

Adapting *SASA!*: Tips and Tools

Programming for Prevention Series, Brief No. 4

Background

SASA! is a community mobilization approach to preventing violence against women (VAW) and HIV developed by [Raising Voices](#) in Uganda. A randomized controlled trial conducted with the Center for Domestic Violence Prevention, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and Makerere University demonstrated *SASA!*'s community-level impacts on preventing intimate partner violence against women and reducing the social acceptability of violence.

Since these randomized controlled trial results were released in 2014, the number of organizations using the *SASA!* approach in their programming has significantly increased. Currently, *SASA!* is being used to prevent VAW and HIV in over 25 countries in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, the Pacific, and Latin

America by over 60 diverse organizations. These organizations operate in different settings from where *SASA!* was originally designed. Therefore, they are adapting *SASA!* to fit their contexts—in humanitarian settings, in rural and urban areas, and in diverse political, social, and cultural landscapes.

A *SASA!* adaptation is a deliberate process to modify the *SASA!* approach to enhance its relevance to local community contexts and/or organizational realities.

Who can use this Program Brief?

This Program Brief can be used by groups or organizations that are considering an adaptation of *SASA!* or are already in the process of adaptation. It can also be used by *SASA!* technical assistance providers who are supporting organizations to adapt and/or implement *SASA!*.

How was this Brief created?

The Brief draws lessons learned from adaptation research conducted by Raising Voices in Uganda, the International Rescue Committee in Kenya, the Women Promotion Centre in Tanzania, Beyond Borders in Haiti, and the University of California, San Diego in the US. This research on understanding *SASA!* adaptations in humanitarian settings, rural settings, and beyond Africa is funded by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women. It also integrates the lessons from Raising Voices' ongoing technical assistance to organizations adapting *SASA!*.

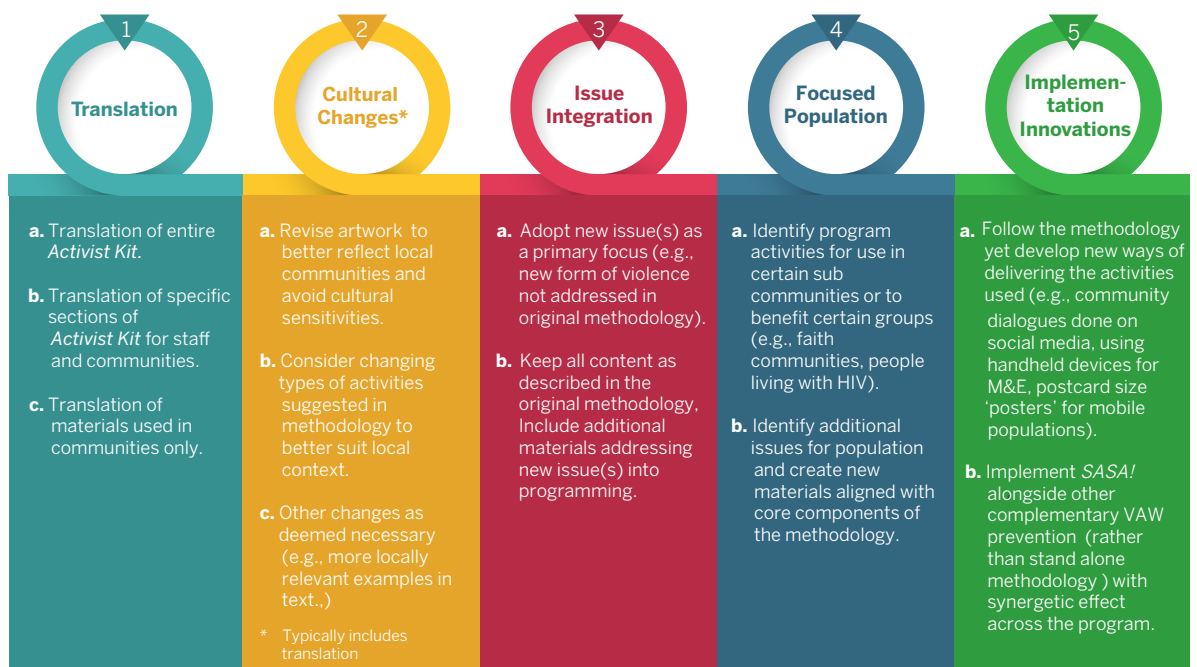
The lessons presented here are broad and can be used to guide the adaptation process across settings. For humanitarian settings specifically, please refer to [Implementing *SASA!* in Humanitarian Settings: Tips and Tools](#).

Types of *SASA!* adaptation

Practice-based learning demonstrates that in most cases, adaptation is needed in some form to ensure *SASA!*'s impact and effectiveness. The process requires careful thinking and decision-making as to why adaptation is needed, what type of adaptation is required, and how it will be structured. Establishing clarity on these points is critical to plan for adequate time and other resources to support the type of adaptation you decide on.

Partners can choose from various adaptation modalities for *SASA!*, as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: *SASA!* Adaptation Modalities



Please Note:

Integration of selected *SASA!* activities or elements into other programming is not considered *SASA!* adaptation. Adaptation also isn't using the core components of *SASA!* (gender-power analysis, a phased-in approach, and holistic community engagement and activism) with different subject matter than VAW and HIV. To maintain effectiveness and impact, maintain fidelity to *SASA!* and refrain from picking a few activities. For more information, see [Fidelity to the *SASA!* Activist Kit](#)

The process of *SASA!* adaptation

Partners use different approaches to adapt *SASA!*, ranging from an informal and iterative adaptation process happening alongside implementation to a structured process with more rigorous testing and careful refinement of all aspects of the *SASA!* approach. Ideally, to maintain ethical and impactful *SASA!* programming in various contexts, we recommend each organization moves systematically through the steps described in detail in this section: preparation for adaptation; getting started; adaptation in process; and finalization.

A. Preparation for adaptation

Before embarking on adaptation, please assess if another organization has adapted *SASA!* in a similar context. Ask Raising Voices, and check with other organizations in your area. If there are no adapted materials, consider using the following steps to guide your adaptation.

- 1. Determine the right adaptation modality.** In your program team, discuss the rationale for adaptation, review the modalities, and identify what type(s) of adaptation would be relevant for your program (see Figure 1).
- 2. Sign a memorandum of understanding with Raising Voices.** Get in touch with Raising Voices (info@raisingvoices.org) to develop and sign a memorandum of understanding. This will allow you to access adaptation tools such as InDesign files and technical assistance if needed.
- 3. Assemble a small adaptation committee.** It is important that most members of the committee are familiar with the *SASA!* methodology and the community where *SASA!* will be implemented. If they are not, consider holding a meeting to help the committee understand the basics of the *SASA!* approach and visiting the community to become more familiar.

Depending on the adaptation planned, the committee could include the program coordinator/manager, program staff, and at least two community activists (one male and one female). Typically, adaptation starts before community activists are selected, although you can bring community activists into the process when they are selected. However, community representation is essential even prior to community activist selection.

The committee might also include a cultural expert (particularly essential if other committee members are not all from the culture you want to engage), a translator (if resources are not available, consider staff for translation), two representatives of the specific group if you are doing a focused population adaptation (e.g., people with disabilities), and an artist or graphic designer.

- 4. Review and plan.** As a committee, review the adaptation modalities, special considerations for each (see Table 1: Adaptation Guidance), and the program team recommendations. Decide together what is most appropriate for your adaptation and revision and develop a plan to help guide your adaptation process (see subsection D, "Finalization").

B. Getting started

Your adaptation can be one of the modalities we have described or a combination. The following table can help you think through key issues concerning your specific adaptation.

Table 1: Adaptation Guidance

Adaptation Modality	Guidance
Translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide on pieces of the <i>SASA! Activist Kit</i> (the entire kit or only selected materials), ensuring a clear rationale for decisions. Identify a translator who has a basic understanding of VAW and power concepts and who is familiar with local language use. There should be less emphasis on “correct” language and more emphasis on language accessible to community members. Back translate and carefully review at least the key concepts in <i>SASA!</i> to ensure meaning and intention are maintained (e.g., the word “power” could be translated as “authority,” which is not the exact meaning of power in <i>SASA!</i>). Please contact Raising Voices for the list of key <i>SASA!</i> concepts.
Cultural Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check whether examples used in original text and images are culturally relevant. If not, discuss adaptations needed. Check if the colors used in <i>SASA!</i> are associated with other issues (e.g., political parties). If yes, consider changing them while maintaining color consistency throughout each phase. Ensure characters in the communication materials reflect the community (e.g., local dress and setting) and allow participants to identify easily with <i>SASA!</i> characters. Remember, clothing and landscape do not need to be an exact match—relatable is sufficient. Check whether artistic styles used in materials are appropriate and aligned with cultural norms and assumptions (e.g., Haiti’s adaptation added facial features to the images in the original power poster, as the images with no eyes were perceived as voodoo).
Issue Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide if there are topics in <i>SASA!</i> that are less relevant (e.g., HIV in countries with low prevalence) or if a topic is so sensitive its inclusion would cause community members or leaders to reject <i>SASA!</i> outright (e.g., condom use in Catholic communities). Remember to come up with an alternative strategy to introduce the sensitive topics gradually. Check if the topics related to VAW that your work aims to address are included in the <i>SASA!</i> materials; if not, decide where and how you want to include them (e.g., if early marriage is an issue you want to address, you could add an image in the poster, as with the Norwegian Refugee Council adaptation in Iraq).
Focused Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect on why your program is engaging a section of population versus the entire community and what this means for community mobilization. Identify the types of people and institutions most relevant to the population you aim to reach. (<i>Note: Make sure you choose people/institutions from each of the circles of influence.</i>) Ensure there are appropriate materials for the various types of people and institutions. Check each <i>SASA!</i> phase to identify the activities most relevant to the population you aim to reach. Consider what additional materials need to be created to meaningfully address power and VAW with these populations, revising existing materials or creating new materials as needed. The SASA! Faith guide is an example of this modality, as it engages specifically with a faith community.
Implementation Innovations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the community or organizational context, consider whether different delivery methods (types of activities or ways to engage community members) would be more appropriate or effective (e.g., small postcards rather than A4 posters in refugee communities or quick chats through social media). Consider whether delivery methods are appropriate given restrictions such as on mixed-gender public discussions or open-air gatherings. If you are integrating <i>SASA!</i> alongside other VAW prevention approaches, ensure all complementary programs share a common understanding of VAW and a similar approach to promoting balanced power between women and men. For example, the International Rescue Committee in Dadaab, Kenya, implemented <i>SASA!</i> and Engaging Men Through Accountable Practice (EMAP) approaches side by side and harmonized the language of power in both.

C. Adaptation in process

Some organizations choose to fully adapt *SASA!* before beginning implementation, while others adapt and implement simultaneously. Based on the experience of partners, it is preferable to adapt on a phase-by-phase basis so that you can learn as you go. Additionally, the adaptation committee will not likely be ready for the content in later phases; ideally, the members are deeply engaged in the process of change themselves. Once the modality has been agreed upon and key decisions have been made about the adaptation, the following steps should be taken:

- 1. Use the *SASA! Adaptation Worksheet*.** For the *SASA!* materials and activities being considered for adaptation, use the worksheet at the end of this Brief as a guide for the adaptation committee to decide on what, why, and how adaptations will be done. After key decisions are made, a smaller group (one or two people) can take responsibility for leading the adaptation on various materials and activities.
- 2. Review translated materials.** After materials are translated (as needed), it is important that the program team reviews and edits drafts of translations based on local use of the language (e.g., word choice, slang, and common phrases) rather than strictly academic or literal translation. Both translators and reviewers should work to maintain the intentions and tone of the original *SASA!*
- 3. Review draft materials.** All adaptation committee members should review each draft of adapted material and provide comments. If the comments are substantial, repeat the revision process prior to community testing.
- 4. Pilot materials in the community.** Test the draft materials with community members. Facilitate small-group discussions in single-sex groups (when possible); present the draft materials, and ask open-ended questions to get their perceptions. Ensure a notetaker is present to capture the feedback. Try not to have the staff member leading the adaptation run this discussion but rather someone who may be more objective. Remember, the intention is to listen and learn—not defend and explain. Materials that are going to be used by staff generally do not need community testing, but they may benefit from additional feedback.
- 5. Discuss with the adaptation committee.** Discuss community feedback with the adaptation committee and decide what to incorporate. Remember that not all feedback has to be incorporated; for example, people may not be used to seeing positive images and thus may recommend women be shown being beaten instead. Take what feedback is useful and aligned with *SASA!* concepts, and accept that *SASA!* is trying deliberately to create change through positive social norms. Carefully consider and decide on suggested revisions.
- 6. Create a second draft.** Repeat steps 2 to 5 if changes are substantial.

D. Finalization

The adaptation process is intentionally rigorous to produce high-quality materials that are relevant to and effective in the communities being served. After preparing an adaptation, it's natural to be excited to see your hard work in action. However, it is essential to take several steps as you finalize your adaptation:

- 1. Edit before finalizing.** Once all of the final content is in place, have multiple people review for typos, incorrect layout, and similar issues.
- 2. Prepare for design and printing.** Organize the graphic design and printing of the materials (if needed). Please note you can easily access InDesign versions of *SASA!* materials from Raising Voices, which can reduce your time and cost tremendously.

Congratulations on the adaptation work! Please note that if you are approaching your adaptation phase by phase, repeat the process for each phase. Remember, it is better to adapt materials when the phase becomes closer to implementation; by doing so, you can integrate lessons learned from adaptation and implementation. Keep your eyes and ears open throughout the process to check for unintended consequences and address emerging issues as you move through the phases. Please send copies of all adapted materials to Raising Voices—we are building a library of adapted *SASA!* materials from across the world and sharing them so others can also benefit.

The *SASA! Activist Kit* is openly shared and available at www.raisingvoices.org/sasa due to Raising Voices' commitment to strengthening the VAW prevention field. Acknowledging *SASA!* correctly in your adaptation is a demonstration of professionalism and ethical practice. Therefore, ensure the *SASA!* logo and Raising Voices website remain on all materials in addition to the logo of your organization(s). Maintain the design elements and quality of the original *SASA!* as much as possible.

Moving forward

The process of adapting *SASA!* is a creative journey that will deepen your connection to your community and develop organizational skills.

Adaptation is most effective when it is informed by a solid understanding of the methodology and through the meaningful involvement of communities throughout the process. Clarity on the adaptation modality, an engaged adaptation committee, and adequate staff time and budget will ensure quality adaptation and impactful implementation of *SASA!*

Are you adapting *SASA!*, or do you need technical assistance for your adaptation? We'd love to hear from you. Contact us at info@raisingvoices.org.



The **Programming for Prevention Series** is a collection of Program Briefs designed to address critical challenges and questions in violence against women prevention programming. This publication (Brief No. 4) was produced with funding from the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women; however, the views expressed and content included do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

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Endnotes

1. Raising Voices, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, & Center for Domestic Violence Prevention. (2015). *Is violence against women preventable? Findings from the SASA! study summarized for general audiences*. Kampala, Uganda: Raising Voices.

www.raisingvoices.org



SASA! Adaptation Worksheet

This worksheet is designed to help structure and systematize your adaptation process.

Type(s) of Adaptation _____

What material/ activity will you adapt (phase and type of material)?	Why are you adapting it?	What changes will you make (add, modify, remove)?	How will you do it?
<i>Example:</i> Material 1: Start Phase Power Poster	<i>To make the poster culturally relevant to communities in the Middle East</i>	<i>Modify images of women to wear headscarves; remove picture of condoms</i>	<i>Artist to redraw images</i>
Material 2:			
Material 3:			
Material 4:			
Material 5:			

