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# SASA! Technical Assistance Hub in Haiti

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## Summary

### Background

Available research offers compelling evidence that violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a serious problem warranting focused attention in Haiti. EMMUS-VI, a Demographic and Health Survey study from 2016 to 2017 in Haiti, found 34 percent of partnered women aged 15 to 49 reported lifetime experience of physical, sexual, or emotional partner violence.<sup>1</sup> A national survey found one in three girls in Haiti experiences violence by age 18,<sup>2</sup> and it is estimated that nearly one in five girls in Haiti has a first sexual experience that is forced or coerced.<sup>3</sup> While the Haitian women's movement is relatively strong, there is limited funding available for work on VAWG in Haiti, and more limited funding still for VAWG prevention. There is also limited technical assistance (TA) available related to VAWG.

Beyond Borders is a non-profit organization committed to helping people build movements to liberate themselves from oppression and isolation in Haiti. Beginning in 2010, Beyond Borders' Rethinking Power Program adapted the *SASA!* methodology—a community mobilization approach to preventing violence against women (VAW) and HIV developed by Raising Voices in Uganda—to the Haitian context. Beyond Borders implemented *SASA!* in Haitian communities and published the adapted Activist Kit in Haitian Creole in 2014, and it serves as a “hub” of *SASA!* TA for other Haitian organizations interested in using the methodology.

To date, Beyond Borders is the only organization besides Raising Voices to provide regular TA for *SASA!* as an organization. This new model offers promise as a way to take *SASA!* to scale, given the substantial interest in the methodology and Raising Voices' learning that quality *SASA!* implementation typically requires quality TA. This report summarizes findings from a 2018 study to assess Beyond Borders' TA to Haitian partner organizations using the *SASA!* methodology, gathering insights and experiences from long-term TA partners and participants in short-term training courses.

### Methods

This assessment used a mixed-methods approach that included an online quantitative survey, focus group discussions, and in-depth qualitative interviews, all between May and July 2018. This study's research population included women and men working with Beyond Borders TA, staff of current or prior long-term *SASA!* TA partners, and individuals who participated in various Beyond Borders training activities on *SASA!* or VAW prevention.

The online survey included 19 participants, who offered anonymous opinions about the TA provided to them and their organizations. Thirty individuals participated in four focus group discussions (one per included long-term TA partner organization), with a range of participants: male and female administrative staff, Local Activism staff, and Community Activists (community members volunteering with *SASA!*). Two in-depth interviews explored the individual-level perspectives of participants familiar with Rethinking Power's provision of *SASA!* TA.





## Key findings

### Types of technical assistance provided and motivations to choose SASA!

The TA provider interviewees described three main types of support from Beyond Borders, offered only to long-term partners implementing SASA! in its entirety: facilitation of staff trainings, remote and in-person TA, and organized information-exchange events (arranged exchanges for a cohort of all partner organizations implementing a particular phase of SASA!).

All of the organizations represented in the focus group discussions were addressing some type of violence in their communities prior to implementing SASA!. Motivating factors for these groups to adopt and implement SASA! included curiosity about the methodology (and the absence of a violence prevention methodology of their own); that the intervention is established, is structured, and has high-quality support materials (e.g., activities and posters); and SASA!'s emphasis on prevention (i.e., stopping violence before it happens).

### Partner feedback on SASA! as a methodology

*Strengths of SASA! and challenges to implementation:* Four main strengths of SASA! emerged from focus group discussion respondents: its comprehensive definition of violence, its inclusive approach fostering community ownership (including both women and men), its human rights framework, and the availability of supporting materials to facilitate planning and implementation.

Insufficient resources for implementing SASA! within partner organizations was the most commonly reported challenge and perceived to affect every stage of training and implementation—including the ability to offer food or transportation refunds to community participants in trainings held at the partner site. Beyond Borders provides TA but not financial support to partner organizations for implementation, and its recent approach to troubleshooting this issue has included collective fundraising, given that TA providers perceived this resource gap was largely beyond the control of partner organizations. Other reported challenges to SASA! implementation included initial community resistance to SASA! ideas, retention of Community Activists, community resistance to participation in monitoring and evaluation activities, and the ability to effectively replicate what they had learned during TA in their implementation.

*Effectiveness of technical assistance:* The 19 online survey respondents were asked how well Beyond Borders trainings had prepared them for using each of the five core SASA! skillsets: local activism, using communication materials, media and advocacy, training, and monitoring and evaluation. Participants rated their preparedness for each skillset on a scale from 1 to 4, with 1 being “not well prepared/still have a lot of questions about this” and 4 being “I could train others on this.” All participant scores on preparedness ranged from 2 to 3, suggesting an overall need for additional TA or other skill-building to feel prepared for the activities central to SASA! implementation.

The scores suggest somewhat better confidence in skills related to training others and use of communication materials than for monitoring and evaluation or media and advocacy. It is possible that none of the respondents felt fully prepared because the SASA! methodology is quite different from that of other VAW or child protection programming in Haiti. This implies a strong need for consistent TA for SASA! users in this setting—that is, a one-time course is not sufficient. It also may point to improvements needed in certain areas of TA provided.



*Perceived strengths and challenges of technical assistance:* Both the online and qualitative respondents were overwhelmingly positive about SASA! TA. Long-term partners in focus group discussions shared that both the remote and in-person TA was helpful at every phase of the methodology. Participants also felt that trainings helped with skill-building and learning how to use the SASA! support materials (such as the posters). The information exchanges offered a chance to learn from other implementing organizations and troubleshoot common issues. SASA! posters, activities, and other materials facilitated implementation. In addition, focus group discussion participants appreciated the TA providers' supportive communication skills, described as "friendly" and "personal."

Perceptions of challenges differed somewhat between partner organizations and the Beyond Borders TA providers, but there were several common threads: implementation funding challenges that impact TA, communication challenges, and insufficient TA support to build skills in key areas. TA providers added another main challenge: limited leadership and accountability within the partner organizations.

*Principles of good technical assistance:* Participants in the survey and in-depth interviews were also explicitly asked to rank how well they felt the TA provided by Beyond Borders lived up to Raising Voices' six "Technical Assistance Guiding Principles." Partners and Beyond Borders staff were both asked to rank their TA relationship on a scale from 1 to 4 (with 1 being "very concerned about how we demonstrate this principle" and 4 being "we are excellent at demonstrating this principle"). Overall scores ranked by TA partners were consistently high for all six principles, averaging between 3 and 4.

## **Respondent recommendations**

Participants offered three main categories of recommendations for Beyond Borders TA providers: improving training and TA services, promoting sustainability of SASA! implementation, and addressing logistics and resources.

### *Improving training and technical assistance services*

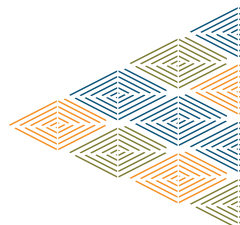
Clear recommendations arose from participants related to strengthening TA services, in particular for long-term partners using SASA!

1. Strengthen communication between TA providers and implementing partners.
2. Strongly encourage organization heads to attend trainings.
3. Mandate progress reporting from partner organizations.
4. Train multiple staff members of partner organizations.
5. Offer refresher trainings.
6. Strengthen TA on monitoring and evaluation.
7. Expand training and mentoring offerings.

### *Promoting sustainability*

Two main recommendations related to the sustainability of SASA! implementation. For these, attention must be paid to the boundaries of what is feasible for TA provision.

1. Establish mechanisms for Beyond Borders to assist implementing partner organizations with funds acquisition to promote the security of SASA! implementation.
2. Proactively recruit new implementing partner organizations.





## Addressing logistics and resources

A number of recommendations related to resources that partner organizations need to implement SASA!, pointing to a need for clarity around the TA role and underscoring the impact of funding and other resource constraints for partner organizations.

1. Organize transportation to and from trainings and overnight accommodations.
2. Provide more materials for media use.
3. Ensure enough, and timely, distribution of SASA! materials.

## Research into action

While it is reasonable for participants to request implementation funding and other resources from their TA provider since there is a deeply felt need for those resources to make implementation successful, both Beyond Borders and Raising Voices approach TA primarily through training, mentorship, and ongoing support rather than providing funding to implementing partners. Drawing on findings from this TA assessment, the following practical considerations for strengthening SASA! TA relationships may be applicable to other settings:

1. Organizations providing TA should periodically solicit recommendations on improving TA, and follow up as appropriate within the boundaries of their role as a TA provider.
2. Organizations providing TA should clarify the expected frequency, intensity, and format of the TA relationship early in the partnership (e.g., when creating the memorandum of understanding), including clear boundaries around the TA role and clarifying where support is and is not available within resource constraints.
3. Donors should examine the context of funding in Haiti and increase support on effective VAWG prevention.



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Available online at <http://raisingvoices.org/innovation/disseminating-ideas/>

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## Endnotes

- 1 Institut Haïtien de l'Enfance (IHE) & ICF. (2018). *Enquête Mortalité, Morbidité et Utilisation des Services (EMMUS-VI 2016-2017)*. Pétiion-Ville, Haïti, and Rockville, Maryland, USA : IHE et ICF, p.389.
- 2 Government of Haiti, PEPFAR, CDC. (2012). *Violence against children in Haiti: Findings from a national survey*. Port au Prince: VACS.
- 3 Bott, S., Guedes, A., Goodwin, M., & Mendoza, J. A. (2012). *Violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean: A comparative analysis of population-based data from 12 countries*. Washington, DC: Pan American Health Organization.