



local activism

soap opera discussion groups

Episode 1 & 2

awareness awareness

be aware

This discussion guide was developed to help you facilitate an active and informative discussion about each episode of the soap opera with small groups of community members. After listening to one program, you could begin the discussion by summarizing the story events and talk show. These summaries are provided for you. After summarizing what your listeners have just heard, pose the questions provided. We have included helpful discussion points for each question, so that you can guide the conversation and get people talking about the issues in a thought-provoking way.

Use this discussion guide with the *SASA!* Soap Opera CD and Soap Opera Scripts found in the Media & Advocacy strategy.





Episode 1

Facilitator's Summary

The Story

In this episode we meet Sara and her husband, Musa, who are having a difficult time in their relationship. Musa is verbally abusive and physically violent with Sara. We later find Musa in the bar with his friends and his girlfriend, complaining about how difficult his life is at home. His friend tries to give him advice, asking Musa how he can expect to have happiness at home if he is always quarreling and beating his wife. Musa dismisses this advice, and when he returns home, he demands sex from Sara. When she tries to ask him to use a condom, Musa becomes even more abusive and forces her to have sex.

We also meet Sara and Musa's niece, Margaret. Margaret has been out of school since her father died because she has no money to pay school fees. She meets her father's co-worker, Daudi, who gives her a bit of money.

The Talk Show

Our host, Zenya, leads a discussion about why some men use violence. She suggests that most men are taught from when they are little boys to believe that they are more important than women—and therefore can use their power over women in a relationship. In most communities, women are seen as less valuable human beings without the same rights and dignity as men. Zenya emphasizes that this imbalance of power, specifically men's power over women, makes women vulnerable to violence and HIV infection.



Facilitator's Questions & Discussion Points

1. What does power mean to you? Have you ever experienced someone (i.e., a parent, teacher, elder, partner or boss) using their power over you? How did it feel?

- Everyone has power. Some people use their power positively. Others use their power negatively. When one person uses her or his power to control another person, it is abuse and violence.
- When we experience someone using her or his power over us, it can create many feelings: anger, fear, passivity, resentment. These feelings are a reaction to injustice. No one has a right to use their power over another person.

2. In the soap opera, who had more power, Musa or Sara? In relationships and families in your community, who typically holds the most power?

- In most communities, men as a group usually have more power in their relationships than women. While some individual women may have power, women as a group usually have less power than men.

3. What do you think causes violence against women?

- Alcohol or poverty can be contributing factors to violence, but they alone do not cause violence. After all, there are many men who are poor but who do not use violence. There are also many men who do not take alcohol but who are still violent to their partners.
- Many of us grew up with the idea that men have more power and can use their power over women. This imbalance of power between women and men is the root cause of violence. After all, we didn't see Musa beating up his friends Kasoa or Sunday. He chose to be violent with his wife—a person who he feels has less power than he does.

4. In the soap opera, even though Sara is a married woman, she is still at risk for HIV infection. Why?

- Women like Sara who are living with violence are not safe. They usually cannot abstain from sex, ensure their partner's fidelity or ensure that a condom is used—because they lack power in their relationship.
- Being married or in a relationship does not mean that women are protected from HIV. In fact, studies show that married women are at highest risk for HIV infection.

5. In the soap opera, Mr. Daudi gave money to Margaret. Do you see this happening between older men and the girls or young women in your community? What do you think about it?

- In many communities, girls and young women are vulnerable. Often, they have lost their parents or are living without even basic needs. This puts them at risk.
- Many men are assisting vulnerable girls and young women, because it is the right thing to do. But other men are using their power over girls for their own purposes and often in exchange for sex.

6. When you think about Sara and Margaret, what do you see happening in their futures?

- Imagine yourself in Sara and Margaret's situation. What are your options? What might your future hold?



Episode 2

Facilitator's Summary

The Story

We meet Daudi and Margaret again, and this time, Daudi gives Margaret money for her school fees. Margaret is very excited to be back in school, but her friend Zam Zam and her auntie seem a bit worried. Margaret discovers why they are worried when she goes to Daudi's house. He asks her to thank him in 'a special way,' and coerces her into having sex to 'pay him back' for the school fees.

Meanwhile Musa's friend Sunday confides in Musa that he has HIV. Musa is anxious about this news and when he returns home that evening, he is frustrated and angry and ends up beating Sara.

The Talk Show

Our guests discuss the concept of "transactional sex," which means the act of sex is like a transaction—or an exchange. In exchange for sex, a girl may receive money, food, school fees, etc. Our guests also talk about coercion—how even though Margaret wasn't physically forced to have sex, she was emotionally and economically pressured, and this puts her at risk in many ways.

Our guests also discuss Musa and Sara's relationship, wondering if Sara still loves Musa, even though he is abusive. They discuss how when many people marry, there is a foundation of love and respect in the beginning. But when respect begins to fade, violence often starts.

Facilitator's Questions & Discussion Points

1. Do you think what happened to Margaret is violence?

- Daudi used his power as an adult and his wealth to exploit Margaret. In this situation, Margaret has little power.
- Coercion is when someone is pressured to do something against her or his will. Although the person does not want to do it, they feel they do not have enough power in the relationship to say no, or they fear the consequences if they say no. Coercion is a form of violence.

2. In the soap opera, Margaret is 14 years old. Why is she and other girls at such high risk for HIV infection?

- Young girls' bodies are not fully developed and are at risk of injury and tearing during sex—which exposes them more to HIV.
- Many girls and young women are having sex with older men. These older men have had more sexual experiences and, therefore, they are more likely to have been exposed to the HIV virus.

- Young girls are at risk for more than just HIV when they have sex with an older man. There are physical risks (e.g., pregnancy, STIs and injury) as well as emotional risks (e.g., trauma, shame, isolation and depression).

3. Many women, like Sara, do not have enough power in their relationships to make their own choices and decisions, even about their own bodies. Do you think this is right? What implications does this have?

- Using one's power over another person is violence.
- Sara and Musa do not balance power in their relationship. Musa has power over Sara. This means Sara is not safe; she is at risk for HIV infection.
- Many women in relationships cannot protect themselves from HIV infection, because they lack power. This is injustice.

4. What is coerced sex? What is forced sex, which is also known as "rape"? What is the difference? How do they hurt women?

- Forced sex/rape is when a girl or women is forced (physically) to have sex against her will.
- Coerced sex is when someone feels emotionally, socially or

- economically pressured or manipulated into having sex.
- Coerced sex and forced sex/rape are violence. They are extremely hurtful and emotionally traumatic. They also are very physically dangerous. They make girls and women vulnerable to HIV infection.

5. How do you think the news of Sunday testing HIV positive affected Musa? Do you think it is common for men to confide in other men about their problems?

- Often, men are socialized in such a way that they cannot freely talk about their feelings or feel uncomfortable doing so. This hurts and isolates men.
- Talking about personal issues among male friends, just as with women friends, can be a source of support and inspiration for change.
- information and support about violence and HIV/AIDS.

be aware
talk with
others!
explore what power
means to you