



JASS

Strengthening and sustaining women's organizing power

Women's Movement Building in Malawi

JASS Southern Africa is building the leadership and organizing capacity of Malawian women to pressure local and national government to make development resources accessible and to deliver on laws that support women and HIV-positive people. By organizing the power of their numbers, women can make their voices heard in order to confront stigma, increase access to healthcare, and improve basic livelihoods.

Victoria, a teacher by profession, has been using the JASS training to 'disorganize' her church, demanding to talk about HIV and AIDS, thus ending the culture of silence and stigma. Asnat went to see the District Commissioner and demanded that seed coupons be given to HIV+ women. Lillian 'crossed the line' (her words) by fighting for mobile clinics to provide ARVs for adults and children on the same day to save women multiple journeys each week. Petite Doreen used her new leadership skills to lobby the seed company to supply women living with HIV/AIDS.

Malawian women leaders, nine months after their first JASS workshops



Needs Assessment

JASS' first step was to travel through Malawi in 2008 to discuss the needs and problems of women, especially those living with HIV/AIDS. Women said that they need access to fertilizer, land, credit and good healthcare. They talked about the pain and shame of HIV/AIDS stigma and the violence they experience. They were frank about what they had to do to feed their families. The JASS team (Hope Chigudu, Azola Goqwana, Shamillah Wilson) consulted many organizations, including the Malawi Network of Religious Leaders Living with HIV/AIDS (MANERELA+), Coalition of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (COWLHA), Malawi Network of Positive People (MANET+), NAPHAM, Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR), ActionAid International (Malawi) and Oxfam GB.

Women know (for example) that the government funds micro-credit for women and youth. But to gain access to this money, women must agree to very difficult repayment conditions. Instead of helping women build sustainable small businesses, this system leads families into bad debt. The women in the workshop want to take up this agenda in their own organizations and then with local government leaders.



