

Building Power:

Women. Organizing. Change.



Who

JASS is a feminist movement support organization dedicated to building the voice, visibility, and collective power of women for a just and sustainable world for all.

What

We equip and strengthen the leadership and organizing capacity of women leaders and their organizations in Mesoamerica, Southeast Asia, and Southern Africa.

Why

We strengthen women's organizing strategies to transform the systems, structures, and beliefs that perpetuate inequality and violence in four areas of their lives: Bodies, Voice, Resources and Safety.

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A note from Shereen

While 2021 was tumultuous, unpredictable, and challenging, it was not all ugly. It is times like these that have a way of showing us *who we are, who we can be*, and igniting hope and new avenues for change that catalyze us into action.

We stepped into 2021 energized and emboldened by the sense of the moment and a global mandate too loud to ignore: transform the world! The mandate itself is not new, of course, but it confirmed in no uncertain terms the urgency of feminist movement building (FMB) as a critical pathway to addressing the world's most pressing problems: bringing people together to surface shared problems, strategize on solutions, and act in pursuit of common agendas. FMB is the core of JASS' work. In particular, JASS invests in strengthening the movement leadership and collective power of women, LGBTQI people, and those most marginalized because of class, race, ethnicity, location, and age, among others, because we know a better world for those most oppressed means a better world for everyone.

Over time, FMB connects and strengthens groups of people, whose collaboration fosters skilled activist leadership, organized capacity for sustained action, and the building of movement infrastructure. These kinds of interconnected relationships and shared political commitments are the bedrock of activating collective power. This approach to movement building is not



“

Sometimes we drug ourselves with dreams of new ideas. The head will save us. The brain alone will set us free. But there are no new ideas waiting in the wings to save us as women, as human. There are only old and forgotten ones, new combinations, extrapolations and recognitions from within ourselves – along with the renewed courage to try them out.”

**Audre Lorde,
Poetry is not a Luxury**



formulaic; it is guided by movement agendas and goals. These are navigated based on a close read of complex power dynamics in a context, of the shocks and slides that come with challenges and opportunities, and an assessment of the strategies and tactics that meet political opportunity to best enable movements to challenge existing power, while nurturing, fueling, and igniting their own for movement wins. The agility baked into this approach helps prepare and position movements to advance their agendas day to day and boldly rise to challenges during crises. It is this ongoing movement building work that lays the foundation for strong and sustained movement organizing that transforms not just policies, but hearts and minds.

This is long, careful, and hard work. Work that is necessary for our full liberation, and an equitable and more just world. There are no shortcuts. In this Annual Report, we want to make some of the elements of FMB work visible, as it is some of these investments and building blocks that create the necessary conditions and capacities for transformative change.

Lorde's words ring true: "there are no new ideas, only old and forgotten ones, new combinations, extrapolations and recognitions [... and] renewed courage to try them out." As always, thank you for all the ways you are a part of our work. We hope that together we continue to make change happen.

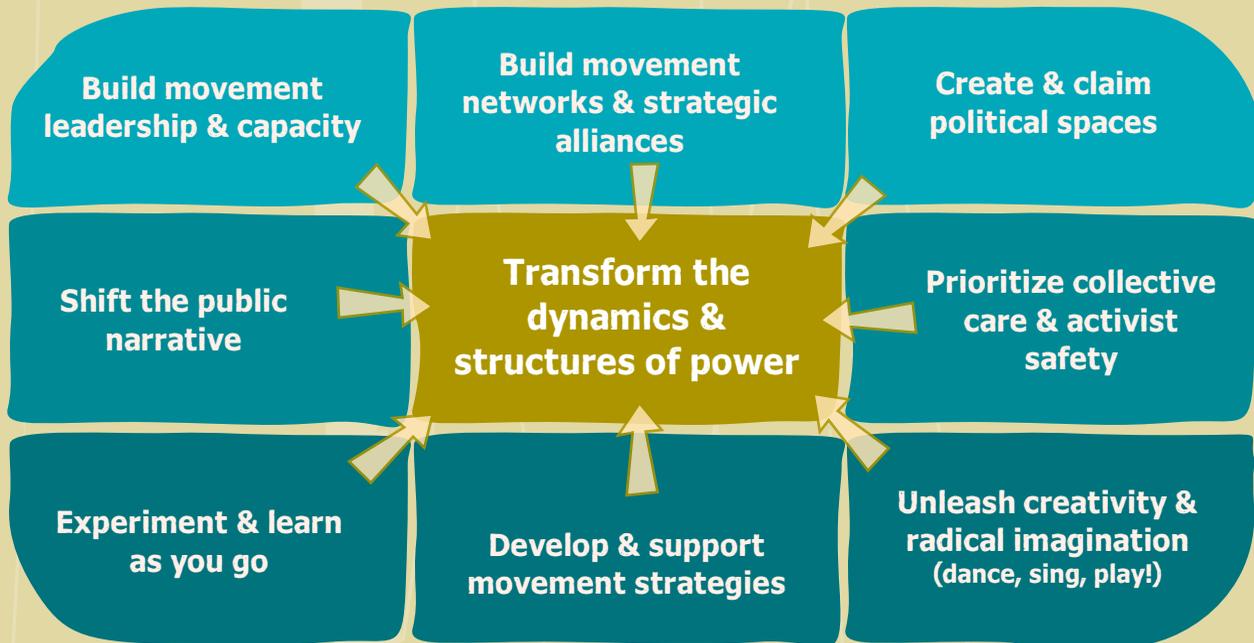
Shereen Essof
Executive Director

FMB building blocks for transformative change

There are many ingredients that need to come together to make change happen. In this report, we spotlight our approaches, strategies, and tactics through four stories.

In our virtual toolkit, [We Rise: Movement Building Reimagined](#), we describe in detail four interconnected cycles of movement building – Rising Up, Building Up, Standing Up, and Shaking Up. At the heart of these cycles lies an analysis

of how to challenge and transform power. Each cycle features key ideas, relevant tools, and practical tips from our work and activists in our network that movement builders around the world can learn from and adapt in their own work.



A woman with glasses, wearing a pink short-sleeved shirt and a blue patterned skirt, is shouting into a white and green megaphone. She is holding a clear plastic bag containing a yellow substance. The background shows other people, some wearing face masks, suggesting a public gathering or protest.

Seizing a political moment to demand democracy

When the military launched a coup in Myanmar in February 2021, thousands of people across ethnic divides and sectors filled the streets in protest, showing their outrage through civil disobedience and creative resistance strategies such as songs, chants, and performance art. Women were at the helm of street and virtual actions, mobilizing many in a bold and united resistance over many months, much greater than the military junta anticipated. The monumental scale and depth of these protests did not come out of nowhere. In this story, we share JASS' contributions that created the conditions that made it possible for women to rise up.

“ I bang pots and pans, [and] never thought I would become a safety guard, but I am. The age of fear is over...We formed civilian night guards at wards to protect ourselves from armed forces. Brave women are night angels. We won't sleep until we gain democracy...”

Woman activist, Myanmar

Building political trust

Since 2011, JASS Southeast Asia has contributed to strengthening the movement leadership and network-building between Indigenous women, women garment workers, and trade unionists in Myanmar. This long-term accompaniment has helped catalyze under-the-radar organizing and strategies for change. Kunthea Chan, co-director of JASS Southeast Asia explains why building political trust is the cornerstone for strong relationships and alliances that enable effective responses in times of need: *“After the coup happened, the way that JASS connected with our partners and responded quickly to that emergency was critical and supportive. The connections that we have built with our partners is deeply personal and deeply political, and that is what shapes our feminist movement building work. We cry with them; we work at 2 or 3am if needed. So, when things happen, it’s this trust that enables us to respond and support partners quickly to navigate sensitive and risky contexts.”*

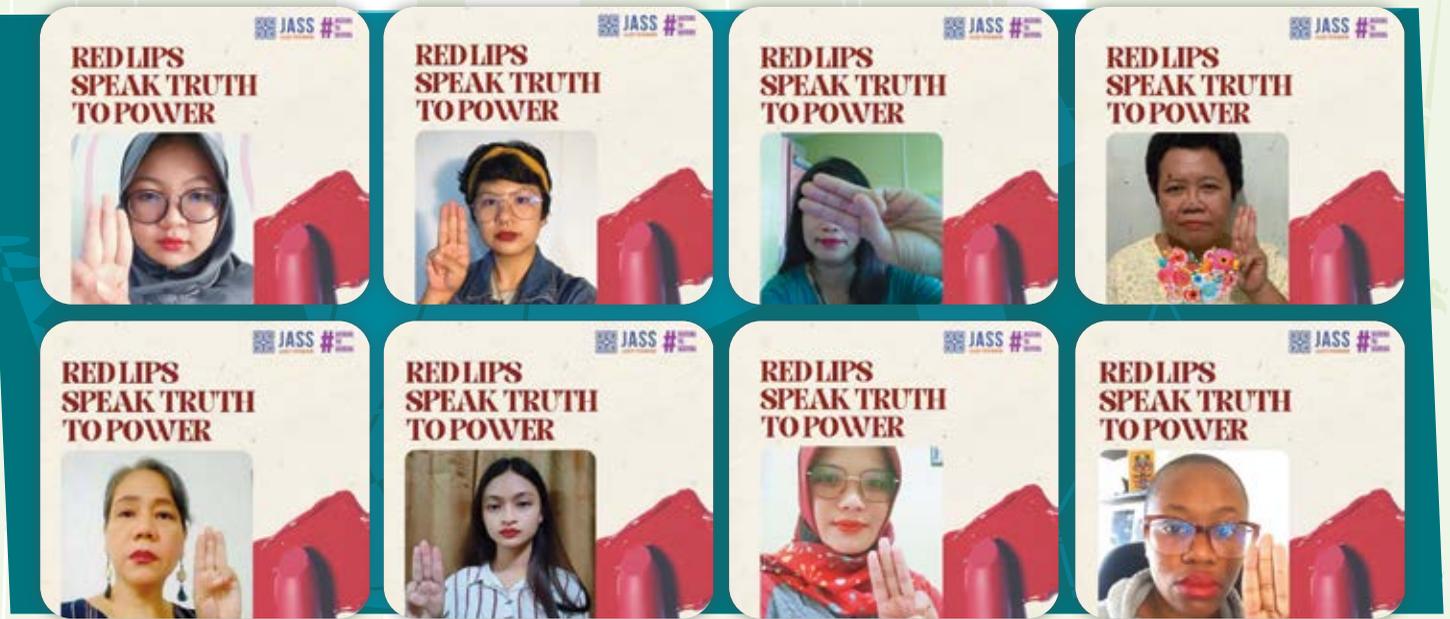
Supporting practical and strategic needs

As the dissent got louder, the military viciously cracked down on various fronts including shutting down communication and arresting thousands and killing hundreds. JASS helped to sustain the leadership, participation, and safety of our partners by providing funds to cover essentials and emerging needs through our Mobilization Fund. We also created safe spaces to support women’s individual and collective care and wellbeing and to re-energize their spirits.



A Feminist Response to Crisis

The Mobilization Fund is a part of our movement building work to support women’s leadership and safety. During crises, the Fund plays a critical role in sustaining and sometimes activating new rounds of organizing by women in a way that is responsive to their contexts and needs.



Claiming voice and political spaces

Cultivating regional and international solidarity proved central in raising awareness to the situation in Myanmar and activating broad solidarity in support of the resistance to the coup. Taking direction from women on the ground, JASS gathered over 100 organizational signatures in a global statement to amplify their demands. We leveraged our global positioning to support women activists from Myanmar in bringing their demands to global advocacy spaces such as the Generation Equality Forum in Mexico City and the Human Rights Council in Geneva. We also organized dialogues in which women shared their concerns and demands directly with several UN special rapporteurs (UNSR), including the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in

Myanmar, Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, and the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism.

Throughout the year, we co-led a social media campaign, [Red Lips Speak Truth to Power](#), with Sisters to Sisters Alliance that mobilized many to post a picture online wearing red lipstick and doing the three-finger salute to raise awareness, exert global pressure, and garner support and solidarity. Along with this, we also joined the call to stop the political harassment of labor activists like Ma Myo Aye, a long-time ally of JASS. Ma Myo Aye was arrested in April 2021 and spent six months in jail, with 45 days in solitary confinement. She was released in October 2021 as a result of the global solidarity efforts and unceasing pressure organized locally.

Imagining a better democracy for everyone

At the core of the fight for democracy in Myanmar is the more fundamental drive to shift and transform power dynamics that have enabled violence, ethnic divisions, marginalization, and inequality for decades. The people, women, LGBTQIA+, and youth are organizing beyond the coup into the future, for a real democracy, by calling for the amendment of the Myanmar constitution to remove military power. Their ways of organizing and building the mass movement demonstrates an understanding that democracy does not come from one person, or one political party, but from people's collective power.

“When I was young, I just cheered for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. She would be in power, and that's what we wanted to see because we were looking at democracy not as a system, not as a collective thing, but more like a person. Having that person in power meant we lived in a democratic country. No, that was clearly the wrong idea, and I think people are starting to realize that. We are sick of personality-based politics and personality cults.”

Young feminist, Myanmar



Building a cross-cutting agenda for collective action



On March 29, JASS Southern Africa gathered women (both virtually and in person) from across the region, leading different struggles – access to public services and safety (Zimbabwe), economic security and healthcare (Malawi), and environmental justice (South Africa) – to discuss the common roots of their problems: structural violence and its manifestations in their lives. The gathering was a culmination of several years of working with women to understand the deeper structural nature of the daily inequities they face and how they constitute forms of violence. This shared analysis became the ground from which the women began to build an organizing agenda for collective action that is linked across their different contexts.

Structural violence

...is a systemic form of violence that deprives people, especially Black, Brown, Indigenous, HIV+, and LGBTQI people of the ability to live with full dignity. These communities are structurally disadvantaged based on gender, race, class, sexuality, and other forms of discriminations.



Women are experts of their lives and worlds

In 2020, JASS Southern Africa launched a feminist participatory action research (FPAR)-based movement building strategy. This was a process in which women activist leaders used a power analysis to collectively investigate instances of structural violence in their lives in order to use the data gathered as the basis for new organizing strategies on food and economic security. In 2021, JASS worked with community-based women leaders to shape this movement building approach to ensure they are recognized as the most knowledgeable about their lives and that FPAR skills, including data collection, fed their analysis and action steps.

“ For me, one of the things that stands out from our work in 2021, was the ability to link women dealing with gender-based violence (GBV) to think much more broadly about violence beyond its physical forms such as domestic violence. Through the individual FPAR processes in Zimbabwe, Malawi, and South Africa, we produced new levels of analysis and connections among women across issues whether it was communities defending land against mining companies or state-sponsored violence. It's ongoing and slow work.”

Phumi Mtetwa, JASS South Africa
Regional Director

Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, JASS conducted FPAR training for women as researchers and data collectors on structural violence in mining-affected communities. These sessions helped build their skills and confidence to claim their agency, tell their own stories, and explore more deeply the power dynamics that sow divisions, conflict, and diminish their ability to collectively organize against mining companies.

“If we do not write these stories, we are going to disappear from the history of Marange, and we know dubious characters are going to rewrite our stories from how we see things and distort the history of our struggles. We are talking about FPAR and mobilizing women to come together and write our stories about us.”

Activist researcher, Zimbabwe

Powered by these processes, women research activists from the Binga District in Zimbabwe challenged the government's decision to grant coal mining licenses on their land. They pushed back against proposed coal mining projects, including the Sengwa Coal Power Plant. Construction of the coal power plant would have required a 254 km water pipeline, which would



displace families and destroy the area's natural habitat. Women openly opposed the government and the investor, RioZim, and withheld their consent for access to their communal land. Despite the government responding with arrests and surveillance to instill fear and silence voices, the Binga community continues to defend their land and natural resources.

Malawi

In Malawi, the 9,800 women-strong *Our Bodies, Our Lives* (OBOL) movement's FPAR processes surfaced unequal land ownership, society's normalization of violence, and stigmatization of sex workers as manifestations of structural violence. Women researchers collected information from women in six districts (Lilongwe, Ntchisi, Neno, Blantyre, Nkhata Bay, and Rumphi), reporting their data using an online application called Kobo.

“After attending one of the workshops organized by JASS with the Malawi Economic Justice Networks on land ownership, I decided to engage with chiefs in my community. After several negotiations, my six sisters and I inherited back the land we lost from our relatives when my mother passed away in 2004.”

Cetrude Mgawi, Malawi



South Africa

In South Africa, FPAR helped women in Shayisfuba, a network of feminist women and non-binary people who are mobilizing to build a national feminist movement, to recognize the importance of women's political participation and voice in decision-making spaces.

“We need to go beyond merely speaking about concepts related to systems of oppression, and rather, incorporate into our activism and organizing strategies that challenge power in a way that not only argues for the alternative, because we certainly have answers, but also in a way that puts us directly in position to execute the decisions and movement demands we put on the table.”

Innocentia Lukhele, Shayisfuba

JASS will continue to expand FPAR processes to build women's voice, power, and leadership to broaden traditional understandings of gender-based violence and develop long-term solutions to ending violence in its multiple forms.

Protecting land, life and our future



From direct action to international advocacy, women land defenders are using a wide variety of strategies and tactics to expose and stop extractive development in their territories and propose life sustaining alternatives. With their ways of life and the generations to come at stake, protecting land and life is the only option. Women are defending natural environments that are vital to the nourishment of humanity, and that ensure planetary survival from pollution, resource depletion, destruction of biodiversity, and other drivers of climate change. Women land defenders remind us of the urgent need to stop these attacks and rethink the economics of extraction because it will determine the future of us all.¹

Since 2010, JASS Mesoamerica has developed and sustained Alquimia, a feminist leadership school for rural, indigenous, and mestiza women activists. These regional and national schools support strengthened resistance strategies and deeper collaboration that enable women to be more powerful leaders in their movements and safer in their defense of land and territory.

1. Adapted excerpt from, Women Defenders of Land and Territory: Challenging Extractive "Development" by Laura Carlsen and Adelaide Mazwarira published in Policy Matters 22: Special Issue on Environmental Defenders.

Developing stronger leadership and influence

Alquimia's innovation stems from its emphasis on the unlearning and re-learning necessary to build leadership centered in feminist and indigenous knowledge and in building solidarity among women from many communities. JASS' power framework enables women to develop a sharper contextual analysis, while our feminist organizing tools equip their leadership and organizing strategies, including approaches to risk.

In 2021, building on the organizing insights from #JusticeforBerta by our ally COPINH (Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras), JASS and our Count Me In! Consortium partners produced a toolkit, *Behind the Scenes of Extractives: Money, Power, & Community Resistance*. The toolkit was based on several years of research on the financing and enabling of extractives, a key concern of our land defender allies. The research revealed just how difficult it is to track those responsible for extractive projects – public and private investors and state agencies – and also how vital this knowledge is for communities as a source of political leverage for accountability. The toolkit is designed to support women land defenders in better identifying the drivers and actors behind extractive projects and levers of power and influence to strengthen their resistance, advocacy, and organizing.

Additionally, JASS' strategic support includes local to global advocacy efforts – sharing these movement



resources with a wider activist audience, helping bring visibility to movement agendas and demands in key spaces, exposing and pressuring powerful interests that threaten land and livelihoods, and amplifying community solutions.

“When I think of 2021, the most striking thing was how the context has been increasingly violent, but also how movements, particularly with cross-border solidarity, have enabled an increased capacity to navigate hostility and mobilize urgent responses for human right defenders at risk. Last year, we leveraged regional and international platforms to connect women activists to strategic institutions and organizations in order to forward their demands informed by their lived realities – needs and demands that are often watered down.”

**Zephania Repollo, JASS Southeast Asia,
Regional Co-director**



During 2021, JASS leveraged key advocacy spaces to bring women together from different countries facing similar struggles with extractives to share their experiences in the context of sharing our toolkit and other knowledge publications. These kinds of gatherings serve multiple purposes. They strengthen leadership, enable women to speak to the issues affecting their lives, forge shared analysis, and create opportunities for greater transnational solidarity and collective strategizing. Below we share some examples of this work.

At the 65th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), we launched the Extractives toolkit in an interactive workshop, “Follow the Money: Activist Tools for Challenging Extractives.” The workshop gathered women activist leaders from Honduras, Zimbabwe, and the Philippines who discussed how the toolkit can strengthen their strategies and enhance solidarity for challenging extractives.

“**Be vigilant. It’s always in moments of chaos and social fracture that extractive projects are inserted into communities. We saw it during the coup d’etat and recently during the pandemic. Creating alliances and solidarity with communities and organizations who are part of the same struggle is also important.”**

Laura Zuniga, land defender, COPINH member and daughter of Berta Caceres, Honduras



Over the course of 2021, JASS launched the toolkit in our movement building schools in Indonesia (translated in Bahasa) and South Africa using this opportunity to build connections among women land defenders in different contexts given their common challenges, and to look for ways that collaboration can strengthen their strategies and increase their visibility.

Because women leaders, and land defenders specifically, face unique and intense forms of gender-based violence and backlash in reprisal of their activism, JASS integrates activist safety in all movement strategies that increase women's power and voice. Through our ongoing initiative, [**Defending Rights in Hostile Contexts: Power and Protection**](#), we host dialogues among funders, human rights organizations, and frontline activists that bring attention to the limitations of conventional approaches to activist safety and closing civic space, and promote support for community and collective strategies for safety.

For instance, in May, JASS and the Fund for Global Human Rights co-hosted a webinar to launch an in-depth article, [**Collective Protection to Defend Territory; Defense of Territory to Protect Life**](#)," authored by Lolita Chávez Ixcaquic and Marusia López Cruz. The webinar, which featured the article's authors, women land defenders, and human rights advocates, highlighted the innovative community strategies being created by women on the ground and the importance of integrating collective strategies for protection that keep women safe and strong.

“ Protection goes hand in hand with the consolidation of models of coexistence and resistance that reject violence and focus on the care and protection of the entire web of life.”

Building the next tiers of leadership

To grow in power, movements need to grow in numbers and leadership. Alquimia has responded to this need, as well as to the realities of COVID by offering a new and virtual, “Feminist Political Facilitators Course,” with groups of women defenders from Guatemala and Honduras. In 2021, the course focused on developing a cadre of movement facilitators who would graduate with enhanced skills including using ICTs (Information and communications technologies) designing feminist popular education methodologies, and addressing conflict. The facilitators took this knowledge back to their communities and movements to train other women, which will over time radiate out to support more and stronger leaders, deeper and wider alliances across communities, growing the collective power necessary to sustain their struggles to protect land and life.

The Regional Director of JASS Mesoamerica, Patricia Ardón, explains why the schools continue to anchor women’s organizing in the region: *“Mesoamerica’s Alquimia Feminist Leadership School received a lot of recognition last year. Despite the pandemic, there has been an incredible interest by women activists to continue to take part in Alquimia processes which we adapted to the virtual realm. Respect, inclusivity, and feminist popular education are at the heart of what we do. And, we have made a new jump.*

As a continuation to our leadership course, we have started to train political facilitators. These new courses do not just center on building women’s leadership capacity but center their capacity to be facilitators for change from and within their own territories.”

“ 28 women graduated from the second round of Alquimia in Honduras with accreditation conferred by Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (UNAH), and 30 women graduated from Alquimia’s first leadership course in Guatemala.





spotlight

Influencing thinking and action on bolder resourcing from a movement perspective

JASS participated in the 2021 EDGE Annual Donor Conference in October themed, “Building Collective Power for Change” alongside over 300 progressive donors, movement activists, and allies.

We saw this as a critical space and opportunity to influence thinking on bolder and more holistic resourcing of feminist movements on the frontlines from a FMB perspective. JASS brought together seven Black and Brown women leaders in the philanthropic sector in a conversation focused on “Movement lessons for Strategic Resourcing.” The candid conversation surfaced [vital and provocative insights](#) that push funders to shift their practices by taking the lead from movements because they are on the cutting-edge of the solutions and innovations needed to realize transformative change.

“What’s needed is a much more honest conversation about who we are, how we are positioned and how we show up in a configuration that allows us to do something together – drive a big, shared agenda for structural transformative change. At its heart is a conversation about power, trust, and a commitment to political principles of redress, putting those who are the most marginalized in every respect at the center of agenda-setting and solution-making.”

Shereen Essof,
JASS Executive Director

You Add, We Multiply

JASS MOBILIZATION FUND DISBURSED A TOTAL OF

\$223,562.61

**SUPPORTED 109
MOVEMENT ALLIES**

& frontline activists with flexible resources

**EQUIPPED 7,098 COMMUNITY &
FRONTLINE ACTIVISTS' LEADERSHIP**

...through over **80** capacity building and feminist popular education workshops, **49** alliance building meetings and exchanges and **3** Feminist Participatory Action Research processes reaching **3,797** people in Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Indonesia.

**AMPLIFIED WOMEN'S IDEAS,
AGENDAS, & ACTION**

...through **26** regional and crossregional dialogues, **3** radio programmes in Mexico, Honduras, and Malawi, **5** solidarity statements and **7** communications campaigns.

**ENGAGED 2,597 DECISION
MAKERS TO HEAR WOMEN'S
DEMANDS**

...through advocacy with a range of actors from village chiefs and religious leaders to government representatives and UN officials.

**DOCUMENTED ACTIVIST INSIGHTS TO
INFORM THINKING AND DECISIONS
ON CRITICAL ISSUES**

...through **3** methodological guides and publishing of **7** influential knowledge pieces including on extractivism and land defenders, self-care and collective protection, and strategic resourcing to better support movements.

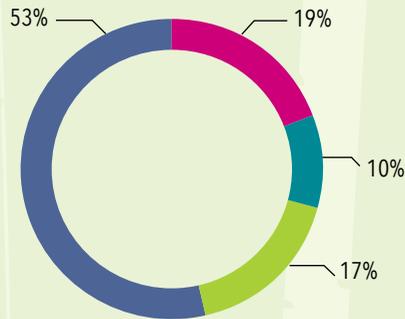
Financials

TOTAL INCOME

US \$4,343,292

TOTAL EXPENSES

US \$6,185,040*



TOTAL PROGRAMS

USD 5,436,010

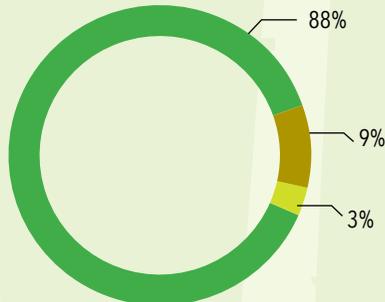
- Mesoamerica 19%
- Southeast Asia 10%
- Southern Africa 17%
- Crossregional 53%

USD \$1,250,282

USD \$1,087,202

USD \$1,141,562

USD \$1,956,964 **



TOTAL EXPENSES PER AREA

USD \$6,185,040

- Administration 9%
- Fundraising 3%
- Total Programs 88%

USD \$553,898

USD \$195,132

USD \$5,436,010

* Financials are based on JASS' 2021 audit. The Income figure represents revenue raised during 2021, but does not capture the annual allocation of multi-year grants, amounts that were fully recognized when the grants were signed.

** This expense includes disbursements of up to \$1,300,000 USD to our partners under our [Power Up! Consortium](#)

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- Urgent Action Fund
- Spotlight Initiative
- The Overbrook Foundation
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- Roy A. Hunt Foundation
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
- International Development Research Centre
- Blackbird
- Africa Groups of Sweden (AGS/ Afrikagrupperna)



Thank you to our donor community

It takes many different kinds of resources to sustain and advance feminist movements, funding for movement building work being one critical component. We honor and appreciate all of our donors – individuals, foundations, and government institutions – who make up this essential part of JASS’ ecosystem.

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