

MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

Power-Movements-Change: Malawi

Editions 3 and 4 of *Making Change Happen* are dedicated to the examination of the complexities of power and opportunities for constructing and transforming power. No. 3 (2006) looks at concepts and ways of understanding power while No. 4 focuses on putting power back into empowerment and rights strategies with a focus on what developing activist leaders, organising and movement-building look like in practice. This initial version of *Making Change Happen 4* focuses on Malawi, but case studies from Guatemala and Indonesia, as well as additional conceptual resources, will be added in 2014.

Making Change Happen is a series of short publications about the ideas and strategies shaping social justice and women's rights work produced by Just Associates (JASS) in collaboration with various partners. Editions 1 (2003) and 2 (2006; reprinted 2008) were produced with the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) and Action Aid International. Edition 3 was produced with Hivos (2006; reprinted 2008 and 2012), and No. 4 is supported by Hivos, Oak Foundation, Comic Relief and the FLOW Fund of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. This initial Malawi-focused version was written by Shereen Essof and Lisa VeneKlasen with Alia Khan and Adelaide Mazwarira, drawing on the ideas of Naila Kabeer, Srilatha Batliwala, John Gaventa and others. Original design by Julie Montgomery. Printed by Doyle Printers 2013.

MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

Power-Movements-Change



1

INTRODUCTION: ABOUT POWER, RESOURCES AND CHANGE

by Lisa VeneKlasen¹

More than six years have passed since JASS (Just Associates) published *Making Change Happen 3: Concepts for Revisioning Power for Justice, Equality and Peace*. While the dynamics, boundaries, and actors continue to shift, the struggle for power continues to be fundamentally about access and control over resources and over the ideas that seek to legitimise who gets what, who gets left out and why. Today, the ferocious scramble to control and exploit resources – from land and forests to technology and human DNA – is a scramble for power, including a scramble for whose voice counts and what matters most where discrimination and oppression based on gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, location and other factors come into play.

... politics is no longer confined to the same boundaries as before, and is no longer tied solely to state actors and institutions, the result being that additional players, new roles, new resources, unfamiliar rules and new contradictions and conflicts appear on the scene. In the old game, each playing piece made one move only. This is no longer true of the new nameless game for power and domination.

Ulrich Beck (2005)²

... we are living in a fierce world in which many social contracts have been broken, with huge increases in inequality... players have emerged, but the old order is not giving way.

Gita Sen, AWID Forum, Istanbul, 2012

Women's seemingly micro-struggles for access and control of resources within the household, family and community are shaped by "macro" dynamics at the national and global levels. Organising for women's political and economic empowerment demands understanding how power operates in all of these realms. Broadening our thinking about access and control of resources from an analysis of power and rights includes deepening our analysis of both macro-economic politics as well as the ever-changing nature of patriarchy – a system and set of ideas, values and beliefs embedded in all institutions and shaping the choices and mindsets of both men and women – and the intersection between the two. As we seek alternatives for a more sustainable future, there is much to be learned and gained from better understanding women's strategies that tap into and utilise many kinds of resources to create and construct alternatives that improve lives and promote reciprocity, community and wellbeing for people and the planet.

The case study that follows attempts to do all of that by sharing the experience and perceptions of HIV positive women in Malawi who have organised to change how they view themselves, how they are treated and how to demand their right to decent health resources. Although the words power, empowerment, and resources are ever-present in these kinds of discussions as they are in many related policies, programmes and documents concerned with development and rights, since the struggle for power also involves language and discourse, we feel it is important to take a moment to define these terms for our purposes.



... not only material resources in the most conventional economic sense, but also the various human and social resources which serve to enhance the ability to exercise choice.

Naila Kabeer

What do we mean by resources?

There's a tendency to think that resources only have to do with money or economic goods. We understand resources to mean a full range of tangible and intangible assets that are essential for translating access into choices and change. These resources include **concrete economic and political stuff**: money, funding, credit, jobs, land, property, tools, equipment, fertiliser, healthcare, water and other natural resources, technology, education, information, food, housing, police protection, legal services, political representation; and it includes **intangible stuff** like: time, safety, wellbeing, political networks and social capital, credibility, self-confidence, creativity, organisation, friends, fun, love, etc. Though one-size-fits-all change strategies tend to give short-shrift to the latter set of resources, the Malawi case study demonstrates that these are often the most critical and generative.

What do we mean by access and control?³

Access: the opportunity to make use of something/resources for a larger gain. Access will reflect the rules and norms which govern distribution and exchange in different institutional arenas.

Control: the ability to choose or define how and for what purpose it will be used, and even to impose that definition on others – in other words, another word for “control” might be **power**, and power can be positive or negative depending on its purpose.

Common myths about access: many efforts and policies to **improve access to resources** focus on making a resource available and improving so-called “equality of opportunity.” Such approaches usually fail to rectify discrimination because people, particularly women, are not in the same position to be able to take advantage of the opportunity due to historical disadvantages and social norms.

What do we mean by power?

Behind questions of inequality, exploitation and oppression are the dynamics of power and privilege (see *Making Change Happen 3*.) We define power as the degree of control over material, human, intellectual, and financial resources exercised by different sections of society. Power is dynamic, exercised in the social, economic, and political relations between individuals and groups, and can be used for both positive and negative ends.

Most people associate power with **power over** – that is, the ability to control and make decisions for others, with or without their consent. Power over can take on oppressive and destructive forms, perpetuated by the threat or use of violence. This zero-sum view of power is based on the perception that there is only a finite amount of resources or access and follows the maxim of, “if you get more, I get less.”

Many development and rights strategies continue to focus on changing **visible** forms of **power over** that exclude, discriminate and perpetuate violence – such as laws, policies, courts, access to credit, and electoral processes. However, the status quo of **power over** operates in less tangible ways that play a much bigger role today in how and whether change happens at all, and if left unaddressed, make any policy victory elusive or tenuous. **Hidden or shadow power** refers to the actors who operate behind-the-scenes or “under the table” to control public agendas, information and discourse, and to prevent alternatives – ideas and ways of life -- from gaining ground and respect. Today, corporations and other non-state actors, like religious fundamentalists and organised crime, use both money and might to control policy agendas (often embedded in the state) and actively manipulate aspirations and perceptions about what is possible. In this way, shadow power uses **invisible power** – norms, beliefs, values and accepted behaviour – to maintain control or reverse progress. Beliefs and values are deeply internalised through socialisation processes in schools, religion, cultural traditions and/or shaped by the media, advertising, etc.

As the Malawi case study demonstrates, change must engage power at all levels, and build positive alternatives to *power over*: We call these *transformative* forms of power. For example, **power within** is one's own sense of self, and the capacity to hope and imagine; **power to** is agency and the possibility of taking action; **power with** is collective power, the power of numbers built through common cause and solidarity.

What do we mean by feminist movement-building?

Building and mobilising alternative power from the individual to the collective as illustrated in the Malawi case study is feminist movement-building. Simply put, this is a process of catalysing women's innate resilience and resistance, and supporting their organising in such a way as to build **power within, to and with**. Equally important, however, is **power for** which has to do with



The assumption behind transformatory potential is that the process of women working together and solving problems on a trial and error basis, of learning by doing and also of learning to identify allies and forging alliances when needed, will lead to empowerment, both collective and individual.

Kate Young⁴

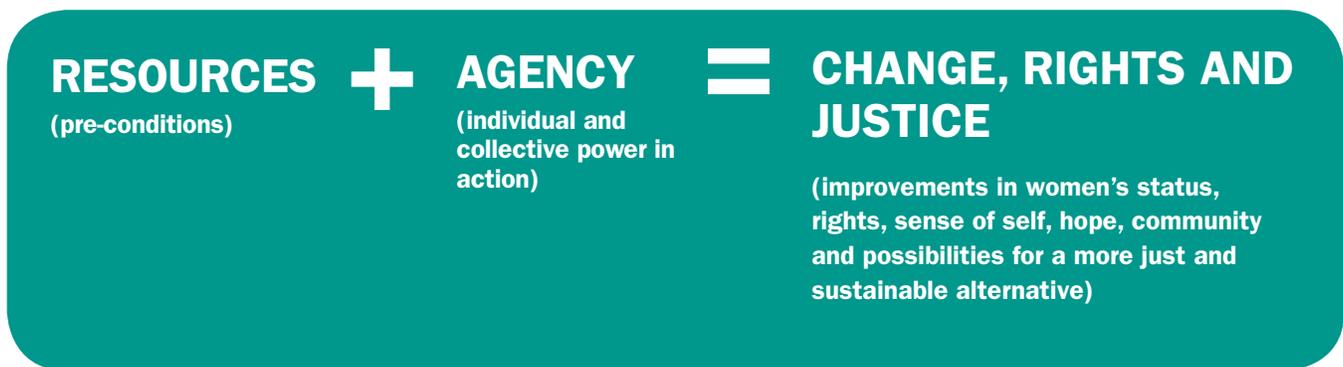
social transformation that goes beyond women’s equality. It is about imagining and defining together a deeply democratic alternative vision of the world and for human relationships where each individual and the diversity of humanity is valued and respected, while the quality of life is determined by strong communities of mutual support for one another and the planet. That is to say it is not enough to empower people to reproduce current models of leadership, organisation and access and control of resources. The alternative vision that emerges in the Malawi story is inspired by the ideas of feminism which we consider to be invaluable to women and men in building a more sustainable, democratic future.

We understand **movement-building** to be a process of developing many kinds of activist leaders who engage in organising and mobilising a broad constituency around a particular social, economic or political change developed over time through joint analysis, education and building connections. Within JASS, we distinguish between the **building feminist movements** and **feminist movement-building**⁵. The Malawi case study is an example of the latter.

Women need power to translate access and opportunity into real and lasting improvements in their lives and world. Challenging the institutional and social barriers that prevent women’s access to resources is political and risky, and demands individual and collective empowerment and organising strategies as this case study demonstrates. Put simply, resources + agency = change, rights, and justice (see the diagram below).

Building feminist movements is a process that mobilises women, women’s organisations (and their allies or supporters) for struggles whose goals are specific to gender equality outcomes – for instance, for eradicating practices like female genital mutilation, bride-burning and female foeticide, or violence against women, or for expanding equality of access to citizenship (e.g. franchise), land or inheritance rights, education, employment, health, or reproductive and sexual rights.

Feminist movement-building, on the other hand, could be defined as the attempt to bring feminism, feminist analysis and gender-equality perspectives into other justice agendas and movements – classic examples are the efforts of many feminists to engender the analyses, goals and strategies of the environment, peace, human rights, and peasant and labour movements around the world. Feminist movement-building can also involve building movements among women from different movements or agendas.





PRINCIPLES⁶ FOR EMPOWERMENT, RIGHTS AND RESOURCES

Along the way, we have learned a lot from women about power, change and resources, including:

- 1. Needs and rights:** Organising for political rights cannot be done without organising to address practical needs. In fact, organising around practical needs is often the most strategic entry point for long-term movement-building for rights. In the context of poverty and given women's caregiving roles, collectively addressing some of their survival issues – from food to childcare – will provide the freedom and the organisational foundation for taking action for rights over the long-haul.
- 2. Start with women's solutions:** As always, when states relinquish their responsibility to provide for the basic welfare of their citizens, women step in to fill the gaps. From savings cooperatives to home-based care networks to mother's demanding justice for family members, women are on the frontlines of all social justice struggles. Their leadership, strategies, and their demands for sustainable alternatives are different and important. While society depends on this work, it is largely invisible and unrecognised, and that must change for women to be equal and for democracy and development to work. Starting with women's solutions demands more listening to women and more open-ended space for them to reflect and share.
- 3. Bring power and politics to the forefront of our analysis and strategies:** Efforts to translate economic and political concepts (including rights) often do little more than simplify arcane terminology without linking it to real life problems and political realities. Re-politicising rights and development demands starting with reality and women's own understanding of their problems, and then, making the links to laws and policies for women to fully use and engage them for change.
- 4. Engaging hearts and minds:** For lasting change, poverty reduction, rights and empowerment strategies need to help people critically understand and question conventional economic thinking and the institutions and interests who benefit from it, just as they challenge conservative religious

doctrines that seek to define sex, sexuality and women's roles. While information is key, learning to question the status quo is often best approached as a process that enables people to understand their own circumstances within the context of prevailing norms and economic arrangements.

- 5. Building bridges between movements, NGOs, and constituencies:** Social movements, as well as NGOs, should be encouraged to take the time to unpack assumptions and ensure clear communication as we may use a common language of change (from feminism to racial justice) but have diverse interpretations. We need honest conversation to address conflict and negotiate political differences as well as fresh thinking and diversified funding sources to address competition for resources. And we must honestly address the prickly questions of representation and legitimacy – on whose behalf are we speaking, and how are we ensuring that those voices are up front, visible, and influential?
- 6. Revisiting and refining our understanding of key economic and political problems and their solutions:** While groups are concerned with dividing up the pieces of the economic pie, it is also important to be able to question the assumptions that define the size of the pie and the rules governing the people with access to the pie (e.g. investment policies, labour standards, public goods etc.) not to mention how these assumptions and choices impact the environment. Once we are clearer about some of the assumptions, the path to defining our own alternative vision is also clearer.
- 7. Revisit traditional advocacy targets and entry points:** With limited resources and capacity, the question has to be raised: 'When is a political space worthwhile?' **Invited policy spaces** (from the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals [MDGs] to the World Bank) with their pre-cooked and controlled agendas, need to be assessed and compared against the alternative of **claiming policy spaces** that advance women's rights and economic justice interests in both the public and private sectors.⁷

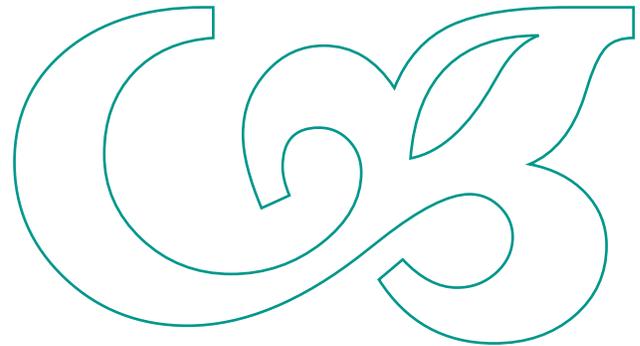


With billions of dollars invested globally in treatment and alternative medicines endorsed by protocols, why is this humanitarian and human rights violation tolerated?

National Women's Dialogue, Malawi, October 23, 2012

MALAWI WOMEN CROSSING THE LINE: MOBILISING WOMEN'S RESOURCES FOR HEALTH AND RIGHTS

By Shereen Essof⁸



HIV/AIDS has added another layer to the dynamics of inequality and violence for women in Malawi and other parts of Southern Africa as both the by-product and accelerator of poverty and discrimination. At the same time, it has demonstrated how resilient and even creative women have been to resist, survive, and care for their communities in the face of such grim circumstances. More than just surviving, this ongoing health crisis has catalysed new forms of leadership and organising among women who are coming together to challenge their families, churches, traditional leaders, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and eventually, their government, donors, and the international HIV/AIDS industry.

In Southern Africa, the promise of “universal access” to HIV treatment remains a distant reality, especially for women. Despite highly publicised influxes of financing and drugs from a host of development actors – the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO) and bilateral donors among others – these investments alone, even if adequate, are not enough to guarantee access to treatment, and access alone is not enough to ensure healthy lives for HIV positive Malawian women.

Women's access to and control over resources – so critical to women's rights and wellbeing – are functions of a complex set of intersecting dynamics that shape women's sense of self, capacity to take action and decision making at family, household, community, national, and global levels. This case study attempts to illustrate how “macro” politics and policy directly impact on the daily lives and choices of women, as well as the diverse strategies that are needed for women to live with dignity and ultimately, transform power to effect meaningful and lasting change. Resources must be

understood to include not only tangible goods and services but also the human and social capital required to take advantage of access to resources. These include social standing, networks, community, knowledge, and ultimately a woman's sense of self, of hope, and her capacity to imagine an alternative future. It is this latter set of intangibles that are essential, but often overlooked, resources, that must be mobilised in order to overcome formidable barriers to access that are the result of global inequities and inequality – stigma, discrimination, and violence, along with governments' ineptitude and failure to provide for the basic needs of their citizens.

Drawing on the movement-building experiences of JASS with Malawian women and a handful of grassroots organisations and networks from 2008 to 2013, this case study features the voices of a handful of Malawian women who were involved from the beginning. Their stories capture the experience of loss and marginalisation caused by HIV, poor treatment and inadequate support, and the emotional and physical pain they have fought to overcome. More importantly, they also demonstrate resistance, courage and what empowerment and a sense of rights really mean for women.

Throughout the experience, Malawian women took on the role of activist and movement-builder, and internalised and wove into their own language and strategies the concepts of power that JASS uses in our work. Malawian women's innate sense about how power operates and the ways to build power continue to inspire and demonstrate vividly how empowerment comes from within and not from outside, challenging all of us who care about justice and rights to develop more effective ways to tap and catalyse women's deep capacities to change rather than impose external models.



Human rights means entitlement by birth, hence, human rights can never be suspended for a later time. Saying that the new ARV treatment shall commence next year is the same as putting our right to life and right to health on hold.

Grace Malera, Executive Director, Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC)

THE POLITICS OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Women often speak from places of extreme poverty. Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world where inequalities have been exacerbated by neoliberal policy prescriptions. In the early 1990s, spurred by international pressure, Malawi liberalised its economy and subscribed to strict structural adjustment policies to pay its foreign debt. The consequences were far-reaching. Public budgets and services were drastically cut and privatised. Local trade – once protected – now lost out to competition from foreign exports. Agriculture – Malawi’s most important economic sector – saw its vast food production narrowed to a few export crops channelled to external markets through export trade while subsidies and distribution supports for small scale farming were seriously curtailed. Diminishing resources meant little investment in this important sector and, despite the availability of better technologies, the productivity of crops has stagnated due to declining soil fertility in addition to the structural changes described above.

Most rural Malawians depend on subsistence farming. More than 90% of the rural population (some 2.5 million households) are smallholder farmers with customary land tenure. Traditionally, women cannot own land despite their major role in agricultural production. The over-used soil they try to farm requires imported fertiliser, which is available in limited supplies, and is often poor in quality, environmentally unsound and expensive.

Following the dictates of the neoliberal model and structural adjustment policies has also dramatically reduced public services, especially healthcare. Salary controls imposed⁹ on all public sector jobs lead to a massive brain-drain of teachers, doctors, and nurses to the UK and the US. A diminished public health system is no match for the HIV epidemic where 1 in 4 adults in urban areas of Malawi are HIV positive. HIV infection is higher amongst Malawian women and is most prevalent amongst women ages 35–39 (24%) (Demographic and Health Survey 2010). Malawi has adopted a public health approach and has attempted to ensure the upscaling of health services to ensure adequate coverage but in a context of under-resourcing, this effort is still fraught. For example, for rural Malawians, access to health services is impacted due to limited transportation and other infrastructure.

The current ARV package in Malawi is rotten pie and it is the women who are eating the biggest chunk of that rotten pie.

Tiwonge Gondwe, Malawian Activist

Malawi has adopted the WHO 2010 treatment guidelines calling for earlier initiation of treatment and phasing out of first line antiretroviral (ARV) drugs including d4T (stavudine), 3TC (lamivudine) and NVP (nevirapine) due to serious body-distorting side-effects, which include lipodystrophy – an often painful condition leading to a mix of fat loss in some parts of the body, and fat gain in other parts. Simply put, women tend to lose fat in the face, arms, legs, and buttocks, and develop unsightly fatty deposits on the back of the neck, stomach, and other parts of the body. Not only that, but the majority of people living with HIV have no access to less toxic second-line regimens that are required if the first-line regimen stops working.

With the death of President Bingu wa Mutharika and the election of Joyce Banda as President in 2012, the targets for universal access to second-line drugs is high on the government agenda due to pressure from a range of civil society organisations. Whilst ushering in a promising new era of democratic reforms, there are many practical hurdles. The new regime reduces the side effects associated with ARVs and enables people to live longer, but fewer people can access these essential medicines due to the increased costs given the current financial resources available. Malawi has also moved to adopt the earlier initiation of treatment recommended by WHO but according to estimates, this will double the number of people in need of treatment.

Malawi’s healthcare expenditure, including HIV treatment, has been extremely dependent on external funding (60%). Alongside budget constraints, erratic delivery of drugs to rural healthcare centres, the low number of healthcare workers available to administer medication and provide allied healthcare and support including treatment literacy, hinders both the distribution of ARVs in Malawi as well as women’s ability to live positively. In 2010, the vacancy rate for nurses stood at 74%. Over 70% of the population is illiterate and almost 30% of poor children never start primary school, while secondary and higher education is largely confined to the few prosperous households in urban areas.



The problem is women may have access to inferior medication and suffer physical side-effects that compound other forms of discrimination.

Linnah Matatya, Malawian Activist



HIV, shame and violence

The stories of Malawian women activists reflect the layers of discrimination and violence experienced by HIV positive women. An HIV positive status radically changes women’s socio-economic situation and place in their families and communities. Sarah’s husband beat her violently because she went to a local clinic and tested HIV positive.

He claimed that I was sleeping around and hence the reason for my status. I married at the age of 16 and never had sex with any other man, surely he must have known about that. I ran away, and ran and ran until I saw stars floating in front of my eyes, expecting at any second to be hit from the back by either him or a car. I ran until I couldn’t – until my legs twisted under me.

Sarah returned to her family home, seeking refuge. However, her return from a failed marriage was perceived as bringing shame upon her family, and, in the context of poverty, increased the competition for limited resources.

The reception from my brothers was shocking. They feared I would share their little land for my survival. They made my life miserable ... there was no place for me, not even in the trash-heap. In my own father’s house, my brothers did not want to give me a corner in which an unwanted object might lie.

Inferior treatment, contorted bodies

HIV positive women are dependent on the under-resourced health infrastructure for life-saving ARVs. Malawi has failed to maintain the required global standards with respect to ARV regimens. *“The ARVs we have now are distorting our bodies,”* says Linnah Matanya, Director of Women for Fair Development (WOFAD), a network of community-based women’s groups working to ensure access to basic needs. Since the virus can morph over time, second-line drugs are critical for the long-term survival of ARV users, especially in contexts where people find it difficult to comply with the proper standards of drug use. Linnah believes that those with money can easily access second-line treatment regimens and most likely through private hospitals. Outside of this, the current plan is to phase out older inferior drugs prioritising pregnant women and TB patients.

The inferior drugs currently available have a range of side-effects, some of which are visible and lead to increased stigma. *“Lipodystrophy is causing people to stop taking ARVs. It is affecting*

women’s body image, it is attracting stigma,” says Linnah Matanya. *“What happened to you? people ask. Women change physically to such a degree that they are not recognised anymore by family and friends. Their husbands leave them. The problem is women may have access to inferior medication and suffer physical side-effects that compound other forms of discrimination.”*

In some instances women are unable to access the life-saving medication. As Kwangu Tembo the Regional Coordinator of the Coalition of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (COWHLA) points out,

Women in these traditional authorities¹⁰ accessed ARVs on Tuesdays and Thursdays. One week they went to Chipoka health centre on a Thursday and they were told that they would not get their ARVs until the following Tuesday because there was no-one to staff the health centre. This meant that they would skip taking their treatment for six days!

More than medicine: food and farming

A basic fact often overlooked by efforts focused on the distribution of ARVs is that proper nutrition is required when taking ARVs. Jane describes how extreme poverty makes this an enormous challenge.

I come from a remote hilly area with barren soil. Unable to till the infertile soil, most of the year, the community lives its demoralised, ebbing life on food handed out by the government but for us who are HIV positive, we can’t afford to live on such handouts since they have no nutritional value.

In Malawi, the prevalence of subsistence farming on nutrient-depleted soil has made the demand for fertiliser a daily challenge – fertiliser has become central to HIV positive women’s survival. Esnat Mbandambanda described this reality directly to a Ministry of Health representative at a National Dialogue on accessing quality ART:

I told the honourable minister, you see all these people? All these women? They are poor. They are HIV positive. If these people do not get fertiliser coupons, it means hunger. We have no food in our homes.

Fertiliser is distributed through a government-supported system of coupons. People in the community are allocated coupons to buy fertiliser at a discounted price, yet HIV positive women are



I want to see change in the issues that affect women and their lives. I want to see the government put things in place to protect women and transform these situations. When I realised that I have the right to my life and when JASS helped me to realise that I have the power to claim my rights, it was a major turning point for me. I believe in the power within me and the power I have with my support groups.

Miriam Munthali, Malawian Activist

often discriminated against when these are allocated. Jane describes her experience:

✪ In our village, the chief distributes land and fertilisers so it was natural that with fellow villagers, we [women living with HIV] should approach him for fertilisers. He listened to our pleas carefully, and then stood in front of all people who were gathered for the fertilisers and announced that he would not waste resources of the community on walking corpses. “These women you see are diseased, they are just walking but they are dead. Why should we waste resources on them?” The crowd reacted with a raucous round of applause to this uncouth statement. It hurt badly.

For the HIV positive women in Blantyre, in southern Malawi, access to water is equally critical, as Linnah explains,

✪ Most of the time we are lacking good water, even though we are in the city. Blantyre Water Board is not able to give us water, most of the time our pipes are dry. This makes women and girl children walk far [3–5km] to find water. They go to wells sometimes where they get dirty water and because of desperation they take that dirty water home. Women are taking medicine with dirty water. Cholera is a big problem in my community. More women die from cholera in my community because men are at work and have clean water at work, but women and children stay at home and use the dirty water and are more at risk of getting cholera and other diseases from unclean water.

Pain and isolation: the personal impact

Women carry the experience of living with HIV not just in their bodies, but in their hearts. A diagnosis is an emotional blow with repercussions and women often have no outlet to express or process feelings. After suffering a stroke, Ruth found out she was HIV positive.

✪ The next thing I knew I was in hospital where I stayed for a month. I was told that I was HIV positive. By the time I got out, I had lost almost everything; weight, my small business, my home and my dignity. I was depressed for a year. Then my sister introduced me to a support group in my area, they counselled me, shared information about useful herbs and other survival strategies, and eventually helped me to get on my feet.

For Marvis, the injustice and pain motivated her to act.

✪ Every day I felt my mind constantly poisoned by the narrowness of the life that was being imposed on me, its meanness, open or disguised, its artificiality and its hypocrisy. I decided I would fight – and fight I did.

MOVEMENT-BUILDING STRATEGIES: HEART-MIND-BODY

JASS employs approaches that reflect and affirm the vital connection between the heart, the mind and the body as a critical foundation for change. Conversations about how power operates in women’s lives—from forms of power that oppress and subjugate them to those that liberate, connect and build solidarity among them for action. These learning and reflection processes energise and challenge women – allowing them to appreciate their individual struggles and talents, name and analyse the common barriers they face, and come together to make a difference.

One creative process used to make this heart–mind–body connection involved a combination of body mapping, storytelling, and power analysis. In pairs, women drew an outline of their bodies. Each then detailed events happening in her life through the story of a specific body part, including the actions she was taking to survive given the many challenges before her. By introducing ideas about different kinds of power in relation to their story and its impact on their body, women developed a new vocabulary that helped them explain and understand how oppression affects their emotions, their body and their mind.

Women were encouraged, often for the first time, to defy taboos and speak about their bodies and the mixed emotions they held about them. They talked about religious beliefs that made them think of their body as impure – which was reinforced by the social stigma associated with HIV/AIDS. Using various artistic forms, women expressed their hopes and fears and made connections across deeply felt religious and social divisions. In the evenings they sat in a circle, with music and candlelight in the background, sharing their dreams for themselves and for their loved ones as well as talking about strategies to make those dreams a reality.

The JASS slogan “Caution: Women Crossing the Line” easily resonates with women from all walks of life as a familiar daily tactic used is subtle or even invisible ways to resist and manoeuvre around the structural barriers and beliefs that come with sexism and misogyny.



MOBILISING AWARENESS

HIV positive women in Malawi clearly understand their political and social subordination. JASS’ movement-building work rests on the foundation that women are fully aware of the dynamics of oppression and discrimination that inhibit their lives – but they are often not fully conscious because of a deep sense of shame and inadequacy. Safe spaces for structured dialogue and reflection offer an opportunity for women to speak about the unspeakable, to rethink and re-assemble “the pieces of their lives” and to “start imagining a new reality.” An opportunity to question and deconstruct power, recognising how society creates barriers for all women, is a critical starting point for organising, leadership, and action. This approach casts aside the stereotype of “African women as victims” perpetuated by the long history of colonisation and continued, often unwittingly, by prevalent approaches to development and empowerment.

For Sarah, this meant acknowledging the injustice of the “alternatives” in her life – violent abuse and rejection on the one hand and sex work and the financial and physical exploitation of a lover on the other. *“I was so afraid of losing him that every little cent I worked for, I gave to him... I was taking care of a man at the expense of saving my money.”* Importantly, her analysis of her situation led her to realise, *“I was not getting out of the poverty trap.”*

Jessica speaks of silence and invisibility, and the frustration of subjugating her skills and intellect to the wishes of those “above” her. Her self-awareness tapped into an intuitive sense of injustice, fuelled by the anger provoked by the daily doses of hypocrisy, prejudice, and condescension that she and other women are subjected to.

W My mother remained very troubled by my intelligence. She warned me many times that for a woman, intelligence is an affliction. She said that a woman’s life is guided by boundaries, she should not live a life guided by intelligence, if she does... she’ll jeopardise her marriage and shatter her future... I was not convinced it was right or fair or that it was something natural just to be accepted.

Apprehensive about attending her first JASS workshop, Ruth worried, *“what if there was a test, and I failed? What if I did not know the answers?”* But without missing a beat, she says, *“but that doesn’t matter because I deserve to be here.”*

By coming together with other women to openly name these dynamics of prejudice and powerlessness, she took steps to increase her own knowledge, awareness, sense of solidarity with other women in a similar situation and willingness to take action.

Linnah speaks about the discovery of a sense of community and power to effect change with others that made her believe that anything possible.

W I’ve been working with JASS since 2008. I have been empowered with skills and knowledge and power, and became aware of the power within me.

JASS believes in women-only safe spaces where women can come together and share their experiences from their lives. These spaces make us strong, we come together and become friends. We understand the problems in our lives. We see how power works, those with **power over** us and we see together that we have **power within**, to make change in our lives.

By understanding power first through the lens of their own lives, women recognise and gain hope from the power they have. But it is the opportunity to dream and imagine an alternative for themselves and their families that is the most critical ingredient to movement-building. It is what sustains them in the long fight for freedom, dignity and a better life.

CROSSING THE LINE: VOICE AND VISIBILITY

The confidence gained through dialogue and mutual support often translates into immediate results in women’s lives. Dire poverty obliges women to maximise even the smallest source of income. For example, JASS activists have saved workshop food allowances, which, in turn, provide them with their first savings or capital for income-generating projects. Ruth’s story explains,

W A week after the workshop, I took the little money I had saved from my transport allowance, bought some potatoes from the main market and sold them in town. Having the courage to get out of the home, do something useful, meet many people and keep going was a major step for me. I crossed the line of helplessness, self-pity, and despair. I am now getting re-established in my business and am much more positive



You are talking about crossing the line, I have crossed countless rivers and lakes to find a livelihood – something that will allow me to live and survive.

Tiwonge Gondwe, Malawian activist

about life. I am teaching other women in my support group to reclaim their lives back.

“When I started imagining this new reality”, says Sarah “I imagined I was educated, able to speak English and with some good money in my bag. I refused to be diminished, suppressed, or destroyed. I refused to be warped by bigotry, tyranny, and pettiness. I refused!”

That is how I crossed the line of an inferiority complex and dependency on men. I am now a member of an HIV support group for sex workers. Through JASS’ workshop, I know I am a feminist. My body is my own. That is what I tell my sex worker friends. My future plans include buying a plot of land back home, building a small house and supporting rural-based sex workers to learn to stand on their own feet.

Jessica, unconvinced that her oppression was a natural and acceptable condition of being female, also sought out the support of other women.

I was quick to join an HIV support group. That is how I came to attend the JASS workshop. I learnt a lot of things during the workshop. At the beginning of the workshop, a few people knew each other, however, today many of us who have been associated with JASS are able to communicate on a regular basis and support each other. We now have trust and solidarity among us. We have built firm and supportive relationships and a shared repertoire of communal resources.

And, like many other activists working with JASS, Jessica did not only cross the line to overcome her own oppression, but works to take other women “across the line” with her. This means continuing to challenge her own values and those of others within her family and her faith, rejecting their double standards about men and women, and about sex and sexuality.

I am a church-goer but I got tired of the hypocrisy of my church. They were behaving as if there was no HIV even if they were burying people almost on a daily basis. I decided to inform my church pastor that I was positive and needed to talk to fellow church people about HIV. Initially he hit the roof; he said that he could not even imagine anyone talking about HIV in his church. He nevertheless relented the day his son came back from town, emaciated, and very sick... Today, I have a strong HIV support group at my church. I am respected in

my group even if other people talk about us. Some of the church elders come to see me at night and to ask questions about HIV. They all pretend they are asking on behalf of someone else but I know that it’s not always true.

Just as Jessica works for change within her church, Jane works within her cultural traditions. She endured rejection and vilification by her chief, who called her and other HIV positive women “walking corpses”. He later tried to appease her because he was in need of her help when he tested HIV positive.

Having attended the JASS workshop and learnt about the importance of claiming power, I used my power within myself and told him I would help but there were conditions. He was to call a meeting, explain that when he refused to give us fertilisers he did not know what he was doing and apologise to the women he called walking corpses. He would declare his status there and then and persuade people to go for testing. Above all, he would find bags of fertilisers for the group. I wanted justice. Only after doing all that would he be allowed to join our group as the first man to do so.

Jane strategically negotiated her relationship with her elder and leader – someone deemed her superior by tradition – in a way that won her credibility for herself and her group, increasing the likelihood that they would get much-needed fertiliser. And despite his attempts to “use all the names that are supposed to soften a woman”, Jane stood her ground.

He did not want to declare his status, but just wanted me to keep his secret while I bent over forwards and backwards to help him. I stood my ground, I told him that I had many things in my heart including anger over the lack of fertilisers and there was no room left for secrets... Having seen that my position was not shifting, he agreed to declare his status openly. He apologised to the community and today he talks and behaves like an HIV activist.

Just as Jane challenged her chief, Marvis, who lives in an urban area, decided to take on her Member of Parliament (MP). She refused to allow him to hide behind the façade of his official position. Confident that his power comes from the people – from her vote and others’ like her – she was determined to make her voice heard in public life. Despite unhelpful gatekeepers and secretaries, whom Marvis refers to as “Miss official elites”, Marvis was determined



Each woman detailed the events happening in their lives so the process evolved and deepened, as though we were entering a flowing river that reforms its banks even as its banks direct its flow. Each woman’s contribution created the direction of the conversation.

Hope Chigudu, Ugandan-Zimbabwean, Gender Justice Practitioner/JASS Advisor

to get an audience with the man she voted into office. After all, *“two years ago, this same MP had gone from door to door looking for votes, promising to work with us but was now inaccessible, exercising his power over us”*. His secretary *“did not know she was dealing with a JASS ‘graduate’; I knew that she was using hidden power to stop me from meeting the big guy.”*

W I was asked by his secretary if I had an appointment and I confessed that I did not. The secretary asked me to make one and return in two weeks’ time. I had used the little money I had saved for transport, I had wasted a whole day, and hence I refused to go and return another day as this would mean spending more money... I was determined to talk to the MP. I would fight for others with the same tenacity with which I had fought all my life for my own survival and that of my family. I would confront the tyranny and condescension of this ‘Miss official elite’. Armed with a fighting spirit, I decided to wait to see the MP even if it meant following him to his home. I sat in his office, dozed, woke up, dozed and woke up again. Surely the secretary would go to the toilet, she would go out to get some water and I would rush in her boss’ office.... and this is exactly what happened... The rest is a long story but I just wanted to share with you how I managed to handle hidden power.

Kwangu goes on to explain that the women of COWHLA *“knew their rights and used their collective power”* and that’s why *“we took it in our hands to demand access to ARVs”*.

W If we hadn’t known, the women could have gone home without medication. But we knew that if we didn’t get a satisfactory answer at the health centre, we could use our analysis of power to identify who we could go to get help and use our collective power to go together to ensure our voices were heard.

Esnat was one of the first 100 people to receive ARVs in Malawi in 2002. Her experiences as an HIV positive woman made her activism and organising work inevitable. Initially, she worked for Médecins Sans Frontières – the first organisation to supply ARVs in Malawi. Now she is an organiser with COWHLA, who has made access to fertiliser coupons the focus of their campaign. JASS training workshops linked her to other activists who shared her experiences and over time she has built support among women in COWHLA. *“It took me to another stage. Now I am a full activist!”* she says.

Using a public meeting as a platform, where both government officials and local chiefs were in attendance, Esnat was able to quickly rally support for the issue of fertiliser coupons.

W I pointed at the chiefs and said, ‘You are discriminating against us. We are healthy. We can grow gardens – even if we are HIV positive. We need to have access to food in our homes. That is what this coupon is for.

COLLECTIVE POWER

M arvis and Jane had not “crossed the line” alone. Like them, Kwangu organised with other women to stop their clinic from arbitrarily shutting its doors.

W We decided to use our collective power to do something to ensure that the women in the traditional authority were able to access their [HIV] treatment. At first we talked to the health personnel but they would not co-operate ... we went to the Honourable Member of Parliament for the Salima South constituency ... he immediately took his phone and called the District Health Officer [who] did not know that the clinic was closed ... he called the person in charge of the clinic and demanded that the clinic be opened ... and all the people accessed ARVs on that day.

Through her leadership and activism, her “big voice” as she calls it, Esnat rallied a crowd of women at the meeting. She recognised that it was the unity of the group that would make the demand for fertiliser, and thus food and nutrition for HIV positive women, a reality. *“It was not speaking one-by-one,”* she says, *“it was the crowd”*. Esnat leveraged the momentum from this meeting to gain media attention, which brought public pressure to bear on the officials who had the power to grant them the fertiliser coupons. And, reports Esnat, *“after two weeks I had a call from the District Assembly asking me to come and collect the coupons for COWHLA members”*.

Esnat has organised women beyond her immediate community. COWHLA, her organisation, approaches chiefs who discriminate against HIV positive women in other places. Esnat recognises that gender dynamics not only operate in personal relationships but are also reflected in traditional societal structures – powerful forces in maintaining gender discrimination, norms, and oppression.



COWHLA activists use taboos strategically in their organising as a way to challenge tradition and patriarchy.

W We plan a day and we go to that chief. Sometimes we even take off our clothes, and the chief runs away! And they stop how they are acting, they say eh! If we continue to do this, these women will go and call Esnat. Then we are really in trouble, so let's stop. In Malawi if a woman is naked it shows that you are very angry.

Linnah's victory (described below) sits on the back of deeper engagement and organising with public officials to demand accountability for promises they have made but failed to follow through on. Today the women in her area in Blantyre have a borehole and have reduced the long distance women walk to get water, as well as chances of getting cholera and dying. As she says, *"Women at WOFAD [Women for Fair Development] are strong from this victory. We will continue to organise and use our collective power to change our lives."*

LINNAH'S STORY

While Linnah has been able to raise funds for a borehole from a range of donor agencies, such as the National AIDS Commission, the US Embassy, World Bank, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Urgent Action Fund, her goal is to increase women's self-sufficiency in her community. Together with her group, she has set up a piggery and herb garden which generate income for the organisation.

Linnah developed some of these practical action plans at the JASS workshop in November 2009, which included drafting a work plan to establish the herb gardens. Subsequently, she and women in her community have established three gardens that are now flourishing.

W It's going very well! We grow garlic and ginger, and people add their own special herbs. We have things in our community that we can do ourselves. The women plant the seeds ... they water the gardens. We can do things on our own that don't take money.

Linnah goes on to talk about how the JASS training enhances this sense of solidarity and mutual support among people in the community, and expands their ideas about what is possible.

W As women in my community, we see a change in people's mindsets – now they think about access to resources on a greater scale: not only food or herb gardens for income-generation or nutrition, but pushing for new-line ARV regimens.

This shows a move from accepting the status quo where no appropriate ARV treatment is available, to "imagining the future differently" – a future where women have access to these life-saving drugs. In JASS training processes, women gain and strengthen both attitudes and skills, allowing them to seek out and acquire new resources, using their individual abilities and leadership in support of collective organising and action to benefit themselves and other women.

W The training gave me strength. We said "WOMEN MOVE!" So I did. I wrote a proposal to the US Embassy for boreholes. I was afraid: the UNITED STATES! But now I can go to any donor, and ask. After all, I wrote the proposal and they gave us the money. The training changed my mindset. JASS was an example – they helped us to get the funding from the Urgent Action Fund for lobbying to get a second-line ARV regimen. It's true, I knew about the US Embassy grants before the workshop, but I didn't feel they would understand me if I applied. After writing the proposal, I went to the Embassy and followed up, very strongly! The day I signed that agreement my heart was overflowing.



I only wish every positive woman in Chirazuru were self-sufficient, then they wouldn't need these guys, and their health and life might be better. Growing a garden, getting a borehole is a step toward self-sufficiency.

Esnat Mbandambanda, Malawian activist

FROM ORGANISING TO CAMPAIGNING

Campaigning for fertiliser coupons, for clinics to open, for water, is not only about the basics women need to build a better life for themselves, it's about enabling women to understand how gender inequalities are intertwined with and exacerbate poverty and need. Esnat views the power dynamics like this: women suffer because men dominate in relationships, refusing to use condoms. Families suffer when people can't find work, when food is not available or not shared, when women are not self-sufficient. All this, she says, compounds the challenge of getting and using HIV drugs properly.

Women seek out what seem to be quick fix solutions – getting a man to marry them so hopefully they will have food on the table. Their treatment adherence may drop or be interrupted increasing the likelihood of developing a resistance to the drugs.

 I only wish every positive woman in Chirazuru were self-sufficient, then they wouldn't need these guys, and their health and life might be better. Growing a garden, getting a borehole is a step toward self-sufficiency.

Even when successful in her advocacy campaign for fertiliser coupons, Esnat found that women still faced the reality of poverty. *"The coupons were very few,"* Esnat says, *"how does one distribute them?"* Extreme poverty is never far from peoples' minds and is a challenge that must be factored into women's strategies for change. How needs are addressed can have considerable impact on the sustainability of women's leadership, organising, and movement-building as well as their success in attaining resources.

 I chose the people who were the poorest. Priority was given to HIV positive women who were also taking care of additional children. People thought I would take one of the coupons, I said 'No. My aim is to advocate for the grassroots women.'

In contrast to a world where dominant economic models are focused on maximising profit in the context of scarcity, Esnat's strategy is based on reciprocity and equity. It is based on her moral and practical belief in the value of working on behalf of the common good. Esnat distributes the coupons to ensure that women see a real change in their lives, one that can motivate their ongoing activism and support efforts to build the power of their

numbers. Her strategy leveraged social capital, built confidence, and raised her profile and credibility as an activist and a leader. *"From that time on, I tell you, I do everything without fear."*

OUR BODIES, OUR LIVES: MODELLING ALTERNATIVES FOR EQUITABLE AND HUMANE ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Esnat, Kwangu, Linnah, Sarah, Mavis, Ruth ... and the thousands of other women, Judith, Mirriam, Lillian, Jane, Chrissie ... are all working together to model alternatives for equitable access to resources for HIV positive women.

In October 2012, after four years of community dialogue, training and organising in rural and urban areas across Malawi, these women, together with more than 150 HIV positive women activists, sat on the edge of their seats in a stuffy conference room of a hotel in Lilongwe, while a representative from the Malawi Ministry of Health presented government policy on HIV/AIDS and ART. Though this was the first such meeting with a high level government official for all but a few of the women present, they did not sit silently. Instead countless numbers of them stood up to challenge the ministry representative, asking the critical questions: why don't we have access to quality ARVs with fewer side-effects? Why don't health officials treat women with respect? Why aren't adequate testing equipment and side-effect management in place? How does the government plan to ensure resources for sustained access to quality ARVs? They shared moving stories of their own experiences of stigma and violence due to their HIV status and ultimately they demanded their rights according to law: *What is the government going to do?*

In the months prior to this meeting, action research conducted by the activists to gain a better understanding of women's experiences of ARVs in their communities produced important data that became a fundamental element of the campaign. Sixty activist-researchers interviewed more than 800 HIV positive women,



Through the movement-building process ... I have found my voice and my power within and am able to use my voice on all the issues that affect women in my community. I became a woman activist.

Kwangu Tembo Makhuwira, COWHLA

which generated a string of urgent and provocative discoveries and messages to President Joyce Banda and the Malawian government. Women were equipped to give concrete evidence of the devastating impact of stavudine on women's bodies, the stigma and discrimination they experience, and the need to connect women's access to quality to ARVs with access to other critical resources including fertiliser and credit in order for women to provide for their families and live healthy lives.

This high-level gathering was the culmination of an organising effort that has to date mobilised hundreds of women around Malawi in what ultimately emerged as a grassroots unified campaign for the health and rights of women, who are among the most marginalised and stigmatised. *The Our Bodies, Our Lives: The fight for better ARVs Campaign* was launched in October 2012 at the National Women's Dialogue on ARVs. The campaign is driven by a broad-based constituency that has multiplied since the inception of JASS' work in Malawi in 2007, particularly through a strategic partnership with Manerela+ (Malawian Religious Leaders Living with or Affected by HIV/AIDS) that were able to reach churches, mosques and faith-based groups concerned with human dignity. An unusual alliance between a feminist movement support organisation and a faith-based network, the two organisations found much common ground, placing women's dignity and leadership at the heart of a health rights agenda, and were able to reach out, persuade and mobilise from households to churches and well beyond their own constituencies.

Currently, more than 1,200 women activists form the campaign's base, which draws on the organising power of community-based and national organisations including Paradiso TB Care Trust, Lilongwe Urban Women Forum, Women for Fair Development (WOFAD), Northern Region Women Forum, Coalition of Malawian Women Living with HIV/AIDS (COWLHA), as well as national groups such as the Society for Women and AIDS in Malawi (SWAM), National Association of People Living with HIV and AIDS (NAPHAM), Malawi Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (MANET+), Teachers Living with HIV (T'LIPO), Health Workers Living with HIV (HECAWLP), and activists working with Action AID International-Malawi.

The National Women's Dialogue brought together women activists from across Malawi to celebrate HIV positive women's organising, engage with stakeholders and decision makers, build a collective analysis on the current context and demand an immediate rollout of quality ARVs. The convening included an Interfaith service with over 200 congregants of wide-ranging denominations and faiths who preached and shared their own testimonies fostering

new forms of solidarity and linkages across religious differences and diversity. Most importantly, out of the dialogue emerged a concrete list of demands – anchored in the immediate needs and realities of HIV positive women – that everyone involved could pursue as a united front.

As part of the campaign agenda, women activist leaders met with Ministry of Health officials to demand the necessary resources and support from the Ministry of Health, medical institutions, local financial lending institutions and government to save women's lives now. Others translated their demands into posters and placards and took to the streets in the *March to S.A.V.E. Lives from HIV Infections, Stigma and Preventable Deaths*. A press briefing to amplify HIV positive women's demands attracted 20 journalists from national and community-based media houses and the National Dialogue was featured in two national newspapers, daily news clips on national news, and in a 20-minute in-depth news special.

Women's demands at the heart of the campaign were:

- to make available the WHO-recommended first-line drug regimen that is better-tolerated by patients to everyone who needs it;
- to put people's health first, and ensure that the scale-up and roll out of the new regimen is sustained beyond one year and that hospitals and providers are able to carry out the roll out;
- to ensure the implementation of the constitutionally-mandated provision for equal access to basic resources, education, health services, food, shelter, employment, and infrastructure for all Malawians so that HIV positive women can support themselves while on treatment.

REFLECTIONS

Women's stories and this organising journey demonstrate that while women may be subject to oppressive practices and belief systems, or face poor health due to lack of appropriate treatment and government services, women are willing and able to take action and effect change. Women do not see themselves as helpless victims, rather as capable confident women, albeit living in precarious circumstances, seeking basic legally-mandated resources from the state to support them in their efforts to gain control over their lives, become more self-sufficient and contribute to their families, communities and their own wellbeing. Women



demonstrate a political realism in their demands, recognising the need for a balance between public support and private initiative in addressing HIV/AIDS.

The educational and organising strategies that help women discover and strengthen their own resources – solidarity, creativity, stubbornness, passion, hope, critical thinking, organisation – are essential along with leadership skills and information to analyse and develop effective strategies to address problems and their context. As they engage on these issues, women develop a deeper analysis of power and an understanding that male privilege and gender oppression, like racism, classism and hate, are not natural or “God given” conditions of society.

But in taking on the dynamics of power and privilege, women and their movements find themselves asking some hard questions that centre around balancing short term versus long term, micro vs macro tactics and strategies in the process of movement-building. Some of these questions include:

- ☛ Given the context, are demands and strategies capable of shifting power dynamics or are they only perpetuating the status quo by achieving modest practical reforms without considering the macro-politics and policies that define local realities?
- ☛ What are the corporate interests behind drug production and distribution, how do they impact government’s and their limited choices, and what are viable alternatives?
- ☛ Who makes decisions on pricing and distribution policies that directly impact them?

- ☛ What is the role of major donor agencies and their government’s reproductive health policies?
- ☛ If women demand access to fertiliser for their gardens to ensure economic and nutritional self-sufficiency, at what point do we begin questioning the lack of other economic avenues open to women, especially in rural areas?
- ☛ When do we begin to question what kind of economic development is taking place in Malawi, and how does it impact women and their potential access and control of key resources?
- ☛ What kind of movement-building and activism is required to help women move beyond bare subsistence? How do we challenge the neoliberal paradigm based on privatisation, deregulation, and austerity that diminish health services and the protection of rights while having to survive within it?
- ☛ What if the resources we seek actually work to perpetuate the patriarchal, neoliberal and oppressive status quo? What are the implications?

Finding the answers to these complex questions is part of the journey and organising process that we face together as they arise. Ultimately, being denied access to resources, based on societal misconceptions or sexist beliefs that treat women “as unwanted clutter” or “walking corpses” is no longer tolerated in Malawi. That is a gigantic win with a deep and practical impact for women. Through the campaign, women are also coming together, finding their power, voice, and agency, asserting their own dreams about their lives, defining ideas about wellbeing and developing inspiring visions of the common good.

1. This introduction adapts and builds on an earlier version co-written with Alia Khan for JASS' Thematic Sessions on Access and Control of Resources for the AWID Forum, Transforming Economic Power, 2012.
2. As cited in Gaventa, John (2009) and Srilatha Batliwala (2011).
3. Adapted from *Making Change Happen 3: Revisioning Power for Justice*, Just Associates, 2006 (reprinted 2008 and 2013).
4. Kate Young. (1993, p. 157). *Planning Development with Women: Making a World of Difference*. Macmillan.
5. Adapted from Batliwala, Srilatha, *Changing Their Worlds: Concepts and Practices of Women's Movements*, 2nd edition, Association of Women's Rights in Development (AWID), 2008.
6. Adapted from VeneKlasen, Lisa and Alia Khan (2012), 'Women's Movements and Economic Power: Connecting the local and the global' published in *Development*, 2012, 55(3), Society for International Development.
7. Cornwall, Andrea and John Gaventa (2001), 'Power, Knowledge and Political Spaces in the Framing of Poverty Policy', IDS WP 143; and Gaventa, John (2006), 'Finding the Spaces for Change: A power analysis' in *Exploring Power for Change*, IDS Bulletin 37.6, Brighton, IDS.
8. Written by Shereen Essof, drawing on interview transcripts produced by Hope Chigudu, Anna Davies-van Es, Maggie Mapondera, case studies produced by Linnah Matanya, Kwangu Tembo Makhuwira and Tiwonge Gondwe with contributions from Thoko Phiri, Sibongile Singini, Valerie Miller, Alia Khan, and Lisa VeneKlasen.
9. Rick Rowden (2013), 'The Ghosts of User Fees Past: Exploring Accountability for Victims of a 30 year Economic Policy Mistake', *Health & Human Rights*, 15 (1). Retrieved from <http://www.hhrjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2013/06/Rowden-FINAL.pdf>
10. Traditional Authorities are a governance and leadership structure in which the authority of a community or ethnic group is tied to patriarchal custom and traditions, in which power and decision making often resides in male chiefs and their headman.



The emancipation of women is not an act of charity, the result of a humanitarian or compassionate attitude...[it] is a fundamental necessity for the revolution, the guarantee of its continuity and the precondition for its victory. The main objective of the revolution is to destroy the system of exploitation and build a new society, which releases the potentialities of human beings ...

Samora Machel, the Mozambican revolutionary leader and President



Acknowledgements

We especially thank all the extraordinary Malawian women who have taught us so much about power and change, and our extraordinary Malawian organisational partner, Malawi Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Affected by HIV and AIDS (MANERELA+) and the leadership of MANERELA+, Reverends Sembereka and Domaya for their vision, deep commitment to human dignity and courage in partnering with feminist movement-builders and making the changes necessary for women to lead the charge. The untimely death of Rev. Domaya in July 2013 was a loss to all of us. We carry his spirit in our hearts and in our continued struggle for a better world for all.

JASS (JUST ASSOCIATES)

JASS (Just Associates) is an international feminist organisation grounded and driven by the partners and initiatives of its regional networks in Mesoamerica, Southern Africa and Southeast Asia. JASS is dedicated to strengthening and mobilising women's voice, visibility and collective organising power to change the norms, institutions and policies that perpetuate inequality and violence, and to create a just, sustainable world for all.

Founded as a learning community by a group of activists, popular educators and scholars from 13 countries in 2002, JASS generates knowledge from experience with the hope of improving the theory and practice of women's rights, development and democracy.

JASS (Just Associates)

www.justassociates.org
info@justassociates.org