

Creating a *SASA!* Transition Strategy

Background:

What is *SASA!*?

SASA! is a community mobilization approach to prevent violence against women and HIV, developed by Raising Voices in Uganda. A randomized control trial evidenced *SASA!*'s effectiveness in preventing intimate partner violence against women and proved that change can occur at a community level within programmatic timeframes.¹ Translated into several languages and adapted to many contexts, *SASA!* is now being implemented by more than 60 organizations in over 25 countries.

As organizations around the world work through the *SASA!* process of change with communities, experience has shown that it is critical that they anticipate, plan for and support what happens "after" *SASA!* After all four phases of *SASA!* are completed, how can an organization ensure that positive changes are sustained in the communities? What tools do activists and community members need in order to continue to create change? This Program Brief is intended to help organizations using *SASA!* understand, plan for, and support a process of community 'transition' in which community activists take full leadership in ongoing violence against women (VAW) prevention while an organization scales back or and eventually ends formal support to those communities. It outlines a transition process for how organizations can build on the achievements of *SASA!* and support community members to continue activism to prevent VAW and HIV.

Who can use this Program Brief?

This Program Brief can be used by organizations who are planning for, or currently implementing *SASA!* Ideally, the way *SASA!* is introduced and supported right from the beginning will help community members and activists set the foundation for *SASA!* transition. However, even if you are well into *SASA!* implementation, this Brief can help ensure a smooth transition from intense organizational support to communities, to having communities fully lead and sustain activism and change. It can also be used by donors to analyze plans for *SASA!*, sustainability of grant applicants proposing use of *SASA!*, or grantee reports of *SASA!* implementation.

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The what and why of *SASA!* transition

SASA! transition means that activists and communities independently continue VAW prevention activism beyond the formal *SASA!* programming that was supported by an organization. An important aspect of *SASA!* transition is the idea that a group of activists in a community becomes so strong over the course of the *SASA!* phases that these activists can join, participate in and help lead a larger VAW prevention movement after *SASA!*. A movement goes beyond any specific program or organization, and has potential to create impact that goes well past the boundaries of one community. While *SASA!* will likely have impacted levels of violence in a community, violence prevention will still be needed within that community and the broader society.

With that in mind, community activists (CAs) are encouraged, mentored and supported from the beginning of *SASA!* to lead community mobilization and their own change process. They are encouraged to see themselves as activists for an issue, not as volunteers for an organization. The training and mentoring they receive from the organization supporting *SASA!* is an opportunity where they can learn for a time, and then they transition to another, more self-directed level where they continue their activism without that same organizational support. Transition can be seen as a recognition of all the knowledge, experience and capacity they have developed. Staff can discuss directly with them the idea of movement-building and their potential to use their skills to influence change at wider levels.

Transition frees up an organization to take another set of communities through *SASA!* or do other VAW prevention movement building work, and sets up an opportunity in which community-based activists can use their newfound skills to continue creating change. Transition demonstrates strength and is cause for celebration!

What is a Transition Strategy?

A *SASA!* transition strategy is a plan of action designed to support and facilitate full community leadership of *SASA!* to sustain positive social norm changes and VAW prevention activism.

Building up to transition

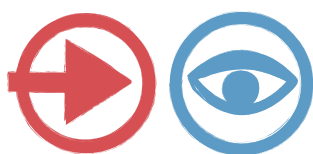
As *SASA!* is a phased-in approach to community mobilization, within each phase, the nexus of responsibility slowly shifts, gradually increasing the level of community-led activism with each *SASA!* phase. For example, in the Start Phase, an organization is playing a strong leadership role, reaching out to and getting community activists engaged. In the Awareness Phase, community activists are closely supported by the organization, with many *SASA!* activities facilitated jointly. In the Support Phase, community activists are largely facilitating activities independently. In the Action Phase, community activists are leading and initiating *SASA!* and a variety of VAW prevention activities. And after transition, community activists continue to engage the community in VAW prevention, not necessarily in a structured phased-in manner, but using the various *SASA!* materials they find relevant for particular groups and new processes and materials developed by the community.

This gradual buildup of responsibility, independence and leadership fosters long-term sustainability of community-led activism—essential for movement building for VAW prevention.

Recommendations for a *SASA!* transition strategy

Below we outline key strategies for *SASA!* transition. It is important to ensure these strategies are developed throughout the *SASA!* phases.

In these recommendations, we'll use the Phase icons to identify each phase:



Develop a strong foundation for activism

For change to be sustainable, it needs to be truly owned by the community. Work with community members to drive the change process in their own lives and in the community.

Considerations

- Careful selection of community activists who are grounded in the community by the organization supporting *SASA!* implementation.
- Relationship-building with community leaders and among community members.
- Clear communication by the organization about the spirit of activism rather than volunteerism (i.e. community mobilization done by community members for the community rather than done for the organization).
- Deep investment in training and mentoring community activists by the organization.
- Close support and co-facilitation by the organization of Awareness activities done by community activists and resource people to build credibility in the community.



Conduct collaboration meetings and linkages

Foster relationships among activists, community structures, and formal institutions/organizations to build better relationships and coordination within the various service providers in the community.

Considerations

- Arrange formal meetings between community activists and government institutions, police, community activists, health care workers, religious leaders and other civil society members.
- Focus on building networks in the community for increased SASA! activism.
- Strengthen partnerships and linkages with formal and informal structures.



Strengthen community structures

Work with both the formal and informal community structures to sustain VAW prevention activism.

Considerations

- Deepen work through existing community groups (SASA! Community Action Groups).
- Encourage and support activists to take up collective action, such as: developing codes of conducts; establishing bylaws; holding others accountable, reviewing local government policies, etc.
- Encourage community activists to facilitate activities independently.
- Emphasize skills-building in community activist and Community Action Group training.
- Encourage activists to create formal/semiformal groups (new Community Action Groups) and consider providing training to select activists to strengthen advocacy and organizational skills.
- Consider supporting organized groups in proposal writing or fundraising skills. Note: This can be done in partnership with other organizations if the specific capacity does not exist within the team.



Gradually hand over the leadership of various activities

Gradually reduce direct staff-led community activities. This allows activists to take up more responsibility, learn and gain confidence in their own abilities.

Considerations

- Create a quarterly mentoring plan to focus on the leadership skills of a few key activists with exceptional leadership potential.
- Support activists to take more leadership in planning events, meetings, or other activities.



Prepare your SASA! team for transition

Transition is a great achievement, and a time for celebration for organizational staff and community members. It will also greatly change the relationships between staff and activists. In some cases, it may mean changes in contracts or employment for particular staff. It is important to prepare your team and ensure positive attitudes towards the idea of transition.

Considerations

- Talk about transition as a success for the team, and celebrate the effort staff and community activists put in supporting the activists and change in the community.
- Ensure the team understands how transition fits into the wider VAW prevention movement building.
- Create a transition strategy and plot its timeline alongside your Support and Action phase implementation timeline. This will help to link the steps in your transition strategy with your SASA! implementation plan.
- Organize a meeting with all SASA! staff to discuss what SASA! transition means for them. Will staff move to a different project, start SASA! in a new community, or another option? Acknowledge and honor their own transitions and the emotions that come along with change.
- Recognize and appreciate the team's work that enabled the communities to make the transition. Award certificates. In cases where staff will be transitioning to a different role or organization, give recommendation letters where possible.



Communicate the transition strategy with stakeholders

Clearly communicate the intent of your transition strategy to key stakeholders; their buy-in is key to enabling a sense of ownership for ongoing VAW prevention.

Considerations

- Organize a meeting with key stakeholders; local leaders, other partners, community networks, local authorities, and others, where you explain your transition strategy.
- Clarify roles of the organization, community activists, leaders and other stakeholders going forward.



Conduct End-line Rapid Assessment Survey

After completing all the activities planned for Action phase, conduct an end-line assessment to determine if outcomes of SASA! have been achieved.

Considerations

- When analyzing end-line data, consider: Is the community ready to transition? Does the result from the rapid assessment show positive shifts in knowledge, attitude, skills and behavior of community members towards VAW?
- If most outcomes suggest readiness for community transition, but a few outcomes have not shifted enough since baseline, make an action plan to continue working on these specific indicators prior to transition if possible. Alternatively, work with community activists on an action plan to address these after transition.



Recognize, celebrate and transition

Celebrate the progress made and outcomes achieved with activists and community members.

Considerations

- Encourage and support activists to write up positive stories of change.
- Conduct a public commitment event with local leaders recognizing community activists for their work and introducing them as the leaders and focal points for continued VAW prevention activism.
- Share the results of SASA! monitoring and assessments with community activists and leaders.
- Conduct celebrations with the larger community to mark the transition. Give basic information about SASA! achievements, and invite community leaders to help you to formally recognize leadership of activists and acknowledge their new roles after transition.
- Award activists with certificates of activism and appreciation.
- Paint murals in public spaces about community accomplishments or commitments on VAW prevention.



Remember to organize a fun party with all the activists, including games, food, music, gifts, congratulatory messages celebrating all the achievements, and awarding certificates to the activists!



Continue informal support to activists after transition

Check in with activists and local leaders, especially in the first six months after transition. This can help activists feel more confident of their leadership role.

Considerations

- After the transition, conduct quarterly check-in meetings with community activists for the first year, and twice per year after that. If possible, remain open to checking in more frequently, based on their needs.
- Where possible, continue to provide communication materials to activists to support their continued activism.
- Invite community activists from communities that have transitioned to speak in meetings or press conferences, and share their experiences with community activists in new communities for encouragement and motivation.

Managing unexpected and early program end

Ideally, transition should happen after the intended outcomes of all of the *SASA!* phases have been achieved. However, there are times when organizational supported programming is prematurely ended due to unforeseen situations such as: end of available funding; reduction in or withdrawal of resources; changing priorities of organizations; and changing context, including social, political, or economic shifts or crises. In these cases, it is essential to minimize the detrimental effect the premature ending of *SASA!* programming will have on women and communities. As far as possible, work to encourage and sustain the momentum and the hopes raised for positive social change in the community while working to minimize potential harm.

Below are key strategies that can be used in such a situation to ensure that what has been achieved is not jeopardized, and that further progress towards VAW prevention goals can be made.

- Communicate with partners and community members about closure or suspension of activities. Provide early, clear, consistent and honest communication on the situation, and why *SASA!* programming will come to an end or be suspended. Avoid false hopes or promises. Be direct.
- In the case of funding issues, strive to mobilize funds for smooth and continuous operation. When there are funding gaps, work with community activists to create a plan that will allow low/no cost activities to continue where possible.
- Identify existing internal programs that can incorporate *SASA!* ideas, or, if this is not possible consider working with other civil society organizations working in those communities to integrate *SASA!* ideas.

- Conduct meetings with community activists and key partners to strategize on next steps. Identify ways to integrate VAW prevention ideas into ongoing community activities and encourage support to women experiencing violence.
- Share communication materials that can support activists in continuing their VAW prevention.
- Hand over *SASA!* activities to another entity with VAW prevention programming. Review existing structures in the community, identify who can continue the work, negotiate handover and strengthen the capacity of the group to continue *SASA!* programming.
- Learn from and document your *SASA!* experience share it internally and externally to support others who may be experiencing the same challenges.

Moving forward

Working to prevent violence against women and HIV is urgent and important work. It takes care and attention to ensure changes made toward creating safer relationships and communities where women and men can live without violence can be sustained. Communities and staff can be supported to see themselves as part of a long-term VAW prevention movement where they can continue to express their activism and commitment to preventing VAW through collective action, far beyond the formal implementation of *SASA!* The strategies outlined in this Program Brief can help organizations ensure community change goes far beyond the time of direct program implementation; supporting equal power between women and men for generations to come!

Please share with us your experiences at info@raisingvoices.org, and join the global community using *SASA!*

Other resources that can help you reflect on the quality of your *SASA!* programming include:

Raising Voices (2017) *Critical issues in ethical SASA! implementation*, Prevention Programming Series, Brief No. 1, Kampala, Uganda

Available online at <http://raisingvoices.org/resources/>

Raising Voices (2017) *Fidelity to SASA! Activist Kit*. Prevention Programming Series, Brief No. 2, Kampala, Uganda

Available online at <http://raisingvoices.org/resources/>



The Programming for Prevention Series is a collection of briefs designed to address critical challenges and questions in VAW prevention programming.

Suggested citation: Raising Voices (2019) *SASA! Transition Strategy*, Programming for Prevention Series, Brief No.3, Kampala, Uganda Available online at <http://raisingvoices.org/resources/>

Endnotes

- 1 Raising Voices, LSHTM & CEDOVIP (2015). *Is Violence Against Women Preventable? Findings from the SASA! Study* summarized for general audiences. Kampala, Uganda: Raising Voices

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