



JASS 2009

Annual Report

Strengthening and Sustaining Women's Collective Power

What We Do

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, and location. We nurture and draw on the relationships between us and on the local-to-global organizational affiliations that each woman brings – these are among our most potent political resources and enable us to multiply our impact with agility.

Strategies

Strengthen women’s activist leadership

JASS promotes movement-style leadership by providing the skills, training, analysis, tools, mentoring and connections for women from diverse backgrounds to leverage collective citizen power.

Promote grassroots organizing linked to strategic advocacy

JASS strengthens women’s organizing for effective mobilization linked by broad alliances to advocacy at all levels, enabling women to sustain pressure and respond urgently to political opportunities and crises.

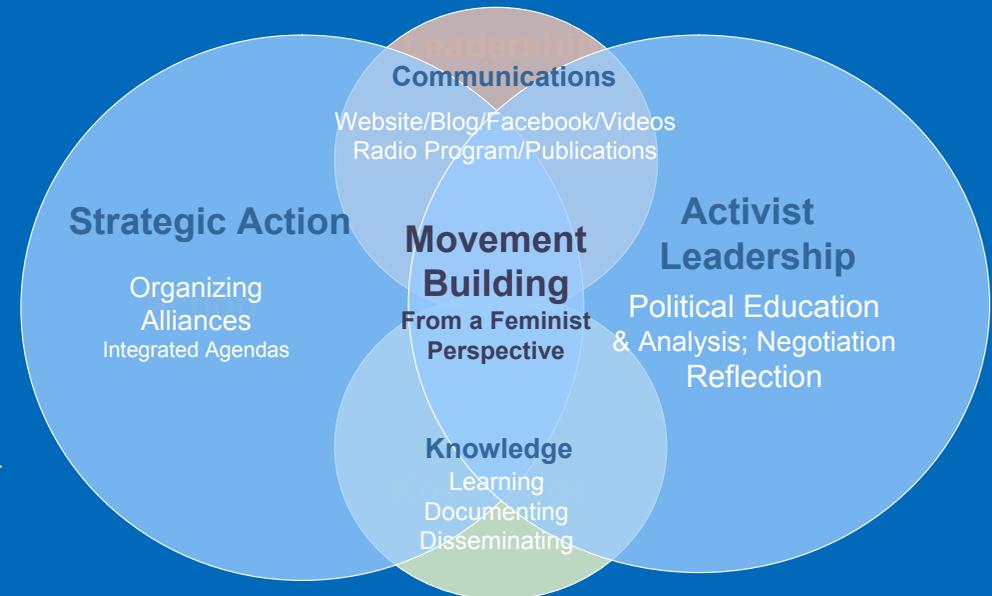
Develop and utilize communications to facilitate and amplify collective power

JASS’ communications training and tools enable activists to create fresh multimedia messages and strategies that connect women and influence public opinion, making women’s rights, feminism and the role of women’s movements visible, relevant and appealing.

Generate fresh knowledge about movement-building and feminist change

JASS harvests, refines and shares practical and conceptual learning about building movements, gender justice and

Core Strategies



social change, with and for women’s rights activists and allies concerned with development and equality.

Increase women’s access to and use of resources for development and change

JASS increases the funding available for women’s organizing and organizations in the regions where we operate, and consolidates the connections with media, policymakers and opinion leaders that enable women to amplify and advance women’s rights agendas.

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JASS Around the World



From the Director's Desk

"Out of a Global Meltdown . . . Rise the Activist Women of JASS"



This past year, 2009, was marked by seismic changes that shook the world. Wall Street's collapse led to financial meltdowns across the globe, directly affecting the women and organizations that are part of JASS. From reduced HIV treatment in Malawi to job cuts in Honduras to increasing economic marginalization in Indonesia, few escaped unscathed. Climate change accelerated environmental disasters while, after the international spark of Barack Obama's 2008 election as US President, 2009 did not bring hoped-for changes.

Reflecting back on such a year, you might expect pessimism. On the contrary, I am incredibly optimistic about the future.

As the Executive Director of the remarkable global community of feminist activists and human rights defenders that is JASS, I see the world through 'JASS lenses.' Every day, I observe with awe the remarkable progress that JASS' diverse women are making towards creating a more just and sustainable world for all. Among those we work with in Southeast Asia, Southern Africa and Mesoamerica, I see women rising and triumphing in the face of adversity in ways that amaze and inspire me.

This report shines a spotlight on a few moments in 2009 to convey a glimpse of JASS women rising around the world – extraordinary women and the extraordinary organizations and movements that support and unite them.

Take Tiwonge Gondwe of Malawi. She describes her personal and political journey of becoming a feminist, a JASS activist leader, and a grassroots force to be reckoned with. "I will continue to work with women so that they can claim, demand, and exercise their power to change things," she vows.

Then there is Nani Zulminarni, JASS Southeast Asia Co-coordinator. When stoning was made legal as a punishment for adultery in Aceh province, Indonesia, she and fellow women's rights organizers sought behind-the-scenes dialogue with Muslim and other influential leaders to begin a slow process of resistance and reversal.

Read about Daysi Flores with her *compatriotas* on the frontline of the citizen pro-democracy movement protesting the June coup d'état in Honduras. Solidarity and international human rights advocacy became a focus of JASS' work this year in our support for these efforts. We mobilized resources with and for the Honduran Feminists in Resistance, convened a fact-finding mission, and, with allies, helped break the media blockade to ensure that the stories of women's leadership in the resistance and violations of women's rights were heard around the world.

How do we, as a multiregional organization, go about promoting and supporting JASS women in their resistance, activism and organization-building?

- We tap into, train and promote activist leadership, bringing together very diverse women to find common ground; reaching across 'sector silos,' identities and geographic regions.
- We accompany and engage in effective mobilizing, contributing safe spaces, tools, and strategies; media attention; local-to-global alliances; and connections to resources (human and financial).
- We construct, strengthen and engage with diverse organizations, alliances and movements in agile and dynamic strategies when collective strength will have most impact and scope.
- We work with donor and other human rights institutions to help them recognize and support grassroots organizing, movement-building and frontline activists.

I encourage you to visit our website – www.justassociates.org – to find much more information and links to YouTube videos, our newsletter – JASS Movements – and our publications.

Thank you to all our allies for joining us in supporting JASS women in their individual and collective journeys – one day smooth, the next tumultuous, always exhilarating – towards creating a more just and sustainable world. Now, that is something to be optimistic about!

Lisa VeneKlasen

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa VeneKlasen".



JASS Southeast Asia

JASS Southeast Asia 2009 Overview

While Southeast Asian countries differ culturally, economically and politically, most face common challenges when it comes to women's rights. Fragile democracies are often threatened by the overwhelming influence of economic forces that generate instability and undermine policy coherence. Although these developing industrial economies are among the fastest growing in the world, unregulated growth is also deepening vast inequalities between poor and rich. Religious fundamentalists exploit the insecurity generated by dramatic changes and western consumerism by tapping into strong traditional, cultural, ethnic, and religious roots that call into question women's basic rights. Within and between countries conflict is ever-present.

Throughout the region, women make up the majority of the rural poor and of the displaced in urban areas. With the exception of the Philippines, women remain disconnected from political processes, with little decisionmaking power or influence. Many countries in Southeast Asia have decent domestic violence laws, yet violence is increasing. As in the rest of the world, it is easier to change a law than to change attitudes.

First launched in 2007, JASS Southeast Asia (SEA) builds on the pathbreaking organizing of its allies and partners in the region in addressing needs and



advancing rights simultaneously, and in recognizing and focusing on engaging the 'invisible power' (values and beliefs) that shapes women's status, roles, and sense of individual agency.

JASS SEA began offering activist leadership training in Indonesia and Timor-Leste in 2007, and on a regional level in 2008. JASS SEA's strategy addresses the divide between urban-based, professional women's rights advocates, who often focus on legislative change or academic research, and grassroots organizers, who mobilize women to address basic needs. The voices of 'celebrity' feminists – the older, more established NGO leaders – have

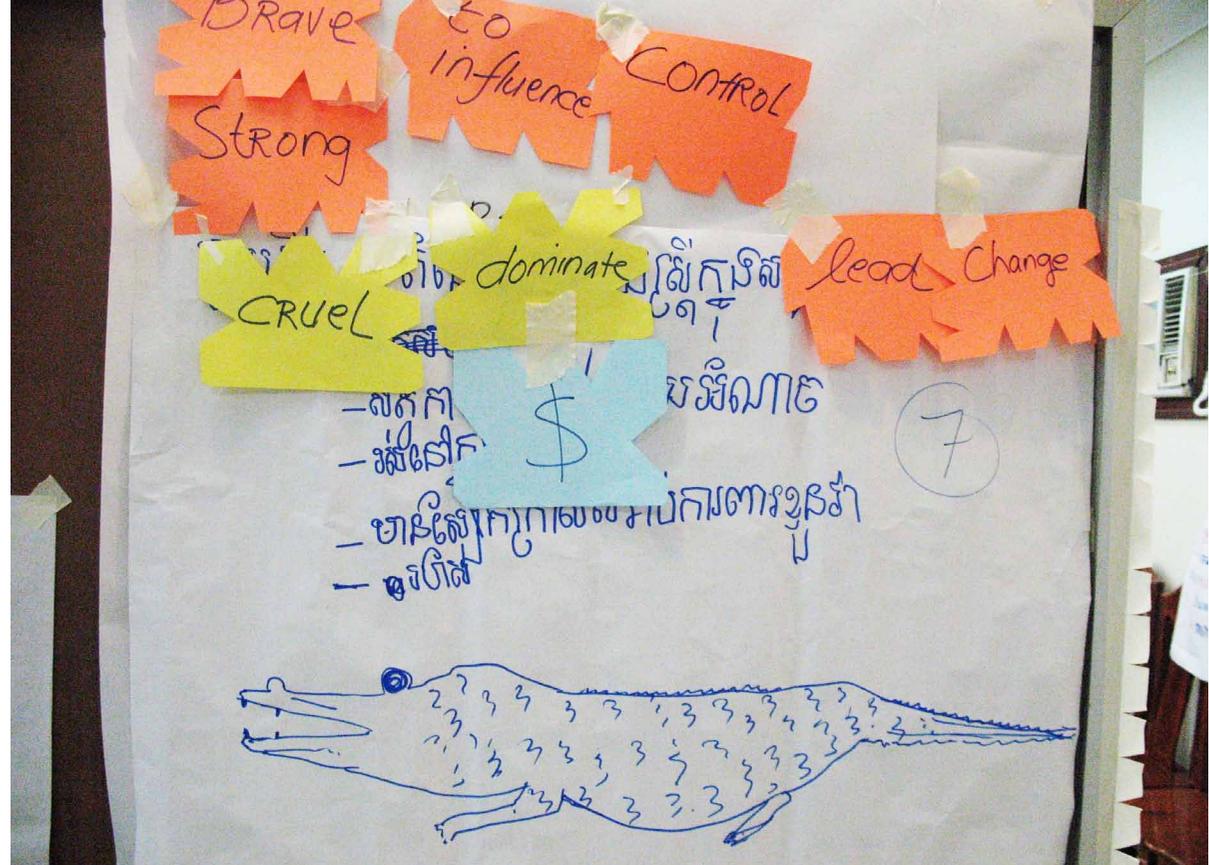
tended to dominate, so JASS SEA concentrates on building the next generations of activists.

For 2009, JASS SEA's strategy focused on activist training and small-scale organizing at the national level in Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Cambodia, the Philippines and Malaysia, deepening processes already underway and preparing for new country initiatives. Along with a wide range of other activities, JASS SEA blogged and sent out press releases against the controversial Pornography Bill in Indonesia. Other communication actions called for democracy without violence, and made strategic use of Mothers' and Valentine's Days to promote women's political participation.

Multiplying leaders in Indonesia and Timor Leste

For the third year, JASS SEA continued in 2009 to train a cadre of young Indonesian and Timorese activist leaders through workshops, mentoring, and the second in a series of intergenerational dialogues. Many placed ‘writing skills’ high on lists of requested support, so JASS SEA created an online writing community and training course in Bahasa-Indonesian, with one of the participants, a seasoned writer, leading the process. Over time, more than 25 women signed up and the group thrived, using a listserv and blog to share and publish personal and political essays. The writers began writing on topics such as ‘being a girlfriend or wife,’ and moved on to sexuality in local culture, domestic violence, the Anti Pornography Act, climate change and IT for rural women. For most of the young women, lifting the lid on taboo topics of sexuality was revolutionary.

In June 2009, JASS SEA selected the next group of 24 activist leaders from 70 applications from 19 Indonesian provinces – a sign that JASS SEA’s leadership training is getting a good name! With an average age of 28 and at least three years’ experience, these young women are active as farmers and fisher women, indigenous women, workers and unionists; in HIV/AIDS support and legal aid; on trafficking; and as researchers and literacy trainers. Three of the trainers were drawn from the initial JASS group, deepening their own skills as they worked alongside experienced facilitators and mentors to introduce power analysis, community organization, and communications, and to learn from scholars about phases and flavors of feminism.



Voices from JASS SEA workshops

- In Papua, particularly in the indigenous community, most men still subordinate and oppress their wives. Since dowry was paid, her parents won't care for her any more, even if she was beaten to bleeding by her husband.
- What struck me was the composition of the trade union board: 80% of the factory workers are women, but only 3 out of 13 board members are women.
- We need the women's political movement to be active at all levels, including the village.
- Talking about sex, we discuss vulnerability to disease but we never raise the issue of desire and pleasure.
- Sex work must be regarded as a profession.
- The big challenge for the women's peasant movement is privatization. If we talk about agriculture, it can not be separated from political struggle. If we talk about a woman farmer, we should know whether she's the owner or a farm laborer.
- We want the ability to use feminist theory as a knife to analyze social problems.

- Participants

National programs launched in Malaysia, Philippines, Cambodia

Three national-level leadership workshops were held in November 2009, drawing on JASS tools and the local “alumni” from previous JASS processes. In Kuala Lumpur, 42 participants from many different sectors and communities in Malaysia were hosted by JASS partner and popular communications center KOMAS under the theme “Empowering Grassroots Women Leadership.” The theme in Manila was “Liberating Filipino Women through the Years” and the host, the Center for Women’s Resources, set up a listserve for ongoing organizing. Confronting and mediating deep and historic political tensions, participating activists now use the umbrella of JASS Philippines to continue rebuilding fragmented connections among women, to renew their advocacy

I am an orphan and have faced a lot of struggle. I started a small marketing business, but I felt that women were not supporting other women. But now I work for Women for Prosperity and I love my job.

- Cambodian participant

We are more complex than we are the same. We are all mixed up – never just by class, never just by gender, never just by age. And age should not be a hindrance. When the ‘young once’ work with the ‘young ones,’ they get energized and continue. Likewise, the younger ones learn and they too persevere.

- Filipina participant

power. Twenty-eight participants between 25 and 30 years old from 17 Cambodian NGOs attended JASS’ Phnom Penh workshop, hosted by local training partner SILAKA.

For each workshop, JASS SEA wove together the elements most relevant to the needs of the particular group and context. Underlying these apparently seamless gatherings are many months of preparation, as JASS teams consult widely to ensure diversity of class/focus/location/ethnicity; negotiate long-standing tensions in certain countries; and mentor new leaders.



“Vote for Women!” on Nias Island, Indonesia

Supporting the North Sumatra’s Women Activists Coalition campaign – “Vote for Women” – JASS SEA focused on media production, including a television talk show and newsletter. Before Indonesia’s elections, PESADA and JASS held political education workshops on women’s political rights on the North Sumatran island of Nias, emphasizing the importance of getting women elected onto the Legislative Council.



JASS at the Asia-Pacific NGO Forum

Held in Manila in October 2009 to review the women's rights situation 15 years after the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, this regional forum gave a JASS team the opportunity to mobilize, do outreach and build common regional agendas.

After the forum, Mikas Matsuzawa, a Filipina activist on the JASS team, posted her reflections on the JASS blog:

“It was my first time to meet women from different parts of the globe all united for the goal of achieving gender equality as enshrined in the Beijing protocol. ...

“I couldn't help but agree with Indian feminist Kamla Bhasin when she said, ‘Patriarchy and capitalism make a dangerous combination.’ Summarizing the situation in her country, she identified the two root causes of oppression – culture and religion. In communication theories, feminists have identified how language is gendered.

We need the words to challenge patriarchy. Even the word ‘husband,’ as sampled during the forum, means ‘to domesticate.’

“Reflecting on all the experiences shared by different women during the forum, I compare their concerns and experiences with those of women in the Philippines. ... Despite all claims that the gender gap in the country is lessening, the realities experienced by grassroots women tell otherwise. We see this in our work, those of us involved in organizations of women from the urban poor, youth and students: how women farmers are not considered as farmers but housewives still. How urban poor women have to work in contractual jobs with meager pay and are still expected to tend to housework. How neoliberal policies in education have increased the number of out-of-school young women. Yes, in this modern age, the notion that a woman's place is in the kitchen and the bedroom still lingers.

“I have learned to recognize that there is indeed double oppression of women not only due to gender but also class. ... I have also learned that the road to women's emancipation is rough but through collective struggle along with the other sectors of society it can be achieved.

“I am a young advocate for women's rights. Yes, I may seem a novice to some, though I know in my self that I am no less capable in fighting for gender equality. I know that I am not alone, that there are others like me, young women, who replenish and continue this struggle. ... ‘There has never been nor will there ever be real freedom as long as there is no freedom for women.’”

- Mikas Matsuzawa, JASS, Philippines

Profile of a Young Feminist Leader

Yasinta Lujina Conceicao das Regras

JASS sees our role as contributing to change; we don't claim to cause it. But in certain moments, someone's life can be transformed by a timely intervention, and this seems to be the case with Yasinta Regras, a young activist from Timor Leste.

“What impresses me about the JASS activities is the space to tell each other stories of our lives as individuals, workers, leaders, and society members. JASS is very important in supporting my personal life and my work.” -Yasinta Regras

Yasinta attended the first JASS movement-building institute in Southeast Asia (in Bogor, Indonesia, June 2007), representing a large social justice group. The process ignited her passion for women's rights advocacy: “I now understand about women's movements and young feminists, about power relations, and about LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender people.) The experiences shared by other participants about their work have motivated me to continue



my struggle for personal change and to support my friends who have less information about this, and to do awareness-raising in my own organization.”

That initial JASS workshop inspired Yasinta to write an article about everything she learned, which was published in the La'o Hamutuk Bulletin. Then, in January 2009, she took up a new opportunity to re-focus her advocacy on women's issues and gender equality as Director of Rede Feto Timor Leste. Rede Feto is a network of 18 countrywide organizations, formed to strengthen the capacity of member organizations to improve women's status and advance their participation in the national development process. Yasinta says, “I came to this position because I have become closely involved in the Timor Leste women's network. My previous organization didn't focus on women's issues, but since the JASS workshops, I have learned more and now my work at Rede Feto

is to promote gender equality. I have learnt from our JASS friends' experiences that in Southeast Asia we share a similar patriarchal culture strongly rooted in our societies. It does not exist in my own country only.” The supportive JASS Southeast Asia coordinators, Nani Zulminarni and Dina Lumbantobing, continue to mentor Yasinta in her new leadership role.

Especially enthusiastic about building a broad base of young feminist organizers in rural areas, Yasinta feels that they are the potential of the movement and that, through them, women will be able to participate at local government levels and beyond in greater numbers. During 2009, she traveled to rural districts of her country, sharing JASS training and political organizing and advocacy methodologies with young, energetic feminists, preparing women legislative candidates for local elections.

Needs and Rights

By Nani Zulminarni,

JASS Southeast Asia Co-Coordinator and PEKKA National Director

How can you talk about rights when poor women cannot even feed their children day to day? They'll never have enough time for training and organizing. Organizing for political rights cannot be separated from practical needs. In the context of poverty, if we want women to be involved politically, we have to support them first to organize for access to economic resources – cash and property – and for the freedom that these provide.

We are often asked how we build economic groups without engaging with the huge funding pots offered by the international NGOs and agencies promoting microfinance. If women are poor, where do we start?

We start from zero, talking one by one with each woman to find out her priority concerns. Women always start with the problem of money. So we begin with savings as a practical means to bring women together but also to seed a strategy to resist consumerism. With these small savings to start with, women are able to invest in joint economic endeavors that generate a growing profit over time if they are frugal and work hard. They control their own income, which is not owed to anyone. The more women have cash in hand, the more they can bargain with their partners and husbands. They become more independent and powerful.



“What do women really need? They don’t need a loan! They need to organize! Many banks come to the villages where the coops we work with are situated. Our women say, ‘No, we don’t need your money.’” - Nani Zulminarni, JASS SEA

By setting up cooperatives or credit unions, women also practice new leadership, decisionmaking and democracy: one woman, one vote, equal rights. This leads to more practical and emotional independence. Of course, it takes lots of consciousness raising and capacity building. That’s an appropriate role for NGOs, we feel; not bringing in the money and making profit off the interest that individual women have to pay. Participatory democracy and leadership does, inevitably, create clashes and internal conflict – people always resist doing things differently. Some want to take control which is why we have a leadership change every three years. That’s our role as organizers – to develop and support new

kinds of leadership and to build women’s capacity to manage conflict.

We don’t attach women to an existing cooperative. They build their own together. From the profit they generate by investing their savings, they eventually have enough to build their own women’s centers. Economic organizing in this way enables us to work under oppressive governments. We say, “We’re doing savings and credit” and then the authorities leave us alone. Over time, our experience shows that the women promote their own leaders to become village head, or members of the village parliament. From there, they have influence, gain more power, and can make bigger change.



JASS Southern Africa

JASS Southern Africa 2009 Overview

In Southern Africa, reverberations from the Wall Street financial crisis deepened economic scarcity, seriously impacting women's livelihoods and reducing availability of HIV treatment, among other crucial services. Well financed, US-based Christian conservatives wielded a palpable influence in the region, deepening the sexual stigma and taboos that limit human rights – a focus of JASS training. In beleaguered Zimbabwe, an attempt at a unity government led to slight easing on the economic front, at least for those with access to the US dollars that replaced the country's own currency. While direct political violence decreased, it did not stop altogether, and the flood of economic and political refugees continued over borders into South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and other neighbors. Within the country and as refugees, Zimbabwean women grappled with the trauma of sexual violence, including rape employed as a political weapon. New South African president, Jacob Zuma, was not a feminist's first choice, given his polygamy, trial for rape, and peculiar statements on HIV, but his popularity increased as unexpected opportunities opened up for advancing an HIV/AIDS agenda post-Thabo Mbeki.

In this challenging context, JASS deepened its organizing and training in Malawi and Zambia, furthered its alliance with the Zimbabwean LGBT group GALZ, and sustained an emerging group of activist leaders throughout the region.



“Our work is positioned against the politics of hunger, scarcity, and poverty. We can't separate the political organizing from this reality.”

- Hope Chigudu, JASS Southern Africa

Regional activist training and strategizing

The young activists involved with JASS since the beginning of the process in 2007 call themselves JASS movement-builders. Early in the year, eight JMBs continued their learning through a training workshop with well-known feminist popular educator Shirley Walters at the Grail Centre in South

Africa. In May, JASS Southern Africa sent Nkhumi Tshivashe, a JMB from South Africa, to complete a week-long course on CEDAW with JASS Meso-america team member and prominent women's rights lawyer Alda Facio in Canada. Another valuable face-to-face learning opportunity came in June, when members of the Southern Africa team met for a week-long strategic planning meeting and leadership development.

Zambian women bridge the urban–rural divide

A national-level JASS Zambia program began in 2009 with an in-depth needs assessment combined with outreach and alliance-building meetings with a range of groups including Community Youth Mobilization, Non-Governmental Organizations Coordinating Council (NGOCC), Southern African HIV and AIDS Information Dissemination Service (SAfAIDS), Planned Parenthood Association of Zambia, Society for Women and AIDS in Zambia (SWAAZ), Coalition of Zambian Women Living with HIV and AIDS (COZWHA), Network of Zambian People Living with HIV/AIDS (NZP+), YWCA, Women Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF), Young Women in Action, and Youth Vision Zambia.



International Women’s Day in Zimbabwe

On the JASS blog, Patience Mandishona, JASS Southern Africa communications associate and GALZ staff member, posted her reasons for postponing festivities.

“March 8, International Women’s Day, is marked to ‘celebrate women and recognize the great role they play in the world.’ ... On this day I felt that as a woman living in a country in which women are not only not respected but treated inhumanly, I had nothing to celebrate.

“Why should women celebrate when many cannot even afford to buy a packet of sanitary pads, which are sold at ridiculous prices, yet they are a basic need? Visiting cities hard hit by the water crisis, I have seen women and children risking their lives by fetching water from unprotected sources.

“As the adage goes: ‘Where two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers.’ And in Zimbabwe, women are on the receiving end of violence, whether in the home or outside in the country at large. Women cannot walk freely at night without being harassed, including by

police agents, accusing them of ‘loitering for the purposes of prostitution.’ Not only is this dehumanising but mind-boggling as well. To me, the Domestic Violence Law is so far just a lot of noise ‘signifying nothing’ because women are still vulnerable to rape and the willful transmission of HIV/AIDS – they have little or no say over their bodies.

“So a day is set aside to celebrate women ... but until women’s efforts are recognized and our rights acknowledged, it is definitely not yet Uhuru for women.” -Patience Mandishona

Grassroots Organizing

Strong movements are generally built from the local to the national and then to the regional level. In Southern Africa, JASS' strategy is to support and connect organizing among women at the grassroots level – a necessary step towards strengthening strategic action at regional levels.

One of the poorest countries in the world, Malawi has presented JASS with extreme challenges but also extreme inspiration. While some decent legislation exists, on domestic violence for example, not enough women know this. Needs assessments confirmed that there was both an urgent demand in Malawi and something on which to build: HIV-positive women trying to organize with limited or no resources. JASS' goal is to build their leadership, organizing and advocacy capacity to pressure local and national government and other agencies to make resources accessible (healthcare, ARVs, food, credit), and to implement the laws that support their rights as HIV-positive women and women generally.

In 2009, this work with women grassroots leaders in Malawi took off with unpredicted energy and, in one year, showed extraordinary impact. Young political facilitators from JASS' regional leadership initiative co-led the work and then went on to assume leadership.



From Individual to Collective Empowerment in Malawi

By Hope Chigudu and Sindi Blose,
JASS Southern Africa

JASS works with women living with and active on HIV/AIDS, from all the provinces of Malawi, aged 20–55, affiliated to different organizations, and identified as having a clear constituency and potential to be movement builders. JASS set out to deepen their understanding, thinking and strategies for change, within the work they were already doing and in response to opportunities that emerge or that they create.



Grassroots Women become Frontline Organizers

“This morning I had breakfast with a young woman in her twenties. She told me how she was married off by her grandparents at the age of 17, following the death of her parents who both died of AIDS. She is HIV-positive herself. Her husband, who infected her, abandoned her with her now five-year-old baby. She is taking care of her child, her siblings, and her sister’s HIV-positive baby. ...

“The women understand the need to continue to interrogate the linkages between patriarchy, violence against women, denial of resources and service delivery, and the feminization of HIV and AIDS, and to find ways of dealing with these critical issues in the work plans they are developing.

“JASS workshops, such as this one, embody the budding connections among women living with HIV and AIDS who come from all over Malawi. They symbolize the beginnings of a whisper, a rustle, a flame that will build into a stronger

movement of women living with HIV/AIDS, and a strengthened sisterhood. As the women received their JASS t-shirts yesterday, and as they danced, they were aware that the struggle had begun. But this time, instead of standing alone, they were moving towards change as a collective.”

From Hope Chigudu’s entries on the JASS blog, November 2009

The first set of workshops, in February 2009, one in each of the country's three provinces – North, South and Central – involved grassroots leaders of local women's or HIV-positive organizations. The follow-up workshop in November 2009 gathered the most dynamic and committed of these women plus, for one session, the coordinators and directors of the relevant NGOs, to ensure national-level buy-in for potent district-level action and, by 2011, national alliances and advocacy.

Our process enables women to emerge as leaders by gaining confidence in the wisdom of their lived experience and by deepening their political awareness in order to become more independent in their thinking and activism. With the JASS power framework – understanding the differences between visible, hidden and invisible power – women learn to recognize and organize around contradictions, such as decent laws vs entrenched cultural norms, as well as the need for collective action.

Our approach respects and uses the power of oral history. As they learn about themselves, the participants come to heal personal wounds. Other participatory, creative workshop methodologies include body mapping, songs, and walking meditation. We start with how women walk into the room – you need to think on your feet and change the whole program so that you engage them through their feelings, their interests, then bring the issues in as you go along. We talk about self-care – emotional, sexual, herbal – discussing a lot of topics that would never be raised in a 'normal' workshop. Dancing is part of

healing. Many participants are not in good health; some struggle even to sit up straight. But dancing connects to the heart.

What has shifted?

- Women are able to articulate what they want and don't want, owning their rights.
- Language has changed; women use empowering and political words.
- Women's testimonies show how they are subverting and using different sources of power to advance their rights as leaders and movement-builders.
- Each leader develops her own organizing work plan to mobilize numbers for specific changes – for example, to clinic timetables for providing ARVs, and for fair distribution of food coupons.
- By creating a safe space for open discussion, the process has begun to demystify issues related to sex and sexuality and to challenge prejudices.

JASS' slogan, 'Women Crossing the Line,' has been adopted with great enthusiasm and the positive concept of 'power within' now forms part of every conversation and every explanation of action between workshops. Women are using their sources of power to demand rights. An early example: when two of the women called on their District Administrator; he was not available. Instead of quietly leaving, they waited for him in order to ask for fertilizer and seeds. "When I got it," said one, "I crossed the line."



How do individual leader's organizing plans lead to movement-building? Each woman works with many other women through informal groups. She might plan to encourage her community group to plant herbal gardens, for example. She organizes her group and they petition the chief and the district administrator, and so they form the beginnings of a movement that spreads by solving one problem at a time. They use the organizing methods that we have shared, the power analysis and other tools, the confidence and skills they've taken from the JASS workshops and amplify them. Empowerment has extended to other aspects of their lives; for example, some are fighting for land even though women are not 'allowed' to own land.



“Our insight since 2007 is that women who are natural activists have been undermined by adherence to rigid international aid frameworks and NGO-ization. So, when we create a different space that acknowledges their natural leadership and organizing capacity even within their homes, an explosion happens. For example, Malawian women start talking about crossing the line. Their leadership and subversive political instincts are being recognized and unleashed. This creates a momentum and opportunity – and a great challenge to live up to and to continue nurturing!”

Lisa Veneklasen, JASS Executive Director



Portrait of a Grassroots Activist

Tiwonge Gondwe

JASS believes that, with investment in alternative forms of leadership and women's organizing capacity, seemingly impossible changes can be made in a short period of time. A key element in JASS' approach to leadership and movement building is the understanding that the personal is political, and that in order to build collective power we must identify and strengthen alternative forms of "power to, within, and with." No one speaks to this belief and this guiding principle of what activist leadership and movement-building is all about more passionately than Tiwonge Gondwe, a grassroots leader based in Malawi's Rumphi District. Reflecting on her experiences in JASS activist training, Tiwonge says, "I remember learning about feminism; we talked about what 'Crossing the Line' means. We said what things can show that you have really crossed the line. We talked about change. We said that change should start with you. Don't look at people outside but look at yourself because you can't change someone else if you are not changing too."

Involved with JASS Southern Africa since the very beginning in 2007, Tiwonge has emerged as a strong leader in three broad-based community organizations (Women's Forum, the Coalition of Women Living with AIDS and the Coalition of Women Farmers). Her organizing training and her belief that "you can't do something alone; it needs you to have some friends to help you," empowered her to organize over 40 women to attend training on land ownership rights



“In my activism, the impact cannot be seen within a year but as I grow, I see I have made progress. To take someone who has little education, just coming from the grassroots, to see and do all these things ... ! I can say that I'm another person from three years ago. My life has changed.”

and on the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act. She went on to meet with the chief and discuss land ownership rights for women. "At first it was hard for me to go to the chiefs and say something. But now I am able to stand with the chiefs and talk with them." The chiefs agreed to allocate land and by December 2009, two women had already received their allotments. With her organizations, Tiwonge's next target is raising awareness about violence against women and building local women's capacity to advocate against harmful cultural practices and to take ownership of their bodies and rights.

"I use the JASS methodology. If you want something, you should be speaking because you are the ones concerned. So as a woman, I'm concerned on issues

which are affecting different levels of women. It's therefore for me to stand and say something, because women are the most vulnerable people and I don't want somebody else to speak on my behalf. In all our doings we should put a woman first; we must say, what does a woman need – her strategic needs and her day-to-day needs? How is the woman included?"

Tiwonge remains a critical part of JASS in Malawi and plans to run for office in Rumphi District in 2010, working hand-in-hand with the general assembly and members of parliament on the issues that affect her community, including reproductive healthcare for women; women's economic empowerment; access to healthcare and ARVs; and the construction of better boarding schools for young women and girls.



Give me back my movement!

Everjoyce Win from ActionAid International has been a close ally of JASS since the beginning. We invited EJ to blog for us after a conversation in which we shared our concerns and questions about the growing number of women's rights organizations headed and staffed by men in Southern Africa. While we have many male allies and the work of JASS activists benefits men in many ways, we were worried that the few spaces we've constructed for our own agendas were no longer... ours.

My safe space called the women's movement is going, or even gone. It's been taken over by men. And I am scared and angry. To paraphrase the racists, let me say it one more time – I love men. Some of the best people I've had sex with are men. So there. I believe progressive, non-patriarchal, non-sexist men have a positive role to play in the struggle for women's human rights. There are a few of them out there. But they are not yet in a majority, and a few good men do not a system make. Patriarchy in all its forms is still alive and doing quite well by my last diagnosis. The majority of men and boys continue to have access to all kinds of power, resources, and privileges, which they don't hesitate to use to exert their control over women's and girls' lives and bodies.

When any marginalized and excluded group creates a safe space for themselves, it is their space. Let me repeat, it is their SAFE space. The notion of safe space is deeply political. Women's space is women's space. It is the one place where I can have a conversation with other women about vaginas. When we experience violence of any kind, and we turn up for counseling at a women's center, the last person we expect to find sitting behind that desk is someone who looks exactly like the one I just ran away from. He might be nice, or the sweetest gay man, but do I trust that he will hear my story?

I work in a mainstream development INGO. I have seen, despite our best intentions, that it is very hard to recruit, retain and support women in the organization. Consistently keeping women's rights on the agenda remains a struggle. And trust me, my organization is one of the best in the INGO stable, if I say so myself. But I know the limits of what can be achieved in this

space. When I want to have certain conversations and when I expect a particular, firm political direction, I look to the women's movement.

The women's movement is still the only place I expect to give women a shot at employment. A women's organization is the last place I expect to compete with a man for an office messenger post, let alone a directorship. Call it sheltered employment if you must. We still need it because patriarchy and sexism have not been eradicated. Who else is going to give women opportunities if not their own organizations? Yet everywhere I look, women's organizations are giving jobs to the men, and in large numbers. In some cases, male staff out-numbers female. The range of jobs being given to men is equally frightening. A colleague recently reported from Zambia that a large number of women's organizations are now directed by men! She also noted that in some organizations men outnumber women in providing psycho-social counseling and support to female survivors of violence.

Even more frightening is the latest fad, men on the boards of women's organizations. A seat on the board is about power and leadership. Where are women ever going to get a chance to learn leadership skills and how to exercise power? Are there no other ways to 'include men' besides handing over our hard-created organizations to them?

It is time to reclaim women's spaces and re-politicize our movements with feminist politics. We can only do this if we put back onto the table, the fact that this is about POWER. Repeat after me... Gender is about men and women, and the UNEQUAL power relations between them. It's back to feminism 101. Sadly.

-Everjoyce Win



Mesoamerica

JASS Mesoamerica 2009 Overview

Although it draws little attention on the world stage, the region comprising Mexico and Central America is in crisis. Known for its history of brutal, armed revolutions in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala during the 1970s and 80s, Mesoamerica has been plagued by poverty and extreme inequality for decades; today, security is rapidly deteriorating. This goes beyond drug trafficking and gang violence – government institutions are being co-opted by powerful non-state actors: organized crime, transnational corporations, conservative religious institutions and paramilitary groups.

Within this risky context, Mesoamerican women continue to organize communities and lead social movements in campaigns against violence, repression, impunity, and the criminalization of abortion and reversal of reproductive rights – in effect, demanding that decision-makers fulfill official commitments to human rights and gender equality.

JASS launched its movement-building initiative in the region in 2006 by convening a group of diverse Mesoamerican activists including feminists, trade unionists and leaders from other social movements. Too often fragmented by urban–rural, ethnic, sectoral and cross-class divides, women’s rights movements in the region have embraced the alliance that emerged from this first JASS gathering. Its name, “Las Petateras” (the weavers), symbolizes the coming together of many diverse elements to form a flexible, yet unbreakable, bond to rebuild a social fabric torn by economic and political destruction.



Building on the initiative’s foundational commitment to support and amplify *transgresión feminista* – politicized resistance by women through civil disobedience in all aspects of life – JASS Mesoamerica and the Petateras experienced a breakout year in 2009 in all aspects of feminist movement building. Together, we created and expanded urgent action mechanisms and efforts, mobilizing attention and resources for women’s rights crises in the region by activating

Observatorios de la Transgresión Feminista (Feminist Transformation Watches) in Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras. In addition, JASS Mesoamerica staff in Mexico played a critical role in demanding attention for the ongoing human and women’s rights violations suffered by the women and men of Atenco as a result of a long-running land dispute with the Mexican government and business interests.

“We demand that the government respect our basic human rights to life, health, education and employment. Today is filled with hope for change for our lives and the lives of our daughters and sons.”

-Sandra Gonzalez, la Asociación de Mujeres Trabajadoras de la Maquila, at the public forum that JASS co-convened in Guatemala



Observatorios de la Transgresión Feminista

Fundamentalisms and the erosion of policy space

Thirty Petateras from eight countries met in Mexico City prior to the 11th Regional Conference of Latin American and Caribbean Feminists in March 2009,

which focused on the rise and dominance of fundamentalist ideologies over government policy in the region, as evidenced by the systematic reversals of reproductive health policies and the criminalization of abortion. As part of this Observatorio and in partnership with the Feminist International Radio Endeavor (FIRE), the Petateras broadcast spirited debates live every day on the radio. During the Observatorio, JASS offered a workshop on using innovative, web-based communications tools (such as YouTube and Facebook) for movement building. The manual from this workshop, *Trangresion Tecnologica: Tecnologia Para Movimientos Feministas*, is available free of charge via the JASS website.

Violence against women in Guatemala

Guatemala experiences the highest rate of femicide in the western hemisphere. In May 2009, Guatemalan Petateras, JASS, and FIRE convened an Observatorio and fact-finding mission of 18 feminists from 6 countries, with 31 people participating virtually through live broadcasts and interactive media to spotlight the situation. Guatemalan human rights defenders and movement activists testified about violence against women at a public forum, and members of the mission met with the UN's International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, as well as with other important human rights and government agencies.

Sea Change Feminist Leadership School

At the first regional Mar de Cambios/Sea Change Feminist Leadership School, held in Panama City in July 2009, 40 Mesoamerican women set out to deepen their shared political analysis of the fast-changing and increasingly violent context in which they operate and to identify strategies to advance women's rights where the state is unwilling or unable to provide justice and protection. Given activist burnout in such a high-risk environment, content was interspersed with measures to mend disconnects between mind, body and spirit. Organized with the Petateras, International Feminist University, CEASPA and Alas de Mariposa, and accredited by the University of Panama, the course produced an innovative leadership curriculum that included the creation of a "mural of ancestors" (described later in this report.)



Rivers of Change in El Salvador

In her capacity as a member of the JASS Meso-america team, Valerie Miller posted her impressions online.

Building on the JASS Mar de Cambios (Sea Change) region-wide gathering in July and the accompanying Wings of the Butterfly-sponsored play, Salvadoran Petateras by September had launched Rios de Cambios (Rivers of Change), a country-level process to strengthen women's movements and engage government in supporting and advancing women's human rights. To bring women together from across society, they worked in collaboration with the Salvadoran Women's Association (AMS), the Women's Collective of El Salvador, the Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women (ISDEMU), and other regional colleagues and supporters. Mar de Cambios evolved and spilled over into Rios de Cambios rippling out from the region to San Salvador, the nation's capital, and on to provincial towns across the country. Theatre performances that highlighted women's stories of courage followed by dialogues that involved key government officials took center stage in a political context that is changing, in some ways rather dramatically.

Women in El Salvador are coming together in a new political moment – one that offers the promise of more effective governance and collaboration between civil society and government. The June inauguration of a reform administration made up of a mix of revolutionary, activist and business leaders has begun to put in place more participatory structures and responsive government programs aimed at reducing poverty and violence and promoting human rights for all.



Yet from experience, we know that to keep women's issues and concerns on the agenda, strong movements and voices for change are crucial for holding government accountable and keeping it honest.

The Rivers of Change process is designed to do just that. By surfacing the concerns of women at national and local levels, acquainting them with unsung heroines from daily life, and engaging them in dialogues with strategic government representatives, JASS and allies have launched an education and advocacy effort that supports women's empowerment and sustained political engagement and action. Calling their initial effort "On the Threshold of Democracy," they gathered major women's groups, feminists, and others in collaboration with the Wings of the Butterfly initia-

tive. Inspired by the butterfly effect potential and the power of art and activism, it combines theatre performances that showcase the experience of women from El Salvador and around the world – women who have challenged violence and discrimination and provided alternative visions of society based on human rights, solidarity, equality and harmony with humanity and nature. UNIFEM has supported the effort as part of an upcoming interagency campaign to eliminate violence against women sponsored by the UN Secretary General.

- Valerie Miller. Read her reflections on Rios de Cambios and Mar de Cambios on JASS Facebook page.

Honduran Feminists in Resistance

Honduran feminists were among the thousands who took to the streets to protest and condemn the coup that ousted their country's democratically elected president on June 28. Rather than advocate on behalf of a particular political party, or for the return of the deposed head of state, the feminists instead demanded a return to the constitutional order. As a result of their non-partisan position, they were able to forge strategic alliances with a broad range of Honduran organizations and emerged as trusted leaders within the resistance movement.

Feminists in Resistance, a name adopted by the core group of women who came together to lead protests in the immediate aftermath of the coup, rapidly became a force to be reckoned with, monitoring and reporting on human rights violations, expanding their numbers and visibility, and fighting to ensure that the feminist agenda remained central to the priorities of the greater National Popular Resistance Front (FNRP).

In the weeks that followed the coup, members of Feminists in Resistance carried green banners and wore green T-shirts and green hats, becoming a visible and growing green splash in the ocean of protestors. Women of practically every age participated, from twelve-year-old girls to women of 60 plus. Remarkably, for the first time in Honduras' political history, feminist women were not only co-leading a movement for democracy, but were also publicly identified as feminists.

The coup precipitated a dramatic decline in the country's human rights situation. For women,



especially those opposed to the de facto regime that immediately assumed power, the violence and civil unrest led to a marked increase in the incidence of verbal, physical and sexual assaults, which are

nearly always committed with impunity and often by state security forces. The day after the coup, the regime revoked a presidential decree that had just months earlier legalized emergency contraception;

“When the whole population is facing human rights violations, women are at even greater risk because we are considered second-class citizens. The coup d’état ruined much of what we had achieved. All that women have gained as a result of the coup is more violence.”

– Gilda Rivera, Director,
Center for Women’s Rights, Honduras



shortly thereafter, the leadership of the Ministry of Women was replaced by staunch conservatives aligned with religious fundamentalists.

The post-coup context in Honduras became an important focus of JASS’ work during 2009: JASS staff and allies maintained daily contact with Honduran women, mobilized resources to support front-line activists, monitored the human rights situation, and sought publicity for the growing number of human rights abuses.

By August 2009, JASS, the Petateras, Feminist International Radio Endeavor (FIRE), and other allies organized an Observatorio de la Transgresión Feminista and an accompanying fact-finding mission to Honduras. Sixteen women from Central America, Mexico, Spain, Canada and the US (the largest Observatorio to date) worked closely with the Feminists in Resistance to document assassinations, rapes, beatings and arbitrary detentions committed during the weeks that had elapsed since the coup d’état.

“It was not easy for me to have a gun pointed at my chest. I never thought that I would experience this. Just like I never thought I would experience hunger, but I went on a hunger strike for 18 days to protest the coup.”

–Daisy Flores, JASS Mesoamerica and Feminists in Resistance



We Are ALL Honduran Women in Resistance

NO to the Coup  **YES** to Democracy

The Observatorio engaged a number of supporters from around the world via the internet and implemented a media campaign spotlighting women on the frontline of the resistance. The campaign included organizing broadcasts on local radio stations, one of which was shut down by the coup government soon after the Observatorio.

According to one member of the fact-finding mission, “The police are targeting young people and women, abusing them physically and verbally. The violence against women participating in the resistance is often sexual in nature: verbal abuse and the way police use their batons – hitting their breasts and other private

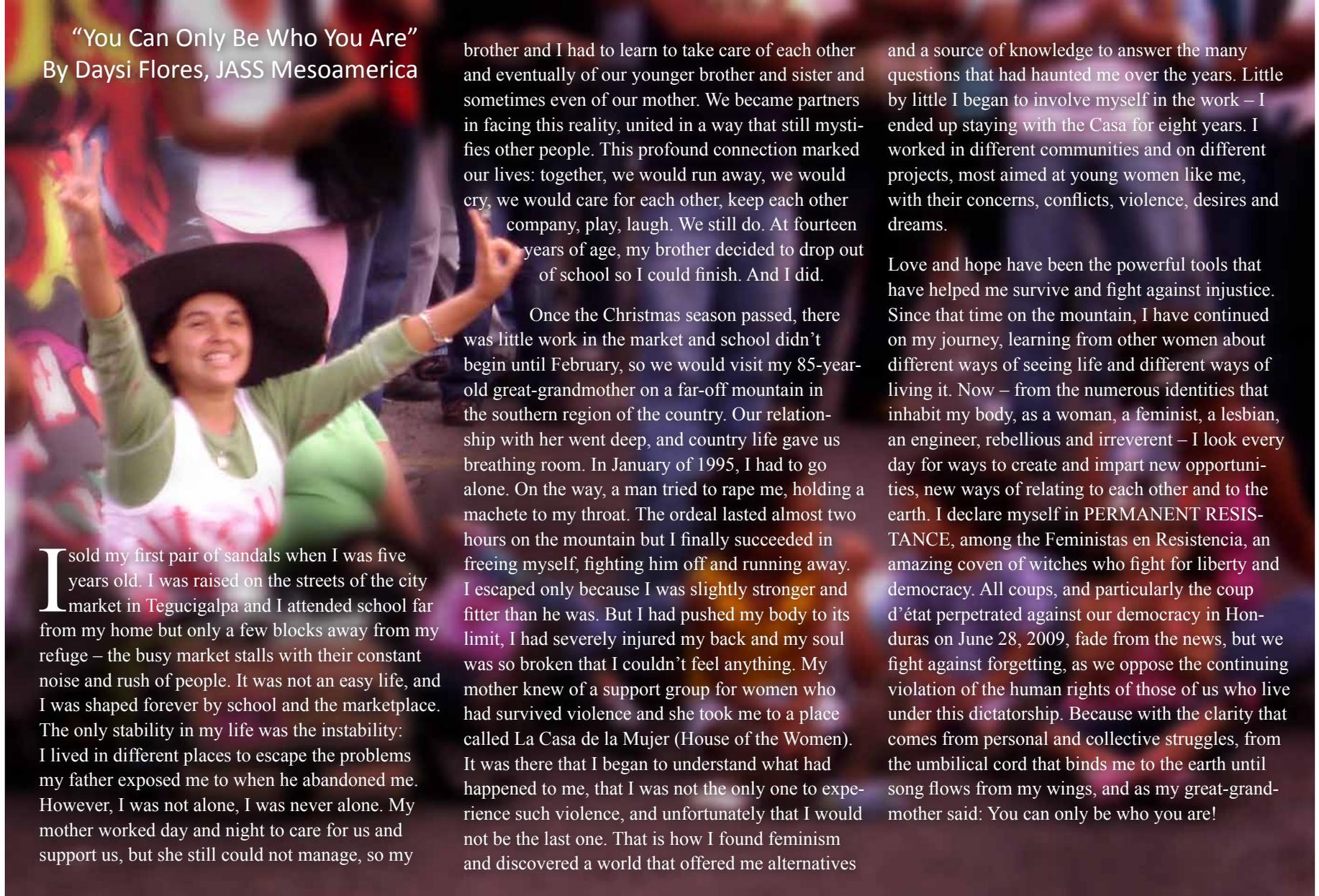
parts.” Another said, “The most poignant testimonies show other types of violations of women’s human rights, such as the fear that is being instilled in women that they might be persecuted or detained. Some women have had to go into hiding; they are separated from their children and families in order to protect themselves and avoid illegal or forced searches of their homes.” Reported statistics showed an increase of at least 60 percent in the already high rate of femicides.



Memoir of a Feminist in Resistance

“You Can Only Be Who You Are”

By Daysi Flores, JASS Mesoamerica



I sold my first pair of sandals when I was five years old. I was raised on the streets of the city market in Tegucigalpa and I attended school far from my home but only a few blocks away from my refuge – the busy market stalls with their constant noise and rush of people. It was not an easy life, and I was shaped forever by school and the marketplace. The only stability in my life was the instability: I lived in different places to escape the problems my father exposed me to when he abandoned me. However, I was not alone, I was never alone. My mother worked day and night to care for us and support us, but she still could not manage, so my

brother and I had to learn to take care of each other and eventually of our younger brother and sister and sometimes even of our mother. We became partners in facing this reality, united in a way that still mystifies other people. This profound connection marked our lives: together, we would run away, we would cry, we would care for each other, keep each other company, play, laugh. We still do. At fourteen years of age, my brother decided to drop out of school so I could finish. And I did.

Once the Christmas season passed, there was little work in the market and school didn't begin until February, so we would visit my 85-year-old great-grandmother on a far-off mountain in the southern region of the country. Our relationship with her went deep, and country life gave us breathing room. In January of 1995, I had to go alone. On the way, a man tried to rape me, holding a machete to my throat. The ordeal lasted almost two hours on the mountain but I finally succeeded in freeing myself, fighting him off and running away. I escaped only because I was slightly stronger and fitter than he was. But I had pushed my body to its limit, I had severely injured my back and my soul was so broken that I couldn't feel anything. My mother knew of a support group for women who had survived violence and she took me to a place called La Casa de la Mujer (House of the Women). It was there that I began to understand what had happened to me, that I was not the only one to experience such violence, and unfortunately that I would not be the last one. That is how I found feminism and discovered a world that offered me alternatives

and a source of knowledge to answer the many questions that had haunted me over the years. Little by little I began to involve myself in the work – I ended up staying with the Casa for eight years. I worked in different communities and on different projects, most aimed at young women like me, with their concerns, conflicts, violence, desires and dreams.

Love and hope have been the powerful tools that have helped me survive and fight against injustice. Since that time on the mountain, I have continued on my journey, learning from other women about different ways of seeing life and different ways of living it. Now – from the numerous identities that inhabit my body, as a woman, a feminist, a lesbian, an engineer, rebellious and irreverent – I look every day for ways to create and impart new opportunities, new ways of relating to each other and to the earth. I declare myself in PERMANENT RESISTANCE, among the Feministas en Resistencia, an amazing coven of witches who fight for liberty and democracy. All coups, and particularly the coup d'état perpetrated against our democracy in Honduras on June 28, 2009, fade from the news, but we fight against forgetting, as we oppose the continuing violation of the human rights of those of us who live under this dictatorship. Because with the clarity that comes from personal and collective struggles, from the umbilical cord that binds me to the earth until song flows from my wings, and as my great-grandmother said: You can only be who you are!

JASS Solidarity and Advocacy on Honduran Women's Rights

In light of the pivotal role played by the US government in the region, JASS' solidarity quickly evolved into global advocacy. JASS' slogan, "We are all Honduran Feminists in Resistance" was picked up and used throughout Latin America in coordinated protests and advocacy.

"JASS took a rare opportunity in the case of Honduras – when our feminist allies were brought to Washington DC to testify before the Inter-American Human Rights Commission – to organize meetings with key US legislators and foreign policy officials as well as an event to educate the US public and the media," noted Lisa Veneklasen. "Once we realized that the international solidarity and human rights organizations leading advocacy on Honduras did not have a women's rights angle and that the international women's rights groups seemed to be silent on Honduras, we jumped into this political void to organize a petition drive first, to communicate the urgency of the matter to the UN Security Council and, then, to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. In the future, we see that JASS Cross-regional will assume an even greater role in taking the advocacy agendas of our sisters in the Global South to the powerbrokers in the Global North. This will be always be driven by the specific demands and agendas in the region – in this way, JASS is both insider and outsider. Our international advocacy role will depend on the political potential for reaching a pivotal decision-maker in the North who can respond to this agenda. Increasingly, we're seeing this as an important role in response to growing repression against LGBT activists in South-east Asia and Southern Africa as well."

Despite both a massive boycott by Hondurans and a wave of international protest, elections went ahead in Honduras in November 2009. As noted on JASS' Honduras monitor (http://www.justassociates.org/actions/honduras_action_coup.html), for women in the Americas, democracy is a life and death issue as they struggle against impunity, the dismantling of secular states, and unchecked violence. Without democratic institutions women have limited chance of advancing equality and justice for women and for all. By accepting the post-coup elections, the international community and the US government send a message to the powerful forces operating behind the scenes throughout Central America – including business elites, organized crime and the religious right – that a coup is an acceptable way to operate.

"The US needs to live up to the expectations the Obama administration has raised in making support for women's rights a pillar of its foreign policy and stand with Honduran women in their fight for democracy and human rights."

- Jody Williams, Nobel Peace Laureate, and Lisa VeneKlasen, JASS Executive Director, in a *Christian Science Monitor* commentary, December 20, 2009



Atenco: Women and Land

This story of international women’s rights solidarity and advocacy, led by Marusia Lopez Cruz, JASS-Mesoamerica’s Regional Coordinator, began in May 2006 when the people of San Salvador de Atenco protested the government’s illegal seizure of their land to build an airport. Mexican police responded violently, killing two people, injuring many more, and detaining hundreds. At least 45 of those detained were women, many of whom were beaten, raped, and otherwise assaulted by police while in state custody. With their husbands, sons and daughters imprisoned for protesting, the housewives and mothers caught up in the violence assumed the leadership – overnight – of this movement for land rights and self-determination. With the support of Mexican feminists, they worked to build interna-

tional alliances with JASS and other groups in an effort to make their voices heard and their agenda visible.

Working with Mexican and Central American feminist and media groups, JASS Mesoamerica tapped into JASS’ strategic alliance with the Nobel Women’s Initiative (NWI) to send a high-level delegation—including Peace Laureate Jody Williams—to Atenco in September 2009. At a public gathering, survivors and their families described experiences of sexual violence by the military, repression of social movements and leaders, femicide, and the criminalization of abortion. Indigenous women from different areas of the state testified about the violations of their rights to autonomy,

reproductive health, and justice. Martha Sanchez, a Petatera and JASS ally from the Guerrero Indigenous Women’s Coordinating Committee and the Indigenous Women’s Alliance for Mexico and Central America, reminded the audience of the long history of indigenous peoples and organizations fighting against *caciques* (strong men) and militarization, and demanded an end to the destructive policies of integration, assimilation and the imposition of a single, non-indigenous culture. In meetings and letters, and on behalf the Nobel Women, JASS, other allies and the people of Atenco, Jody Williams called on Mexican officials to halt the violence and respect human rights.



Jody Williams’ Blog

“The prisoners were contacted by phone again during the public event and one of the women held the microphone to the cell phone so we could all hear. Two women standing behind me with their machetes started silently crying. Mothers of two of the prisoners. I had to get up and hug one and she started sobbing on my shoulder.

“It fills me with rage. Disposable people. As one said, ‘We are cannon fodder.’”

From JASS blog entries by Jody Williams, Nobel Peace Laureate



JASS Cross Regional

JASS Crossregional 2009 Overview

As a multiregional organization grounded in the South, JASS' work is linked by a crossregional team and by crossregional exchanges for learning, communications and advocacy. As JASS' impact has multiplied across the regions and as numbers have swelled, the depth and range of crossregional learning have intensified. This year, 2009, saw some major shifts in JASS' crossregional role and strategy.

Key allies – the Feminist International Radio Endeavor (FIRE) and the Nobel Women's Initiative (NWI) – have from the beginning amplified the reach of JASS action in general and of the Mesoamerican Observatorios (Feminist Transformation Watch) in particular. In 2009, JASS and the NWI co-convened an international conference: "Women Redefining Democracy for Peace, Justice and Equality" in Antigua, Guatemala in May, described below. Here, JASS chose to make more overt its often behind-the-scenes role in shaping the substance, participation and communications of international women's rights gatherings. More than one hundred women from over sixty countries around the world, including four women Peace Laureates, gathered to examine the challenges of democratization and to reshape democracy through the lens of women's rights and women's experiences. The JASS community was represented by more than twenty women, including JASS Mesoamerica allies the Petateras, who participated in the three-day strategy meeting by speaking on panels, acting as moderators, and documenting



the conference. Additionally, Lisa VeneKlasen, JASS Executive Director, collaborated with Alda Facio, a JASS Mesoamerica regional advisor, in authoring the concept paper that framed the conference. The final Declaration was drafted by two JASS board members, Malena de Montis and Srilatha Batliwala, based on input from the participants, and made available in Spanish and English.

Later in the year, and grounded in the urgent actions of the Honduran Feminists in Resistance, JASS crossregional supported a wave of international advocacy in Latin America, the US and beyond. As detailed earlier in this report, this marked a new stage in JASS crossregional action, intersecting with many different

actors at the local, national and regional levels, which in turn amplified the momentum at national level. In the Honduran case, and many others where key decisions outside the country are pivotal to the prospects for women's rights, this momentum quickly flows and extends to global levels where advocacy becomes critical to changes far away.

This was also a year of innovation for crossregional knowledge generation as JASS initiated the first in a series of discussion papers and virtual debates on 'intersectionality.' Feminist scholar-lawyer and JASS Mesoamerica team member Alda Facio set the ball rolling with a powerful and personal piece we called "Age Matters," which is posted on the JASS website,

along with responses from young JASS feminists. Together with the host of tools in *A New Weave of Power, People and Politics* (by Veneklasen and Valerie Miller, JASS co-founder, available in English, French and Spanish), the Age Matters materials are used in multigenerational feminist leadership training.

Questions of age and power were explored in other ways in the regions during 2009. In Southeast Asia, JASS launched an ongoing series of multi-regional dialogues, to encourage real exchange across apparent generational divides. Meanwhile, at the Mar de Cambios/ Sea Change Feminist Leadership school in Panama, participants created a beautiful mural of feminist ancestors to recognize and honor

the contribution of women who inspire them. This was translated into virtual and interactive form on the JASS website, where it continues to grow.

Another element of intersectionality important to JASS' work is that of sex and sexuality. As illustrated below, the politics of sex and the body operate largely through the invisible power of repressive values and norms. In Parapat, Indonesia, in Mzuzu, Malawi, in San Miguel, El Salvador, JASS processes carefully open up discussion to previously taboo subjects, igniting a passionate response as women come to recognize the connections between sex/sexuality, and more public forms of power and struggle. Below, we offer a few moments and topics from these discussions: feminist alliance-building strategies employed by an LGBTI organization in Zimbabwe; quotes on

sex work from JASS SEA; body-mapping in Malawi; and a range of personal experiences with fundamentalisms.

The second in JASS' annual crossregional dialogues brought the year to a triumphant close. Entitled "Power – Movements – Change," this gathering of 25 members of the JASS community not only shared learning from the different regions but also seeded a number of forward-looking international collaborations, for example on feminist alternatives to micro-finance, and on women's rights training with indigenous women. We invite you to download the full report on Power – Movements – Change, as well as sampling some key insights below.





“As women, we know that democracy that comes from the heart is not the rule of the majority, but that it safeguards dissent and difference with equal rights, and fosters a culture of peace.” – The Declaration of the JASS–Nobel Women’s Initiative Conference: Women Redefining Democracy

Women Redefining Democracy

JASS and the Nobel Women’s Initiative

Since its formation in 2006, the Nobel Women’s Initiative has been one of JASS’ key strategic partners. The Peace Laureates’ participation and press statements bring a powerful media spotlight and profile to the Observatorios called by JASS and the Petateras. In May 2009, this relationship deepened as JASS and the NWI co-convoked a three-day international conference, “Women Redefining Democracy for Peace,

Justice and Equality” in Antigua, Guatemala. Here, more than a hundred women from around the globe critiqued democracy’s failed promises to women, in a moment when the global financial crisis was forcing millions into poverty. The conference offered a rare opportunity for extraordinary front-line women activists, academics, journalists, government officials and parliamentarians from Guatemala to Ghana to Burma to share the creative ways in which they are confronting inequality and insecurity, and to highlight women’s efforts to shape more inclusive and vibrant democracies.

JASS women from Africa, Asia and Mesoamerica made up nearly 20% of participants and presenters, while a JASS team played a key role in designing and

facilitating the conference, developing the provocative conceptual framework and moderating panels. JASS board members Srilatha Batliwala and Malena de Montis led the conference in drafting the conference press statement to be read by the Laureates, and JASS collaborated with the NWI media team to film participants’ reflections and to produce short video reports every day.

The setting of the conference was particularly significant given the increasingly violent conditions faced by Guatemalan women and the culture of impunity that prevails. The state cannot guarantee women’s safety, femicide is on the rise, and human rights defenders are being targeted.

Fact-finding mission in Guatemala

To take advantage of the media attention provided by the Nobel Laureates and the international conference, JASS, the Petateras, and Radio Feminista called an Observatorio de la Tránsgresión Feminista and fact-finding mission immediately after the conference, to investigate and report on gender-based violence in Guatemala.

Guatemala statistics

- Population: 14 million.
- 2000 to 2008: over 4,300 violent murders of women registered, the majority preceded by rape or torture, with 98% of cases still unsolved.
- 2008: 39,400 reports of domestic violence taken to the courts.

Of the 722 women murdered in 2008 alone, 75% were femicides, defined as “the murder of a person based on the fact that she is female.” In Guatemala City, about 20% of the over 500 women murdered in 2004 and 2005 were probably lesbians. The number of femicides in Guatemala in 2008 increased by 457% from 2007.

In May 2008, Guatemala passed the Law against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women, officially recognizing femicide as a punishable crime and establishing a 25- to 50-year sentence for those found guilty. Since the law was passed, only two perpetrators have been sentenced. From January to May 2009 alone, 265 cases of femicide were registered.



After Colombia, Guatemala is the Latin-American country with the highest number of murders of human rights defenders. Cases of violence against human rights defenders have increased since 2006 due to their investigations of cases of femicides, with the percentage of human rights defenders attacked increasing from 26% to 36%.

At the request of the Guatemalan Petateras in collaboration with JASS, the Nobel Women’s Initiative released a statement at the end of the conference, expressing their solidarity with the women of

Guatemala and denouncing the growing violence against women in the country:

“We have witnessed the strength, courage and resistance of Guatemalan women as they work to advance their rights and those of the whole of society, amidst enormous challenges and threats to their wellbeing and that of their families and communities. Guatemalan women struggle in a context of insecurity and violence that they have faced throughout history and continue to face today.”

- from the Nobel Women’s Initiative statement

Understanding Power: Intersectionality

In order to understand power better, regional teams drew on and adapted concepts and frameworks from the JASS toolbox, collected in *A New Weave of Power, People and Politics* by JASS founders Lisa Veneklasen and Valerie Miller. One key tool, *intersectionality*, helps activists analyze the ways in which gender intersects with other social characteristics or identities. Every one of us has multiple, nuanced identities and so can experience oppression and privilege simultaneously. For example, a doctor may be respected in her profession but suffer domestic violence at home. This idea underlies all levels of JASS' work and in 2009 became an explicit focus in training and strengthening leaders in all regions.

In the JASS feminist glossary she is developing for activists, renowned human rights lawyer, Alda Facio (JASS Mesoamerica) explains:

“In patriarchy, all forms of discrimination (based on race or ethnicity, religion, nationality, socio-economic class, age, immigration status, disability, and so on) also intersect with gender and, as a result, each one affects the other, creating a system of oppression and privilege. This is the ‘intersection’ of the multiple forms of discrimination that the majority of woman experience.

“The concept of intersectionality is used in the struggle for equality by indigenous women and by disabled women, to give only two examples. These women have taught us that inequality based on race or disability is different from that based on gender and

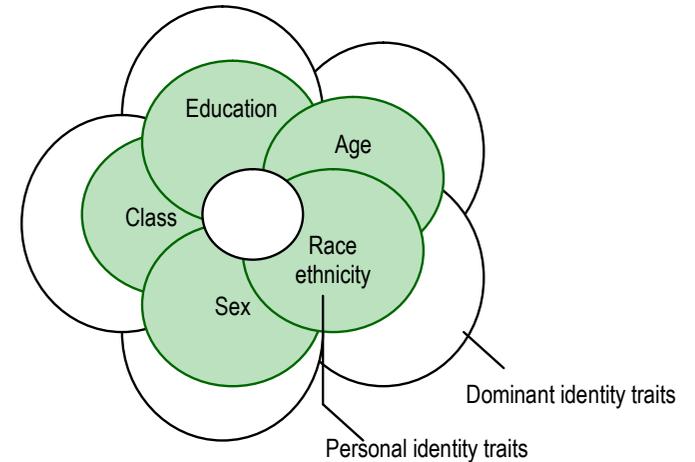
that these forms of discrimination are not mutually exclusive. Instead, very often they cross each other leading to an ‘intersection,’ simultaneity or tangle of discrimination that is quite difficult to unravel and much more than the sum of just two ‘discriminations.’”

“From their own stories, the concept of patriarchy is immediately understandable and useful, as it names the power that all the women live with and under.”

– Hope Chidgudu, JASS Southern Africa, blogging from Malawi

Addressing ageism in JASS regions

During 2009, given the importance of building inter-generational movements, JASS regions focused on age and ageism, as one set of factors within an understanding of intersectionality. Alda Facio prepared a discussion paper, *Age Matters*, that sparked a virtual debate across regions; JASS Southeast Asia held the first crossregional dialogue in Indonesia; and at the first regional *Mar de Cambios/ Sea Change Leadership School*, JASS Mesoamerica created the *Mural of Feminist Ancestors*, first in person and then online, where women name and honor those who inspire them.



A Training Tool: The Power Flower

Use the Power Flower to map a few key elements of your own layered identity and relationship to power.

- * Use the outer circle of petals to describe the dominant social identity. For each category (level of education achieved, age, etc), what are the characteristics of those who have most power? Label each petal.
- * Now consider your own identity in each category. Note this on the inner circle of petals.
- * How many of your personal characteristics are different from the dominant identity?
- * Which characteristics cannot be changed?
- * What does this say about your own power or potential for power?

You can adapt the flower by changing or adding new “petals” such as religion, ability/disability, and place of origin.

Source: Veneklasen and Miller: *A New Weave of Power, People and Politics*, page 95

Age Matters!



From a JASS Discussion Paper

by Alda Facio

How can we truly engage all generations in our movements? We all have something valuable to offer, no matter what our age, and yet the ageism that often blocks us has not been explicitly addressed as a factor in building sustainable feminist movements. As JASS, we want to facilitate a cross-regional virtual dialogue about age relations – within our movements and in our lives as women – to ensure that our movements benefit fully from our multi-generational talents and wisdoms.

We define ageism as a prejudice against a person or people because of their age – any idea, attitude, action, or mental or institutional structure that subordinates a person or group because of age. Like other power relations (such as those based on race or ethnicity) many forms of ageism are particular to women. Sexist ageism is any attitude, action, or structure that discriminates against female human beings because of their age. It includes any assignment of roles based purely on the age of a woman or a female child without regard to her preferences, abilities, and capacities. In each moment of our lives, we all face different forms of ageism because we are women. A female human being’s age classification, unlike most other factors, changes as she progresses through her life cycle.

JASS virtual dialogue on “Age Matters”

“Peggy Antrobus has always advocated a multi-generational movement that includes everyone on a spectrum, not just young and old. This means a mentoring role for even retired activists, to ensure that the institutional memory is effectively transferred. On the other hand, younger activists are often given the technology or artsy tasks. While indeed there is talent in this area, an older activist recently said to me, ‘We also need time to play.’”

- Shamillah Wilson, South Africa

“Young women who are living in small villages, rural regions, far away, have taken the more essential learning from the women’s movement so far. They have created their own spaces because they have ONE ENEMY ... which is Patriarchy. Here I am, a young feminist living in Jakarta, crying out loud about how the ‘seniors’ behave toward me, but am I aware about what’s happening beyond the spaces allocated for ‘discussing youth issues?’ Are we really paying attention to what happens with women’s groups in villages? Am I successfully creating a positive space out of the differences that separate us, young from old?”

- Chika Noya, Indonesia



JASS SEA Intergenerational Dialogue

The analysis underlying the JASS women's movement-building initiative in Southeast Asia prioritized a problematic divide between professional urban-based women's rights advocates on one hand, and grassroots organizers (many of them young and rural-based) on the other, rooted in power dynamics shaped mostly by age, class and location. The intergenerational dialogue in Indonesia in 2009 was devised as one step towards bridging this separation and building alliances. The gathering was scheduled strategically to follow a training workshop with young women from previous JASS SEA activities. Here, younger women were able to prepare before they met with established feminist leaders.

The dialogue produced a great deal of important learning for expanding collective power. For example, in teams by age, women identified the wisdom and challenges of their own decade (with sometimes hilarious results.) In the debrief that followed, however, young women expressed some frustration too: familiar roles were repeated, they felt, with powerful figures seeming more comfortable in presenting information than in hearing the views of their younger sisters. The JASS SEA team took this as a further learning opportunity. The next intergenerational gathering will be a workshop, rather than a dialogue, focusing on group discussions and processes applying the tools and concepts of intersectionality, rather than on presentations, co-facilitated by young leaders rather than older 'professionals,' and all participants will be asked to commit to staying for the full event. Increasingly, JASS teams surface and share this kind of learning, spotlighting the 'seams' in apparently seamless processes.



Mar de Cambios

Mural of Feminist Ancestors

Reconstructing history, bridging generations

The first Mar de Cambios (Sea Change) Feminist Leadership School, convened in Panama in July 2009, included the collective construction of a Mural of Feminist Ancestors – a method which will be used by all JASS regional teams from 2010 onwards.

In this exercise, each woman shares a photograph or other image of a female ancestor who has inspired her to seek empowerment and understand and address oppression. She adds the image to a collective display and then either speaks or writes about what this ancestor means to her. The resulting mural – still ongoing through a virtual on-line process – honors these women, their struggles and their stories, creating a space alive with memories and a women's

history that is deeply personal while recognizing women who may have been invisible despite their courage and contribution to their community and to women's rights.

The mural presents the different ways women of all ages and backgrounds make history in their homes and their countries. The process connects women from across different generations and movements by demonstrating the resistance, contradictions and resilience that all women experience, regardless of age and other differences. "One step is to understand ourselves as perpetual migrants from one age group to the next. Those of us who are now old were once young," as Alda Facio explains. "The Mural of Ancestors begins to bridge the gap that ageism has created between young women and older women in any given movement. We need to ensure that our movements are multigenerational. This is about building respectful relationships of trust, and of learning and teaching, based on a long-term approach to movement building."

Sex and Sexuality

As women, we experience both power and oppression in our bodies. Wars are often said to be played out on the battlefield of women's bodies, and all levels of power, especially invisible power, are expressed through sex and sexuality – through stigma and shame as well as direct abuse such as domestic violence and rape, and through policies on abortion and access to sexual and reproductive health services as well as repression and censorship. The politics, safety, health, integrity and pleasure of our bodies are always integral to feminism in general and to JASS feminist movement-building in particular. Throughout 2009 and in all three regions where JASS operates, women activists have highlighted the politics of sex and sexuality.

Views on Sex Work

Why do we say 'commercial sex worker'? We don't say 'commercial NGO.' Many people work for money – we don't call them commercial doctor, commercial healer, commercial waitress. - Ampoorn Boontan, JASS SEA team, Thailand

The difference is that most of us actually are sex workers, but we don't get paid! When we raise this issue in Indonesia, we say, "We're all sex workers. You can't say no to husbands in Indonesia – he can slap you, take you to court." - Nani Zulminarni, JASS SEA co-director, Indonesia



LBTI strategies for alliance-building

In an interview for the JASS website, Patience Mandishona, JASS Southern Africa communications associate, described some strategies of her organization, Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe.

“At GALZ, I work in the gender program which focuses on issues of sexual and reproductive health and the LBT (lesbian, bisexual, transgender) rights of women within the organization – overall, we look at issues of empowerment, leadership and lobbying. Organizing as a lesbian isn't easy here but we've dealt with it by making sure we had a presence at most meetings and events on women's rights, so that

people get comfortable with having us around. We do workshops with the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe, trying to integrate LBT within their mandate and to get them involved in our activities too, such as our activism through sport, especially with our soccer teams. This has been our strategy over the past three years.

“We've learned so much from JASS. Popular education is on very important tool that we have begun to use within GALZ. We had never looked at introducing our members to feminism, women's leadership or the politics and understanding of power. But now we incorporate power and sexuality in most of what we talk and write about.”

The influence of conservative religious groups

Participants at the 2009 JASS Crossregional Dialogue identified different strands of fundamentalism, asking: Why are these forces so powerful? What challenges do they pose for feminists worldwide?

India: “December 6th in 1992 was one of the worst days in the modern history of my country. One million people, one quarter of them women, tore down the historical Babri Mosque. Why are so many women mobilized so successfully by the fundamentalists? Why is it that people like us have been so weak in comparison? Labor movements for example have never given women a space to contribute. Perhaps fundamentalists are so successful because they give women such a space.”

– Srilatha Batliwala, JASS Board Co-chair

Nicaragua: “Women continue to strategize against a formerly progressive government that bows to powerful Christian interests by criminalizing abortion and overtly attacking feminists.”

– Malena de Montis, JASS Board

Indonesia: “Today, we mobilize 1,000 women to protest the Pornography Law. Tomorrow, 150,000 Muslim women take to the streets, opposing us and supporting this legislation. The authorities applaud – women fighting against each other! That’s the strategy of fundamentalist groups – use other women to mobilize using invisible power. Perhaps we have to learn from their strategies.”

– Nani Zulminarni, JASS SEA Co-coordinator

The Philippines: “Feminist movements are so progressive and radical – we challenge the status quo and that disturbs many women. When reproductive health was a campaign issue, very few women would tackle it, and yet the Catholic church could gather so many against abortion and contraception.”

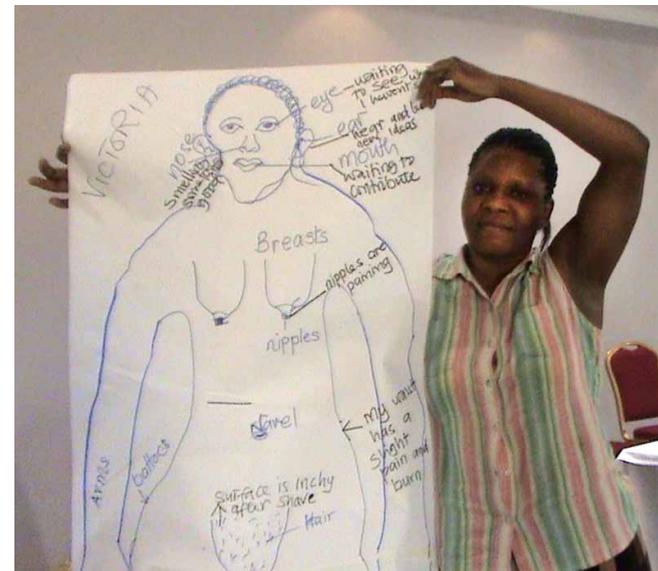
– Jojo Guan, JASS Philippines

Zambia: “One of the participants in a JASS workshop, a Catholic nun, was the one who embraced feminism, not the NGO-aligned women. A journalist had been arrested for taking a photo of someone giving birth outside the hospital and charged with distributing porno material. NGO-women were agreeing that it’s pornography, but the nun said, ‘Who can get aroused by this?’ I was apprehensive about showing the video from Mexico, with the phrase ‘take your rosaries out of our ovaries.’ And sure enough, some women said it was blasphemy. But the nun could acknowledge that people in her own church use faith for bad reasons.”

– Martha Tholanah, JASS Southern Africa Regional Coordinator

Zimbabwe: “Facing death, even the most progressive feminist might turn to a fundamentalist church. When people die, where does a feminist go? You have to work very hard to find comfort within feminism. We’ve done a lot but we have to make our feminism comprehensive and embracing.”

– Hope Chigudu, JASS Southern Africa



From the Body to the Collective

“Our lives are written on our bodies. Women living with HIV/AIDS, leaders in the AIDS movement in their communities in Malawi, started a four-day JASS workshop by creating startling and beautiful body maps. In this way, each woman recorded and shared her unique story of living with HIV or just of being. Body mapping helped the women to make visible that which ordinarily is invisible to others and sometimes invisible to themselves. Although facing bad memories and fears, the women went on to discuss their health in the context of the stories told in their body maps and, from there, the need to organize and mobilize to form a bigger movement to demand, fight back and claim their citizenship. It is difficult to fight back without hope. Through the mapping process and the discussions, one could see nuggets of hope beginning to surface.”

Hope Chigudu, JASS Southern Africa, blogging from Malawi

“I saw in Malawi how change comes in on the margins – as one woman crosses the line by challenging feared institutions – the police, the hospital, the district administrator. I saw how one woman can change the whole community. ”

– Hope Chigudu, JASS Southern Africa



Power – Movements – Change!

Cross-regional learning

Three days, twenty-five participants, an immeasurable exchange of learning and deep political debate! For JASS’ second annual cross-regional dialogue, regional teams and board members met to share and assess strategies, to surface assumptions and challenges, and to generate knowledge about movement-building. The group was broad enough to spark all kinds of new information, and small enough to go deep on some big political themes, stepping back from practice to explore important concepts such as *hegemony*. As the set of ideas, ideologies, and discourses that normalize and reproduce inequality and oppression, the term *hegemony* helps activists understand the most complex dynamics of power - and resist them.

“To be confused is a sign of innovation and change. If we stay with same logic we’ll stay in the same place – so congratulations on confusion as well as clarity.”

– Ellen Sprenger, JASS Board Co-chair

From presentations and analyses of particular strategies, the group went on to discuss important questions about political organizing, movement-building and transformation:

- What is political consciousness and how is it nurtured in new forms of activist leadership?
- How do we come together across differences of class, race, age, sexuality, and location; and sustain our organizing, common agendas and collective action?
- How do we generate and mobilize knowledge that challenges the dominant thinking that marginalizes/disempowers women and feminists?
- What does local-to-global solidarity look like and how do we deal with the inherent conflict and possibilities of such political relationships?
- How do we strengthen individual and collective actions that cross the line and produce real change, while navigating the inevitable risk and conflict?

These conversations framed discussions about the organizational entity that is JASS itself – how it came about, what it looks like, how to keep true to its organic and unconventional nature as it grows, and what can be learned from experiences of building other path-breaking transnational groups.

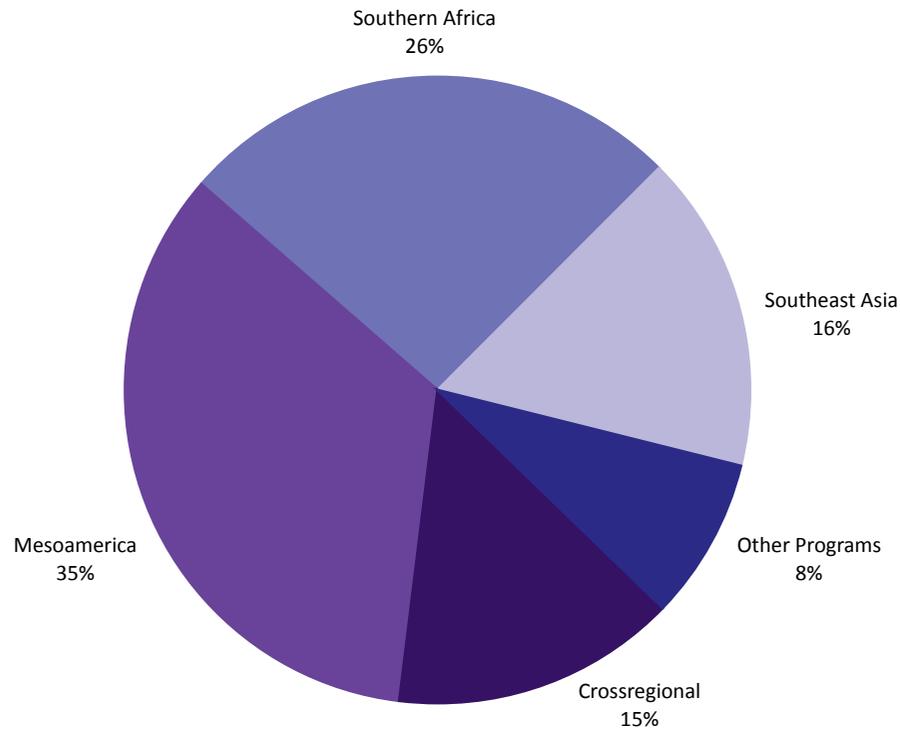


“Recognize the power of feminism to disturb the collective and to reveal deeply rooted authoritarianism.”

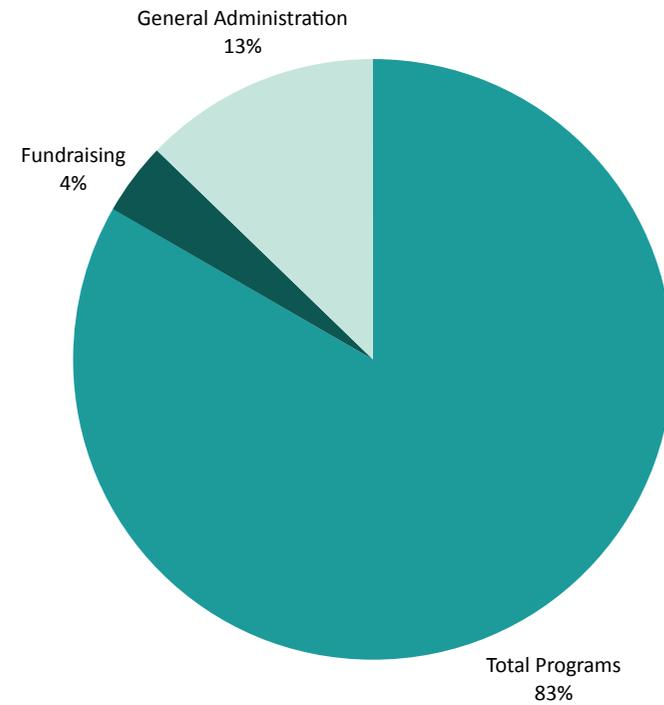
– Atila Roque, JASS board member and World Social Forum co-founder

Finances

2009 JASS' EXPENSES BY REGION



2009 JASS' TOTAL EXPENSES PROGRAMS VERSUS ADMINISTRATION



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Ellen Sprenger, Co-Chair
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Lori Heise
Malena de Montis
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Hivos
Stephen Lewis Foundation
Ford Foundation
Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa
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