



local activism

community asset mapping

start

Understanding Asset Mapping

Community asset mapping means identifying the strengths and abilities of a community in order to solve a problem. In *SASA!* it means building on the positive aspects of a community to overcome the challenge of violence against women and its connection to HIV/AIDS.

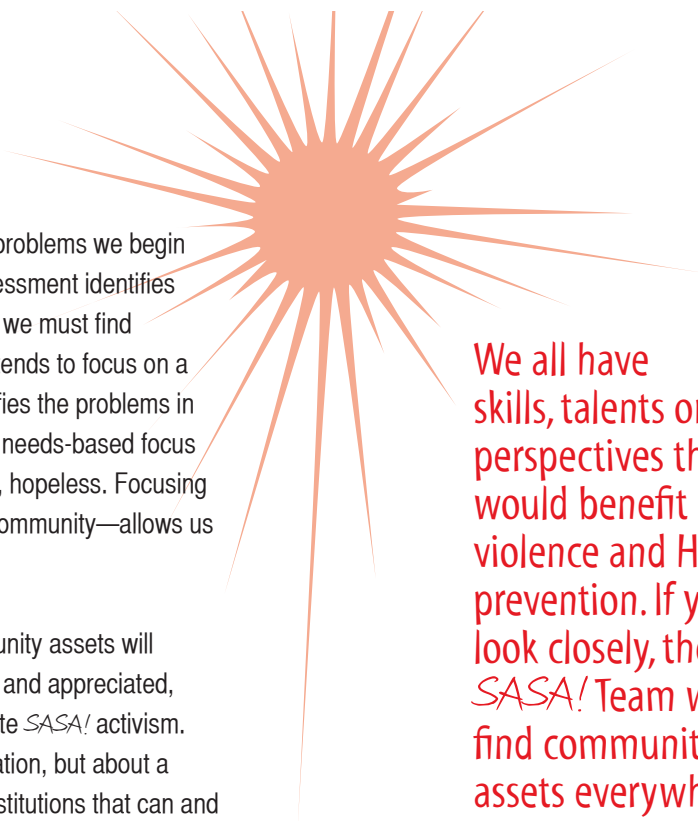
SASA! is all about finding and fostering strengths and abilities in your community. These strengths and abilities are also known as “assets.” An asset is anyone or anything in your community that can contribute to the effectiveness of *SASA!* For example: Is there a religious leader in your community who speaks out against violence? Is there an HIV positive women’s group that educates others about preventing HIV infection? Is there a community center with a large meeting room that is easily accessible? Is there a local theatre group that is keen to create performances about non-violence? These are all assets that can contribute to and become part of *SASA!*

Everyone
in the
community
is a potential
asset!

A Positive Approach

Many times in trying to solve community problems we begin with a “needs assessment.” A needs assessment identifies problems within the community, and then we must find ways to meet these needs. That method tends to focus on a community’s shortcomings, since it identifies the problems in the community before the strengths. This needs-based focus can make us feel overwhelmed, resigned, hopeless. Focusing on the positive—on the strengths of the community—allows us to feel energized and hopeful.

Identifying and strengthening your community assets will help individuals and groups feel engaged and appreciated, responsible and active. It will help generate *SASA!* activism. *SASA!* will not be just about your organization, but about a whole range of individuals, groups and institutions that can and must get engaged for social change to happen.



We all have skills, talents or perspectives that would benefit violence and HIV prevention. If you look closely, the *SASA!* Team will find community assets everywhere.

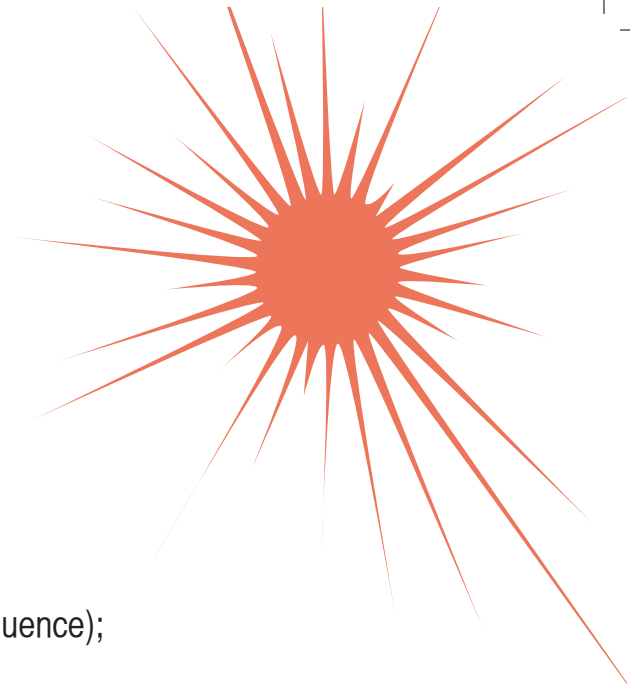
Where to Find Community Assets

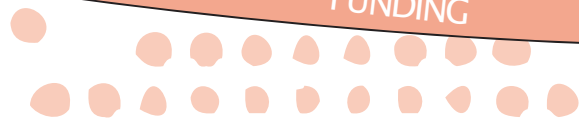
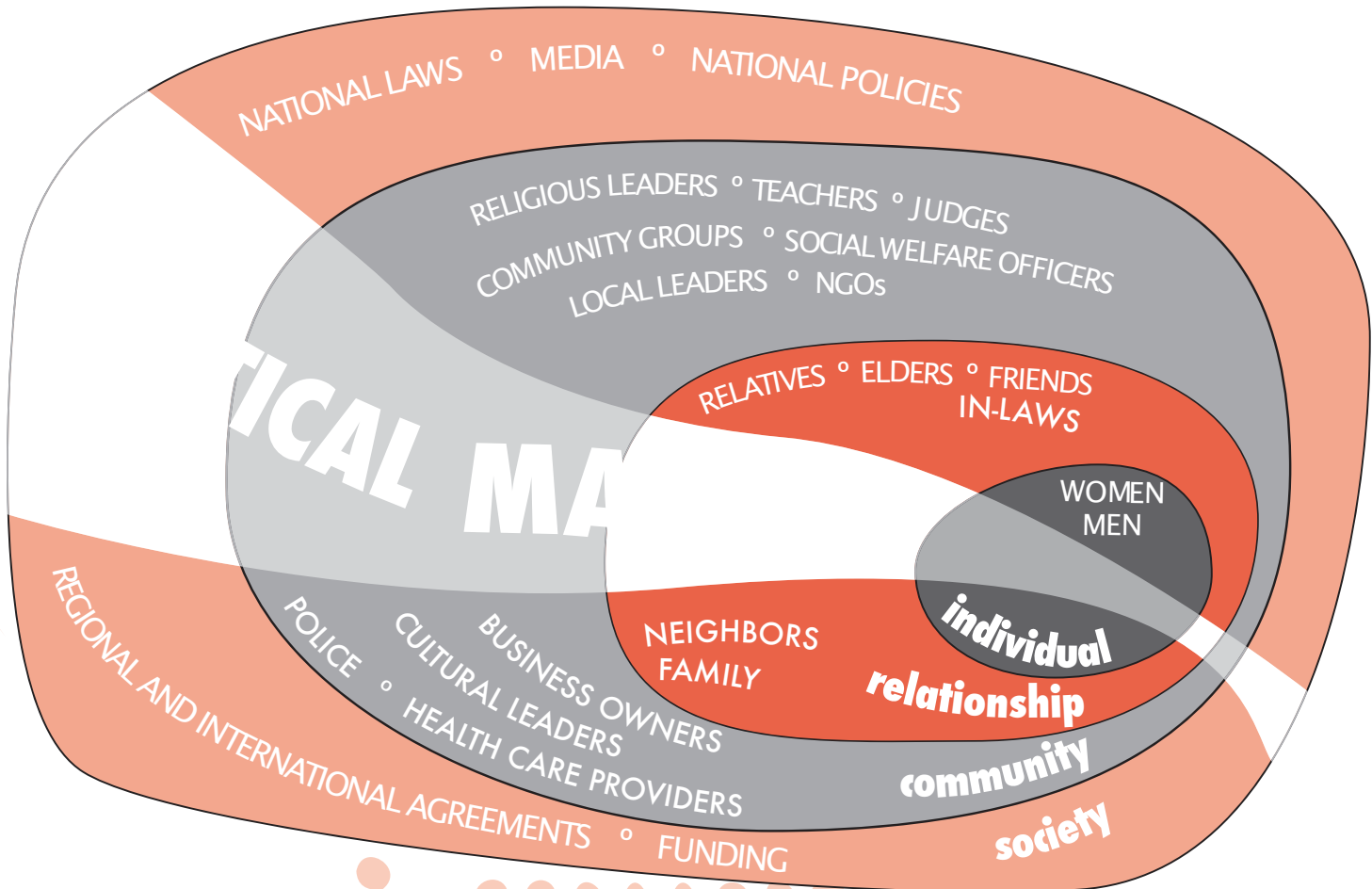
In *SASA!* we engage the four circles of influence in the **Ecological Model**.

By working with each **circle of influence**, we can generate the **critical mass** required to effect real change.

Therefore, when asset mapping **we must explore the assets of each circle:**

- the assets of individuals (the “individual” circle of influence);
- the assets of friends, families and neighbors (the “relationship” circle of influence);
- the assets of local leaders, professionals, institutions and community groups (the “community” circle of influence);
- the assets of media, government officials and policy makers (the “society” circle of influence).





Remember, community assets don't only exist in people. Within each circle of influence, you will hear mention of many other things that could be community assets. Community assets include any of the following:

- **People** (e.g., their skills, talents, knowledge and perspectives—such as artistic skills, planning skills, expertise in human rights, or experience living with violence)
- **Places** (e.g., meeting places, event venues, theatre space, workshop space)
- **Groups** (e.g., women's groups, student groups)
- **Events** (e.g., national holidays, traditional celebrations, company parties)
- **Items** (e.g., office supplies, electrical equipment)

All of these assets can be used, built on and strengthened to make *SASA!* relevant to your community. By engaging assets from all circles of influence, you increase community members' sense of ownership over *SASA!* They will see their strengths make *SASA!* successful.

Creating a Community Asset Map

Creating a community asset map is a great way to learn about your community and to begin the *SASA!* process. By engaging all community members in talking about the community's strengths, you will build people's confidence and will ensure that *SASA!* is seen as a positive, helpful force in the community.

Every community has a long list of assets. Consider how you might use or adapt the following four-step approach to create your own community asset map for *SASA!*

Step 1: Conduct a Brainstorming Session

Bring the *SASA!* Team together for a brainstorming session. Be sure to also invite others who have specific experience and knowledge of the community. You could conduct this session in one large group or in many small groups.

Begin the session by introducing the following ideas:

Asset-Based Approach: Focusing on the strengths and assets of the community that could be engaged and utilized in the prevention of violence against women and HIV.

Asset Mapping: A process of identifying and organizing assets in your community that could contribute to the *SASA!* movement, including people, places, groups, events and items.

Circles of Influence: A way of thinking about our community and the roles we each play in the community.

Remember, the four circles of influence are: individual, relationship, community and society. Use the Ecological Model poster, found in the Start phase, Communication Materials strategy, to illustrate this.

After explaining these concepts, begin the brainstorm using the following questions as a guide. Record contributions on cards or flipchart.

- **What skills, interests, experience or knowledge do YOU have to contribute?**

This question might feel awkward at first. People often aren't encouraged to think about their own strengths, or to talk about them! Even a talent that seems ordinary can be used for extraordinary purposes. It isn't vanity or pride to reflect on these gifts. It's important to recognize them so they can be used for everyone's benefit, for the benefit of positive community change.

- **Think about the people in your lives, your friends, family and neighbors. What strengths do they have?**

Is there an emerging leader among these people? Is there someone with unique and creative ideas who just needs encouragement to begin creating real change? Are there people who have experiences of violence or HIV who may be willing to share these experiences with others?

- **Reflect on the local, informal groups you know of in the community. What are the strengths of these groups?**

For example: Do income-generating groups provide women with some financial independence? Do church groups discuss healthy families and could they incorporate discussions about power? Do any of these groups' meeting places have space available for *SASA!* meetings, trainings or other gatherings?

- **Consider the formal institutions in the community: police, health care workers, religious institutions, local leaders, NGOs. Are there key allies and assets within these institutions?**

What do these institutions do in relation to non-violence, peace, family, health? What resources do they have that might be useful? Do they provide services or give support?

- **What are the assets and opportunities at a societal level that can contribute to *SASA!*, such as through media, government officials, donors and policy makers?**

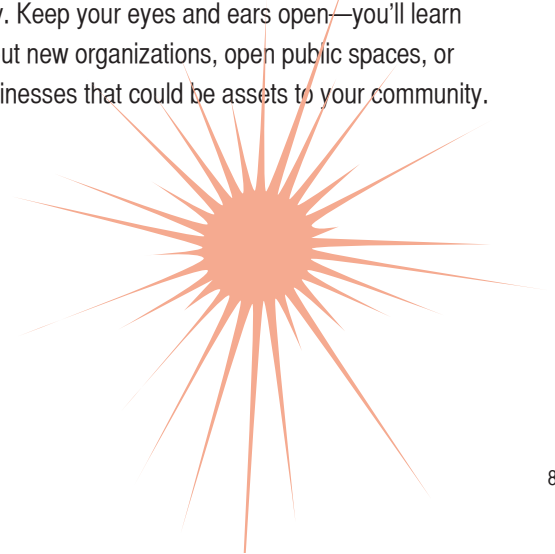
Are there local media outlets that give free airtime or cover social or health issues? Are there national laws that uphold women's rights that the public should know about? Are there agencies committed to funding community activism? Are there policy makers who are particularly vocal on these issues?

Step 2: Refining Your Asset List

Gather your *SASA!* Team to review the outcomes of the brainstorming. The brainstormed list of ideas will give your team members a better sense of where to look and what to look for when creating a formal asset map. Divide the *SASA!* Team into four groups, and assign one circle of influence to each group. Ask each group to go into the community and develop a more refined list of assets for their circle of influence. Provide the following possibilities as ways to collect this information, and encourage them to think of their own methods as well:

- **Visit gathering places.** Visit homes door-to-door. Walk around the market and ask people for their ideas. Visit health center waiting rooms, beauty salons, barber shops and drinking joints.
- **Gather community gatekeepers.** Hold a meeting with all the staff at an NGO, all the leadership of an institution or all the local leaders in an area.

- **Make it personal!** Engage with community members one-on-one. Call them, email them, or invite them to tea.
- **Discover new groups.** Check out local groups and institutions that may be listed in community newsletters or in phonebooks/directories.
- **Do a community walk-about.** Move around on foot in the community. Chat with people along the way. Keep your eyes and ears open—you'll learn about new organizations, open public spaces, or businesses that could be assets to your community.



Step-by-Step

No matter who you are visiting, from women at a market to religious leaders, from journalists to MPs, always plan ahead the key questions and topics you will discuss. Also, carry a notebook and record community members' responses. Here is a sample of what a meeting with community members could look like:

1. Introduce yourself, your organization and *SASA!*, and hand out the *SASA!* brochure.
2. Explain that the *SASA!* Team is creating a map of all the assets and strengths within the community, specifically those that could be helpful in organizing activities about having safe, happy and healthy families by preventing violence against women and HIV.

3. Explain that every person has skills, talents and ideas that can contribute to the health and happiness of the community. Explain that often what seems like a simple or small skill or resource can be a huge help. Ask: *What skills, experience, knowledge or resource do you have to contribute?*

4. Have community members consider the other people in their lives, such as their friends and family. Ask: *Who are these individuals? What assets do they have?*

5. Ask them to reflect on the local, informal groups they know of in the community. Ask: *What are these informal groups? What assets do they have?* If not clear, explain that these assets could include people, places, groups, events or items.

6. Ask them to think about the formal institutions in the community: police, health care workers, churches, NGOs.

Ask: What are these formal groups or institutions? What assets do they have?

7. Ask them to think about the larger society: media outlets, government officials, donors, policy makers. Ask: *Who are these individuals and groups? What assets do they have?*

8. Thank the individuals/groups for their time. Tell them how much you appreciate their contributions. (Everyone feels motivated to share their knowledge when it is appreciated.)

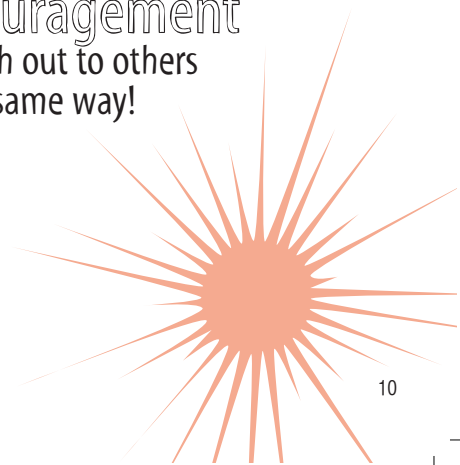
9. Invite community members to give you their contact information, so that you can add them to your community asset map. Invite them to contact you if they have any questions or think of any more assets or other ways they could contribute to SASA!

Create a ripple-effect!

Once you have encouraged
**women and men in
the community**

to recognize and
share their assets,
provide them with the

support
and encouragement
to reach out to others
in the same way!

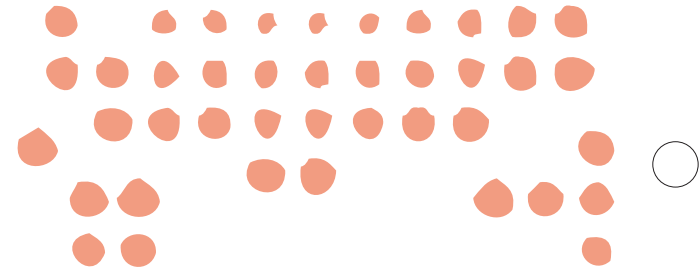


Step 3: Create Your Asset Map

Gather the *SASA!* Team and ask each group to present their findings. Create a visual representation of all the community assets identified. Make it fun and motivating! This visual representation could take many forms. Three popular options include the following:

- A giant asset list, with items categorized into “people, places, groups, events and items.”
- A giant diagram of the concentric circles of influence, with assets written in the appropriate circle.
- A geographical map of the community, with a sticker or number where assets exist and a corresponding list of assets (or any creative use of a map as a background for your list).

www.raisingvoices.org/sasa/php



Step 4: Maintaining Your Community Asset Map

Now you have a large list of people, places, groups, events and items that can contribute to the *SASA!* process. Before and after each phase of *SASA!*, review and update your *SASA!* asset map. Assess whether you are using and building on the community assets to increase *SASA!*'s success. Identify ways that you can use community assets in the next phase. Continually add new assets to your map — it is a work in progress!

SASA!
Preventing Violence Against Women and HIV