A YEAR ON OUR FEET
2018
ANNUAL REPORT
I’ve been working with JASS since 2008. They have really empowered me with skills and knowledge. JASS’ women-only spaces make us strong; we come together and become friends. We understand the problems in our lives. We see how power works, those with power over us and the power within ourselves. We see together that we have the collective power to make change in our lives.

Linnah Matanya, Women For Fair Development, Malawi
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WHAT

We equip, organize and work alongside grassroots women activists and organizations on the frontlines of crises and change (indigenous and rural, LGBTQ, HIV+, and young activists) in Mesoamerica, Southern Africa and Southeast Asia. Together, we catalyze and amplify solutions and strategies for addressing inequality and violence. Our crossregional learning and knowledge development enrich and increase the impact of our country and regional-level programs.

WHO

We are a multi-regional feminist network anchored in the Global South dedicated to strengthening and amplifying the voice, visibility and collective power of women for a just and sustainable world for all.

WHERE

We have teams and locally-led in-depth programs in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras, Indonesia, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Nicaragua, while our work and network extend our reach across 26 countries and globally.
WHY

We tackle violence and inequality by transforming four areas of women’s lives: VOICE, RESOURCES, BODIES, AND SAFETY. We see each of these as interconnected entry points for women’s organizing to press for rights and shape solutions to the problems they face. Below is our transformative vision of each:

VOICE: Women gain freedom of expression and the right to participate, and have a voice and power in decisions that affect them in personal and public arenas.

RESOURCES: Women have access to decent livelihoods, including work and labor rights, and the right to sustainably use and protect their territories, land, forests and water.

BODIES: Women have bodily integrity and autonomy, including on sex and sexuality, reproductive and sexual rights, gender identity, health and wellbeing, and are free from violence.

SAFETY: Women feel safe to be who they are in all aspects of their lives, in their homes, workplaces, organizations and the streets, and are able to exercise their rights and participate politically without facing violence.
In 2018, women took up space at many tables. Fed up, angry, and hungry for change, women-led organizing efforts exposed corruption, challenged the misogyny at the heart of rising authoritarianism, demanded an end to violence in our homes and schools, and defended the planet in the face of a climate crisis.

Building on years of under-the-radar organizing, important victories created promising possibilities for change. In the U.S., young women, Native Americans, LGBTQ people, and women of color captured our political imaginations to win unprecedented seats in Congress. In Mexico, decades of women’s rights advocacy led to new wins, as women now comprise half the cabinet and 51% of Mexico’s Congress.

Beyond headline news, women have resisted and created collective alternatives to the socialized inequalities, violence, and exploitation embedded in our current systems. Here are some of the key efforts that we, as the JASS network, helped build and were part of in 2018:

- **In Zimbabwe**’s first elections post-Robert Mugabe’s 37-year rule, JASS Southern Africa and our local partner, Institute for Young Women’s Development, gathered dozens of women from across the country to generate their own electoral manifesto: “What Women Want.” These demands were co-created by those most impacted by the economic crisis – women in informal settlements and markets, sex workers, and LGBTQ activists. This collaborative process initiated a future-oriented agenda towards a Zimbabwe that works for all women.

- **In South Africa**, JASS Southern Africa joined hundreds of women in organizing the #TotalShutdown to call for an end to all forms of violence. The intersectional march brought together women from all walks of life and promised a fresh, broad women’s agenda for the country.

- **In the Philippines**, JASS Southeast Asia joined our Filipina sisters and human rights allies to speak out against the “terrorist list,” which targeted more than...
70 women defenders. JASS Southeast Asia worked with allies to release a bold statement and generated national media attention to join women’s voices to the international pressure on Duterte’s government.

- **In Guatemala**, 34 years after the unthinkable abuse and enslavement they endured during the country’s Civil War, Q’eqchi’ women won their case against the military, finally receiving reparations and recognition, while paving the way for other survivors of sexual abuse to break their silence. We celebrated with our sisters, as our staff and allies in Guatemala have played a critical role supporting this process over the last several years.

- **In Honduras**, we ended 2018 with an important but incomplete victory on the long road to justice, when the courts convicted seven men of the murder of indigenous environmental defender and feminist Berta Cáceres. Led by her family and organization, the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), this case has been a priority for all of us in JASS and an opportunity for extraordinary solidarity among many. It has exposed the collusion among oligarchs, corporate interests, and government authorities aimed at stealing natural resources and silencing dissenters. The struggle to hold Berta’s killers accountable has surfaced the damage of the “economic development model” and made visible the enormous work that women are doing to defend the earth and life.

These examples of women-led mobilizations and advocacy were only possible due to years of sustained grassroots organizing, leadership development, alliance building, and most importantly, the under-the-radar education and community organizing that change the culture and values underlying misogyny, racism, and exploitation. **This has been the heart of our work at JASS for more than a decade since we launched Imagining and Building Women’s Movements of the Future in 2006.**

Throughout our history, we have prepared women to win crucial battles for health care, livelihoods, safety, and the environment while democratizing their communities, families, organizations, and political institutions – and in 2019 we will continue to build the next generation of leaders. But our strength and power to bring about change is threatened every day by violence and increasingly repressive governments. Never before has it been so crucial to build women’s voice and power, and invest in community-based political education, leadership, and organizing.

**As a JASS supporter, you’re already aware of what women can do: when we’re mobilized, we win against incredible odds.** Your dedication to our growing global community means women activists have more resources to ensure community self-defense and opportunities to multiply their collective power to confront crises and build a better future, starting in the places where they live and fight. We need you with us as we dig deep into the roots of the world’s problems – and work with women to offer solutions.

With love and gratitude,

Lisa
In 2006, JASS launched a multiregional training, accompaniment, and network-building effort called “Imagining and Building Women’s Movements of the Future” in response to the rising attacks against women activists and freedoms that many did not seem to notice at the time.

Today, when rethinking power, movement-building, and feminisms are “in,” we are very proud to offer what we have experienced, learned, and created alongside many allies in all of our efforts to forge a just, feminist, multiracial, and sustainable world for all.
YOU ADD, WE MULTIPLY

BOLSTERED THE LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND ORGANIZING CAPACITY OF 3,000+ grassroots activists who are changing policy, structures and beliefs on HIV treatment, sex and reproductive rights, environmental justice and land rights, and activist safety and wellbeing.

IMPROVED THE COLLECTIVE SAFETY of dozens of women activists including indigenous and rural women.

SOUGHT OUT as a go-to source of concepts, tools, and how tos on power and feminist leadership and movement-building.

CO-CONSTRUCTED the emergence of new agendas and eight powerful solidarity networks, including the award-winning and now autonomous Mesoamerican Women Human Rights Defenders Initiative and protection networks in Cambodia, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Honduras, and Mexico and regionally across Mesoamerica.

INFLUENCED THE THINKING AND PRACTICE of regional and global feminist, human rights, protection, and development institutions and policy (e.g. on collective protection, power, “closing civic space,” and violence against human rights defenders).
The ability to speak out has never been a given for women and other marginalized groups. This is what “voice” is all about: having the right and the freedom to have a say in what matters and to participate in decisions that impact our lives. Exercising these rights often comes with consequences in personal and public life. When women, LGBTQI people, and other marginalized groups speak out, they often experience backlash and violence to silence their organizing and undermine their solutions. They can even face rejection or violence within their families, communities, and organizations. JASS works with activists to create the conditions in which they can effectively and safely have a voice and organize for change in their contexts. We believe that strong alliances and leadership along with effective strategies are essential for women to use their voices.
In November 2017, a military coup ousted Zimbabwe’s President Robert Mugabe after 37 years in power, paving the way for the election of a new president and parliament on July 30, 2018. In preparation for the election, JASS Southern Africa and our local partner, the Institute for Young Women’s Development, convened a series of conversations on the issues affecting women’s lives in this pivotal moment.

Bridging urban-rural and partisan divides, more than 500 women who carry the burden of Zimbabwe’s worsening economic crisis participated in defining a common agenda. These included women and girls in informal urban settlements, rural farmers, sex workers, LBTI activists, and market women. From these discussions, we devised a voters’ manifesto – “What Women Want” – listing seven demands for the new government that would improve our lives and wellbeing.

“These demands speak to all women and they are our call to action to all power holders. In the past few months, I have seen women organizing informally in their communities and collectively acting for change. Organic organizing at the community level has inspired me.”

Ntombi, Woman Activist, Bulawayo
The Manifesto

Together, JASS and the Institute for Young Women’s Development identified seven key issues to improve women’s lives and wellbeing.

1. Public services that work and are responsive to our rights and needs.

2. An economy that meets the needs of all in a just and equitable manner.

3. A country where all women in our sexual diversities can fully exercise our sexual rights, bodily autonomy, and agency without fear of reprisal or attack.

4. Infrastructure that works in the form of quality housing, improved road and transportation networks and streetlights.

5. Decision-making spaces and processes that actively include women who are able to participate freely and meaningfully.

6. A demilitarized State founded on the ethos of accountability.

7. A society where women are free to engage in artistic expression without fear of reprisal.
“We’re Fed Up!”

Zimbabwe has held 11 elections since the country gained independence in 1980, but in most, violence and repression were effective measures to silence dissent and maintain an increasingly authoritarian regime. Even without Mugabe, women in Harare’s less affluent communities expected business as usual in 2018. In Domboshava, Highfield, Chikwanha, and Hatfield, women told us the same thing: *These elections will not bring meaningful change to our lives.*

Women have been fed up for years by government’s dwindling capacity and will to provide basic services such as water and electricity. Their pessimism came as no surprise; women tend to carry the burden of care and survival for their families. They have also long been targets of violence, unlawful arrest, and intimidation. For women who dare to speak up, the backlash is severe: toxic rhetoric and violence. Whether they are political candidates, campaign managers, or community activists, the opposition labels them ‘*hure*’ – vernacular for prostitute.

**A Call to Action**

Women realize that the key to building a better future starts with them coming together to define common problems and build shared agendas for renewed organizing. In 2019, JASS is convening critical dialogues that *meet women where they are* – at boreholes in rural areas or market places in low-income urban areas – to do on-the-spot popular political–economic education circles. These circles promote economic literacy, foster critical awareness, surface common agendas, and nurture collective leadership to lay the foundation for a feminist future that works for all Zimbabweans.

‘*Hure*’ is a word that is used to describe any woman doing amazing work in her community, workplace, and life. If you haven’t been called ‘*hure*’ as a woman, you have not started working.

Gladys Mavusa, an activist from Marange
Debunking Elections: A Feminist Perspective

Everjoice Win, ActionAid International, JASS Builder and JASS Southern Africa Advisor

Personally, as a feminist and an organizer, I believe elections and people who are elected only contribute to five to ten percent of change that happens. 90% of the change comes when we – the people who are affected by the issues – organize and push for those in positions of power to give us what we want.

Elections are a blip, a small moment, in the bigger democracy and democratization process. What matters more is the work we do collectively in our movements. How do we build strong, feminist leadership, movements and organizations that bring us together collectively to work for the greater good? Unfortunately, as civil society we have often put too much effort into a very narrowly conceptualized idea of democracy, i.e. elections and who gets to win, rather than the social justice which should be an outcome of elections. We tend to invest far too much in who wins, rather than what issues they stand for. Neither have we invested enough in pushing specific issues during the electoral process.

We must use elections as moments to organize, mobilize, bring women together, make our voices heard, and continue that mobilization and pressure after elections. We make up 90% of the change, not the politicians.
To survive and thrive, we need essentials such as land and water, decent wages, and access to public healthcare and education. For many around the world, life is difficult because these resources are threatened, withheld, or inaccessible. Women’s work – formal, informal, and reproductive (much of it part of the care economy) – is undervalued and underpaid. The mandate for profit above all else in the dominant economic model means low wages, cuts to public services, and escalating destruction of the earth’s water, land, and minerals, particularly affecting people in the Global South. The result is intensifying economic inequity, community displacement, environmental damage, and climate change, and resistance is generally met with repression and violence. JASS bolsters the leadership and organizing strategies of women – indigenous and rural land defenders, garment workers, and health access activists – to protect their rights and communities, and to promote alternatives for survival.
Defending the Planet & Culture

Like elsewhere, extractivism\(^1\) – the act of centering economies around extraction and export of raw natural resources such as oil, gas, precious minerals, and forest products – has accelerated in Mesoamerica. According to Global Witness\(^2\), “It has never been a deadlier time to defend one’s community, way of life, or environment.” Indigenous and rural women organize communities and lead resistance to extractives because they are the ones responsible for water, families, and land use that ensures everyday survival. As result, they are among the most targeted for their activism. Local and transnational corporations operating illicitly, often backed by corrupt governments, orchestrate the violence and backlash. Women are also attacked for stepping out of traditional gender roles, while public narratives spewed by state and corporate actors label them terrorists, prostitutes, anti-development, and bad mothers. This manipulation of public opinion legitimizes violence, destabilizes movements, and undermines possibilities for alternative solutions.

“We have seven territories in dispute: body, land, nature, memory, history, worldview, and the state. We have a lot to do.”

Sandra Morán, Guatemalan feminist activist and Member of Congress

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1. Everjoice Win, Between Jesus, the Generals and the Invisibles, October 2013
Alquimia: Sustaining Indigenous Women’s Leadership

In this context, strengthening indigenous women’s leadership, exchanging resistance strategies, and promoting safety and wellbeing are vital for activism, movements, and survival. JASS Mesoamerica’s leadership training school, Alquimia, breaks isolation and fosters movement leadership that is feminist, collective, and safer by re-tooling activists with confidence, effective skills, and new allies and strategies. The name – Alquimia – refers to mythical process of alchemy and synergy that explodes when women come together across their differences to build more just, equitable, and peaceful societies that sustain our planet.

In 2018, JASS launched a five-part Honduras Alquimia leadership course in collaboration with the Autonomous National University of Honduras (UNAH) and the Center for Women’s Rights (CDM). An adaptation of the regional Alquimia School (2010-2016), the course brought together 33 participants from 19 organizations – 12 of which signed Memorandums of Understanding with JASS to mutually commit to strengthen women’s leadership and weave feminist perspectives into their work on land, water, and territory. The course’s accreditation, which included a UNAH certificate, was especially meaningful to the many participants who lacked access to formal education. Despite many obstacles, all but two participants completed the course; one fled the country for her safety, and the other’s partner disapproved of her leadership role outside the home. This is precisely why Alquimia matters; it addresses the threats that women face from multiple sources including governments, families and their own organizations.
Alquimia helped me transform from a subordinate model of leadership to feminist leadership, and I did it guilt free. The school taught women to learn from, teach, and support each other.

Alquimia participant, Honduras

Non-violent Resistance

Women are using different forms of resistance. In Guatemala, the La Puya resistance movement, which grew out of objections to a U.S.-owned gold mine, has kept up tactics of non-violent defiance for seven years. Women take 24-hour shifts to block bulldozers and dozens of police in order to protect the river. Spirituality plays a big role too. Sometimes, when the military and police approach with firearms, women – even those who are not Catholic – belt out religious songs because they know their opposition tends to be afraid of God.

Indigenous communities also propose alternatives to improve lives and promote community, resilience, and wellbeing for people and the planet. Some invoke the concept of Buen Vivir, a term for living well and in harmony – not domination – with nature, as co-existing participants in an ecosystem that sustains life.
Cambodia: Women Garment Workers Speak Out

By Kunthea Chan, JASS Southeast Asia Co-Director

Cambodia’s economy depends on the garment industry, but workers never reap the reward. In 2018 Gap’s CEO was paid an estimated $20.8 million\(^3\), while garment workers’ wage only rose to $182 a month!\(^4\)

Cheap labor draws the international garment industry to Cambodia, and it is no coincidence that working conditions are tough. Gender-based violence and harassment are considered part of the deal in the factories. A male technician will say, “If you want me to fix your machine, you need to sleep with me.” Workers struggle to pay for basic needs such as health care, water, electricity, and education for their children.

Some trade unions and factory owners often collude to exploit workers. Sometimes

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3. “Gap CEO gets pay raise amid retailer’s struggles” Financial Times, April 2019
4. “New minimum wage now $182” Khmer Times, October 2018
owners close their factories to avoid paying pensions, and then they open new ones to continue the cycle with new employees. Some trade unions are also corrupt, and women do not participate or have much of a voice in trade unions; male leaders make the decisions. Many workers who speak out are arrested or even killed. This trauma affects workers’ and women’s organizing.

At the same time, space for civil society and trade unions is closing, leaving few opportunities for workers and their allies to organize, mobilize, and demand rights. Women workers in particular need consciousness-raising around their rights to understand how gendered power dynamics affect their lives.

JASS works with allies both inside and outside trade unions to support workers. We use our trainings as a space for garment workers to build solidarity and develop a shared analysis of the political and economic context. Using JASS’ power framework and other tools (translated in Khmer), we help garment workers map different players and interests, including male trade union leadership. These workshops explore appropriate, effective, and adaptable strategies that fit the context to raise visibility and challenge the wage gaps between workers and management. As a result, women workers gain confidence and build their critical awareness that enables them to minimize risk. JASS also works with the Solidarity Center. In 2018, we co-conducted research on gender-based violence in the workplace in Cambodia and Indonesia. Workers designed the survey themselves and documented their needs and the issues they are facing. This research helped us influence broader dialogues on labor rights, including the annual International Labor Conference.
Our bodies, sexualities, and gender expression are at the heart of gender equality, and yet our control over these areas of our lives is continually under attack. Societal norms and practices rooted in conservative belief systems and religious fundamentalisms dictate how people should behave, express their sexuality, and what choices they can make about their bodies. These norms, enforced – often violently – in homes as well as through laws, cultural practices, and by the police and military on the streets, particularly control and jeopardize women’s and LBGTQI bodies. Our bodies also feel the direct impacts of inequality and discrimination. Women tend to (literally) carry the burden of their families’ care and survival, while contending with limited access to education, health care, and reproductive choices. JASS places women’s bodies and lived experiences at the center of our work, creating safe spaces to break taboos, heal, form alliances, and forge strategies for a feminist future, in which all bodies are free and valued.
Since 2012, the Our Bodies, Our Lives campaign (OBOL), an 8,000-strong, women-led initiative, has helped HIV-positive women across Malawi gain equitable health access and transformed the narrative from shamed and stigmatized “walking corpses” to proud, strong leaders for dignity and equal treatment. OBOL took shape through JASS’ ongoing feminist movement-building process and accompaniment with our partners: a progressive faith-based network, MANERELA+ (Malawi Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV and AIDS) and COWLHA (Coalition of Malawian Women Living with HIV/AIDS).

Today, OBOL has 30 community hubs (spaces for organizing and education) in 27 of Malawi’s 28 districts. These hubs foster women’s collective action to make sure policy gains exist in practice and not just on paper, especially the government’s promise to ensure equitable health access for all. In 2017, JASS worked with OBOL to complete a feminist treatment literacy manual and pilot trainings. These tools provide crucial health information for women (and men) on staying healthy while living with HIV, but also place the learning in the center of feminist politics of bodies, sexuality, respect, and dignity.

In 2018, OBOL expanded its feminist treatment literacy (FTL) workshops and dialogues to 24 districts. Using a feminist approach, these workshops disrupt the dominant medicalized model with a holistic approach that centers women’s bodies and wellbeing, and interrogate how power works in their lives. About 120 women have become health care experts, acting as go-to resources, boldly raising awareness and engaging local authorities and religious leaders, while
leveraging their positions to educate health care workers in clinics and hospitals.

At health centers that have mistreated patients, OBOL members have spoken out, leading to improvements in patient care. From shifts in families’ and communities’ mindsets to national organizing for mobile clinics and greater access to a variety of health services such as cervical cancer screenings, OBOL women are ensuring that all people living with HIV gain quality medicines and greater social acceptance.

"JASS’ HIV Treatment Literacy Training is a unique blend of women-centered focus on their bodies, power analysis and in-depth learning about HIV, antiretrovirals and the importance of adherence to treatment. By the end of the training, I witnessed a room full of informed and empowered women, determined to make good choices for their health and collectively to challenge systems that made it difficult for them to choose healthy options.

Dr. Di Lavies, a clinical doctor specializing in HIV"
SAFETY

At the heart of safety is the freedom from fear, stigma, and violence and the freedom to speak out, make choices, organize, and lead change. Across the world, repression is increasingly the response to any form of dissent. Women activists in particular face gendered forms of violence for stepping out of traditional roles to challenge the status quo. Speaking out within their organizations, communities, and even families can generate backlash, and they face additional threats and stigma aimed at silencing them and halting their organizing. To achieve lasting change, JASS recognizes the interconnectedness of organized power (collective ability to make change happen) and organized safety (collective strategies that make it safe to fight for change). For women to sustain their activism, especially in hostile contexts, they need to build collective strategies – alliances, collaborations, and protection networks – that offer the power of numbers for impact and safety.
JASS works with allies to incubate and promote a feminist movement-building approach to navigating political violence that combines individual and collective strategies for protection that sustain and strengthen activism, while reducing risk. Women are stronger when they are part of resilient communities and organizations, and capable of organizing themselves creatively and safely across movements for greater impact. By building networks of solidarity and mutual support, women develop the collective power to confront violence and backlash.

In 2017-18, JASS in collaboration with Protection International, piloted a comprehensive and cross-community protection strategy anchored by local groups OFRANEH (Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras), Movimiento Amplio, COPINH, and ERIC (Equipo de Reflexión, Investigación y Comunicación) to learn from each other and increase the capacity and support for community and movement-based protection. Each of the groups faces threats from many actors including corporate extractive industries, and has developed its own community-based strategies for collective safety. Our collaboration brings a deeper power analysis of the context and its players to orient and strengthen resistance strategies. This commitment to deep solidarity on collective safety is an integral part of our effort to strengthen women’s leadership and collective power in communities and movement organizations in Honduras.
When we talk about the security of human rights defenders (HRDs), we also have to talk about collective defense...We tend to think about security from an individual level [but] individual protective measures that states provide such as police protection tend to be ineffective for us because we actually feel the safest in our communities. We need to share and adapt lessons and best practices about collective defense strategies that communities are building...

Miriam Miranda, Garifuna leader, OFRANEH

Influencing Thinking, Practice & Policy

In the current moment of extreme and widespread crackdowns on civic participation, activists, donors and organizations are examining the adequacy of current approaches. After a decade of working directly with women activists in hostile contexts, including co-building the Mesoamerican Women Human Rights Defenders Initiative and other protection networks, JASS has considerable knowledge to bring to this conversation.

Over the last three years, using a local-to-global approach, JASS has carefully built a cross-regional influence agenda around understanding the interface between gender-based and political violence, and rethinking closing space and activist protection. Leveraging our pivotal partnership with the Fund for Global Human Rights, JASS presented and promoted the latest version of our power framework on “rethinking civic space” in dialogues with donors and international human rights groups concerned with how to understand political violence and better support movements in hostile contexts. Our promotion of these ideas and the reception by a broad range of human rights actors (e.g. UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs) and donors has generated strong interest in and demand for our work and power analysis framework, and opportunities for further impact.
Financials

INCOME FOR 2018

US $3,850,000*

EXPENSES FOR 2018

US $3,575,395

PROGRAMS

Mesoamerica
$1,013,844 36.74%

Southeast Asia
$453,378 16.43%

Southern Africa
$796,282 28.86%

Crossregional
$495,767 17.97%

Fundraising
$224,927 6.29%

Administration
$591,197 16.54%

Total Programs
$2,759,271 77.17%

* JASS’ 2018 audit reports higher revenue that includes multi-year funding.
Thank you

- Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Dialogue and Dissent)
- Ford Foundation
- Novo Foundation
- Oak Foundation
- Foundation for a Just Society
- Open Society Foundations
- Sigrid Rausing Trust
- Comic Relief
- Fund for Global Human Rights
- Global Fund for Women
- Urgent Action Fund
- Afrika Groups of Sweden
- Angelica Fund of Tides Foundation
- Channel Foundation
- General Service Foundation
- Inter-American Foundation
- Overbrook Foundation
- Partners Asia

We would also like to thank many other friends and supporters who generously give donations and share their time and connections, including our growing circles of solidarity in Santa Fe and New York.
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Brittany Alexander
Long Nguyen
Pamela Johnson

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Written by Adelaide Mazwarira
Edited by Lindsee Gregory with Annie Holmes
Features stories of JASS contributors including Lisa VeneKlasen, Alexa Bradley, Rosanna Langara, Kunthea Chan, Patricia Ardón, Winnet Shamuyarira, Everjoice Win, and Sibongile Singini.
Design and layout by WE Designs
Join us for the next 10 years of Imagining and Building Women’s Movements of the Future.

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