



SASA! CASE STUDY

AN ACTIVIST KIT TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND HIV/AIDS

Overview

Through our work with communities in East and Southern Africa, we have learned that reproductive health education and the ABC approach are insufficient to prevent HIV infection among women. In order to effectively prevent HIV, we must also recognize and work to prevent the violence that many women experience in their intimate relationships. In East and Southern Africa, violence against women is fueling the epidemic – it is both a cause and a consequence of HIV infection. To this end, Raising Voices, is creating an activist kit, titled **SASA!** for organizations working to prevent HIV infection and violence against women.

In Kiswahili, *sasa* means “now”. At Raising Voices, we believe that the time to begin thinking differently about preventing the spread of HIV is *now*. **SASA!** provides organizations with practical materials and information to incorporate into their existing HIV and VAW programs to address these issues in tandem and recognize the linkages between the two. In addition to its Kiswahili meaning, **SASA!** is also an acronym for the four sections of the Activist Kit: **Start**, how to begin your work; **Awareness**, educating and providing information on the link; **Support**, providing suggestions and a platform for discussion on how we can create supportive relationships and communities; **Action**, practical ideas for how everyone can prevent VAW and HIV.

The Activist Kit is filled with practical resources and activities for advocacy, local activism, training, and media that organizations working on violence or HIV/AIDS can use to incorporate these cross-cutting issues into their work. Highlights include: a 30 minute advocacy film (on DVD) and screening guide, posters, comic sheets, community drama sketches, radio programs (on CD) and a series of training modules. All the materials are designed to push the boundaries on these issues, helping organizations and their stakeholders analyze old problems in a new light and rethink issues of power to respond boldly and create a climate of activism against violence and HIV/AIDS.

A New Conceptual Framework

In many countries in East and Southern Africa ‘gender’ has become technical jargon, unfortunately often misunderstood and misconstrued. There is clearly potential for ‘gender fatigue’ to set in. Yet activists know that the transformative intention of gender analysis has not yet been realized – and this is evidenced too clearly in the rising HIV infection rates for women and the alarming levels of violence women experience.

SASA! pushes organizations and individuals to rethink old problems; to see long running issues in a new light. **SASA!** pushes boundaries – it avoids old jargon and promotes a new bold analysis of **power**. It examines how power over women hurts us all, it demonstrates how power with others can provide essential support to women, and how we all have the power to create change. It provides organizations with a sound conceptual framework for discussing the link between violence against women and HIV/AIDS and the programmatic structure in which to implement creative and comprehensive programs.

Users

SASA! is designed for organizations in East and Southern Africa, and other English speaking communities on the Continent. It is intentionally designed for both, organizations that traditionally address violence against women as well as HIV/AIDS agencies. The aim is to generate synergy by making the case that in our context, addressing both in tandem will significantly improve outcomes in both areas. The activities in **SASA!** are intended to reach a broad spectrum of stakeholders from community members and leaders at the grassroots, to journalists and editors, policy makers, and service providers (i.e. health care providers, VCT counselors, police, social welfare, etc).

SASA! Components

SASA! is a kit – as such all the materials within **Sasa** will be packaged in a box – handy pocket guides, CDs, DVDs, communication materials, etc all individually printed so they are practical, hands-on resources that

staff can take directly to communities. In addition, because Raising Voices recognizes the minimal impact that one off activities have on creating awareness or action there is also a broader overview and structured process for organizations to draw on when designing interventions. *SASA!* is designed within a four step process.

Start

This part of the Activist Kit describes the linkages between violence and HIV/AIDS. Based on global and regional research, it provides essential foundational information that can enable organizations to work on violence and HIV/AIDS. This introductory section gives background information on violence against women, HIV/AIDS, it fosters individual's **power within** and discusses the importance of creating a culture of activism. This section also includes a *SASA!* Activist pocket guide with key talking points, organizing tips and ideas staff can take with them to the community. Finally, this section has organizing materials such as a *SASA!* map to help users learn about what is in the activist kit and where they can find it.

Awareness

The materials in the Awareness section of *SASA!* are designed to provoke a new and more political analysis of the linkage between violence and HIV/AIDS. It challenges staff and stakeholders to go beyond the rhetoric and lip service to examining why these problems are happening. All the materials in this section emphasize that male **power over** women and girls is a violation of their fundamental human rights and pushes a new level of awareness and internalization of the issues.

Support

The materials in the Support section of *SASA!* are designed to motivate women and men to support women experiencing violence and HIV/AIDS, men who use violence, and community members speaking out on these issues in both their personal and professional capacities. Recognizing the importance of secondary prevention, activities are designed to help mitigate the consequences of violence and HIV on individuals. This section emphasizes that **power with** others is life affirming and life saving.

Action

The materials in the Action section of *SASA!* are designed to inspire and move women and men to create change. Recognizing the importance of primary prevention, activities are designed to facilitate longer-term attitude and behavior change. This section emphasizes that we all have the **power to** prevent violence and HIV.

Lessons Learned

As Raising Voices develops and uses *SASA!* in communities in Uganda and Tanzania we are learning valuable lessons for the prevention of violence against women and HIV/AIDS. They include:

- A conceptual framework of power is allowing both women and men to become engaged in the issue. It is new language that is at once powerful yet easy to relate to. Using the language of power is helping community members connect with interlocking oppressions.
- It is challenging to raise the issues of violence and HIV/AIDS together as HIV/AIDS often pushes out the dialogue of violence – people naturally tend toward the discussion on HIV/AIDS as this is perhaps more comfortable, familiar and traditionally has 'easier' solutions attached to it (i.e., using condoms, limit sexual risk taking, etc).
- The connection between VAW and HIV/AIDS needs to be introduced carefully and through a process over time with communities.
- In order to have meaningful change in communities, a whole cross section of the community needs to be engaged and involved. Thus, using multiple strategies is essential in order to generate sufficient exposure to ideas.
- Staff need sufficient training and support to address the interconnected nature of the issues. More often, they are comfortable with either VAW or HIV/AIDS but not on the intersection.
- Organizations can effectively work toward preventing the dual pandemics through a gendered analysis. This is ultimately more sustainable as the prevention focuses on the root causes of violence against women and HIV/AIDS which is the imbalance of power in relationships.