

activism

GROWS IN KIBERA, KENYA

CREAW is using SASA! to prevent violence against women in Kibera, a high-density urban area of Nairobi, Kenya. The organization used to focus on response services to women experiencing violence, but since 2014 are increasing their attention to prevention of violence, and are now in the Support phase of SASA!

Angelina Cikanda, Head of the Access to Justice Program and Ian Mwangi, Assistant Project Officer of CREAW explain how SASA! has transformed the way CREAW works and makes them more effective: "We had been more confrontational with duty bearers. We'd say, 'violence is wrong, what you are doing is wrong, and you will go to jail for it, etc.'—but it wasn't working. We were wondering . . . why isn't this working? Kenya has really progressive laws, but things weren't changing. With SASA!, you're able to engage with people rather than telling people what to think. Instead, they are telling us what they want the change to look like. It's more engaging and personal now."

Still, working in a difficult, urban area comes with many challenges, including turnover of staff, community activists, and others critical to the change process. Also, because the population is very diverse, sometimes groups do not want to be mixed with each other so building community cohesion and connection is an important part of the work. CREAW responds to these challenges by meeting with various groups frequently and handling issues directly, to promote honest and open reflection.

CREAW's other innovation is to incorporate SASA! into their existing programming, including maternal and child health issues in the SASA! process, as well as violence against women and HIV. For example, they include discussion of female genital mutilation and maternal health outcomes.

CREAW community activists enjoy using SASA! activities in creative ways. For example, community activists have found ways to engage people at traditional weddings that can take multiple days. Men and women are often in different small groups throughout the time, making the occasions ideal for conducting various SASA! activities. They also found ways to support community-led sports events, where women play, so called "sports for peace." "People get curious when they see women playing these games, so it gathers people and they can talk with people about other issues of peace and violence."

"SASA! is transforming the communities and helping people take responsibility for what is happening. There are many vocal women in the community. There are some powerful stories already, which is really surprising because after a short time, the community members are really taking over—we are wondering how active they will be later in progressive SASA! phases."

SASA! in action!

After the first SASA! training with community activists, the women participants came together to form a special Women's Group in their community where, early marriage, wife inheritance and female genital mutilation (FGM) are all very common. They called their group 'Inua Dada' translated to mean 'Uplift a Sister.'

The group decided to hold dialogues in the schools about the topics. As individuals and collectively, these community women go into schools to talk with the head teachers about the importance of education – especially for girls – and the community practices that can prevent girls from completing basic primary and secondary education. As parents of the students, head teachers and the school administrators accept their presence in the schools, and a new wave of activism around these issues is emerging. Girls are learning to say "NO!" to retrogressive cultural practices.

So far about 27 girls who had dropped out returned to school to complete their education. CREAM supports their efforts by sharing materials and videos that can be used in their activities. The group has been particularly strong about advocating for an end to FGM. As survivors themselves, they are speaking with a powerful collective voice to other parents and students, helping girls in particular know that they should not have to endure the practice.

This is a great example of how SASA! inspires and encourages personal activism and collective change.



The *Creating Change Series* are simple case studies of quality programming happening around the world to prevent violence against women and children.

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