



JASS VISION, MISSION AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (2004-2006)

Vision: Just Associates is guided by a **vision** of participatory, inclusive and empowering democracy as both an end in itself and as a means to address the systemic inequalities that generate and perpetuate poverty, oppression, violence and environmental destruction worldwide. For us, this demands changing dominant norms and values that perpetuate discrimination and privilege, as well as reforming and transforming paradigms, institutions, policies and decision-making processes in both public and private spaces of power.

Mission: We believe that such transformation is achieved by building and using the collective power of people, which is a long-term process of forging relationships between individuals, communities and organizations through dialogue, analysis, planning and action. Our efforts seek to deepen, diversify and expand public engagement while refining and strengthening visions, strategies, leaders and organizations. At the same time, we believe that empowerment is about tapping the best of the human spirit by unleashing the capacity to imagine a better future while developing a critical consciousness of caring, solidarity, respect and fairness. In this way, we seek to build movements that celebrate and negotiate differences among people and organizations from the very local to the global level. We believe the crucial starting point for transformation is by strengthening and building movements of people and communities that are marginalized and subordinated by the current arrangements due to their gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, age and location.

Strategic Priorities: We choose partners with a close connection and commitment to building the voice and influence of excluded groups and communities. We seek out constituency-based and ‘movement-oriented’ organizations such as women’s groups, trade unions, and other social networks that come together to claim economic, social and cultural rights. In keeping with these priorities, our activities and partnerships are built around two core themes.

Women’s rights and empowerment: In the face of a conservative backlash and a rollback to gender equality commitments worldwide, JASS works with women’s organizations around the world to rethink and rebuild strategies and alliances for redefining and recovering the common public good in a way that secures gender and other forms of equality and ensures basic freedoms and security from personal to public arenas.

Economic Rights, Citizen Action and Globalization: We work with and seek to build bridges between unions, grassroots organizers, advocates and researchers to develop better ways to demystify and engage with the politics and ideas shaping economic decision-making. By linking local issues (schools, wages, healthcare, land) to an analysis of global actors and trends, and their nexus with national and local policy, our efforts aim to deepen understanding of the competing

interests and what's at stake in order to strengthen strategies and alliances between citizens, consumers, workers and community advocates at all levels.

2006 PROGRAMS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

JASS' work in 2006 was organized around six core program areas:

1.- MOVEMENT-BUILDING INSTITUTES

JASS launched its movement-building initiative with the aim of re-building and re-energizing women's collective capacity to shape and advance people- and planet-centered agendas. This initiative draws on JASS' extensive experience worldwide in human rights education, community development and advocacy capacity-building with women from grassroots to global policy levels, from within women's organizations and across social movements. It was developed in response to widely expressed frustrations with the limited impact of policy and technical solutions on inequality and against powerful conservative agendas that threaten to rollback key gender equality and broader social justice gains. Concerned about the disconnects and fragmentation among efforts, gender equality activists everywhere are thirsting for opportunities to re-group, re-tool and re-build the collective vision, power and agility necessary to promote equality, development and peace for the benefit of all. The overall goals of this effort are to:

- Strengthen and diversify the leadership of women's movements through intergenerational political education and skill-building activities and transborder learning and action;
- Re-politicize gender equality and women's rights strategies through improving power analysis and methodologies for popular education, participatory planning, negotiation, communication and other political skills.
- Connect and build bridges between rural and urban, grassroots efforts and policy strategies, between researchers and activists, and between women's movements and women and men in other social movements (indigenous rights, racial justice, immigrant justice, workers and trade unionists).
- Facilitate communication and learning among women working in different spaces, countries and regions through creative communications strategies using radio, video and internet technologies.

JASS is organizing a series of regional workshops to give shape to and 'kick-off' a 3-5 year agenda for regional political capacity-building and action. Participants come together to assess the last few decades and identify the kinds of agendas, strategies and organizational forms that tend to fragment organizing and the kinds that facilitate effective base-building and the emergence of new leaders.

Working with our network members from Central America and Mexico, JASS launched the first of these movement-building institutes in Panama in September 2006 as a Mesoamerican dialogue. "Imagining and Re-building Feminist Movements of the Future" brought together 30 diverse women's rights activists, organizers and scholars from across the region. Four days of intense analysis, historical reflection and assessment of the state of regional women's movements generated three very concrete proposals for a long term forward-looking process to strengthen feminist movements in the region:

- "feminist schools" that are long-term processes of political capacity-building with diverse women of all ages and from all sectors throughout the region. The "schools" are designed, built on lessons from what has and hasn't worked in similar past efforts, and carefully link with existing regional structures where appropriate and combine occasional workshops and virtual dialogues with a strong communications and outreach component;
- an "Observatorio de Transgresiones", roughly translated that's an "Observatory of Transgressions". The idea is to give public visibility to the places and spaces where women are really pushing the political envelop through important forms of resistance, solidarity, and transformation at all levels. "Transgressions" reflect the kinds of actions women take on a daily basis to challenge dominant, oppressive norms and build a different kind of society. The first "observatory" is a virtual elections commentary process in the upcoming elections in Nicaragua, facilitated by Feminist International Radio (FIRE).
- "Boletín Petatera": "petate" refers to a woven palm mat that is common throughout the region. Much of the analysis in the meeting centered on how neoliberalism, militarization, and fundamentalisms of all stripes have devastated the "social fabric". The idea of the "petate" resonated with participants who saw it as a symbol for rebuilding the social fabric from a feminist perspective, coming from "the creation, regeneration and re-invention of women's ways of organizing, and bridging with others to build collective power." The proposal is for a virtual (web and radio-based) "Petate bulletin" that would highlight different experiences of the "observatory", advances in the "feminist schools", proposals for and experiences with building bridges with other movements and political processes, and more.

JASS is also carrying out a variety of consultations and working with our network members in Indonesia and Southern Africa to prepare the next regional movement-building institutes for 2007.

WHERE'S THE MONEY FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS?

This action-research program is being carried out in alliance with the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), a global network of over 5,000 members. Looking at donor commitments to women's rights 10 years after the historic Beijing Conference, the first phase of this research in 2005 sparked tremendous interest by donors, activists and governments in taking a deeper look at the role of money in the struggles of women's movements and organizations at this particularly challenging political moment for gender equality. During 2006, we have been working to update the research and fill in key gaps identified previously. In addition, we are supporting dialogues and workshops around the world, from Panama to Washington, DC, helping women's and social justice organizations concerned about gender equality take a critical look at their own approaches to resourcing their work and overcoming a mindset of scarcity and competition that contribute to fragmentation. As part of this project, JASS co-facilitated a workshop on "Diversifying and Mobilizing Resources for Women's Rights: Ensuring the Sustainability of the Women's Movement in Central America" convened by the Central American Women's Fund. This workshop brought together donors and women's organizations from the region to share and analyze information in the "Where's the Money" report, ground the analysis in the regional context and explore possible strategies for leveraging greater resources. JASS is also supporting AWID in the planning and facilitation of a forum for 300 gender equality activists in November 2006 in Mexico called "Money and Movements",

bringing this discussion to a much larger audience and helping to highlight key debates and possible ways forward.

CROSS-BORDER DIALOGUE ON CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT AND GLOBAL ECONOMIC POWER

Building on the inspiration and interest generated by a global workshop we convened with the Institute of Development Studies titled “Citizen Knowledge, Citizen Action and Global Economic Power,” this dialogue will bring together community and union organizers, popular and labor educators and a handful of policy advocates from the US, Mexico and Canada in April 2007. The dialogue -- a 3 –day workshop, co-organized with the Toronto Labour Education Centre (which is directed by a member of the JASS community) -- is part of a long-term learning and action process aimed at strengthening the kinds of popular education, communication and organizing strategies that enable citizens, workers and communities to critically understand and influence economic policy dynamics from local to global levels. This effort builds on JASS experience with economic and budget literacy and with trade unions, and responds to our concern that many of the efforts geared to demystifying economics tend to rely so heavily on expertise that they disempower rather than embolden communities, unions and their local leaders. During 2006 we have been meeting and talking with numerous groups doing interesting popular economic education to lay the groundwork for the dialogue and fine-tune the process and content. As part of the networking and agenda-shaping for the Cross-border Dialogue, JASS also participated in the Popular Education Encuentro organized by Grassroots Global Justice (GGJ), a coalition of grassroots groups organizing in the U.S. to build an agenda for power for working and poor people. At the Encuentro, JASS made important connections to immigrant justice efforts run by young Latina and Asian- and African-American women who have proposed that the movement-building project for the Americas extend to them.

Given our recent decision to focus exclusively on women’s equality initiatives, the participation of women and women’s economic justice groups and strategies will have increased attention and priority for the Dialogue.

MOVEMENT FOR GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY

JASS is working with the National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS), based in Pune, India through their **Community Learning Movement (CLM)** program. CLM aims to strengthen grassroots civil society capacity for people centered advocacy and social action through community mobilization and empowerment. This exciting collaboration builds on long-time links and affinities between the two organizations and holds many opportunities for engaging our network in key questions around what it takes to build and sustain strong social movements in the current context. After years of experience, and as they begin to launch CLMs in several new communities, NCAS and their partners are grappling with several questions and challenges as they advance in this intent to bring people-centered advocacy to a grassroots level. The collaboration with JASS is a way of connecting with the varied experiences of our network on movement-building and community organizing to provide new ideas and possible alternatives for the CLM process. For example, we are working closely with our global advisory member, Srilatha Batliwala in this effort. NCAS values the experience of the JASS network in incorporating gender equality and women’s empowerment into broader struggles for change and we are exploring how gender equality can be a strong part of the CLMs.

KNOWLEDGE GENERATION & NETWORKING

A core part of JASS' work is developing cutting edge thinking and materials that combine tools and how-tos with concepts and theory relevant for social change strategies that link personal, organizational and political change for gender equality, human rights and development. In 2006, JASS is producing three new editions in our "Making Change Happen" series:

- Making Change Happen 2: Citizen Engagement and Global Economic Power.
- Making Change Happen 3: Concepts for Revisioning Power for Justice, Equality and Peace
- Making Change Happen 4: Strategies for Navigating, Confronting and Transforming Power



The first edition of *A New Weave of Power, People & Politics* was out of stock by late 2005 and so in 2006, JASS negotiated with a new publisher, Practical Action Publishing (formerly ITDG) and their US counterpart, Stylus Publications, to reprint and distribute *A New Weave*. We're also negotiating with the distributors of the Spanish translation to make that version available electronically. A Bahasa-Indonesia translation of *A New Weave* will soon be available from a local advocacy support organization, Pergerakan, in Indonesia and we are coordinating with Plan International's West Africa Region Office as they produce a French translation of the book.

Coming out of our participation in the AWID Forum in Bangkok in October 2005, we invested time in the early part of 2006 to produce, publish and disseminate a series of papers and articles drawing on our workshops and presentations at that event. These include:

- "Strategic Opportunity or Black Hole? Assessing Policy Spaces to Advance Women's Rights"; 2006; www.justassociates.org.
- "Your Net, My Work: Pitfalls and Lessons Learned from Coalitions, Alliances and Networks"; 2006; www.justassociates.org; also reprinted in the AWID Forum Report.
- "Last Word – How Does Change Happen," by Lisa VeneKlasen in *Development: Volume 49, Number 1*; Society for International Development, UK: March 2006. (based on VeneKlasen's final plenary presentation at AWID)

Other Knowledge Projects:

1. JASS has also worked over the last two years with **public education activists in Washington DC, Chicago and New York**, who see their cities' crumbling public schools as an entry point for building the voice, organization and impact of low-income communities in the city's public policy process, and often with a focus on halting the indiscriminate privatization of essential services. JASS has been collaborating with a diverse range of grassroots, youth and church groups to carry out a series of citizen dialogues while teaching our partners how this process can

deepen democratic participation in decisions about public institutions and resources. Bringing together global education activists with their community-based counterparts in the US has been eye-opening for both parties and helped motivate US local activists to explore the adoption of a rights-frame for their social change work. Connected to this local work, we allied with ActionAid International to conduct action-research on the state of public education advocacy in the US and convene a dialogue with international education rights activists. This collaboration, drawing on our experiences over the last two years, culminated in a report on *Forging A Global Movement: New Education Rights Strategies for the United States and the World*.

2. In response to interest among many of the individuals and organizations with work with, JASS developed an outline for a **human rights advocacy training methodology for US activists**. The idea was to think about how to bridge U.S. social justice advocates (who rarely incorporate a rights framework) and human rights lawyers (who are well-versed in legalese but disconnected from organizers, constituencies, and people's real-life experiences and concrete problems). The core idea draws from our experience with women's rights advocacy around the world and we hope will open opportunities for more integrated political approaches centered around the right to participate and how that can be made real.

3. Having participated in and facilitated many workshops and dialogues in the past few years on the relevance of **popular education for social justice** efforts, JASS has consistently found that many groups who speak of using popular education have in fact reduced this highly political process to to a mechanical, interactive learning game, without a clear sense of how it can be used to build upon people's lived experiences to enable them to challenge their thinking and question dominant structures and systems. In an initial effort to recap some of the history and transformational potential of popular education, we drafted a short article on *Revisioning and Using Popular Education* that has already been warmly welcomed by many groups. Reclaiming and adapting popular education methodologies for consciousness-raising and critical constituency-building is a key element of our movement-building project.

4. For the last two years, JASS has participated in a small international learning project supported by the Ford Foundation called "**Assessing Social Change (ASC)**". Through e-dialogues, rotating facilitation, papers and workshops, this IDS-accompanied process, involves the sharing of theories, tools, experiences, challenges and highlights from efforts to measure and evaluate social change in a way that effectively responds to activists' and development practitioners needs to learn from their experiences and evaluate challenging processes that are not easily measurable. In this process, in addition to facilitation and other input, we have produced a short case study on the experiences of local DC activists with evaluating social change that was presented at a workshop convened by SPARC (Sheela Patel is one of the participating partners) in Mumbai at the end of October.

5. In collaboration with ActionAid international (AAI), JASS convened 10 women's rights activists from around the world for a **structured reflection and writing process to document stories relating to women's organizing**. This exciting collection, titled *Women Navigate Power* which ranges from grassroots organizing strategies with women-headed households in Indonesia, to the challenges of linking collective empowerment to empowerment within the home for Babassu nut-breakers in rural Brazil, will be available in January 2007.

Also with AAI, JASS produced a **toolkit and resource guide on “Power and Inclusion: Gender Equality and Rights-Based Approaches to Development”** to be used for AAI’s work with staff and partners.

6. When members of our network are in the Washington DC area, JASS convenes local practitioners and scholars for discussions around issues of key relevance to our work. In 2006, we organized an event on **“The Power of Women’s Movements: Impressions and Reflections on Women’s Organizing in Africa and the US”**. This discussion featured our associate Everjoyce Win, women’s rights activist from Zimbabwe who is the International Women’s Rights and Gender Equality Coordinator for ActionAid International; Timothea Howard, the Director of CentroNia and a community, labor and cultural organizer and organizing trainer; and Lisa VeneKlasen, JASS Executive Director.

We later organized an event on **“Community Organizing, Gender Justice and Citizen Engagement in Indonesia Lessons, Insights and Comparative Perspectives”** with our Indonesian associate Nani Zulminarni. While Indonesia’s context differs from DC and the US in significant ways, Nani’s experiences working with poor communities, women and youth offer useful lessons and inspiring examples to those concerned about re-energizing people’s involvement in decisions at all levels, building people’s power and ensuring accountability.

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIC ACCOMPANIMENT and ADVOCACY

JASS is collaborating with the **DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence (DCCADV)** to restructure and reinvigorate the coalition, and define an exciting strategy that reflects a comprehensive response to domestic violence including service provision, community organizing, outreach and advocacy. We are working with a wide range of DC agencies that serve immigrant, African American and poor communities to deal with the structural and political dimensions of violence more effectively, and to combine policy, outreach and engagement of constituencies, including organizing “survivors” as agents in the change process.

JASS’ advises and is actively involved with the exciting new **Nobel Women’s Initiative** that draws upon the prestige and credibility of women Nobel Laureates to spotlight the voices, issues and strategies of gender equality and women’s rights activists.

In addition, JASS provides strategic support and training to a wide range of development and women’s rights organizations. Most recently these collaborations have included **Oxfam America, Catholic Relief Services, CARE and Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)**.