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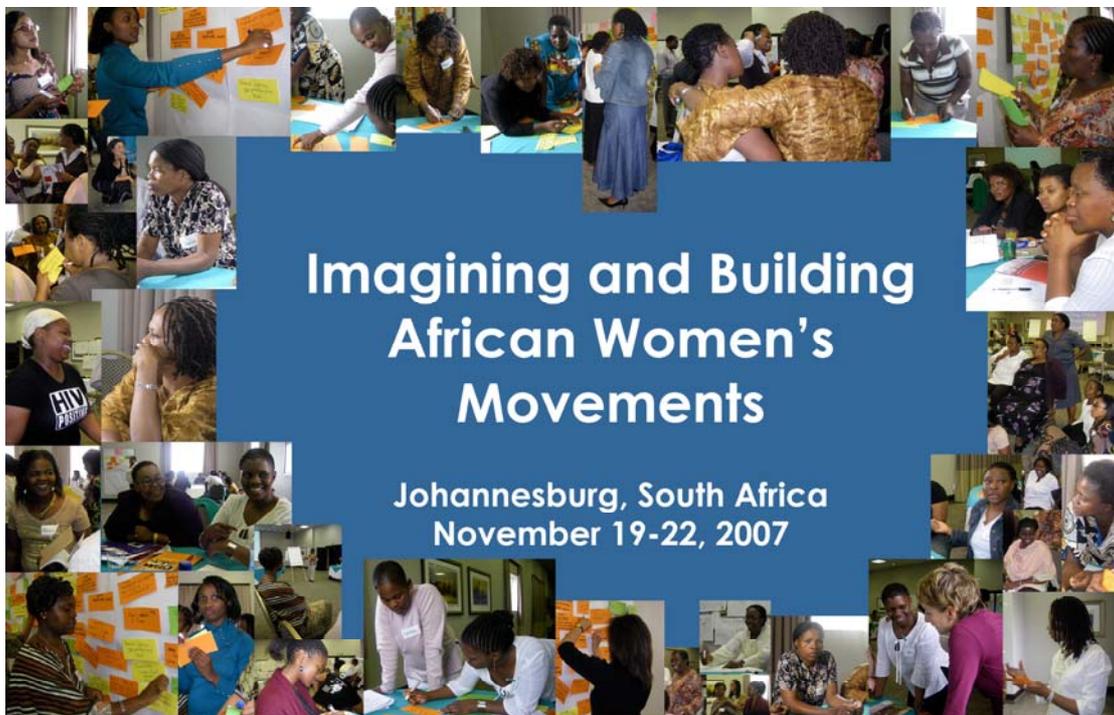
Strengthening & sustaining
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REPORT
Movement-Building Institute
November 19-22, 2007
Johannesburg, South Africa



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JASS' Feminist Movement-Building Initiative relies on the support and collaboration of Hivos, the Global Fund for Women, Mama Cash, the Gender Equality Unit of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Steven Lewis Foundation, in addition to our partnership with OSISA and ActionAid International.

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February 14, 2008

1. Summary: Building African Women's Movements

From November 19 to 22, 25 Southern African women living with and active on HIV and AIDS came together in Johannesburg for a four-day workshop of reflection, analysis and strategizing.

This gathering marked the first phase of a long-term process to strengthen women's leadership, strategies and collective power, in order for their voices and demands to be visible and influential at all levels of decision-making. Along with similar groups in Southeast Asia and Mesoamerica, the Southern African process is part of JASS' multi-regional political capacity-building effort, *Imagining and Rebuilding Women's Movements for the Future*.

JASS Southern Africa builds on the active support of the Open Society Institute of Southern Africa (OSISA) for meaningful engagement by Africans in shaping the agenda for HIV and AIDS policies. Other building blocks for the institute were OSISA's 2006 meeting (with Hivos and Women and Law in Southern Africa), *Reinvigorating and Sustaining Vibrant Women's Movements in Southern Africa*; ActionAid International's pioneering efforts with women in HIV and AIDS, including the *Women Won't Wait* campaign spotlighting violence against women; and the bold recommendations of 2006's African Feminist Forum.

Through an open application process, over 25 HIV+ women and AIDS activists were invited to the institute. Most were young women from organizations of people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) from Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia, Zambia, Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Mozambique, and Malawi. They represented a diverse range of experiences (mobilisation, education, care, etc.) from a range of organisations and movements (women's organisations that work on HIV&AIDS, women's rights groups, and mixed organisations that work on HIV-AIDS) and at different levels (grassroots organising, community work, campaigning/ mobilising, community media, advocacy).

The institute was carefully designed to enable women to reflect on their own experiences, as the foundation for gaining new political skills and deepening their political analysis of the context and moment. During the workshop, participants learnt about and critically assessed the last two decades of trends, policies and civil-society strategies on HIV and AIDS and women's rights in the sub-region and on the continent. They analysed the current political landscape, taking stock of women's movements, of the realities faced by the community of women living with HIV and of the groups working on HIV. With new insights about the complex nature of change, participants shaped visions for the future and mapped the needs and opportunities for women and organizations at country and regional levels. The maps and plans forged by the young women form the basis of a route going forward, for interconnected training and advocacy to strengthen individual women leaders, organizations and alliances over the four-year span of the movement-building initiative.

In order to reclaim feminist politics...there is a need to strengthen the architecture of the feminist movement at all levels through education [and] popularization – taking the feminist movement to the streets... *Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, ED African Women's Development Fund, speaking at the African Feminist Forum, November 2006*

2. Rationale: Why Movement-Building?

What is movement-building?

- Strengthening women's organizing and building collective power
- Linking community-level action to address needs and rights with systemic change strategies at other levels
- Forging common vision, broad agenda from the ground upward
- Recognizing and negotiating differences of power, privilege, perspective
- Creating flexible alliances, linkages and honoring a division of labor
- Responding with agility to political opportunities and threats
- Ensuring voice & leadership by those most affected by injustice

JASS overview

The overwhelming spread and toll of HIV/AIDS has been at the centre of the African continent's struggles for economic and social development in the last decade. Wealthy donor countries have been shockingly slow to respond to the unfolding epidemic, while a series of misguided policies have made matters tragically worse, particularly for women. For example, the Bush administration uses its funding to promote ABC ("abstinence, be faithful and use condoms"), which fails to account for the fact that women have little negotiating power when it comes to sex, particularly with steady partners. Thus, it should be no surprise that the highest infection rate today is among African women in steady partnerships. Similarly, much heralded "home-based care" programs have had the effect of exploiting women's devalued care-giving role, while letting governments and the international aid community off the hook for providing basic healthcare. Indeed, during the same two decades that the epidemic unfolded, strapped public health systems were further dismantled as a result of internationally-imposed neoliberal economic policies that favoured privatization and fee-for-service models, while capping hiring and salaries for professionals. This combination of factors has left women disastrously overburdened, increasing their health risks while reducing their opportunities and ability to generate income or food.

Since the mid-2000s, shocking statistics – combined with the bold challenges of prominent leaders like Stephen Lewis, UN Special Envoy for AIDS – finally gave the pandemic an African woman's face and called the donor community on the carpet for negligence. Though African women were significant early pioneers in the fight against AIDS, African women's rights groups have been surprisingly missing in action over the last fifteen years, as powerful gender-blind rights and service NGOs dominated the battle over what to do with the vast sums of HIV/AIDS money.

Meanwhile, although African women rights advocates have made significant progress in terms of formal equality and increased numbers in decision-making, the last five years have witnessed a decline in the influence of rights organizations. It seems that opportunities in and with governments have, over time, diverted key women's rights leaders and efforts. (A stark example is that of the South African women's movement which lost its vibrancy as women took their places in a newly installed post-apartheid government that has gradually diluted its commitment to equality.) Increased women's representation in formal decision-making has not amplified gender equality commitments as hoped, partly because many women in power have no relationship to women's rights groups. In many countries, party politics have proven divisive for women. As poverty, development and macro-economic issues have taken centre stage, women's rights activists lament their inability to respond effectively at all levels. Yet, arguably, it is economic rights – from land to healthcare – that matter most to the majority of African women today.

The dominant discourses in the women's movement in the region have been those around civil rights incorporating freedom of movement, association, access to services such as health and education and good governance in which women are included. However, as poverty increased, the limits of these discourses have become evident, as inequalities by class, race and gender remained unchanged or increased. It has become more difficult for the women's movement to mobilize women and other oppressed groups through these equality-based discourses. *Rudo Gaidzanwa, Concept Paper on the Women's Movement in Southern Africa, OSISA, 2006*

African women's movements are dominated by NGOs as an institutional form. Yet, many activists today say that these institutions, while a source of strength and stability, have also become a hindrance for flexible, strategic action and alliances. Extensive grassroots women's associations and clubs (burial societies, savings clubs, market women's associations, religious women's groups, etc.) actively organize women around basic needs throughout the continent, but given rigid social stratification and history, there is little connection to urban-based women's NGOs. In the face of conservative backlash and government backsliding, women's NGOs are fragmented and struggling to be influential and relevant.

A movement is **not** a collection of NGOs! Rather, it is a collective of groups and individuals working towards a common goal. Effective movement-building requires that we look beyond the usual suspects to build the voice and power of the movement, organizing and convening many different players, who work in a range of different ways. *Lisa Veneklasen, JASS*

Despite the frustrations of the moment, there are many inspiring signs of push-back from African women, including by young women. While HIV/AIDS is spawning communities run by grandmothers and families headed by children, it has also sparked new forms of organizing and mobilization by women and particularly young women who are HIV-positive. In some countries for example, sex workers have become more organized and powerful, fighting on the frontline of HIV/AIDS prevention. Nevertheless, the absence of women's rights agendas and organizations in HIV/AIDS work remains palpable and a source of deep tension between women's rights activists and women living with HIV/AIDS. This troubling disconnect surfaces the unfinished business of African feminists with regard to the powerful taboos, denial and fear surrounding sexuality and sex. Many feminists feel strongly that the cultural lid must be taken off these vital issues – albeit slowly and carefully – as diverse African women to come together around a broad agenda for equality in both the public and private arenas of power.

We should start within ourselves. We need to change mindsets, to be independent, and to create strong African movements outside the NGO sector. *Tiwonge Gondwe, Coalition of Women Living Positively with HIV/AIDS, Malawi*

The many interconnected injustices women face in relation to HIV and AIDS can be traced back to the dynamics of power, as inequality and oppression shape women's personal and public lives. Looking at the causes and consequences of HIV and AIDS from a gender perspective (as well as potential solutions), the issues of sex, stigma, technology and money predominate. Given widespread gender violence, taboos and lack of information, urgent needs include:

- the information, confidence and support to negotiate sex;
- appropriate technologies that women can control for treatment and prevention;
- access to resources (land, property, income, jobs) for women and their families;
- better resourced public health systems that address women's needs and rights.

On the level of organizing and citizen-driven change, women living with HIV and AIDS confront a particular set of tensions. African women's rights groups have been slow to prioritize HIV and AIDS, and there is some bad feeling regarding the perceived 'diversion' of funding towards the epidemic. Within most groups of PLWHA (people living with HIV and AIDS), women lack voice and power although they are often the backbone of these groups. Resources hardly 'trickle down' to HIV+ women, but tend rather to be controlled by a handful of large NGOs that lack a gender perspective and do not represent positive people. 'Prevention vs treatment' complicates funding, advocacy strategies, alliances and priorities around HIV and AIDS, and sidelines related women's-rights questions.

In order to strategize effectively, an HIV+ activist needs the political information and analytical skills to understand the connection between (for example) global trade agendas, international financial institutions, macro-economic policies, and the dearth of drugs and staff at the local clinic. The challenges of changing policies, resource flows, attitudes and behavior demand more than individual action. Southern African women need to build and use their collective power in order to amplify their voices on this complex network of issues, from partner violence in the home, to grandmothers struggling to support orphans, to the allocation of national budgets.

We need to spend time looking at where we have come from, how and why we have organized, with what resources, what lessons. We also need to know the issues, the struggles, the resolutions. We won't have all the answers, but this forum is really to help us to view history and the present, and to share ideas on how to develop new ways to think about our movements, connecting with each other, and strengthening our work. *Everjoice Win, AAI*

The four-day institute is the beginning of a long-term training, advocacy and communications initiative to build the collective capacity of a new wave of activists. A second phase through 2008 will continue honing strategies and building leadership and organizational capacities through mentoring, training, and planning linked to action that combines grassroots organizing, advocacy and creative media. As this institute is also part of JASS' broader multi-regional and global movement-building effort, underway in Mesoamerica and Southeast Asia, participants will have opportunities to exchange experiences and network with activist women from Asia and Latin America.

When we were conceptualizing this institute, we did not want it to be a matter of dialogue only with no follow-up or action piece. We are committed to walking with people in their actions and to looking at how we can reinvigorate the movement, get back the energy that has been lost. *Sisonke Msimang, OSISA*

3. Methodology: Analysis and Reflection

The interactive approach employed in the institute combined skills-building with political analysis and reflection on organising experiences in different parts of the sub-region. The interconnected themes of power, sex and money were consistently interwoven throughout the process that led to strategising. The facilitators introduced related critical concepts for discussion, including globalization, neoliberalism, hegemony, fundamentalisms, movements, movement-building and feminisms.

I've struggled for a long time to see change implemented or opened up by women, and what comes into my heart and my mind now is that we're only starting to realize the change within ourselves as women. This is the road we have to take first. *Sipiwe Hlope, Swaziland Positive Living*

3.1 Understanding power in women's organising and life experience

A focus on technical solutions during the last decades has not only depoliticized change strategies, but also left many activists ill-equipped to understand power dynamics as both the negative forces they must confront **and** the alternative they are building. Thus, a central piece of JASS' feminist movement-building work is power analysis and political education more broadly.

In reflecting on power, participants noted that women as individuals are likely to feel powerless in their marriages, when they are not able to make decisions, and when they are unable to protect themselves and their children. In contrast, participants all felt powerful when they were able to solve problems themselves, participate in support groups, when they are campaigning, marching and making their voices heard in the media, and when they are challenging other actors and governments,

We feel powerful when coming out to the community around us, people we work with, our families, and society in general – this empowers LGBTI people [lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, inter-sex]. *Patience Mandishona, Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe*

I felt powerful when my sisters and I had to fight to have an ARV site in our communities. People used to have to go to the cities to get ARVs and many of them would die on their way. I had to fight to get ARVs available in my area, and I felt powerful on this occasion. *Caroline Magerad Lelosa, People Living Openly With AIDS, Lesotho*

A moment of powerlessness was last month when I went to get my supply of ARVs for ten million Zimbabwean dollars. I went back last week for my new supply and it was now 54 million Zimbabwean dollars. I had to go to the black market to get the money, and when I got to the pharmacy they were out of stock. I was thinking about where in the public sector I can go and do they have drugs there, and what about those people who don't have the money, and can't even get to the clinic? This makes me feel very powerless. *Martha Tholanah Mensah-King, Zimbabwe AIDS Network*

The group noted that we tend to think of 'power' in the negative: the power to dominate, to control, to abuse, to isolate, to make someone feel shamed, or to push someone aside. These are all forms of *power over*. While it is important to understand and analyse the different forms of power over, the process reminded participants that other, positive forms of power exist:

- Power *to* – the capacity of each individual to shape her life; to make a difference; to grow and change; to resist;
- Power *within* – sense of self-worth, self-awareness and tolerance, respect for difference; ability to imagine and hope;
- Power *with* – collective strength and organization; solidarity; unity of purpose; common cause; influence of numbers.

The power analysis provided a useful framework for developing strategies and leadership styles that promote *power to*, *power with* and *power within*. The group discussed the reality that, despite knowing a lot about violence against women, women's rights and how to prevent HIV, women may not act on this information in their personal lives because it creates conflict and potentially a loss of community that is too hard to face. As women confront these contradictions between their public and private selves, tolerance and mutual support by other women are necessary.

Participants discussed the JASS framework for understanding 'power over' by looking at how it operates in three overlapping dimensions, or the three faces of power:

- *Visible power – Observable decision-making*: This refers to governments, kings, prime minister, laws, budgets, international donors and financial institutions. Elected and appointed officials and institutions that decide about policies and resources.
- *Hidden power – Setting the political agenda*: There are actors and forces who may not sit at the decision-making table in an official capacity but nevertheless control what happens from under the table. These forces narrow the public agenda to serve their interests by preventing other perspectives from challenging theirs. For example, oil interests call the shots on energy policy and prevent alternative sources of energy from being developed. Pharmaceutical companies have reduced HIV/AIDS to a medical challenge in policy discussions. Women's issues or perspectives on violence and prevention are not part of the agenda as more powerful actors overshadow women's voices and de-legitimise women's issues.
- *Invisible power – Shaping meaning*: This refers to the way power influences what is in our minds; the ways that socialization and ideology work to define narrowly what is "normal" or "acceptable" or part of our culture. In this way, women blame themselves for abuse or for being HIV positive. Invisible power in the form of stereotypes and stigma makes women believe that they do not deserve rights.

The group identified some of the ways that visible, invisible, and hidden power operate and impact women with HIV and AIDS. The framework helped to surface how negative and harmful traditional practices (common in most cultures) prioritize male pleasure and make women's pleasure wrong or immoral.

The power analysis also revealed how poverty and violence are key pieces of the complex of interconnected problems that shape women's experience of HIV/AIDS. It is critical therefore to have a clear sense of the key actors, forces and causes that impact women, including the local, national and global dynamics of policy-making. Women's strategies need to combine education and awareness-raising with effective advocacy to generate pressure to develop **and** implement programmes and policies to address women's economic, social and political realities shaping their health and wellbeing.

One of the great problems of history is that the concepts of love and power have usually been contrasted as opposites ... What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and that love without power is sentimental and anemic ... Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love. *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Visible Power	Hidden Power	Invisible Power
Investment in the production and distribution of male condoms (where the decision about protection is the hands of the man) is given priority over investment in either female condoms or microbicides (where women have more control the situation)	Aid agencies dominating policy-making about prevention are gender-blind in the sense that they do not recognize women's limited negotiating power in sex. Also, donors say they cannot allocate money for education about condoms because of the influence of strong religious forces and US government policies.	Women, particularly in steady partnerships, risk being beaten by their male partners if they insist on a condom; such a request is perceived as suspicious. Traditional practices and behaviours, and fear of stigma prevent people from using prevention and treatment resources to which they might have access.
PMTCT (prevention of mother-to-child transmission) services and policies only take the child into account; there are no resources to support the mother to remain healthy after the child is born.	Women may be denied PMTCT services because of individual nurses' or doctor's attitudes that an HIV+ woman should be punished for getting pregnant	Pregnant HIV+ women are taught about the risk of mother-to-child transmission breastfeeding but are nonetheless pressured into breastfeeding by social attitudes at community level. ("If you don't breastfeed people will know.") This is an example of a policy that can't be implemented because of social norms.
Marital rape is not regulated or in some cases even recognised by government.	When women are raped they must report it to the police before they can access PEP (post exposure prophylaxis, to prevent infection). But the police often tell women that they asked for it, so most women don't even come forward when they are raped.	At the level of attitudes and values, some people believe that a man has 'the right' to demand sex with his wife.
Governments fail to design, allocate resources to or implement programmes for women with HIV. Meeting the needs of HIV+ women seldom features as an evaluation criterion for programs.	Swaziland Women's Coalition submitted a proposal to the Global Fund Round 7, but the people who submitted the final proposal had their own agenda and removed almost all activities for women and girls.	Even where women receive services and support, deep-seated cultural values induce them to put themselves last, for instance by giving their ARVs to the men in their family.

3.2 Reflecting on the past

Participants constructed a detailed timeline and historical analysis, showing key advances gained and challenges faced by women's movements and HIV movements in the last few decades. The timeline illustrated that during and before the 1980s, many groups engaged in activism for the rights of women and of PLWHA, although the gains only became visible a decade or more later. The timeline experience also revealed significant policy and institutional achievements – and yet, each victory was rarely sustained, while bringing new challenges and a pattern of backlash.

Key points arising from the timeline:

- In the 1980s, many of the first HIV and AIDS support groups were headed by and organized for African women. However, in policy circles, African women were not talking about their own experience with HIV and AIDS. Instead, as HIV and AIDS

came into focus and resources, 'experts' discussed African women, a tendency that continues today.

- It was noted that gay men do not necessarily push the agenda of lesbian women or HIV+ women in general. There is a need to communicate with gay men to persuade them that a women's rights agenda can be in their interest too, and to develop a strategic alliance.
- Nothing like 'a natural ally' exists for African HIV+ women. Instead, there are always conflicting interests around resources, visibility and voice. It is important to begin negotiating from the interests that you have in common, but to recognise the differences. Just because we are women, for example, we are not the same. We have conflicting interests amongst ourselves; we have power struggles between us that we need to resolve in order to move forward. Power dynamics are not static – they change all the time.
- Because it is technology that women can control, microbicides are a very important tool for prevention. The group expressed concern that clinical trials are held in rural areas where it is possible to abuse women's ignorance and lack of knowledge, and it may be more difficult to mobilize support for them as they are ostracized by their communities.
- Women are *used* in the consultation process to legitimize government plans. Inclusion at the planning stage seldom translates into women's benefit in implementation or monitoring.
- Neoliberal and 'free-market' economic policies advanced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have dismantled and/or privatized public healthcare systems replacing stretched services with fee-for-service initiatives put healthcare beyond the reach of the poor. In Africa, where 'debt' has increased five-fold and conditions on loans place caps on wages and hiring in the health profession, the drain of underpaid and poorly supported health professionals has created shortages that compound the HIV and AIDS crisis.
- Multinational corporations play a huge role in shaping global AIDS policies through their influence over trade, investment and foreign aid policy. Major players include a handful of pharmaceutical and insurance companies that control access to generics and the pricing of medicines, and that weigh in heavily on the side of treatment vs. prevention.
- Fundamentalisms of all kinds seem to offer firm solutions, clear enemies and a return to some mythical better past – the answer to people's feelings of insecurity and vulnerability. We need strategies to address the false appeals that fundamentalisms offer. Much media attention focuses on Islamic fundamentalism but in Southern Africa, it is fundamentalist Christian groups that have spread damaging messages and encouraged a backlash against women and HIV and AIDS. These groups flourish because an enormous amount of money flows to them from their counterparts in the US, and from the US government through its support of "faith-based initiatives" especially in the delivery of HIV and AIDS programs. Many right-wing Christian organizations who are now providing services and abstinence-only education showed no interest in HIV and AIDS until the money was made available by the Bush administration.

The group concluded that it is important to be educated about the macro issues and forces at the root of the feminization of HIV and AIDS. To find ways to engage locally with a global connection, we need a more in-depth political analysis and a carefully defined political strategy that draws upon the power of numbers and strong alliances to influence change. Participants agreed that individual lives and experiences provide the lens through which we can better understand ideology, socialisation and the politics shaping policy and reality. These are essential first steps towards educating and organizing women and communities for movement-building.

3.3 Systemic and Social Challenges

Three participants shared their experiences organizing HIV+ women, in:

- a PLWHA organization (men and women),
- a campaign-style organization, and
- an all-women's organization.

In the deep discussion that followed the presentation of these case studies, group members expressed a strong need to organize autonomously as women – and to develop women's agendas, platforms and alliances. Individuals described the enormous hurdles to getting women's priorities on PLWHA agendas, whether the men are gay or straight. The track record is abysmal.

The discussion identified a number of other, key challenges:

- Many women served by HIV and AIDS organisations are struggling for basic day-to-day survival. With so many women facing such uncertain livelihoods, the potential for engaging them in organizing and advocacy – even when their rights are at stake – is very limited. The challenge is to develop strategies that organize women to work collectively meet those needs and thus, gradually, to have the time and energy to engage in the political struggles necessary to address the root causes of their issues. Providing treatment or counselling, for example, can provide an entry point. From meeting individual needs, this can become a means for building women's movements that address the root, systemic causes of women's struggles with HIV and AIDS and with inequality and poverty generally.
- Experience amply demonstrates that mixed PLWHA organizations are unlikely to take up women's issues even if the majority of the members are women; the case studies discussed examples where the majority of members were women while the leadership remains male. If women want such organizations to include their concerns and priorities, as well as open up space for leadership, they need to be prepared to face conflict, power struggles, and other people's individual agendas.
- A great deal of knowledge exists about ways in which women are organising themselves, for example in burial societies. How can we integrate that knowledge into strategies for politicizing these groups and drawing them into political struggles
- HIV and AIDS is much more than an epidemic; it's a web of power and forces (such as gender inequality, poverty, culture, conflicts, and governments) that shape women's experiences.

3.4 Organizational and Leadership Challenges

In small groups, participants role-played some of the typical challenges and dynamics that women face in five different kinds of organisational settings:

- a positive women's group;
- women in a mixed positive people's organisation;
- between women's rights groups and positive women's groups;
- between international women's organizations and African women leaders; and
- between donors and African activists.

For each one, the group enacted what the situation looks like now and then what we want it to look like in the future. This produced hilarious and revealing scenarios – a sharp spotlight on the kinds of leadership that participants seek either to avoid or to provide. It was clear from the cases that the tendency to use HIV+ women to advance interests and agendas other than those of HIV+ women is common not only to mixed PLWHA groups, but also women's and international organizations.

3.5 How Change Happens

In pairs, each woman shared an example of significant change in her own life and how she felt about it. This exercise was the basis for thinking through the messy realities of social change strategies, in sharp contrast to the promises of linear two-year plans and log-frames that many participants encounter.

When something is taken away from you are forced to change. When your parents die you are forced to change. Change involves loss and struggle.

The best change comes from inside. Nothing else will truly change you; you have to change yourself.

You may set out to change one aspect of your life but then it touches every other thing that surrounds you. You may change one thing and then it changes your whole life. One little change multiplies.

Fear comes from being alone, and fear can make us sceptical about trying new things.

We related change to our own lives, the sacrifices we have made, the losses we have suffered. And now you try to apply that to a political situation or a situation where you are trying to make change for everybody. It's somewhat scary, it's heavy.

Participants, MBI

In one of the most profound conversations of the institute, participants reflected on the ways in which change happens, confirming that change is both an internal and an external process, both a positive and a difficult experience. "Information alone is not going to produce change among our sisters. Sometimes the challenges of change – even positive change – are so daunting that they will cause someone to withdraw or go into denial. Sometimes new ideas can make us angry. Anger can be a good motivator and so we may want to help people tap into their anger. Conflict can be productive and can be used as a motivation for change. We need to understand how change happens – including conflict, anger and pain – and use this knowledge to inform our organizing strategies."

The Mesoamerican feminists involved in the JASS movement-building initiative in that region use the word "transgression" to describe how women push against the grain, pushing back in subtle and big ways. Important points to note:

1. nothing changes without pressure;
2. nothing changes without conflict;
3. change comes from the inner self but will not be sustained without the collective.

Respect for differences and the ability to understand them are critical, if organizations are to work through the dynamics of change.

The important thing is to step back and go through this process of thinking "What has changed me?" We are all change agents. *Everjoyce Win, AAI*

3.6 JASS Movement-Building Initiative

JASS facilitators spelled out the broader, multi-regional feminist movement-building initiative of which this workshop was one step. In progress in Southeast Asia and Mesoamerica as well as in Southern Africa, the MBI is designed to:

- Strengthen and diversify women's leadership and capacity for collaboration;
- Deepen leaders' political skills to equip them to engage communities, adjust strategies to fast-shifting power dynamics, and negotiate agile alliances;

- Reconnect effective grassroots empowerment and organizing strategies with policy advocacy and broader systemic change strategies;
- Increase the visibility and legitimacy of women's critical, transformative actions in many contexts through innovative media and communications strategies;
- Enhance women's rights strategies that integrate different rights agendas (economic, social, cultural, civil and political) with inspiring long-term visions of hope and change;
- Generate and share fresh knowledge and innovative approaches.

These goals are carried out through a series of workshop linked to action, generating diverse kinds of organizing and priorities in each region despite the common cross-regional desire to retool, diversify and remobilize.

3.7 The Concept of Feminism

The group discussed key concepts critical to women's movement-building, including feminism. During the discussion, many participants talked of how they had distanced themselves from the term 'feminism' because they associated it with academics, white women, lesbians or unmarried women in the past. But participants were excited to learn of efforts across Africa to revitalize and re-energize feminist agendas, especially through the African Feminist Forum in Ghana in 2006.

Feminism is a movement dedicated to eradicating inequality among people based on gender, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race and other forms of differences. *Bene Madunagu, Nigerian feminist*

For many of the participants, the discussion of feminism building on the reflection and political analysis gave them a fresh perspective on the possibilities of being a feminist.

3.8 Visions

Informed by these insights, small groups fashioned their visions as the basis for strategies going forward:

Our vision is walking the journey together as women, taking off our institutional hat. This group, the thirty of us, this is the start of something, a support base to share ideas, whether we are working in a participatory way with rural women on their rights, or writing a paper for a conference.

We envisaged a situation where it becomes normal to say "Do you see how they portray women?" so that people begin to do that on their own, making a critical analysis of what's happening around us.

We said we should start within ourselves, then move to the organizations where we work, changing mindsets, working independently of men, and creating strong African movements outside the NGO sector.

Visible and strong movements of women living with HIV and AIDS (WLWHA) that take care of our needs today, facilitate mobilization of other women, and build critical consciousness for us to take political action on our violated rights!

We talked about the meaningful participation of all women, because for a long time men have had the advantage so women need to be on an equal level with men. We talked about equal representation at all levels, increased visibility of women, and women's perspectives to be visible and noted in private and public spaces.

Our vision is to have strong and well-coordinated national as well as regional networks that are built on trust and solidarity, in which we effectively use the power within us – as individuals and organizations – that will act as an enabler rather than a barrier for sisterhood.

Taking the elements of these visions further, participants formed two groups to look at strategies on the regional level and as young feminists.

I'm a feminist. I wasn't sure before, but now I'm sure.

I gained knowledge on the visible, hidden and invisible powers I used to not understand. And I understood myself to be an angry feminist.

Participants

Regional Presentation

This group began by recognising that regional structures already exist. Participants discussed groupings such as the International Community of Women Living with HIV and AIDS (ICW) and raised the issue of women's desks within PLWHA groups. Certain organizations (NAPSA, Sanarela and Sanaso, for example) already have observer status within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), something that ICW should also attain. Southern African women need to be represented by such organizations at international events and within bodies such as the AWID Forum, UNGASS, the Commission on the Status of Women, the International AIDS Conference (ICA) and the International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases in Africa (ICASA).

In terms of interventions, the group identified the need to set up and strengthen national branches of regional networks where these are absent, for example in Zambia, Namibia, Lesotho and Botswana. At national level, participants committed to transferring capacity from this institute to grassroots women as well as connecting with movements of women living with HIV regionally.

Healthcare systems emerged as the most immediate advocacy target. Noting that it is the responsibility of government, the group identified specific focuses:

- access to treatment for women;
- sexual and reproductive health (with access to regular pap smears as an example);
- transferring the burden of home-based care from women to government;
- harmonized national drug regulations; and
- literacy around clinical trials.

Recognizing that poverty underlies women's vulnerability overall, the group made a strong call for women's empowerment.

Young Women's Presentation

The group of young women proposed to do a mapping exercise, to find out how many youth organizations currently exist with space for young women. Another focus was e-networking at the international level to share experiences, information, and support for developing national strategies and interventions to mobilize young women and build movements. The group confirmed the value of inter-generational exchange, as existing women's organizations have technology and access to resources (funds, office space, programs and so on), as long as older women open up space for their younger sisters and transfer knowledge and skills. Young women need to be represented fully, and involved in meaningful ways in civil society, women's organizing and government.

4. Action: What Next?

In their country groups, participants went through a rigorous and in-depth discussion in order to identify the opportunities for organizing women more effectively and their priority needs and strategies for doing that.

4.1 Country groups

Common to all country groups was the desire for dialogue with relevant national organizations and with government, and the need to identify opportunities for mobilization and movement-building, including dates such as the 16 Days of Activism and groups such as women councillors. Dialogue towards a common agenda was also prioritized.

Botswana

The group saw national elections in 2009 as an opportunity, along with the annual national AIDS Day. As well as strengthening regional links and creating a forum to share information about women's rights and demands, participants agreed to mobilize WLHA to strengthen existing networks. They identified women's HIV organizations as well as human rights groups who do advocacy for women's rights issues:

- Bomme Isago,
- WLSA,
- Emang Basadi,
- Bonela.

Lesotho

The group emphasized the role of a forum in which the needs of WLWHA can be prioritized by women themselves, information and ideas can be shared, a common agenda created, and mobilization efforts coordinated. They listed groups such as:

- WLSA,
- FIDA (federation of women lawyers),
- the national network of people living with HIV as well as a CBO offering home based care of preschool teachers,
- women councillors – particularly given local government elections in 2009.

Malawi

Priorities for this group were to:

- mobilize and organize grassroots women across the country, especially the center and south, to be part of a national women's coalition;
- build the capacity and confidence of women in leadership (public speaking, resource mobilization, advocacy networking);
- economic empowerment to meet practical needs (through income-generating activities or IGAs).

In terms of WLWHA groups, many committees already exist at village, district and regional levels, as well as national executives and COWLHA (the Coalition of Women Living Positively with HIV and AIDS in Malawi). Organizations have started village saving credit schemes and have pushed representation of women at traditional authority level and local assembly. A law has already been passed against domestic violence and, with general elections in 2009, women with political aspirations will campaign in 2008 and need support.

Mozambique

Among opportunities, the group noted a favorable political regime with a Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Welfare in place as well as parliamentary representation of both PLWHA and women. Pledging to promote dialogue and to analyze the hidden

and invisible power at work in each organization, the Mozambican women listed these organizations and groups:

- Kuyakana (a network of organization of women living with HIV/AIDS),
- Muleide (women, law and development),
- NNCJ (Mozambican women law professionals),
- Forum Mulher (women's forum),
- Department of Domestic Violence,
- Students' World Assembly (SWA),
- Human Rights League,
- WLSA (Women and Law in Southern Africa).

Namibia

This group prioritized capacity building of women living with HIV to take up key positions in women's organizations, the inclusion of women living with disabilities, and making HIV and AIDS issues more visible in women's organizations' agendas and actions. Along with a Ministry of Gender Equality, existing organizations in Namibia include:

- Lironga Eparu (network of PLWHA),
- Sister Namibia (feminist magazine),
- Women's Leadership Centre (feminist writing),
- NANGOF (National NGO Forum) gender sector,
- Pots of Hope (new),
- Namibia Women's Network,
- ICW chapter (young women's dialogue),
- Parliamentarians for women's health,
- Namibian Girl Child organization,
- YWCA.

South Africa

This group prioritized strengthening women's movements in South Africa and pushing for a platform for women's voices and issues within existing HIV/AIDS organizations. Opportunities include official bodies such as the Commission for Gender Equity (CGE) and Office of the Status of Women (OSW), as well as provincial AIDS councils and Provincial Gender Machinery. South African participants noted these organizations:

- 1 in 9 (a number of organizations working with women and gender are involved),
- TAC (Treatment Action Campaign),
- TVEP (Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Program),
- Sonke Gender Justice Network,
- KZN Network for Violence Against Women,
- Progressive Women's Movement.

Swaziland

For this group, priority areas included mobilization and raising awareness along with economic empowerment. Along with the 2008 national election, opportunities included the 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women. As well as a number of organizations, Swaziland has a women's coalition.

Zambia

The Zambian group stressed attention to power relations, along with grassroots-oriented consultation, networking and collaboration to spread information. They identified a number of government groupings and processes to focus on, including the Gender Ministry, female MPs and councilors, input on the national budget, constitutional assembly, land policy/gender policy, inheritance (review of the Act),

parliamentary committees, district AIDS teams, and the National Aids Council. From among the country's many organizations and groupings, participants listed:

- CYM (Community Youth Mobilization),
- NZP (Network of Zambian People Living with AIDS),
- YWCA,
- NGO Coordinating Committee,
- Women for Change,
- ZNAN (Zambia National AIDS Network),
- CHIN (Children in Need Network),
- WLSA,
- WILDAF (Women, Law and Development in Africa).

Zimbabwe

Here, the group listed three top priorities: funding; women's leadership development and accountability; and addressing fragmented interests within the women's movement. Participants noted that existing efforts included a range of awareness and treatment literacy campaigns (including that of GALZ – Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe), the Zimbabwe Social Forum, and grassroots mobilization, for instance through the NZPW (Network of Zimbabwean Positive Women)'s database.

Opportunities ranged from efforts to popularize the new Domestic Violence Act, to a return to traditional grassroots structures, to the depth of human rights awareness in the current humanitarian crisis. Groups listed included:

- GALZ and other LGBTI groups,
- NZPW,
- WASN (Women and AIDS Support Network),
- Working Group on Women and Girls (Global Fund),
- WAG (Women's Action Group),
- Women's Coalition.

This was my first time to attend sessions like this but believe me I am taking all the information and challenges back to my country.

It was good to meet other women and share stories because I am newly diagnosed and battling to cope.

The power analysis made me think about how power has been used in the work I'm doing, without my being conscious of it.

MBI participants' evaluations

What a revival!!! Thank you all for bringing us together and letting us explore the potential within. ...Just the beginning of a process.

Gcebile Ndlovu, Regional Coordinator (Southern Africa), International Community of Women Living with HIV and AIDS, Swaziland

Thank you so much....for such an eye-opening experience.

Patience Mandishona, Gays and Lesbian of Zimbabwe (GALZ)

Hey!! am so excited, I don't know where to begin from!!! Firstly, I am definitely not the same person since I came back from the women's movement building session. ... Next piece of good news is that our Board has recognised the need for inclusion of women's issues and has created the position for a Regional Director of Women's Leadership and Empowerment (!!!)

Miriam, Network of Zambian People Living with HIV/AIDS (NZP+)

5. Appendix

5.1 Agenda Summary

Day 1: Monday, November 19th

“Mapping our lives”

Understanding power from our own personal experience (drawings and discussion)

Naming the moment: women & HIV/AIDS in the Southern African context (3 faces of power applied)

Retracing our histories: HIV/AIDS & women’s movements

Day 2: Tuesday, November 20th

Wrap up of historical & contextual analysis

Empowerment strategies & talking about sex: group discussion

Learning from our strategies & organizing experiences: 3 stories of change

Discussion and lessons from 3 stories

Day 3: Wednesday, November 21st

Power, leadership & decision-making: What it is? What we want it to be? What do we need to do to get there? (skits)

How does change happen? Work in pairs & discussion in plenary

Day 4: Thursday, November 22nd

Movements, feminisms and the future: meaning, practice & stories from JASS’ work in other regions

What’s next? Where are we going? What do we need to get there? Country planning (small groups and plenary discussion)

What’s next? (part 2): Regional planning and young women’s organizing (2 groups and plenary discussion)

Showing of workshop movie and photos

5.2 Participants

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