

Local Activism: Identifying Community Activists

(2 hours 30 minutes)

DRAFT - For Field Test

*Local Activism Series
Staff Skill Building Library
Raising Voices*

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 *Local Activism* 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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Note: This session can be used by groups who feel a training process that covers material in “Identifying Community Activists” found in the Start Phase would be helpful in ensuring quality CAs are selected. If such a detailed walk-through and skills practice is not needed, select parts (below) may be used as needed to practice specific skills.

Objectives

- Create criteria and a process for the selection of local community activists.
- Prepare for a community activist selection mini-workshop.

Competencies

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- List at least 2 criteria for selecting effective community activists.
- Describe SASA! and the role of community activists (main responsibilities, hours worked, and compensation) to local leaders, teachers, potential CAs and others.
- Identify other activist roles and list people who could fill those roles.
- Explain to different sets of community members what role they will play (core CA, other skilled SASA! activists, etc.)
- Explain different roles women and men play in violence against women prevention and response and why.

Preparations

1. Ask participants to read in advance, and photocopy or have available copies of: SASA! Start Phase Local Activism section—*Identifying Community Activists*, pp. 1-14.
2. Pre-write flip chart instructions **Step 1**, No. 6
3. Photocopy handouts: **Sample Community Activist Selection Criteria** and **Action Plan: Community Activist Selection**.

Steps

Introduction

1. Explain:
 - *SASA's! success relies on having strong, motivated community based activists that start conversations and the social change process in their everyday lives.*
 - *Since community activists (CA's) are so critical to the social change process, it is very important to choose the right people as CA's.*
 - *In this session, we are going to walk through a process of identifying CA's to work with SASA!.*
2. Ask: *Why is the selection of good CA's the key to the SASA! social change process?*
3. Write responses on flip chart, e.g.
 - CA's are the people on the ground to carry out all the community activities and to inspire activism.
 - CA's are familiar leaders people can identify with, and are available even when program staff may not be.
 - CA's are responsible for helping activism to spread.
4. Ask participants to turn to their neighbors and discuss: *What will community activists do in the SASA! program?*
5. After 3-5 minutes, ask volunteers to share what they discussed with their neighbors.
6. Write responses on flip chart and clarify any misconceptions.
7. Ask: *Will the roles of male and female CAs differ at all? Why or why not?*
8. Solicit a few responses. Make sure the following are included:
 - Both men and women's activism is needed to prevent violence against women (VAW) and HIV. The engagement of both men and women are needed to create social change.
 - While, at the beginning, men may respond best when other men speak about balancing power, we should remember that a sign of change is that, over time, men start to listen to women's voices and respect them, too--and vice versa.
 - If there is a case of violence that needs to be worked with, it is helpful to remember that we are going to ensure referrals are made to existing counselors or services in the community, but remember that many survivors of violence are women and prefer to speak about their experiences to other women—and we want to respect their will and choices.
9. Ask: *Now that we have discussed what CAs will do, what are some characteristics of the type of CA that will help to drive the social change process? (e.g. well-respected)*
10. Write responses on flip chart.
11. Distribute Handout: **Suggested Criteria for CA Selection.**
12. Ask: *What similarities and differences do you see between the list we just created about characteristics we are looking for in a CA and this handout?*

13. Invite participant suggestions, and adapt criteria list to group needs. (*Note: complete final criteria list and type up or write out on flip chart to have in office until CA selection process is completed.*)
14. Explain: *There are 4 main steps to selecting the right CAs:*
15. Write on flip chart:
 - Step 1: Gathering community recommendations.
 - Step 2: Publicizing the activism opportunity.
 - Step 3: Refining the recommendations and holding mini-workshops.
 - Step 4: Final CA selection.
16. Explain: *In the rest of this session, we will be discussing how we can find community members that meet the criteria and ask them to be SASA! CAs.*

Part 1: Gathering Community Leader and Respected Community Member Recommendations

1. Explain: *First, we want to gather the recommendations of respected community members and leaders of who they think will make a good CA.*
2. Ask: *Why?*
3. Solicit responses, e.g.
 - They know the community better than we do!
 - It helps create ownership of the program, and some of them may even be interested.
4. Ask: *Who exactly are these local leaders whose opinions we will ask?*
5. Invite participants to list names of individuals in each community, and write responses on flip chart. Include local leaders, parish chiefs or other civil servants, opinion leaders, religious leaders, elders, and other available institutions.

Note: The list should not only be of entities, but of actual people, when that information is known—e.g., Harriet (police outpost), Mr. Juma (village elder), etc. Be sure there are about an equal number of men and women on the list.
6. Ask for 2 volunteers to practice approaching one of the people on the list to ask their recommendations for CAs. 1 volunteer will be themselves in the role play. The other(s) will play one of the people from the list who we will be approaching. Write instructions on flip chart:
 - Explain SASA!
 - Explain briefly what might be expected of CAs, clarifying that this is voluntary work—no stipends, etc.
 - Explain that we highly respect their recommendations and opinions, but will not be able to select absolutely everyone they recommend.
 - Ask for recommendations. Take notes, not only on the names, but also their comments. Listen for and ask about some of the criteria on the list we created.
7. Conduct role play practice.

Validation Option: Activity in Training

This activity allows for group validation of the competency:

- Describe SASA! and the role of community activists.

Did participants explain to their neighbor and role play an accurate description of CA role, hours worked, what they can and cannot expect from program? Did participants explain what staff expects from them, and approaches potential CAs with enthusiasm and sense of equality (partners, not teacher/ student)? If so, then the group demonstrated the competencies. If not, further training is recommended.

8. Ask group for feedback for the volunteer's role play.
9. Ask what we learned about the people recommended.
10. Explain: *Next, we would go to another leader on the list and repeat this process.*
11. Explain:
 - *Once we have asked multiple leaders, we can sit and see whose names emerge more than once.*
 - *Our notes should include any reservations or assets that were mentioned by the leaders we spoke with.*
 - *Remember, sometimes community members are suggested because of personal connections or community politics, it is important to ask multiple leaders and others in the community to try to get objective suggestions for women and men who might truly care about SASA! issues.*

Part 2: Publicizing the Activism Opportunity

1. Explain: *In addition to talking with leaders, we can directly ask the community about their interest in being CAs, through posters or advertisements letting people know what the volunteer opportunity is and what they can do to contact us, if interested.*
2. Solicit a volunteer to create such a poster or advertisement, as an action point after this session. Each staff will take some copies of these to post and hand to community leaders as they solicit their recommendations.
3. Explain: *It is also useful for staff to spend time in the community, informally chatting with people in popular places. Often times, those people who would be most interested and suitable are just 'regular' women and men in the community who are not currently playing a leadership role.*

Part 3: Refining the Recommendations and Holding Mini-Workshops

1. Explain:

- *Once we have obtained more recommendations and interested potential activists than the number of CAs we need, we will sit down together as a staff and talk through the comments about each person who was recommended by more than one person or who staff met or referred to by others who seem particularly keen on SASA!*
 - *Remember getting recommendations from multiple leaders helps to ensure their recommendation is authentic and widely supported.*
2. *Ask: How many CAs do we want? For those of you who have already read the SASA! piece: Identifying Community Activist, how many people should we invite to each mini workshop?*
 3. *Explain: There should be more people invited to mini workshops than we need as CAs, in case some do not work out—but each mini workshop should have no more than 30 participants to allow good interaction.*
 4. *Ask: Can we have another 2 volunteers to role play what words they would use to invite the potential CAs to the mini workshop?*
 5. *Explain:*
 - *1 volunteer will play yourself and the other will play the potential CA.*
 - *This is much the same as the previous role play, except you may give more detail here about what the CAs role will be, including what they can and cannot expect (no stipend, etc), and explain this workshop is not a commitment—it is a way for them to see if they are interested, and to see whether they are a match to be a CA.*
 - *There are no promises on either side.*
 6. *Conduct role play. Stop after 5-10 minutes.*
 7. *Invite participants to give feedback to volunteers. Add comments as necessary and thank the volunteers for participating.*
 8. *Explain:*
 - *In the mini-workshops, there need to be enough staff available to have program staff sit and move among participants, because the facilitator cannot notice everything, and all verbal and nonverbal cues can provide useful information about the participants.*
 - *We need to observe each participant's interactions with other participants, as well as what they actually say, and to think about them in regard to the criteria for CA's we created.*
 9. *Briefly talk through the sections of the mini-workshop outlined in SASA! Identifying CA's pp 3-8. Assign each section's facilitator, planted note-takers/ observers, etc.)*
 10. *Ask participants to turn to their neighbors and explain what the opportunity is and is not, what we can and can't do, what we expect from them and what they can expect from us. Remember: Never promise what you can't, and clarify any expectations they may have and be clear whether they are possible or not. Note: do not decide or make promises to participants of the selection meetings that day. Staff must debrief together first.*
 11. *Ask for volunteer to stand up and role-play what they would say. Note: this should be a more in-depth explanation than in the role play where staff invited the participants.*
 12. *Provide feedback about the role play.*

Step 4: Final CA Selection

1. Explain:

- *After each mini-workshop, we will divide the participants of that workshop into yes', no's and maybe's.*

Validation Option: Activity in Training

This activity allows for group validation of the competencies:

- Identify other activist roles and list people who could fill those roles.
- Explain to different sets of community members what role they will play.

Did the list created in plenary include relevant ideas for alternate roles that could make use of all interested community members' energy and strengths? In role plays, did volunteers explain clearly why someone was or was not selected and explain next steps for training or personal activism, specifically and in an encouraging way?

If so, then the group demonstrated the competencies. If not, further training is recommended.

- *At the end of all mini-workshops, we will count up the yes', among both men and women, and discuss the maybe's to fill in.*
 - *There should be equal numbers of men and women CAs, as much as possible. This sends an important message about equality and is essential to build critical mass.*
 - *Finally, we will get back to each CA again, confirming their interest and our interest in them and inviting them to the first CA training.*
 - *Mini-workshop participants who were not selected should also be approached.*
2. Ask: *What are other activism opportunities we could offer the people who were not selected?*
 3. Solicit responses, e.g.
 - *Artist to paint murals or other communication materials.*
 - *Dramatist for community theater.*
 - *People with physical assets like a large yard, a shop to distribute materials from.*
 - *Etc. Note: See SASA! Identifying Community Activists p. 10 for more ideas.*
 4. Ask: *Who can role play this?*
 5. Have 1-2 volunteers stand up and role play what they would say to mini workshop participants who were not selected. Be sure they offer alternative activist opportunities that match with their skills.

(E.g. It seems like you are very busy already, but we noticed you are a great artist, and wondered if we could approach you sometimes to donate some of your skills toward making a community mural, helping us make posters for marches, etc.)

Conclusion and Action Planning

1. Explain:

- We have said that selecting good CAs is the heart of our program—they are our partners in activism.
- Are we their bosses? No—we are their partners, and we are responsible for helping their activism to grow and spread!
- Now we are ready to start the identification and selection process.

2. Distribute and fill out as a group the handout: **Action Plan for CA selection.**

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Explain different roles women and men play in violence against women prevention and response and why.**	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
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* 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.

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Validation Questions

- What are two of the criteria to consider in selecting CAs?
- How are the roles of male and female CAs the same? How might they be different?
- List at least 3 activist roles that could be played by interested individuals who are not selected as CA's.

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Sample Community Activist Selection Criteria

The potential community activist (CA):

- Understands the time commitment required and has the time to participate (Including being available during the day).
- Can commit to participating in bi-monthly CA meetings and to conducting at least 1 activity a week.
- Is approachable.
- Is able to speak publicly.
- Is ready to work in a team.
- Is not a student. *(Note: Students can be valuable as other types of activists and can take leadership in youth-based community action groups, but tend not to have the stability in schedule to make ideal CA's.)*
- Speaks language(s) needed to communicate with community and staff.
- Is interested in violence and rights.
- Is respected in the community.
- Is open to learning and change.
- Is willing and able to move around community talking with others.
- Is cooperative and willing to respectfully work with others (community members, CAs, etc.)
- Is not a local government leader *(Note: leaders are to be engaged in other ways).*
- Is not looking for full-time, salaried employment.

Action Plan for Community Activist Selection

Action	Person(s) Responsible	Timeframe
Poster creation advertising CA selection (description of SASA, CA role, hours expected, compensation, and how to contact staff if interested)		
Who will approach which local leader: <i>(continue on back if necessary)</i> Local Leader Names:	(1-2 persons per leader)	
Mini Workshop Preparations Facilitator(s) Observers Logistics (set date(s), rent hall, order food, gather supplies, etc)		