Supporting SASA! Together Staff

Why Supporting Staff Is So Important:

→ **SASA! Together training is just a starting point.**
  The most challenging work comes when the training and activities begin to spark critical thinking in the individual lives of staff—calling into question the way they think, behave and problem-solve in life and as part of the organization. This experience continues over the full duration of *SASA! Together* for staff and for the rest of the community.

→ **Violence affects all of us.**
  Some staff may be experiencing violence, using violence or have other trauma-related experiences. For them, working on *SASA! Together* may feel supportive, empowering, overwhelming or triggering. Other staff may be affected as they consider violence in the lives of those close to them.

→ **Guiding a community through change is stressful work.**
  An activist approach is provocative for everyone. Staff need to stay deeply attentive to what is emerging in the community—responding to backlash, interpersonal conflict, personal disclosures and more. Ongoing support enables staff to be energized by the work rather than burned out.

→ **Supporting staff ensures safe implementation.**
  *SASA! Together* is not a typical NGO-to-beneficiary program. If staff approach the work with little preparation and reflection, they may unknowingly reinforce stereotypes and misuse their own power, putting women and community relationships at risk.

→ **Support for staff is a fundamental part of *SASA! Together*.**
  If staff haven’t developed the necessary skills for and self-awareness of their own change process, they will be unable to recognize, understand and support the change happening in the community. If they aren’t supported personally and professionally, they can’t support activists, leaders and allies, and the whole process of community mobilization breaks down.

**Provide genuine support that staff can trust.**

In many organizations, meeting with senior leadership or as a team can feel intimidating or like a fault-finding exercise. Strive to set a supportive and constructive tone among staff and rules for confidentiality and respect within the group.
Two Ways to **Support Staff**

1. **Staff Check-Ins**

   - **Conduct regular SASA! Together meetings.**
     Use existing staff meetings or new meetings to check-in with staff as a group. For example, you could meet quarterly as a full group and every two weeks in smaller working groups (e.g., strategy teams). Meeting as a full group is essential to avoid siloed programming.

   - **Connect individually and informally.**
     Create opportunities to connect with staff one-on-one, or consider partnering staff for these informal check-ins. These conversations provide greater privacy for sharing without judgment on the reflections, learning, personal discoveries and more that come with this kind of work.

   - **Talk about the program, progress and planning.**
     What makes SASA! Together effective also makes it a bit messy and complex. Use your check-ins as a chance for staff to share successes, solve problems and plan what’s ahead.

   - **Facilitate Staff Development Exercises.**
     For SASA! Together to be effective, it has to be personal for everyone involved. Use your check-ins as a chance to support staff in their individual growth and in navigating the challenges of their evolving activist identity and the changing power dynamics at home and work (see the following).

**Staff Development Exercises are provided for each phase!**

In the back of this book (page 218) you’ll find Staff Development Exercises that include a reader, journal activity and a group debrief. Three topics are covered in each phase, and these sessions can be used in connection with the staff check-ins.

For the Start phase, they include:

- **Topic 1:** Creating Safer Spaces
- **Topic 2:** Appreciating Self-Care and Personal Development
- **Topic 3:** Injustice Is Political
2. Practice Sessions

- **Organize practice sessions in the workplace that simulate SASA! Together activities.**
  It’s one thing to read about an activity and another to use it with a group of people, who can respond in unpredictable ways. True practice means using an activity with others who are acting as community members and role-playing what could really arise in the community and institution.

- **Stay one step ahead of your work with SASA! Together activists, leaders and allies.**
  To ensure staff are well-prepared, practice the activities at least two weeks before they are introduced to the activists, leaders and/or allies. Even the simplest activities or handouts should be reviewed and discussed as they would be with activists, leaders and allies.

- **Practice the activities and using the L&A tools.**
  Staff also practice completing the Activity Observation Form and Community Change Tracker (see L&A Guide, pages 23 and 27, respectively).

- **Practice with family and friends.**
  An activist is always strengthening their activism skills. Encourage staff to also practice activities and skills with family and friends whenever possible—they are spreading SASA! Together ideas and also developing their expertise.

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**Turn the page for a sample practice session.**

Our suggested approach has been tried and tested through years of SASA! implementation. Combine this process with other role-playing approaches that work for your group. Have fun!