

ANNUAL REPORT

2017: THE YEAR OF WOMEN



Picture courtesy of Center for Women's Resources (CWR)

YOU ADD, WE MULTIPLY 2017

PERSUADED

54+

village chiefs, members of Parliament, ministers, heads of state, ambassadors, UN rapporteurs, human rights bodies, and General Assembly representatives to hear women's demands

TRAINED

2,164+

women activists and grassroots leaders from 26 countries

FEATURED

121+

women's voices and agendas on mainstream media

MOBILIZED

100+

local and national organizations into networks in Mexico, Central America, Southern Africa and Southeast Asia

4 out 4

stars on Charity Navigator and Gold star on GuideStar for "transparency" and "accountability"

ANNUAL REPORT 2017

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WHO

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

WHAT

We equip, organize, and work alongside grassroots women activists and organizations on the **frontlines of crisis and change** (indigenous, rural, LGBTQ, young, and poor women) in Mesoamerica, Southern Africa, and Southeast Asia. Together, we catalyze and amplify solutions and strategies for addressing inequality and violence.

WHERE

We have in-depth programs in **Zimbabwe, Malawi, Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras, Indonesia, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Nicaragua**, while our work and network expand across 26 countries.



WHY

We aim to transform four areas of women's lives: **VOICE, RESOURCES, BODIES, AND SAFETY.** We see each of these as interconnected and an entry point for organizing, around which women press for rights, shape solutions, and address systemic problems of inequality, violence, and poverty. Below is our transformative vision of each:

 **Voice:** Women enjoy freedom of expression and the right to participate, have a voice and power in decisions that affect them both individually and collectively, and in personal and public arenas.

 **Resources:** Women have access to decent livelihoods and work/labor rights, environmental justice, and the right to sustainably use and protect their resources, territories, land, and water.

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

 **Safety:** Women are safe to be who they are in all aspects of their lives, have safety in their homes and the streets, and are able to exercise their rights and participate politically without facing violence.



Picture credit: Fungai Machirori



FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

If there is one thing we can say about this past year, it is that 2017 was the year of women. We were in the streets in dozens of countries – wearing pink hats, no less! We persisted. We reclaimed our time and we broke the silence. In large numbers – united by outrage at the raw, unchecked sexism and racism on display everywhere – we boldly crossed the line to open up difficult conversations in our families, with our friends, with politicians, and at work. Men and boys stood with us.

Hot off the press comes the news that **FEMINISM is the Merriam-Webster Word of the Year** – the most searched word on the virtual dictionary. Rather than dismiss the term as outdated or “man-hating,” many actually wanted to know what it means! As you know, **feminism is one of the many big ideas shaping JASS’ theory of change and practical strategies.** We work to ensure that grassroots feminist activists and agendas are at the heart of social justice struggles over land, water, climate, corruption, health care, and violence.

Nevertheless, **we still grapple with what feminism means in practice.** In 2013, **Beyoncé’s embrace of feminism** set the internet alight and kicked off a debate across the 26 countries of JASS’ network. Here is what I wrote with my colleague Adelaide Mazwarira – words that resonate today:



Beyoncé reminds us of something we believe deeply. That feminism is a perpetually unfinished idea and vision that has inspired and shaped some of the most profound changes in the world over the last three centuries (without ever firing a single shot), from the abolition of slavery to emotional intelligence, from contraception to the fact that domestic violence is a public crime. ... That this idea is not just about women and men, but about race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, ability, age and all the many ways that systems and beliefs construct privilege, power and discrimination. As bell hooks says, feminism is for everybody. From our sisters (and brothers) working on the frontline in communities with little resources to those with salaries and business cards, we all need to figure out how to make feminism a household word and embrace the contradictions that this implies.

In 2017, **#MeToo** reaffirmed the importance of JASS' core business in advancing this feminist vision:

strengthening the voice, visibility and collective power of women

#MeToo reminds us that, even for women and LGBTQ people with relative privilege, **voice is a process, not a destination, shaped by big political forces and by beliefs about whose truth counts.** To speak out about injustice or violence involves sorting through layers of fear, taboo, tradition, and what's "normal." Speaking out on sexual assault, for instance, or against illegal mining or corruption – where entrenched interests are aggressively controlling the narrative – **can threaten** one's place in a community, and mean humiliation and loss of family, work, and more. This is the essence of **crossing the line.**

JASS' "safe spaces" – workshops and dialogues involving political education and leadership development – **are crucial to unleashing women's voices.** Our experience shows that **one voice is courageous, but many voices are essential to make change.** Voice depends on visibility, which in





turn, **depends on collective power for impact and safety.** For real change in the mindsets, behaviors, and policies that marginalize and silence women, we need to organize continuously to make sure we have each other's backs. For real change in the mindsets, behaviors, and policies that marginalize and silence women, we need to organize continuously making sure we have each other's backs.

In 2017, here are some of the ways we amplified **women's voice, visibility, and collective power for justice:**

- To maximize visibility and power, we teamed up again with the **Nobel Women's Initiative** – including four Nobel Laureates – on a fact-finding delegation to Honduras and Guatemala to **hear from indigenous and rural women leading their**

communities to protect land, water, and forests against corrupt mining and extractive projects. We gathered dozens of powerful testimonies from women who face unspeakable violence by police and security forces. The delegation generated a lot of media buzz, including feature articles in **The Guardian, The Nation, and National Observer.** The delegation could not be timelier. Immediately afterward, we co-hosted a **Congressional Round Table** to share the findings of the **International Group of Expert Advisors (GAIPE)** from their yearlong **investigation** into the killing of Berta Cáceres. In an unprecedented lawsuit in Canadian courts, **11 indigenous Guatemalan women are suing a Canadian Mining Company** for gang rapes at the hands of mining security.

- JASS partnered with the Fund for Global Human Rights to bring our accumulated insights, tools, and analyses about how to sustain and **strengthen civic activism and women human rights defenders in hostile contexts** to a global conversation with human rights officials, leaders, and donors in Johannesburg. A key contribution to that discussion was our publication, ***Making Change Happen 6: Rethinking Protection, Power, and Movements***, about the importance of understanding and supporting women's leadership, and building movements to stay safe and strong in violent contexts.
- We collaborated extensively with many allies and **the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders** to influence other international human rights organizations to better understand and **promote gender, women's leadership, and collective protection strategies** for human rights activists, especially feminist, LGBTQ, indigenous, environmental, and labor rights activists. These activists are confronting the most entrenched forms of power controlling who counts, who gets what, and what matters.

Lastly, I was particularly proud to be included in a book of ***200 Women Who Will Change the Way You See the World***. It is an honor for me and for JASS to be featured with these incredible change makers. My own leadership depends on the bravery, generosity, wisdom, and love of so many others.



Thinking of Guatemalan indigenous women leaders standing up to police and a Canadian mining company puts any recognition in perspective and reminds us that **millions of women are joining together to cross the line for a better world. Together, we are more visible, powerful, and shaking things up.**

YOU are our collective power – as an essential part of our growing global community, **YOU** sustain and amplify us. Thanks again for all you do and for your support of our work.

Lisa VeneKlasen
Co-founder and Executive Director

WOMEN DEFENDING THE PLANET & LIFE

In Honduras and Guatemala, indigenous and rural women leading struggles to protect their land and rights face repression and smear campaigns. They are called *terrorists, bad mothers, whores, backward, and anti-development*. These tactics tap into existing prejudices and serve to isolate and silence opposition and undermine the legitimacy of human rights. Despite these obstacles, women are constructing new strategies for collective and community protection, while strengthening the social fabric necessary for community unity, safety, resilience, and resistance.



GUATEMALA: RURAL WOMEN'S FIGHT FOR LAND



You can join the meeting but you can't speak.

This is what a town mayor told Dalila De Jesús Vasquez and her fellow Madre Tierra members when they attended a meeting in their own community. It was not the first time men had tried to silence them and it probably will not be the last, but Madre Tierra members have refused to back down.

Dalila is one of the leaders of Madre Tierra (Mother Earth), an organization that advocates for rural and indigenous women's equal access to land in La Lupita community, a right that Guatemalan women have on paper but not always in practice. Many barriers stand in their way: a cultural norm that puts the purchase of land strictly in the male domain, pushback from leaders who refuse to take women's perspectives seriously, and the discrimination and harassment women activists face not only from civic authorities, but also from men within their own organizations and movements. In short, it is not easy for women land activists to break through the cacophony of misogyny and bureaucracy, but that is exactly what Dalila and Madre Tierra continue to do.



Women like Dalila are at the forefront of environmental justice efforts, leading the fight to protect their land from multinational companies whose projects in the name of “development” are destroying the livelihood and cultural foundation of communities. Instead of occupying a seat at the table, these activists face threats of violence and accusations of hampering development and stalling progress.

“*Rural, indigenous and peasant women are seen as ignorant, as if we don't know anything, so they [government officials] don't attend to us if we're not accompanied by a high profile person.*”

Dalila was one of the first 22 indigenous and rural women from Mesoamerica to participate in JASS' Alquimia feminist leadership school for rural, indigenous, and *mestiza* women activists in Mesoamerica. Alquimia strengthens resistance strategies and collaboration so that women activists and their community organizations are safer and more powerful in the face of violence. The initiative has provided workshops and follow-up accompaniment at community and national levels to strengthen individual and collective leadership and organizing strategies with a feminist lens.

“*Being able to share, get to know each other, and exchange ideas helps us ground ourselves in what we are, what we want, and what we're seeking to achieve. For me this is very important, being able to maintain that spiritual connection, that connection between each other without competition, but rather the contrary, complementing each other.*”

Alquimia methodology is grounded in the indigenous practices of women, supported by power analysis and feminist organizing tools and strategies to recognize the power, knowledge, and histories of those in the room. Drawing on their unique and shared experiences, participants dissect the power and violence operating in their lives—from inside communities and families, to the political, economic, and social realities of their countries and regions. The initiative has given birth to the Mesoamerican Indigenous, Rural, and Mestiza Women's Alliance, which supports its members and collaborates with JASS Mesoamerica on training and leadership support at country level. Its leadership training has been essential for strengthening activist networks and building collective action, and confirms the principle that self-care is an essential tool for collective political strategy.

MALAWI: OUR BODIES, OUR LIVES

HIV-positive women are boldly organizing for equal treatment and healthcare for themselves and all living with HIV in Malawi. Their campaign, *Our Bodies, Our Lives* (OBOL), took shape through JASS' ongoing feminist movement-building process and accompaniment with our partners – a progressive faith-based network, the Malawi Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV and AIDS, and the Coalition of Malawian Women Living with HIV/AIDS. This grassroots campaign upended stigma, lifted taboos about sex and sexuality, and reversed discriminatory treatment policies at the national level, placing HIV-positive women in the leadership of transformative health solutions for all. Today, the women of OBOL continue to be an unstoppable citizen force taking on land inheritance, LGBT rights, and fair treatment of sex workers.



MALAWI: CHALLENGING SEX AND SEXUALITY IN THE CHURCH

My name is Veronica Banda and I am a female pastor from Lilongwe, Malawi. I would like to share my story with the world, and hope it can inspire other women.

I am HIV+. I decided to share my story because I feel it is important for the church to have a voice and speak honestly about sex and sexuality issues. I am also coming from a background where women are not expected to take on roles as pastors. People in the church are very judgmental especially where HIV is concerned. In the church, all women who are found HIV+ are called names such as 'prostitute' and this is not right. As an HIV+ female pastor, I feel that it is important for me to be at the forefront of challenging taboos surrounding sex and sexuality, and fighting to ensure that we de-stigmatize HIV in our churches and in the communities.

I became a pastor because I felt that it was important to open up spaces for women to take on roles as pastors. I also wanted to amplify the voices and experiences of women using the pulpit, a platform that has been used to marginalize our existence.

The fact that HIV is mostly transmitted through sexual contact has made many pastors stigmatize people living with HIV. Thus, the church has not only been at the forefront of stigmatizing HIV, but it has also been preaching about "faith healing." We have seen many HIV + women stop their medication after being told



by their pastors that they could be healed through prayer and their faith. However, as a person living with HIV and a pastor, I know that the virus cannot be healed through faith. People need to take their medication in order to live longer.

I am really tired of people looking at HIV+ people as promiscuous and also being solely defined as HIV+, such that our lives just become about that. I want to be seen as Veronica and for the church to start respecting our lives and our health through how we preach. Our preaching should not chastise people. Instead, it should encourage them to take their medication, and to know their status.

When I came for the Malawi Northern Region Feminist Movement Builders School, I was sitting with a lot of things that I thought should never be spoken about. However, given the safe space that was created here, I found myself questioning how it is that I live in the "master's house?" I realized that I feed the system of the master's house in many ways, including my silence on issues that are affecting me.



Given this shift, my conviction to work with women to challenge sex and sexuality especially in the church was made even more concrete. Women's voices and actions are critical in ensuring that our lives are free from discrimination of any sort. I will carry this lesson and use it in my work as a pastor as I engage with the church, and above all to ensure that we keep the momentum of the **Our Bodies, Our Lives** campaign. I am a woman crossing the line by transgressing against social norms through talking about my status, my body, my life, and sex.

The Master's House is a popular education method initially designed by Koni Benson, Anna Davies-van Es, and Shereen Essof. It provides an image for understanding patriarchy, which JASS defines as "systemic and institutionalized male domination and the cultural, political, economic, and social structures and ideologies that perpetuate gender inequality and women's subordination." As a system, patriarchy works in tandem with other normative institutions such as religion, cultural beliefs, education, the state, and the media. Together, all these systems build the Master's House. As women, we live in this Master's House. Since women have grown up in this house, we have also internalized certain patriarchal thoughts.

SAFE SPACES AS POLITICAL SPACES

Safe space is a critical component of JASS' movement building work. We deliberately define *safe spaces* as political spaces for building common ground among diverse activists. When activists come together, they come with histories of trauma, stigma, and isolation. To build solidarity and collectively strategize about the risks and violence they face, they need safe spaces to break silences, feel connected, analyze power dynamics, and find common ground. Safe space is the foundation for political awareness, new organizing strategies, and the resilience that comes with strong solidarity and support.



INDONESIA: YOUNG WOMEN ORGANIZING FOR SOLIDARITY, POWER, & SAFETY

Forum Aktivistis Perempuan Muda-Indonesia (FAMM-Indonesia), also known as the Young Indonesian Women Activists' Forum, provides safe spaces to its 350 members who are LGBTI, Muslim, rural, and indigenous women. FAMM's strategies draw on JASS' power framework and feminist popular education facilitation methods to challenge social norms about sex, sexuality, and discrimination, while finding effective ways to influence decision makers. FAMM has turned the creation of safe spaces and mutual acceptance, trust, and "home" into a political strategy for collective power and safety. Centered on solidarity, FAMM members support each other through difficulties and crises.

To understand the importance of safe spaces from the perspective of the different contexts we work in, we interviewed Ajeng Herliyanti, FAMM's national coordinator.

How would you describe a safe space?

A safe space is not [just] a physical space. Sometimes, members just want to talk to someone. That is what we provide, a listening ear. Sometimes, we maintain safe spaces through virtual communication. Safe spaces also provide a venue for women to pause, reflect, and recharge.

Why are safe spaces important?

Safe spaces enable young women activists to reflect on their work. In a safe space, all the physical, emotional, and spiritual baggage is unloaded. We

deal with the burn out that members experience. A safe space can be a room for young women to get rest, to flesh out their feelings, and to reflect on their own thoughts and fears. This is a room where members of FAMM need to pass before they get ready to work again.

What value do safe spaces bring to women's lives?

Safe spaces bring nurture, nature, love, kindness, acceptance, inclusivity, diversity, and letting go of all excess baggage. Trust, understanding, acceptance, and the relation between one another, which is essential for them to understand their work better and put it in alignment with their feminist realities.

How do FAMM members integrate safe spaces into their work and activism?

To continue to connect the individual activist to the larger movement, FAMM initiates safe spaces as a platform for their members to reflect on and make their work more relevant, especially with the current changing contexts in Indonesia. In our experience, each FAMM member is facing a different problem; each is facing a different attack. That is why there is no magic bullet or single solution to what our responses should be for women activists. Many FAMM members have more responsibilities and face more challenges in their work and activism, so we really need to create different ways to accompany them.

What advice do you have for women activists around the world?

We need more voices of women, especially young women from the grassroots, to be heard. I encourage all women to live bravely, to advocate for themselves, to connect with themselves, to express their realness, and to assert and fight for what they want.

TRANSFORMATIVE TOOLS FOR THE TIMES

The times call for bold and creative strategies. Drawing on JASS' long standing work with women in many countries, we created *We Rise: Movement Building Reimagined*. *We Rise* is a dynamic and accessible online resource that features IDEAS – TOOLS – STORIES for movement builders everywhere and anywhere.



Picture credit: Allison Shelley

ORGANIZING VS MOBILIZING?

This year has been **one of outrage and inspiration with extraordinary mobilizations** against injustice all over the world. **Women are leading this movement moment** – holding the line against further restrictions on basic rights and freedoms, while bringing new thinking and solutions to the world’s most pressing problems. Although the level of protest is hopeful, how do we transform “movement moments” into sustained organizing that can bring about the change we need? Below is an excerpt on organizing and mobilizing from **We Rise**.

“ *People often confuse organizing and mobilizing, rather than understanding them as two interdependent elements of movement building.* ”

Organizing means finding common ground through dialogue and collective analysis and leadership, and is an essential component of anchoring a change strategy with the people most affected by a set of issues. **Mobilizing** refers to sets of actions taken to garner attention and to pressure for change.

For JASS, organizing efforts begin with women-only spaces where women come together to



build relationships, solidarity, a shared contextual analysis, and an understanding of how power operates in their lives. Women begin to recognize how negative forms of power, such as restrictive policies and norms, affect their lives. In the same vein, they also begin to step into their power by understanding that they are worthy and valuable, and that their voices and experiences matter. This consciousness-raising process builds their confidence and gives them a new lens with which to examine their lives—not as victims, but as people with the capacity to lead and mobilize for change.



Organizing isn't rocket science, but it is a serious skill and a craft. We have to build an army of people in the field who can actually contend with capital on the local level. ... A good organizing conversation [is] 70% listening and 30% talking. ... The framework of the conversation is so important. People have to engage in self-discovery through face-to-face conversation. It is not Facebooking, it is not tweeting ... those are mobilizing tools. Organizing tools and an organizing conversation are literally about a process of self-discovery. People begin to systematize and analyze what is going wrong in their life. So it is people's own experience, moving toward something broader, that can then bring them out together.”— Jane MacAlvey and Michael R, Jacobin. “The Big Difference Between Organizing and Mobilizing: How Unions Can Win in the Future” Alternet, October 21, 2015.

RISE UP

Critical Awareness and
Common Ground

SHAKE UP

Strategies, Solutions and
Sustained impact



BUILD UP

Shared Issues, Organisation
and Leadership

STAND UP

Mobilization, Alliances
and Action



THANK YOU

- Dialogue and Dissent, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ford Foundation
- Novo Foundation
- Oak Foundation
- Foundation for a Just Society
- Open Society Foundations
- Comic Relief
- Sigrid Rausing Trust
- Fund for Global Human Rights
- Channel Foundation
- Overbrook Foundation
- Angelica Fund of Tides Foundation
- General Service Foundation
- Afrika Groups of Sweden
- Fundación Fondo Centroamericana de Mujeres (FCAM)
- Global Fund for Women
- Calala, Fondo de Mujeres
- Inter-American Foundation
- Heinrich Boll Foundation

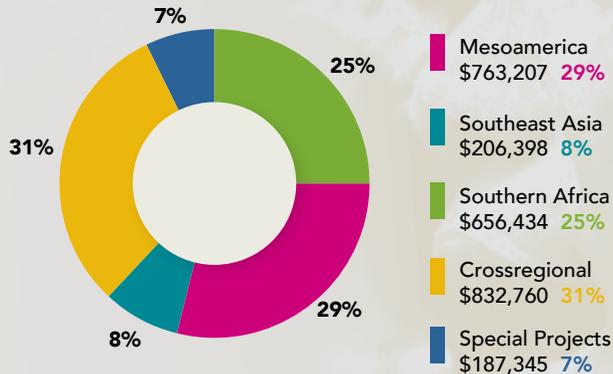
We would also like to thank many other friends and supporters who generously give donations and share their time and connections including our growing circles of solidarity in Santa Fe and New York.

FINANCIALS 2017

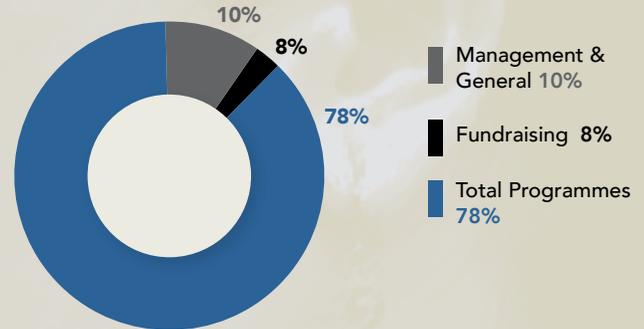
TOTAL EXPENSES FOR 2017

US \$3,060,489

2017 TOTAL EXPENSES BY REGION



2017 TOTAL EXPENSES



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Mattison Johnston
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Ryane Sloan
Gwen Wilson
Brittany Alexander

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COVER PICTURE DESCRIPTION

The cover photograph was taken during the One Billion Rising (OBR) held on February 14, 2017 in Manila, Philippines. One of JASS' allies in the Philippines, GABRIELA, a national alliance of women's organizations, led the OBR across the country with this year's theme: Rise, Resist, Unite! Women from different sectors, including Lumad indigenous women from Mindanao under the BAI Indigenous Women's Network, participated in the OBR to amplify their calls to stop militarization in their communities and to end land and resource grabbing by local and foreign private corporations. Indigenous women suffer extreme poverty aggravated by the militarization brought about by land and resource grabbing. Widespread displacement, harassment, and criminalization of indigenous leaders, and extra-judicial killings of environment defenders led indigenous women from BAI to join and rise for solidarity against state-instigated abuses and attacks on women. BAI's calls include: end martial law in Mindanao, stop plunder and tyranny, stop the killings of indigenous peoples, save indigenous peoples' schools, and respect indigenous peoples' rights to land, life, resources, and self-determination.

“

JASS is an organization that really means 'movement' when they say movement. I see the diversity of the women that they engage, across social classes but many showing the strength of leadership in communities framed by multiple oppressions – but resisting them fearlessly. To me, JASS is keeping to an activist ethic in an era when quite a bit of work on gender equality and with women does not really point out or work to transform systemic power relations.” – JASS Ally

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