



JASS

*Strengthening & sustaining
women's organizing power*

Action in Malawi

The JASS Movement Building process continues to grow from strength to strength in Malawi as grassroots leaders shared their recent achievements in putting their political skills into practice.

Women Leaders in Action

Following an earthquake in December, Caroline and Margaret have focused their time in establishing themselves and families. NAPHAM will provide support in February and March 2010 for them to raise awareness on uKupimbira (a **harmful cultural practice that forces young girls to marry, drop out of school and be exposed to HIV/AIDS**). Currently, DFID provides their support group with transport to go for CD4 cell count testing and funds meetings where they plan to lobby women.

Tiwonge mobilized women through the Women's Forum and Coalition of Women Farmers, with the support of ActionAid, to meet with the chief and discuss **land ownership rights for women**. The chiefs agreed to allocate land to women and in December two women had already been allocated land. She also organized 40 women to attend training on land ownership rights and on the **Prevention of Domestic Violence Against Women Act, supported by ActionAid**.

Judith and Lillian set up a meeting on 12 January 2010 with the District Health Office **to demand mobile clinics to ensure that ART and other treatments reach people living with HIV**. As a result, two mobile clinics had already been allocated by 20 January, to serve the most needy areas (Kafukule and Mphelemve), with two further mobile clinics promised for August 2010.

Violet and other girls from the Girls' Coalition visited a number of schools to sensitize girls about their rights and to encourage **young girls to remain in schools**. The context: soldiers from a nearby army camp offer to **pay school fees for girls in exchange for sex**, then leave the girls when they fall pregnant and move on to other girls. This behavior encourages school dropout and risk of HIV transmission. Similarly, truck drivers encourage many young girls to drop out of school and leave Malawi for a better life in Tanzania and elsewhere. As a result many **girls are trafficked** this way. In the poverty-stricken area near a third school, parents encourage their girl children to **drop out of school** to sell mandasi/zi and kasava to earn a living for the family.

Criesse has visited five villages including schools to discuss the spread of **HIV and the link to harmful cultural practices such as chokolo (wife grabbing)**, with the support of the Women's Forum and COWHLA members.

Essenat has had difficulty implementing her plans due to funding and lack of support from her organization, but intends to organize meetings in March to **sensitize chiefs about stigma, violence and the impact of HIV/AIDS on women**.

Linnah and Jusinta met with two groups of 16 and 21 people each who have already started growing a herb garden, as a mother garden from which to establish others. They have established a committee which is facilitating **negotiations with the chief to get land for the nutrition program**.