inclusivity and voice into practice in the design of workshops and processes – opening a rare, safe space for discussions about sexuality, and planning for younger, grassroots activists to facilitate the next intergenerational dialogue with 'senior' feminists to ensure stronger, deeper alliances. At every gathering and every level, women recovered their histories – local, national, feminist, regional. The JASS Cross-Regional Movement-Building Dialogue in November deepened this exchange of commonalities and differences.



The women's movement (along with the people's movement) in the Philippines has a lot of lessons to contribute. The history of the struggle of Filipino women spanning several centuries is a source of pride and a challenge to continue what our forebears have started. My starkest realization at the Cross-Regional Movement-Building Dialogue is that women in other countries suffer almost the same injustices as women in my own country. This realization prompts me to seek more ways to forge ties with other countries from different regions, in order to strengthen the impact of our advocacies and to build bridges for exchange and alliances in the future.

~ Rosanna 'Osang' Langara, Philippines

Context

Conditions within Southeast Asian countries vary enormously: consider life under the Burmese junta, the emergence of civil society in Vietnam and Cambodia, Malaysia's wealth and technology, the shaky, newly autonomous national government of Timor Leste, and the Philippines' remittance-dependant economy. All the same, beneath this variety lie certain common factors.

After the 1997 East Asian financial crisis, structural economic changes deepened poverty, inequality and insecurity in the region and, although countries and communities rebuilt in the interim, the recent crisis has once again created economic disaster. Corporate-led globalization is transforming traditional communal social systems into more individualistic, consumer-oriented economies. This has intensified social conflict around class, ethnicity, gender and religion. Powerful religious fundamentalist forces, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia, are mobilizing to limit women's basic freedoms and rights even further. Decentralization of governance structures can mean increased participation for women in decision-making, but it presents more barriers in those local governments that have imposed shariah law. The combination of economic insecurity and corrupt or ill-equipped governments has increased the mobility and scale of labor migration, generating new cross-border forms of exploitation, such as sex trafficking, especially in the Mekong region (Thailand, Cambodia, Laos).



The organizing capacity and role of women's rights groups also varies significantly from country to country. For example, in Cambodia and Vietnam informal women's groups have focused primarily on immediate economic needs while women's organizations in other countries have successfully campaigned for legislation against VAW (violence against women), and the Philippines, with its powerful social

movements, has made notable advances in gender equality including gender budget legislation and the existence of an all-women political party.

Most countries in this region have experienced a massive proliferation over the last decade of well-resourced NGOs, with a resulting disconnect between urban-based elite NGOs and thriving mass-based grassroots organizations. This has weakened the influence of women's movements, especially in regional processes such as those of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In addition, there



has been little effort to prepare the younger generation for leadership, thus leaving young people with few of the resources, skills and connections that they need in order to make an impact.

Activities

Regional Movement-Building Institute

Twenty-two activists and organizers from eight Southeast Asian countries gathered in Parapat, North Sumatra, Indonesia in June 2008 to explore the history of women's movements in the region, to map the current context and to maximize the opportunities for connection across borders, ethnicities, religions, cultures and generations. Participants from Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam represented a balance across generations (aged from 19 to 52, with 40% young women), issues, locations of work (rural/urban), ethnicity, and geographic focus. The result was a dynamic combination of new faces and perspectives on burning questions such as poverty, labor, sexuality, and trafficking.

In some Southeast Asian countries, civil society is newly emerging. Where people have struggled to be allowed to form organizations, the critique of NGOs can be confusing. And it's true that NGOs have played a big role in developing civil society. But an NGO is not a goal; it is only a vehicle. In order to change this patriarchal ideology and inequality, we need to involve more women. The challenge is to use the NGO 'vehicle' to move towards our bigger dream, to strategize to be more inclusive and to draw others into our movement. If the vehicle is too small, we must create a different engine.

~ Nani Zulminarni, Indonesia



Some women feel that out in society they have the full right to do anything, but returning home is difficult and may end in domestic violence, as a form of backlash.

~ Chan Kunthea, Cambodia

The institute wove experiences of personal change – the realm of invisible power and ‘power within’ – with wider activist struggles building collective power. In country groups, participants identified priorities for action going forward: sexual and sexuality rights, migration, violence against women (lobbying for legislation and then putting laws into practice), political education, and fighting for women's rights within human rights agendas.

JASS SEA supports individuals among this diverse and energetic group as they bring new thinking and strategies to their own organizations. Looking ahead, JASS is drawing some participants into the design and implementation of national-level workshops in the coming two years.

Community Organizing Workshop

Organizing skills are a critical element of JASS' approach to movement-building and an often undervalued part of effective political work. In August 2008, in tandem with an Intergenerational Dialogue, JASS SEA gathered 26 young women activists, alumni of the initial June 2007 workshop, from 18

provinces in Indonesian and Timor Leste. Held over three days, the workshop discussed the power cube and three dimensions of power (as outlined in JASS' Making Change Happen series), mapped the history of women's movements in the two countries, and hand-produced media: installation art, popular and traditional songs, a short film from digital stills, a community map, and a daily newspaper.

Intergenerational Dialogue

I am youngest in my organization so it's difficult to make a contribution, even if it's brilliant!

It's also hard to be the oldest in the organization, especially if you are trying to be participatory and not a dictator.

From the start, JASS SEA has worked to address the gap between high-profile national-level feminist leaders and the younger generation of organizers and activists. This dialogue, held in August 2008, alongside the community organizing workshop, drew significant positive press coverage in Indonesia and was considered successful on three fronts:

- Bringing together women from different generations who work at policy, grassroots and other different levels and on a range of issues;
- Generating a shared understanding of the history and dynamics of each historical era, and of the challenges and successes of women activists in each period;
- Detailing and clustering issues and challenges such as domestic violence and migration – some ongoing, others new – and thus moving towards a feminist agenda for the two countries.

Although they appreciated all that they had learned, younger women expressed frustrations in the debriefing that followed: the voices of senior feminists had dominated, while those of younger and/or community-based activists went unheard. “Wow, these celebrities just come and go – they don't want to listen to us.” The JASS SEA team took this disappointment as an entry point, inviting the younger women to define the kind of movement leadership and values they want going forward. The coordinators have re-designed the next gathering as a workshop (not a ‘dialogue’) where all participants will be required to commit to the full duration. Also, the idea of a dialogue implies two separate generations, whereas in fact the women spanned a range of ages from under 20 to over 50, with many gradations between. Most dramatically, the next such intergenerational gathering will be facilitated by the younger JASS SEA movement-builders themselves. In these ways, JASS will challenge the established style (presentations by eminent resource persons) and, instead, will invite a true and participatory exchange.



Mainstream media

Two senior journalists from *Kompas*, Indonesia's leading national newspaper, attended and observed the intergenerational dialogue. Their article, under the provocative title “Women's Movement, building a house of cards?” appeared on August 25, 2008.

“Is it true that, as part of people's movements for democracy, the women's movement does not have a common platform and that their movement is therefore not as strong as other social movements? Is it true that the women's movement tends to break into factions without any links between them? Is it true that building women's movement is like building a house of cards?”

“These questions were answered during the Intergenerational Dialogue of Women Activists conducted by Just Associates South East Asia (JASS SEA). This face-to-face meeting of 42 women activists from the 1980s to 2000s mapped the linkages between one movement and another, over geographical spread and over different issues, eras and contexts. The rainbow strategy of diversity turns out to be a strength. Even women's movements in very remote areas can be seen and linked with the national, regional and global movement, especially with the aid of technology.

“The dialogue also proved that the women's movement is not like building a house of cards, but rather has a clear vision: fighting for a more just society with power shared equally. There is a clear foot print, strong process and tangible results, although still much to be done.”

JASS Cross-Regional Movement-Building Dialogue and AWID Forum

Twelve women from eight Southeast Asian countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Timor Leste, Malaysia and Burma) traveled to Cape Town in November 2009 for the Cross-Regional Movement-Building Dialogue (and the AWID Forum afterwards). Comparing the three, very different JASS regions, SEA participants learned a great deal about the ways in which other women respond to their particular contexts, particularly HIV issues in Southern Africa and political struggle in Mesoamerica. Visual media were especially important for bridging gaps in language and background. Following the dialogue, the SEA group participated in JASS tech camp and in formulating the 2009 regional plan.



Mobilizing for Women's Rights on Mother's Day

In December 2008, JASS SEA co-hosted a new, political way to commemorate Mother's Day in Medan, Indonesia. The 77 participants (66 women, 11 men) included women legislative candidates, activists, NGO representatives, and community partners. In two sessions, they discussed the impact of religious and political fundamentalisms on women's lives and women's movements, and the experiences and strategies of women political candidates. This event helped establish JASS SEA's relationship with women in public office for future work.

Communications

With ongoing support and promotion from Niken and the mini tech camp in Cape Town, JASS SEA activists became increasingly active on the JASS blog, web-site and Facebook page. Two listserves now operate, one for Indonesian and Timor Leste alumni (in Bahasa Indonesian), and the other for regional alumni (in English).



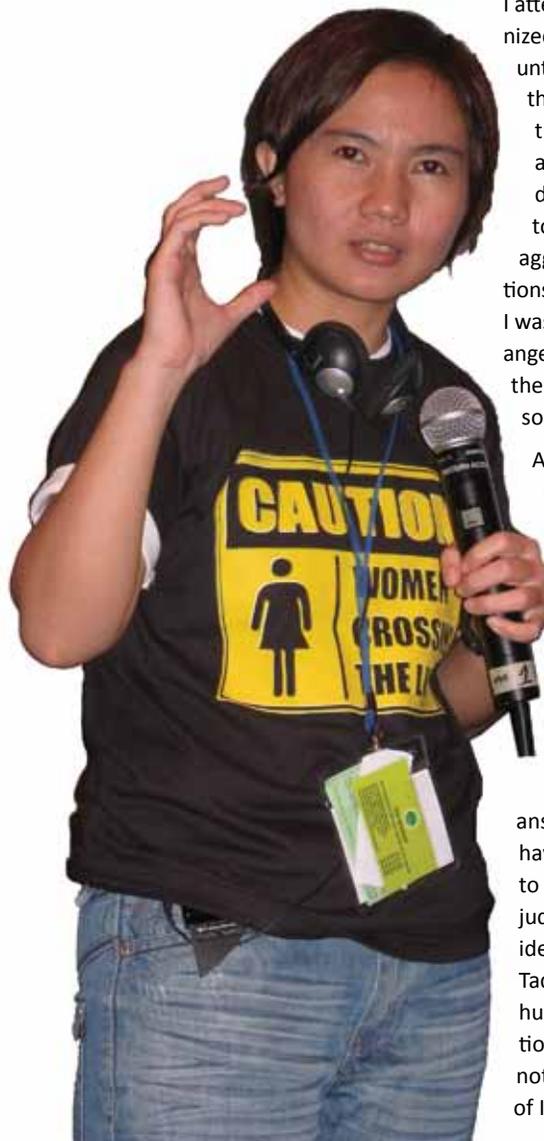
Kamilia Manaf on the JASS Blog

Fight Homophobia with Politics of Fun not Anger

I attended a workshop on homophobia [at AWID] organized by the Coalition of African Lesbians. It ran so well until three Moslem women asked questions. Suddenly, the session became heated. Participants said that the three Moslem women were being aggressive and that they claimed that homosexuality is a sin, a disease, an insult to the Koran. I was at the session too. But I don't think those Moslem women were aggressive; they just asked questions, the usual questions from heterosexual people that I get as a lesbian. I was disappointed by those LBT women who showed anger and did not listen to the questions. People have the right to be angry, but we cannot make a positive social change towards LBT women with anger.

After I introduced myself as a lesbian at JASS's Indonesian and East Timor Youth Feminist Forum in 2007, some participants started gossiping behind my back and finally the facilitators of the forum decided to open a special session on lesbianism. They asked me to be the resource person. I tried to make the discussion forum full of fun by making jokes about their questions. The discussion ran for almost four hours. And it was fun!

As a Moslem lesbian woman, I really wanted to answer the questions in that AWID session. I would have liked to say: "The essence of Islam teaching is to respect and deeply honor human beings, not to judge them by race, skin color, social status, gender identity or sexual orientation. God's only criterion is Taqwa (goodness), and only God can judge Taqwa, not human beings. As long as someone's sexual orientation and gender identity are used for sharing love and not for violence, they are meeting the main purpose of Islamic teaching."



Multiplying Impact

For JASS SEA in the first phase of strengthening activist leaders, a key strategy is to support and accompany the young movement-builders as they take leadership positions in their local organizations. In 2008, for example:

- Amniati was elected 2009–2011 coordinator of FBCB (Forum Belajar or Capacity Building Learning Forum), a network organization of 27 Sumatra NGOs;
- Yasinta Lujina became director of Rede Feto, an organization of 18 women's organizations in Timor Leste;
- Niken Lestari, JASS SEA program coordinator, took on new communication roles, becoming involved in North Sumatera feminist activism, speaking on many issues, and preparing to host a TV talk show.

Participants comment on the impact of JASS processes on their personal, work and activist lives, an indication of the many ways that women's voices and issues are being amplified.

When I came back from the Parapat institute, I held a seminar with [trainee primary] teachers about women rights. The response was very good. Women shared their problems and some ideas for solving them. As a young member of the team, I was nervous to be open about this new thinking, but my adviser gave me full support and encouragement. After Cape Town, I'm organizing a seminar for my teachers to share what I've learned at the JASS dialogue and AWID Forum.

~ Mullai Khrisnan, Malaysia



Burmese Women's Rights

LuLu, a Burmese participant at the SEA Regional Movement-Building Institute, works with the Human Rights Education Institute of Burma (HREIB) based in Thailand. LuLu left the regional workshop inspired to focus in more depth on women's rights within her work. She identified two urgent topics: women's participation in decision-making and reducing trafficking in women in the border areas. HREIB reported back to JASS on some of the ways the organization has integrated a strong women's rights focus into their activities.

"We ran a TOT over one month in Mae Sod on the Thai-Burma border for 50 participants from China, India, Thailand and (the majority) inside Burma. We facilitated discussions about gender and women's rights, leadership skills, violence against women, sexual harassment and domestic violence and also taught advocacy, documentation, facilitation and community organizing skills. We keep in touch with all the trainers to support them as they take these issues into their work and organizing.

"In Phang-Nga, southern Thailand, we held three-day workshops with Burmese migrant women from different villages, to discuss women's rights and ways of preventing trafficking and sexual violence. We held similar workshops in Delhi, India, where Burmese refugees suffer abuse by husbands or Indian men. Sometimes, we cooperate with other organizations to assist these women, and HREIB supports income-generating projects to empower women."

I participated in PESADA's internal discussion to understand the global financial crisis and its impact on local communities, including rural women's businesses. Dr. Jonni Manurung led us in considering ways to strengthen small and local financial institutions that are more accessible to women. These discussions and relationships are critical for JASS SEA to ensure a linkage between women's economic status and strategies, and movement-building.

~ Niken Lestari, Indonesia

Meeting women with real stories and real aspirations and struggles to tell is really compelling. Now, when I hear news about Burma, for example, it has a face: the struggle of women in Burma, especially in disaster areas. Beyond this, I have also become more interested in women's movements across the region.

~ Rosanna 'Osang' Langara, Philippines



Our challenge is to involve our alumni in developing JASS-SEA's agenda and strategy, and in planning and co-facilitating workshops. We are very confident that they are special people in their own organizations but we want to keep building their capacity to play an even bigger role. In 2009, our young women alumni will lead the whole process at national-level. We will monitor closely how it goes, support the young women, and document and reflect on the learning.

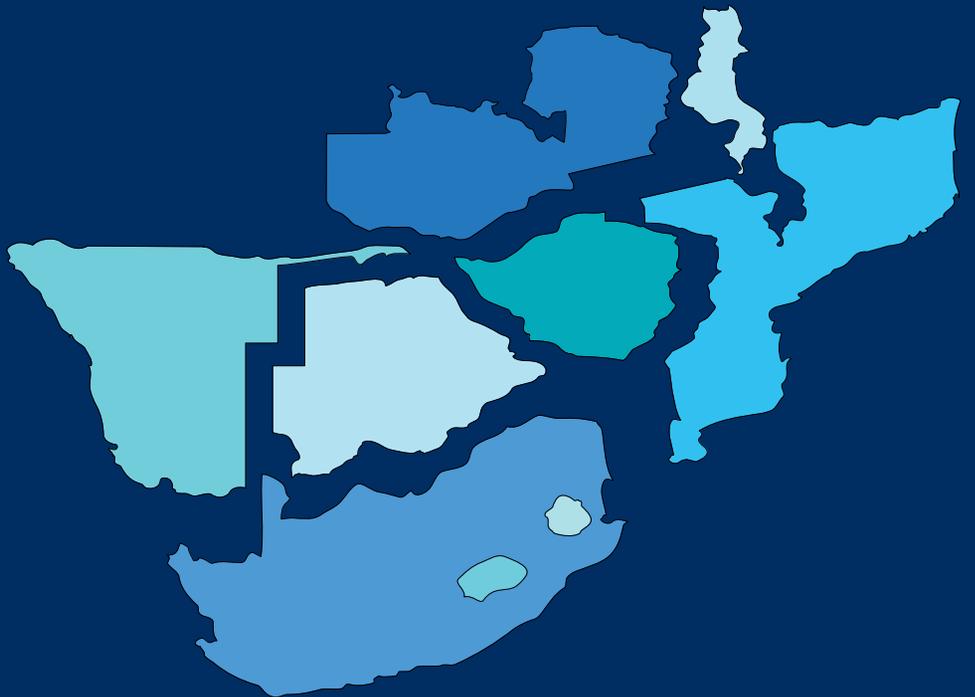
~ Dina Lumbantobing and Nani Zulminarni, Indonesia



JASS

Cross-

Regional



JASS Cross-Regional

As JASS continued to deepen its regional programs and structures this year, the cross-regional team remained closely involved in the design and implementation of movement-building training and action with the regional staff and allies around the globe as well as leading the charge on knowledge generation. Given the diversity of programs as a result of contextual differences, ensuring and refining the vision and core directions of JASS remains a critical function in 2008. This began to shift toward the end of the year as the cross-regional team added global advocacy to the agenda and continued to shift responsibilities to the regions.

In addition, a primary focus of the cross-regional team in 2008 was developing and supporting the communications skills and strategies that are so critical to movement-building, in order to amplify the voice and visibility of women and feminist agendas. From activating and refining the webpage and JASS blog to the production and use of several YouTube videos to the development of a mini-tech workshop and manual for grassroots activists – “Women Crossing the Tech Line” – JASS is working to connect on-line and face-to-face organizing for bigger, broader movements.

A high point for JASS as a growing community, generating knowledge, was the November 2008 JASS Cross-Regional Movement-Building Dialogue, which drew together 60 women from the three regions, the cross-regional team, advisors, board members and key allies. Given JASS’ local-to-global engagement and emphasis on decentralized, grounded strategies, it becomes ever more critical to find ways to learn from one another and find moments to affirm the common vision and principles.

The year closed with the first face-to-face JASS board meeting, with 50% new members and new co-chairs, Srilatha Batliwala, Indian feminist scholar, and Ellen Sprenger, Dutch organizational development expert. The focus of the meeting was shaping JASS’ global architecture, supporting movement-building, and organizational strengthening. The board and staff celebrated a successful year’s fundraising with a large multi-year grant from the Dutch government.

Requirements of any JASS learning process:

- laugh
- be radical
- be brave
- be open
- be creative
- be political
- be personal





Activities

Cross-regional team members facilitated or supported activities in the three regions, as well as convening the key cross-regional gatherings of the year.

Cross-Regional Dialogue and International AIDS Conference

Taking advantage of the International AIDS Conference in Mexico City, JASS convened a lively discussion between the seven Southern African activists and twelve JASS Mesoamerican allies. They shared perspectives about the state of women's movements in their context, the distinct challenges they face, and the new directions they see in women's organizing.

(See the sections on Mesoamerica and Southern Africa for detail.)

Sixty JASS-allied women gathered in Cape Town in November in advance of the 2008 AWID Forum and in the wake of Obama's election in the US, to reach a shared understanding of the reasons for the dramatic impact of JASS' movement-building initiative over just two years; to share strategies; and to forge alliances. At this first face-to-face, Cross-Regional Movement-Building Dialogue (CRMBD), participants from Mesoamerica, Southeast Asia, Southern Africa, the cross-regional office and allies from around the world paused to reflect on 21st-century feminist movement-building and to discuss how – through their organizing, bold action and many voices – women are “crossing the line?”



This was a unique opportunity to set foot on this continent. I was nervous to come to this place, but I wanted to meet you and listen closely to your stories. I also like that the young women were talking. In Mexico, we are trying to create a new generation of indigenous women leaders so it means a lot that both the elders and the youth are here together.

~ Martha Sanchez, Mexico

I never thought that a Western country or the USA would have women's problems as we do in our country. But now I see that we have the same problems, so we need to hold each other's hands to reach our goal. Thank you to bringing us together.

~ Chan Kunthea (Kunthi), Cambodia

Conflict, negotiation and compromise are inevitable in this work, along with forgiveness. We have embarked on a 20year plan with no goal posts.

~ Hope Chigudu, Uganda/Zimbabwe

The JASS Cross-Regional Movement-Building Dialogue was a process of building collective power as women in a global sense. We came together with other JASS regions to strategize to move forward. Because this was part of our ongoing JASS relationship, it was intimate and real, not just a speech and move on. We shared the bitter and the sweet of our struggles; it was very moving.

~ Nani Zulminarni and Dina Lumbantobing

I learned many things: how brave women from Africa are, and that women are smart enough to transform the world in a peaceful way. Despite our diversity – languages, color, race, education, etc. – we have common issues: invisibility, taboos, domestic violence, the victims of culture and war. The very few women in top leadership positions need to remember that “None of us are free until all of us are free.” Therefore our first step must be empowerment to become free women. I want to be a free woman more than I want to be a good woman.

~ Pan Tsun, Burma

Core questions framed the discussion:

- How are changing power dynamics in the local-to-global context shaping women's lives, freedoms, strategies and agendas?
- How do 21st century feminist activists build movements, especially across sector, age, class, location and other differences – what are challenges and what does collective organizing power look like in each context?
- What does it take to be a feminist movement-builder and an activist leader?
- How does new communications technology interact with valuable, old-fashioned organizing and how is this combination shaping strategies and impact?
- What fresh, relevant visions are emerging, to make feminist agendas inclusive of all women and appealing to society more broadly?

During the intense, two-day dialogue, JASS' YouTube videos punctuated the sessions, provoking responses, questions, songs, laughter and debate. The Southern Africans used song and dance to present the changes in their individual lives and capacities as activists, as people living with HIV/AIDS, as young women and as community organizers from (for instance) rural areas, lesbian groups



*Nos separan los mares
nos unen nuestras voces...*

*Nos alejan las fronteras
nos unen nuestras acciones...*

*Nos separan las distancias
nos unen nuestras esperanzas...*

*Nos acerca JASS, nos tejemos entre todas,
juntas, mayores/ jóvenes, mujeres con historias
Y raíces...*

*Poema original de Martha Sanchez,
12/noviembre/08*

and mixed organizations. For JASS Southeast Asia, critical components in the process so far have been the focus on developing young leaders, intergenerational dialogue, creative communications and IT, and popular education approaches to share skills. From Mesoamerica, the Petateras identified JASS' initial Panama gathering as a key learning moment along the path, where trust and safety made it possible to put conflicts on the table with an openness and flexibility that remain the basis of the work.

From the snap-shot presentations of the political context in each region, participants recognized different manifestations of the same patriarchy and injustice they face themselves, along with the opportunity to learn from each other's strategies and experiences. Common throughout the JASS community are reclaiming and defending feminism; the power of communications to amplify feminist voices; the creation of unique terms to define these new models of political work and connections; recognizing and navigating multiple identities in strategic ways; and mobilizing more women to analyze and seize the political moment.

JASS was a big influence, visibly and behind the scenes, before and during the AWID Forum on "The Power of Movements." Lisa Veneklasen, JASS ED, and Shamillah Wilson, Southern Africa Regional Coordinator, participated in the Forum Planning Committee, and JASS regional leaders were featured on the plenary panel each morning and in numerous workshops.

*Oceans separate us
our voices unite us...*

*Borders divide us
our actions make us one...*

*Great distances keep us apart
yet hope brings us together...*

*JASS weaves us closer
older / younger, women all, with our histories
And our roots.*

*Poem by Martha Sanchez,
12 November 2008*



At the AWID Forum, I liked the march against violence against women. It was the first time for me to walk along the road with so many women like this. I felt sad that as women we need to march to claim our rights, but I felt very proud seeing the strong commitment of all those women.

~ Chan Kunthea (Kunthi), Cambodia

One of the young feminists today said, "If you want to go fast, walk alone but if you want to go far, walk with others." This surely got me thinking, especially coming out of the JASS Cross-Regional Dialogue, how there is so much we can learn about the power of numbers.

~ Patience Mandishona, Zimbabwe

Communication media isn't something outside of us but integral to our strategy. From the Observatorios, we have been able to carry out negotiations around initiatives in every country. This affects how we negotiate and build our collective power inside and outside.

~ Roxana Arroyo, Costa Rica

Language continues to offer creative challenges. For example, is JASS a network, a coalition, a confluence, a community or what? How can we define ourselves and our new model in ways that people can understand?

~ Lisa Veneklasen

As a member of the movement of indigenous people, I can't accept it when you say, "laws are of limited use." We should be looking at the possibilities of using the laws for which so many grassroots women struggled. It is a misperception to think that elite women are the only ones responsible for new legislation.

~ Martha Sanchez, Mexico

Two important threads emerge. 1. How to strategize against the betrayal of the left in Mesoamerica and Southern Africa, rather than reeling? 2. How to repair damage by old policies (structural adjustment) as new crises hit (recession)?

~ Ireen Dubel, The Netherlands

Knowledge Generation & Communications

JASS is known for its creative knowledge strategies and products, with a knowledge agenda accompanying all activities. JASS produces and gathers research, evaluation, reports, documentation and translation, and movement-building lessons from all regions, to be shared cross-regionally and with appropriate external audiences such as donors and organizations. As a learning organization, JASS focuses on aligning monitoring and evaluation processes, reporting on funding, and knowledge generation. To disseminate this learning, as well as to support face-

to-face organizing, JASS uses a variety of multimedia formats – both the tried-and-true (text/print, video, radio) and the newer technology (handheld devices, online tools such as Facebook and Skype).

Beginning with a feisty YouTube produced at the first Southern Africa gathering (November 2007), JASS has made particularly creative use of video. Individuals' digital stories, YouTubes on regional gatherings, and a short, music-based video essay on Women, Power and HIV have had a big impact in

workshops, big public events such as the International AIDS Conference (IAC) and AWID Forum, and online. Meanwhile, Radio Feminista is a key ally, accompanying JASS activities wherever possible and posting dynamic podcasts online. Radio Feminista was represented by two journalists and broadcast live from the JASS dialogues in Mexico City and in Cape Town. The JASS blog, introduced in August 2008, drew increasing numbers of posts, readers and bloggers, while updates and traffic on the website have greatly accelerated.

Mini Tech Camp after the JASS CRMBD, Cape Town



Radio Feminista in Action





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