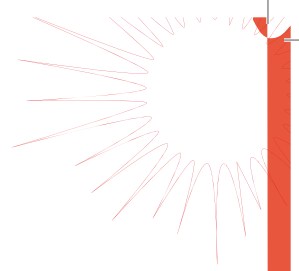


local activism

identifying community activists

start





The Local Activism strategy is about inspiring and supporting community members to become activists.

Community activists will become the heart of *SASA!* Their efforts and commitment will continue long after *SASA!* has come to an end. These community members will make *SASA!* real and accessible to others. Their facilitation of activities among their neighbors and friends will allow *SASA!* to be a *movement* driven by community members rather than the *project* of an NGO. Their engagement, and their ability to engage others, is a key part of creating the critical mass of support needed for the success of *SASA!* With the interest and involvement of a critical mass of community members rethinking ideas of power, violence and HIV/AIDS, community norms can change in positive and powerful ways.

During the Start phase of *SASA!* you will identify the initial group of community members interested in becoming community activists. You will introduce them to the urgency and positive spirit of *SASA!* and help them discover their skills and confidence as activists.

Everyone
can be
an **activist!**





Step 1: Identify Potential Community Activists

First the *SASA!* Team needs to spread the word that it is looking for community activists. Here are some approaches that may work in your community. In each case, collect the names and contact information of interested community members. Tell these community members that you will contact them about an upcoming mini-workshop where they can learn more about *SASA!* and further explore their interest in being a community activist.

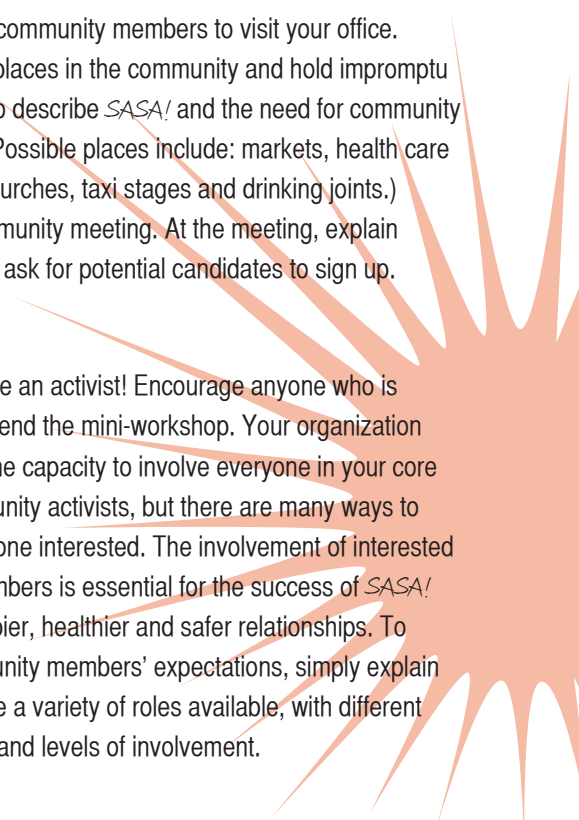
- Contact local leaders. Ask them to recommend potential candidates.
- Ask other organizations working on violence and/or HIV prevention for their recommendations.
- Ask head teachers at secondary schools for the names of youth they would recommend.
- Post flyers or notices in the community, inviting

interested community members to visit your office.

- Visit busy places in the community and hold impromptu meetings to describe *SASA!* and the need for community activists. (Possible places include: markets, health care centers, churches, taxi stages and drinking joints.)
- Call a community meeting. At the meeting, explain *SASA!* and ask for potential candidates to sign up.

Remember:

Everyone can be an activist! Encourage anyone who is interested to attend the mini-workshop. Your organization may not have the capacity to involve everyone in your core group of community activists, but there are many ways to still involve anyone interested. The involvement of interested community members is essential for the success of *SASA!* in creating happier, healthier and safer relationships. To manage community members' expectations, simply explain that there will be a variety of roles available, with different responsibilities and levels of involvement.



Step 2: Organize a *SASA!* Mini-Workshop

Once you have gathered a list of people who are interested in becoming community activists, hold mini-workshops to further assess their interest. Each mini-workshop can host up to 30 participants (more than this makes it difficult to effectively facilitate participatory activities). Set dates, times and places for as many workshops as you think you will need, and then contact all interested community members to sign them up for one of the mini-workshops. The mini-workshops will take approximately three hours.

The Community Activist Mini-Workshop

Objectives

- Interested community members learn about *SASA!* and get to know some members of the *SASA!* Team.
- The *SASA!* Team gets to know the community members interested in being community activists to determine what type of roles they could each play.

Preparations

Bring flipchart paper and markers. Arrange the room so participants can sit in a circle without any tables in front of them.

Who are community activists?

Community activists are women, men and young people in the community who feel moved to create positive change and to work for the health and well-being of the community. They are driven by their connections and commitment to their friends, families, neighbors and community and by their desire to make their community stronger. The *SASA!* Team will work closely with and support these activists (particularly through the Local Activism strategy) in facilitating grassroots activities for the prevention of violence and HIV in the community.

Facilitator's Notes

Consider having one facilitator lead the exercises and a few observers who can pay careful attention to and take notes of participants' contributions and involvement. These observations will help you decide how to involve each activist in your work.

Introduction (30 minutes)

- Welcome everyone and introduce yourself, your workmates, your organization, and *SASA!*
- Ask participants to introduce themselves by giving their names, explaining something about their work or family, and something fun they like to do.
- Thank everyone for coming and showing interest in *SASA!*
- Briefly explain the role of community activists in *SASA!* and the importance of their leadership.
- Explain that the session will introduce participants to the issues discussed in *SASA!* and will help the *SASA!* team determine what role they could each play in preventing violence against women and HIV.

Activity No. 1: Stand if You ...* (30 minutes)

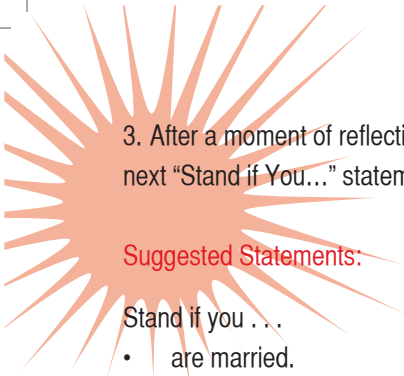
1. Explain the exercise:

- *"The first exercise is called 'Stand if You ...' The idea behind this game is to get to know more about each other, our families and our beliefs."*
- *"I will read a statement. If you identify with the statement stand up. If you do not, remain seated. There are no right or wrong answers. It's up to each individual to determine what she/he should stand for."*

2. After reading each statement (see next page), ask participants:

- *"Look around at the others to see who is standing and who is sitting. Those standing have had a different experience than those seated. What can those who are sitting learn from those standing?"*
- *"What valuable experience do those who are standing have to offer to others? How does it feel to be in their position?"*
- *"What would it feel like to be in the position of others?"*

* Adapted from: Kammen, C., and Gold, J. (1998). *Call to Connection*, Commune-A-Key Publishing, Salt Lake City, Utah. 189.



3. After a moment of reflection, ask everyone to sit. Read the next “Stand if You...” statement.

Suggested Statements:

Stand if you . . .

- are married.
- are widowed.
- have children.
- work outside the home.
- are active in your community.
- have offered support to a friend in need.
- know someone who is HIV positive.
- know a woman who is experiencing violence.
- know a man who is having an inappropriate relationship with a young girl.
- have experienced feeling a lack of power at some point in your life.
- believe that women are more at risk for HIV infection than men.
- think that the problems of violence and HIV/AIDS are connected.
- believe that members of the community can prevent violence.
- have seen members of the community working to prevent HIV infection.
- think women and men should balance power in relationships and in the community.

Note to Observers:

Although this exercise is a warm-up and a community building exercise, it will also give you valuable information for assessing the suitability of the various participants. Remember, for your core group of community activists you are looking for a diverse group of activists and also activists who share your values. If participants consistently sit when being asked about violence and HIV/AIDS, it may be an indication that they will need more intensive training and might not be appropriate for the core group.



Activity No. 2: Power Sharing Brainstorm (45 minutes)

1. Explain the exercise:
 - *“The next exercise involves working in small groups to discuss the statement: ‘Women and men should balance power in their relationships and the community.’”* Write this statement on a sheet of flipchart, and hang it on the wall.
 - *“You will have **10 minutes** to discuss this statement. Your group will then be asked to share the highlights of your group’s discussion. Designate a notetaker and a reporter for your group.”*
2. Divide the participants into small groups of four or five. Provide each group with a piece of flipchart paper and a marker.
3. After **10 minutes** ask participants to return to the main circle. Give each group **three minutes** to present their ideas. Remember, this is not a training session, allow all ideas to be shared and resist expressing your own opinion.

Note to Observers:

During the group work, walk around the room so that you can observe participants’ interactions and listen to their ideas. It’s not only important to learn who is participating and who has great ideas. It’s also important to determine how the participants relate with others, how they share time with others, and how respectful they are of others’ ideas and opinions.

Activity No. 3: Power Paper (45 minutes)

1. Explain the exercise:
 - *“This exercise will help us get in touch with the experience of power.”*
 - *“Please form groups of four or five people. Please sit together and avoid talking. This is a silent exercise.”*
2. While the participants are organizing themselves in small groups, give each group one piece of flipchart paper.
3. Read the following statement slowly and calmly to participants. Pause after questions, giving participants time to think. Do not rush.

“Now, please sit quietly, close your eyes and focus on my questions. Think about them silently and answer them to yourself. What does ‘power’ look like to you? (pause) When you hear the word ‘power’ what comes to mind? (pause) What images do you see in your mind? (pause) Think about power in your own life. (pause) Do you feel you have power? (pause) How does it feel to have power? (pause) How do you use your power? (pause) Do you feel that others have more power than you? (pause) How does this feel? (pause) Would you like to have more power?”

4. Ask participants:


“Slowly open your eyes. When you are ready, stand up with one hand behind your back. Please take the flipchart paper given to your group. Hold it between all of you using only one hand each. The group members will be holding the paper together, each person with one hand on the paper. This piece of paper represents the power in your group. All the power that you as individuals and the group have is contained in this

single piece of paper. On the count of three, you should all ‘take your power.’ One, two, three.”

5. Allow participants to act out in whatever way they wish. Allow this to continue for a minute or so. Observe what the reactions of the group are during this exercise and ensure that no one behaves violently or aggressively.

Note to Observers:

It will be useful for you to see how potential community activists handle this exercise. Are they impulsive and hungry for power, or are they balanced and more interested in sharing power with others? Listen to the quality and depth of the participants’ thoughts after the exercise is over. This discussion will give you a good indication of which potential activists are critical thinkers and sensitive to power issues.



6. After **one minute** ask participants to put down their papers, stay with their small groups and have a seat. Debrief the exercise using the following questions:

- *“How did you feel in the first part of the exercise? What came to mind when imagining power?”*
- *“How did you feel when you were asked to imagine that all your power was contained in a single piece of paper?”*
- *“What happened in your group when you were asked to ‘take your power’?”*

Probe by asking if anyone became aggressive and pulled the paper away from others, if groups stayed calm and decided how to share the paper, etc.

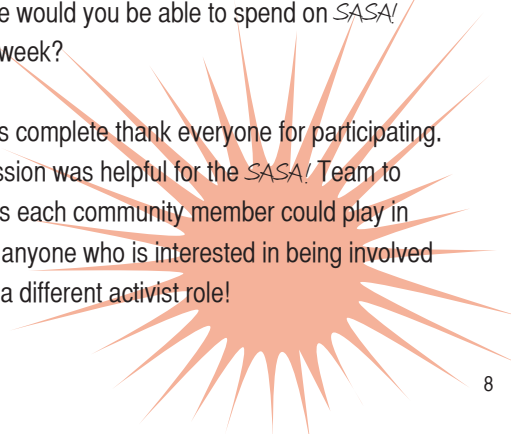
- *“Could the sharing of power have happened differently in your group?”*
- *“How did you feel during this exercise?”*
- *“Did your experience in this exercise reflect how people deal with power in our community?”*

Wrap-Up (30 minutes)

If participants can read and write consider making a simple questionnaire with the following questions. Otherwise, hold a group discussion using these questions:

- After this session, are you still interested in being a community activist? Why? Why not?
- What skills or talents do you have? Be broad, list everything you can think of, even if you don't see how these skills or talents would apply to your activism work!
- What are your interests and hobbies?
- What kinds of things would you like to learn more about?
- What groups in the community do you belong to? (Religious groups, women's groups, sporting groups, etc.)
- How much time would you be able to spend on SASA! activism each week?

When the session is complete thank everyone for participating. Explain that the session was helpful for the SASA! Team to figure out what roles each community member could play in SASA! Explain that anyone who is interested in being involved will be invited to fill a different activist role!



Step 3: Identify Your Core Group of Community Activists

Based on the outcomes of the mini-workshops, we suggest you select a core group of community activists who you will work with throughout the entire *SASA!* process. The “core group” would support the *SASA!* Team by leading grassroots activism in the community. The *SASA!* Team would provide these individuals with ongoing training, guidance and support. The number of activists you identify and train for your core group will depend on the size of the community and the capacity of the *SASA!* Team to support them.

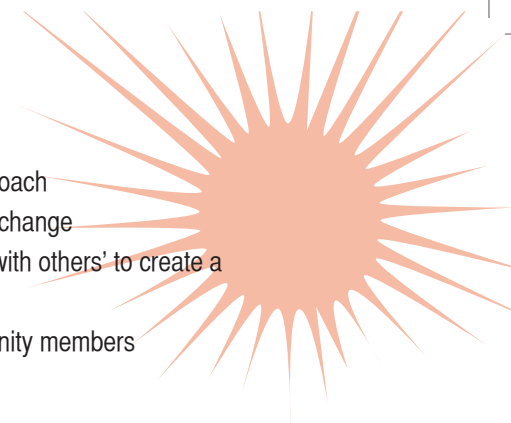
Community activists in your core group should demonstrate the following characteristics:

- commitment to promoting balanced power between women and men
- passionate about preventing violence and HIV

- respected in the community
- friendly and positive in approach
- enthusiastic about creating change
- working to join their power with others' to create a supportive environment
- well-known to other community members
- articulate and creative

Make sure that your community activists also represent the diversity of your community! Include a good mix of people—women, men and young people including those representing the following elements of your community:

- ethnic backgrounds
- religions
- socio-economic levels (farmers, businessmen, local leaders, taxi drivers, etc.)
- sets of skills and interests
- life experiences (Try to include women who have experienced violence, men who have rejected violence, young women and men, women and men who are HIV positive, etc.)



Step 4: Identify Other Activist Roles

Everyone has a role to play in preventing violence against women and HIV. Hopefully the mini-workshops provided you with some ideas for the roles all other interested community members could play, based on their skills, talents and interests. Here are some ideas:

A “secondary group” of activists could include interested community members that meet many of the characteristics for the “core group” but who do not have the time or capacity to be fully involved. They may be interested and able to plan, support and lead specific activities in the community, but not on a regular basis. For these community members, you could give them specialty roles based on their contacts or talents. For example, you

could ask these activists to work specifically with one type of community member, such as local leaders or peers in a social group, or to work with one specific activity, such as conducting film screenings with various community groups.

Activists with artistic skills are incredibly valuable to your work. Invite these community members to lead arts-based activities, such as forming drama groups, writing articles for local newspapers, speaking at public meetings or on the radio, or painting murals, banners and posters.

Activists with physical assets are also very useful. They may have a large yard or compound where meetings can happen. They may own a shop from which they can distribute materials or paint a mural. Invite these community members to manage logistics for various events and activities based on their physical resources.

Activists with links to other community groups can really help to spread the work of *SASA!* far and wide. People who belong to church groups, psychosocial support groups, income-generating and micro-credit groups, and community-based organizations are well connected to their community and have built strong relationships with others. Invite these community members to take on roles related to promoting events and increasing community engagement.

Remember:

These are only some roles that can be filled by your community activists. Think about your community, talk to potential activists about their skills and interests, and get creative! Find a role, big or small, for everyone who is interested. This may require lots of brainstorming with the *SASA!* Team, but it is well worth it and critical to the success of *SASA!*

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Step 5: Support Community Activists

Identifying community activists and the different roles they will play is just the beginning! Now that you have taken this important step, it's vital that you continue your work with the activists in a way that will help them to become strong advocates for change.

Consider how you might best support the variety of activists working with you. Some possibilities include:

- Provide regular *SASA!* training sessions or develop your own.
 - Support community activists in planning out their activism using *SASA!* activities.
 - Help out as they conduct their activities, particularly at the beginning. This will help them build confidence.
 - Link community activists to each other. Encourage them to support and help each other.
- Strengthen their ability to lead activities by developing their facilitation and public speaking skills.
 - Visit them often in the community and observe their skills. Provide both positive and constructive feedback.
 - Make sure activists know that your organization is always available as a resource and to help solve any problems they may encounter.
 - Attend activities in the community, both to show your support and interest, and to provide activists with feedback for improvement of future activities.
 - Make resources available to the community activists whenever possible, including communication materials, meeting space, supplies such as paper and markers, equipment (DVD player for showing the *SASA!* film or a CD player for playing the soap operas), etc.
 - Meet with the core group of community activists monthly throughout the life of your *SASA!* work to share experiences, strengthen their skills, plan activities together, etc.

Step 6: Create a Partnership

Community activists are not your students. They will learn from you and from others in the community, and you will learn from them.

View and treat community activists as essential partners in your work. Value their ideas and insights. Ask them often for their opinions and suggestions. Because they are women and men from the community, they will most likely hold beliefs that reflect the community and not necessarily of the *SASA!* Team — especially at the beginning. This is good! They are grounded in the realities of life for women and men in your community, which will bring a critical perspective to your activities and planning.

The *SASA!* Team's role is to expose community activists to new ideas about women, violence, HIV/AIDS and power; to

raise their awareness or consciousness about these issues; to help them develop skills for talking about these issues and for facilitating a change process in the community.

**Create an environment
of mutual support
and grow together
as effective and
inspired activists!**

Step 7: Remember to Have Fun!

The way we approach our work deeply influences how others perceive us and our efforts. If you bring enthusiasm, passion and commitment to *SASA!* you will inspire others to do the same. Be deliberate about fostering these qualities in community activists.

Demonstrate through your actions and attitudes that *SASA!* is about hard work but also about having fun! Preventing violence against women and HIV is serious and important. But that doesn't mean that it can't also be enjoyable. Creating loving families and healthy communities is fulfilling and rewarding work. Keep a sense of play and friendship in your work. This positive energy makes activists, organizations and communities stronger!

Encourage creativity!

Help everyone feel essential!

Help everyone see the value of their work!

Avoid criticism.
Give constructive feedback!

Trust in each other's abilities!

Celebrate everyone's success!

Inspire commitment!



www.raisingvoices.org/sasa.php