

Common Challenges in Violence against Women Facilitation

(2 hours)

DRAFT - For Field Test

*Training and Mentoring Skills Series
Staff Skill Building Library
Raising Voices*

(SASA! Start Phase Logo)

This module is part of a *Staff Skill Building Library* developed by Raising Voices. The *Library* consists of competency based training modules designed to strengthen skills of staff implementing or supporting community-based violence against women (VAW) prevention programs. The *Library* is designed for organizations using the *SASA! Activist Kit for Preventing Violence against Women and HIV* but can be used by anyone working to mobilize their community to prevent VAW. If you are not using *SASA!* simply replace the word *SASA!* wherever you see it in the text with the name of your methodology.

This module is part of the Training and Mentoring Skills series in the *Staff Skill Building Library*.

All materials in the *Library* can be downloaded at www.raisingvoices.org/staffskills.php or requested at info@raisingvoices.org The *SASA! Activist Kit* can be downloaded at www.raisingvoices.org

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Common Challenges in Violence against Women Facilitation (2 hours)

Note: This module is best done with groups after SASA! Awareness 2.4 A- Instruct, Inform or Question? and Basic Facilitation Skills modules

Objective:

- Increase participant ability to respond to common facilitation challenges that arise in violence against women training.

By the end of this session, participants will be able to . . .

- Use “validate, then challenge” technique to respond to victim blame or challenging question.
- Respond to common challenges and questions that arise in VAW training.

Preparations

- Photocopy 1 copy only of *Exercise: But Men are Victims, Too!* and cut apart group work scenarios.
- Photocopy Handout: *Validate, Then Challenge Example: But men are victims, too!* for all participants.
- Photocopy 1 copy only of *Exercise with Common Scenarios* and cut apart scenarios.

Steps

Responding to Common Challenges

1. Explain: *Even if a training facilitator has excellent skills, violence against women (VAW) issues can be controversial and certain challenges often come up. It is good to be prepared and think through ahead of time what you as a facilitator might do if these challenges arise.*

2. Ask: *What are some examples of training participant comments about VAW that might be good not to let pass without discussing them or challenging them?*

Note: The group should generate examples, but the below examples can help if they have a hard time getting started. Use their examples, rather than the ones listed here, if they do not match.

Examples:

- Women are to blame for the violence against them – they misbehave!
- A light slap isn't violence, it is necessary discipline!
- If we want to stop rape, we should be talking to these girls about the way they dress.
- Gender equality is a white people's idea/ a western concept.
- You people only care about women! Men are victims, too and women are usually doing these things to their husbands, but you don't talk about that.

3. Explain: *We could talk about responding to these all day, but let's discuss a few to begin.*

4. Invite group to choose 1 of the examples discuss. *(Note: If "But men are victims, too!" is on the list, be sure it is not selected now, as it will be explored later in the training.)*

5. Ask: *Looking at this example, how should facilitators respond?*

6. Have a few participants volunteer to respond to one of the statements.

7. Discuss what others think of each possible response. Assure responses are accurate, without blame and do not reinforce any myths about VAW.

8. Summarize:

- *Your goal as a facilitator is to make sure that everyone feels comfortable and that respect for others is always maintained. This will help promote an atmosphere in which people can examine their attitudes and beliefs.*
- *There is a narrow line between creating a friendly, accepting and open climate for discussion and allowing discriminatory remarks to pass by unchallenged. Facilitators must decide how much to support or change what participants say.*
- *Do not avoid challenge. BUT REMEMBER: Arguments are always counterproductive. As it says in Instruct, Inform or Question in SASA!--questions that are challenging encourage participants to think more critically about their attitudes and beliefs.*
- *In addition to questioning, one of the ways you can deal with victim blaming comments or inaccurate information coming out in the community is through the Validate, then Challenge¹ technique.*

¹ Adapted from: Rape Victim Advocacy Program Crisis Counselor Training (Unpublished, 2000 version). Iowa City, Iowa, USA.

Validate, Then Challenge

1. Explain:

- *Sometimes, after questioning and creating good dialogue, there are still strong comments that you do not want to leave without addressing in some way before you close a session.*
- *Validate, then Challenge is a technique that can help us to refocus and summarize a discussion, and not allow misconceptions among the group to continue.*

2. Invite participants to imagine a scenario where they have gone through sessions on power, the cause of VAW, and most participants seem to be thinking through it in a helpful way, but a training participant is arguing that the way women are dressing as the cause of rape, and others are starting to listen to them and get convinced otherwise.

3. Explain:

- *You could say: "But we have already established men's power over women is the cause of rape!" But the participant might take offense.*
- *Instead, first we validate or find common ground with their intent. Tell them their concern is a common one, or validate the feeling behind the words.*
- *Then, we challenge the person's belief, providing brief information and asking a key question back to the group.*
- *For example, "it seems like you are very concerned about rape, and want to be sure we are getting at the real cause of it so it can stop. At the same time, if we look at examples in some parts of the world that restrict the way women dress, we see that that does not stop rape. So, what does everyone think—can women's dress code be the real root cause of rape?"*
- *To further demonstrate Validate, then Challenge, we can look at another common example.*

4. Ask: *Has anyone ever had someone in a training or activity, or even in your own life, saying—but what are you doing talking about violence against women? What about men!?!—men are victims, too!?!*

5. Ask 1-2 participants to share experiences briefly.

6. Explain: *There are a number of reasons someone might bring up the idea that men are victims of domestic and sexual violence. Often, it comes from the topic bringing up a certain emotion for them.*

7. Ask participants to count off from 1-5, breaking into 5 groups.

8. Distribute slips of paper to each group, from Exercise: But men are victims, too!

9. Explain:

- *We are going to get 1 possible explanation for a participant's bringing up the idea that men are victims of VAW, too.*
- *Your group will read the possible explanation and think about 2 things:*
 - *What might the person say to tip us off that this is what is behind their comment?*
 - *What might the facilitator say to validate the sentiment behind what they are saying, and then challenge with a brief piece of information and a question to the whole group?*

- You will have 10 minutes to discuss and prepare a brief (3 minutes) demonstration of the interaction—what the person might say, and what you might say to the person to validate, then challenge.

10. Invite questions or clarifications.

11. After 10 minutes, call “stop!”

12. Ask each group to present briefly.

13. Offer feedback, assuring that:

- Validation was offered, but did not overly support the negative comment.
- Brief information was given (only 1-2 sentences).
- A question was thrown back to the group for further reflection.

14. Distribute Handout: *Validate, then Challenge: “But men are victims, too!”* and explain that it summarizes what we just did.

15. Read the following statements aloud and have a different participant for each one volunteer to validate, then challenge in a response in the moment. Have other participants help them if they get stuck, and give encouraging feedback.

- A police officer begins to ask a series of questions about why the survivor behaved a certain way “why did you go to sell in the market alone at night?”
- A religious leader tells a group of people in an awareness raising that the reason HIV is so prevalent in the community is because women have no morals and cheat on their husbands, so he wants to warn women that, if they are going to have an affair God will punish them by bringing HIV to their family.
- A teacher says: “It is a waste of time and money to send girls to school because they just get pregnant”.

Validation Option: Activity in Training

This activity allows for group validation of the competency:

- Use “validate, then challenge” technique to respond to victim blame or challenging question.

Are participants able to validate without appearing to support the negative comment? Are they able to provide relevant information briefly, and only as necessary? Are they able to ask a challenging question to the group, for further discussion? If so, then the group demonstrated the competency. If not, further training is recommended.

Exercise with Common Scenarios:

1. Explain: *There are many other common questions and scenarios that come up in VAW trainings. We are going to briefly go over a few of those in this next section.*

2. Ask participants to stand in a circle.

3. Pass out the slips of paper in Handout: *Exercise with Common Scenarios.*

4. Explain:

- One person will volunteer to stand in the middle of the circle and act out the scene for us—ask the question or make the statement, in role play fashion as though you were that person.
- After the person makes the statement, we will all think like facilitators—what would be some good facilitator responses?
- You can either think of your own, or act out one that is suggested on the sheet. Do this in role play style, as though you are responding in the moment.

5. Clarify any questions or comments after all scenarios and responses are read and matched.
6. Summarize:

- *Today we have discussed how participatory facilitation is different from conventional teaching, and practiced a few techniques for responding to common questions and challenges that come up with VAW participatory groups—that generate more participation.*
- *There are many other challenges you may face, but if we remember the SASA! principle of using thought-provoking questions, and techniques like validate, then challenge—we can build our skills in creating dialogue that facilitates social change.*
- *Thank participants for their participation.*

Validation Option: Activity in Training

This activity allows for group validation of the competency:

- Respond to common challenges and questions that arise in violence against women training.

Are participants able to choose or create responses to challenges that create further dialogue and do not make participants defensive.? If so, then the group demonstrated the competency. If not, further training is recommended.

Validation Options

Validation is another way to say “assessment” or “pre/post-test”. It is used to determine whether the participants in a training learned what the facilitator intended for them to learn. Instructions for how to use each validation method can be found in *Training Validation Methods: A how-to guide for assessing participant learning* downloadable at www.raisingvoices.org/staffskills.php

Select validation methods for each competency using the table below:

1. Choose whether the competency (specific skill) needs to be validated at a group or individual level.
2. Looking at the validation methods listed in that category (group or individual), select only **one** of the validation methods marked with an 'X' for each competency.
3. Plan a time in the training agenda to use the validation method you've chosen to test each competency.

Suggested Validation Methods										
	Group Validation					Individual Validation				
	<i>Use if it is sufficient for the group, as a whole, to demonstrate the competency</i>					<i>Use if essential for each participant to demonstrate the competency her/himself</i>				
Competency (Specific skill)	Activity in Training*	Game Show	Card Game	Answers Bingo	Pick and Play	Activity in Training*	Exit Interview w/ Role Play	Game Show (All Play)	Written Quiz	
Use “validate, then challenge” technique to respond to victim blame or challenging question.**	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Respond to common challenges and questions that arise in violence against women training.**	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	

* Activity in Training includes many possibilities, depending on the module, including brainstorming, group practices, debates, agree/disagree/not sure exercise, and others.

**See Validation Questions for this competency, to be used in Game Show, Card Game, Answers Bingo or Pick and Play methods, on next page.

Validation Questions

- If you were conducting a training and a male participant said: “You keep talking about violence against women—what about the men? Men are victims too!” How would you respond?
- During a training, a participant asks a question you do not know the answer to. What do you say?
- Facilitator’s Note: Find out what the participants really learned! These cards can be cut out and used with Game Show, Card Game, Answers Bingo or Pick and Play validation methods. Full descriptions of how to use each of these validation methods are available in the *Staff Skill Building Library*. Download at: www.raisingvoices.org/staffskills.php and go to *Training Validation Methods: A how-to guide for assessing participant learning*.

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Exercise: But Men are Victims, Too!

Group 1: A man in the community or other organization staff makes the comment: “you talk about women being the victims of VAW, but it happens to men, too!” or “but women are perpetrators, too!”

You get the sense that this person feels: Guilty.

For a male participant, some men have never thought about what women have to go through with VAW. He may feel guilty and be trying to make himself feel better by asserting that women are to blame, too. For a female participant, she may be realizing past times when she has been unsupportive of female survivors she has come across in her life, taking the man’s side, and feeling bad about it.

Do a short demonstration, showing:

- What this person might say or do to make you think they are feeling guilty?
 - What you as the facilitator might say to 1. Validate the feeling behind their words, and 2. Challenge their statement, with brief information and a question?
-

Group 2: A person in the community or other organization staff makes the comment: “you talk about women being the victims of VAW, but it happens to men, too!” or “but women are perpetrators, too!”

You get the sense that this person feels: Curious.

Sometimes our strongest assertions are really our strongest questions. The person may be wondering if this can happen to men, too.

Do a short demonstration, showing:

- What this person might say or do to make you think they are feeling curious?
 - What you as the facilitator might say to 1. Validate the feeling behind their words, and 2. Challenge their statement, with brief information and a question?
-

Group 3: A person in the community or other organization staff makes the comment: “you talk about women being the victims of VAW, but it happens to men, too!” or “but women are perpetrators, too!”

You get the sense that this person feels: Defensive.

A male participant may feel that he is a good, nonviolent man and that men are being blamed. He wants to believe he is good. A female participant may feel defensive about the men in her life, her culture, and the way she was taught to be a woman.

Do a short demonstration, showing:

- What this person might say or do to make you think they are feeling defensive?
- What you as the facilitator might say to 1. Validate the feeling behind their words, and 2. Challenge their statement, with brief information and a question?

Group 4: A person in the community or other organization staff makes the comment: “you talk about women being the victims of VAW, but it happens to men, too!” or “but women are perpetrators, too!”

You get the sense that this person feels: Threatened.

For a male participant, he may be realizing that women gaining power in the family and community means that he is not the boss all the time anymore. He may be against the VAW program, and be trying to challenge the ideals of equality that the program works towards. He may or may not be a perpetrator himself, who resents the program spending so much time addressing the needs of women. For a female participant, she may feel like this goes against everything she was taught about being a good woman, and feel like such talk turns her worldview upside-down.

Do a short demonstration, showing:

- What this person might say or do to make you think they are feeling threatened?
 - What you as the facilitator might say to 1. Validate the feeling behind their words, and 2. Challenge their statement, with brief information and a question?
-

Group 5: A person in the community or other organization staff makes the comment: “you talk about women being the victims of VAW, but it happens to men, too!” or “but women are perpetrators, too!”

You get the sense that this person feels: Vulnerable.

The person may know a male survivor of domestic violence, or be one themselves. There is a kernel of truth in the comment—men can be survivors, and women can be perpetrators, even though statistically this does not happen nearly as often. Perhaps the person is thinking of one of these cases and the program’s focus on female survivors does not speak to his/her experience. A male survivor or support person to a male survivor may want to speak with someone about what has happened to him. A female may be feeling vulnerable for the first time, realizing how big the pattern of VAW is in the world—and may want to reject the idea that she is somehow more vulnerable based on who she is, because feeling at risk is not pleasant.

Do a short demonstration, showing:

- What this person might say or do to make you think they are feeling vulnerable?
- What you as the facilitator might say to 1. Validate the feeling behind their words, and 2. Challenge their statement, with brief information and a question?

Handout: Validate, then Challenge Example--But Men are Victims, Too!

Community members and staff of NGOs who work in other sectors often make the comment: “you talk about women being the victims of VAW, but it happens to men, too!” or “but women are perpetrators, too!”

What can VAW prevention staff say when this comes up?

Before you challenge the person about the reality of VAW or talk with the person about SASA’s focus on violence against women and girls, it is important to think about the feeling or the question behind their comment, and respond to it. This is a great time to open up a dialogue about an often-misunderstood topic!

The person may be feeling:

- ✓ **Guilty.** For a male participant, some men have never thought about what women have to go through with VAW. He may feel guilty and be trying to make himself feel better by asserting that women are to blame, too. For a female participant, she may be realizing past times when she has been unsupportive of survivors she has come across in her life and feeling bad about it.
- ✓ **Curious.** Sometimes our strongest assertions are really our strongest questions. The person may be wondering if this can happen to men, too.
- ✓ **Defensive.** A male participant may feel that he is a good, nonviolent man and that men are being blamed. He wants to believe he is good. A female participant may feel defensive about the men in her life, her culture, and the way she was taught to be a woman.
- ✓ **Threatened.** For a male participant, he may be realizing that women gaining power in the family and community means that he is not the boss all the time anymore. He may be against the VAW program, and be trying to challenge the ideals of equality that the program works towards. He may or may not be a perpetrator himself, who resents the program spending so much time addressing the needs of women. For a female participant, she may feel like this goes against everything she was taught about being a good woman, and feel like such talk turns her worldview upside-down.
- ✓ **Vulnerable.** The person may know a male survivor of domestic violence, or be one themselves. There is a kernel of truth in the comment—men can be survivors, and women can be perpetrators, even though statistically this does not happen nearly as often. Perhaps the person is thinking of one of these cases and the program’s focus on female survivors does not speak to his/her experience. A male survivor or support person to a male survivor may want to speak with someone about what has happened to him. A female may be feeling vulnerable for the first time, realizing how big the pattern of VAW is in the world—and may want to reject the idea that she is somehow more vulnerable based on who she is, because feeling at risk is not pleasant.
- ✓ **Etc.**

Think about what the feeling or question behind the comment may be. Of course, we will not know for certain, but oftentimes we get a sense of what it might be about for someone, based on their other comments or the context of the conversation. **Validate** that feeling and listen to the

person, then **challenge** them about the reality of domestic violence and about SASA's! focus on violence against women and girls.

For example, if it seems like a man feels defensive, you can say—“of course, there are very good men who want to stand up against VAW with others and try to make the community a safer place. Not all men are perpetrators. And there are male survivors. Many of them do not report their cases because they feel ashamed. However, the vast majority of survivors of VAW are women because in general, women in society have less power and violence against women is an abuse of power.”

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Exercise with Common Scenarios

Scenario 1: When we are discussing rape during a community training, a woman stands up and starts to tell the story of being gang raped by soldiers. What should the facilitator do?

✓ Response: Say it takes a lot of courage to talk about your own experience. Tell them you are glad they survived what they went through, and glad they want to talk.

✓ Response: Thank the person for speaking out, and say we usually encourage people to speak with us after the training session about their own experiences, because we want to make sure we can assure confidentiality.

✓ Response: Remind the group that this is a confidential space and that what is heard in the group should stay in the group.

✓ Response: Move the attention away from the person after you have finished speaking to their question/ comment.

Scenario 2: A young woman comes up to you after training and says she wants to talk to you because she is being abused.

✓ Response: Make sure you are one on one with the person, and that others are not in a place to overhear the conversation.

✓ Response: Ask if the person would like to go somewhere more private or quiet.

✓ Response: Ask her if she feels safe now or if she is in a dangerous situation at home.

✓ Response: Tell the person you are glad they survived, it is not their fault, or other supportive statement.

✓ Response: Validate their feelings.

✓ Response: Follow the person's lead—if they want information, give it to them. If they want to talk (counselling session), clarify what your role is (you are a trainer, not a counselor) and make appropriate referral so they have someone to talk with.

Scenario 3: A participant asks a difficult question, which you want to open up to the group in order to create discussion.

- ✓ Response: Answer the question with another question to the group. Facilitator says: “What do others think about that?”

Scenario 4: Someone asks a question you don't know the answer to.

- ✓ Response: Tell the person that you don't know. Either tell them where they can find the information, or tell them that you will find the answer and get it to them. Follow up and do so.

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