SASA! Technical Assistance Hub in Haiti

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1. Background

A. Introduction

SASA! is a community mobilization approach to preventing violence against women (VAW) and HIV developed by Raising Voices in Uganda. *SASA!* is both an acronym for its four phases—Start, Awareness, Support, and Action—and a Kiswahili word meaning "now," as in *now* is the time to prevent VAW and HIV. A randomized controlled trial conducted in Kampala demonstrated *SASA!'s* community-level impacts on preventing intimate partner violence (IPV) against women and reducing the social acceptability of violence.[1] With this evidence, global uptake of the methodology has grown dramatically, and *SASA!* is currently used in over 25 countries worldwide.

Beyond Borders is a non-profit organization committed to helping people build movements to liberate themselves from oppression and isolation in Haiti. Beyond Borders supports movements to end child slavery, guarantee universal access to education, end violence against women and girls (VAWG), and replace systems that oppress the poor with systems that support dignified work and sustainable livelihoods.

Beginning in 2010, Beyond Borders' Rethinking Power Program adapted the *SASA!* methodology to the Haitian context, implementing in Haitian communities and publishing the adapted Activist Kit in Haitian Creole in 2014. The organization also serves as a hub of *SASA!* technical assistance (TA) for other Haitian organizations interested in using the methodology. This TA's overall objective is to strengthen the movement for VAWG prevention. Specifically, Beyond Borders offers TA on the *SASA!* Activist Kit by sharing the materials, offering training courses, and providing long-term TA to organizations fully implementing *SASA!* The TA focuses on providing access to quality VAWG prevention materials through creating and adapting methodologies, as well as increasing the capacity of partner staff to effectively implement VAWG prevention.

To date, Beyond Borders in Haiti is the only organization besides Raising Voices to provide regular TA for *SASA!* and is considered a TA "hub"—that is, a designated organization to provide *SASA!* TA. This new model offers promise as a way to take *SASA!* to scale, given the substantial interest in the methodology and Raising Voices' knowledge that quality implementation often requires quality TA.

Recent research illustrates many of Beyond Borders' successes related to *SASA!* implementation since 2010. However, prior to this study, the organization had not evaluated its performance and impact as a *SASA!* TA hub. Raising Voices also wanted to learn from Beyond Borders' experiences to inform recommendations for other groups interested in providing *SASA!* TA.

B. Assessment of Beyond Borders' technical assistance in Haiti

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. This evaluation was a sub-study of a project conducted in Haiti from 2016 to 2018 known as Learning from *SASA!* Adaptations in a Caribbean Setting supported by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women.

The evaluation was conducted during year three of the project (2018), and Box 1 describes its specific objectives.

Box 1. Objectives of the assessment of the *SASA!* technical assistance hub in Haiti

1. To understand the process used by Beyond Borders to provide TA to partner organizations and assess which TA components were easy, challenging, enjoyable, and/or less fun to implement;

2. To assess perceptions of Beyond Borders' provision of TA, as narrated by local *SASA!* implementing organizations in Haiti, including on the extent to which TA helped them to effectively implement and monitor *SASA!*;

3. To identify challenges and successes of implementing the *SASA!* intervention (per partner organizations); and

4. To seek recommendations for how Beyond Borders can improve its provision of TA.

C. Violence against women and prevention in the Haitian context

The World Health Organization estimates approximately one in three women has experienced physical and/or sexual IPV or non-partner sexual violence in her lifetime.[2] Similarly, 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.[3] A national survey found one in three girls in Haiti experiences violence by age 18,[4] and it is estimated that nearly one in five girls in Haiti has a first sexual experience that is forced or coerced.[5]

Available research offers compelling evidence that VAWG is a serious problem warranting focused attention in Haiti. Further, numerous global studies have shown a bidirectional relationship between VAWG and HIV infection.[6,7] This association is a key concern in Haiti, which has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the Caribbean and involves women bearing a disproportionate burden. In 2017, HIV prevalence among Haitian women aged 15 to 49 was an estimated 2.3 compared to 1.5 among similarly aged Haitian men.[8]

The Haitian women's movement is strong and largely focuses on general economic empowerment activities for women, as well as policy change and service provision for survivors of violence. However, despite a government gender equality policy for 2014 to 2034, VAWG prevention—including the plan itself—remains unfunded and under-implemented. Prevention efforts have largely been short-term, isolated, and piecemeal, and they have often been limited to Port-au-Prince. Social norms change approaches are well documented as effective in preventing VAWG and HIV. Until Beyond Borders completed the full adaptation and pilot of the *SASA!* methodology in 2014, however, there was no strategic, structural-level primary prevention methodology to effect social norms change to prevent VAW and its link with HIV in Haiti. There is limited funding available for VAWG work in Haiti, and more limited funding still for VAWG prevention; there is also limited TA available related to VAWG.
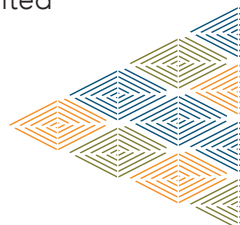
2. Methods

This assessment used a mixed-methods approach that included an online quantitative survey, focus group discussions and in-depth qualitative interviews. All data were collected between May and July 2018.

A. Research population

This study's research population included women and men working with Beyond Borders, staff of current or prior long-term *SASA!* TA partners (hereafter referred to as "partner organizations"), and individuals who participated in various Beyond Borders' training activities on *SASA!* or VAWG prevention.

Due to time and funding constraints, a subset of four Beyond Borders partner organizations was selected for inclusion in the qualitative assessment (see Box 2). These organizations included only long-term partners in full *SASA!* implementation, and recruitment criteria included: a) length and intensity of the TA relationship with Beyond Borders' Rethinking Power Program; b) level of advancement of the organization's *SASA!* implementation and c) proximity to another study partner and/or ease of travel to the site. Efforts were made to include at least one urban or peri-urban and at least one rural partner, as well as to include partners from geographic departments throughout the country.

Box 2. Technical assistance partner organizations participating in focus group discussions

Haiti Partners Children's Academy and Learning Center

Located in Malik, a rural community near Port-au-Prince, the Haiti Partners Children's Academy and Learning Center (Children's Academy) is a school-based community development project in which students learn locally relevant skills and parents participate in adult education on a variety of community health topics. The Children's Academy has been using the *SASA!* methodology since 2015 and is currently implementing the "Support" phase.

Association Femmes Soleil d'Haiti (AFASDA)

Based in Cap-Haïtien in the North Department, AFASDA (in English, Association of Women of the Sun of Haiti) is a well-recognized women's rights organization in Haiti. Since 1997, AFASDA has worked on women's rights and participation, as well as VAWG service provision. AFASDA began implementing *SASA!* in 2015 but halted implementation at the beginning of *SASA!*'s "Awareness" phase due to lack of funding.

Beyond Borders' Model Community Initiative (MCI)

MCI is a Beyond Borders program on Lagonav Island that combines a number of methodologies designed to advance the rights of children and end child slavery, prevent VAWG, ensure quality primary education for all, and improve food security and livelihoods. With ongoing TA from Rethinking Power, MCI has implemented *SASA!* since 2016 and is currently in seven Lagonav communities, including two in the "Support" phase and five in the "Awareness" phase.

Mouvman Peyizan Papay (MPP)

Based in Haiti's Center Department, Mouvman Peyizan Papay (in English, Papaye Peasant Movement) organizes communities to create a sustainable future for Haiti's rural citizens, including on issues such as food sovereignty, environmental protection, rural participation in political structures, and gender equality. Since 2015, MPP has engaged in Beyond Borders' technical support programming to implement *SASA!* in Papay, Basen Zim, and Seramon. MPP is currently in the "Support" phase of *SASA!* implementation.

B. Quantitative assessment: Online survey

Since 2014, Beyond Borders has facilitated an average of two short courses per year for individuals representing over 36 organizations. Focal points from these organizations were invited via email to complete the survey if they had participated in the short courses since 2014 or if their organization had become a long-term TA partner organization; they were also invited to share the survey with any of their colleagues. Nineteen people responded, 79 percent having participated in a *SASA!* "Start" phase course (n=15) and 31.5 percent (n=6) identifying as belonging to long-term TA partner organizations.

Survey data were collected between May 21 and July 5, 2018, in Haitian Creole. The online survey aimed to allow participants in long-term TA or short courses to offer anonymous opinions about the TA provided. All data were collected using SoGoSurvey, a cloud-based software-as-a-service (SaaS) application designed to create, distribute, and analyze multilingual surveys, forms, polls, quizzes, and assessments. As the initial response rate was low, contact was made by phone (when contact details were available) to encourage participation and work through technical problems or survey access questions that may have inhibited participation. The person who reached out to potential participants had no role in TA provision and explained there was no requirement to participate.

C. Qualitative assessment: Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews

Thirty individuals participated in four focus group discussions (one per organization), with a range of participants: male and female administrative staff from each organization, Local Activism staff, and Community Activists (community members volunteering with *SASA!*). Table 1 shows the makeup of each focus group discussion. Not all focus group participants had previously attended in-person trainings by Beyond Borders, but all were familiar with the *SASA!* materials and methodology. Focus group discussions were conducted at a central location in the communities where the four organizations (Children's Academy, AFASDA, MCI, and MPP) are located.

Table 1: Focus group discussion participants, by vocation and sex

Organiza-tion	Participant type						Total participants		
	Administrative staff		Community activist		Local activism staff				
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Children's Academy	2	2	1	1	1	1	**4**	**4**	**8**
AFASDA	0	3	1	1	1	0	**2**	**4**	**6**
MCI	3	1	1	1	1	1	**5**	**3**	**8**
MPP	1	2	1	1	2	1	**4**	**4**	**8**

Two in-depth interviews were conducted in Haitian Creole to explore the individual-level perspectives of participants familiar with Rethinking Power's provision of *SASA!* TA, one with a Beyond Borders staff member and one with a contractor who provided TA to local *SASA!* implementing organizations in the region. Participants were asked to describe the Beyond Borders TA provision program (i.e., types of TA support offered) and their perceptions of the strengths and challenges of their TA provision. The interviewees were also asked to reflect on how the guiding principles for service delivery influenced their TA provision and the value of tailoring their TA to meet the needs of each partner organization. The in-depth interviews were conducted in the Beyond Borders office in Jacmel.

All focus groups and interviews were completed between May 12 and 23, 2018, in the local language (Haitian Creole) by trained research assistants.

D. Data analysis

SoGoSurvey's automatic analysis features were used to examine key survey data. Open-ended comments from the survey were categorized to accompany focus group discussion and in-depth interview qualitative results. The written notes and recordings from the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were used to transcribe the information into full, word-processed transcripts. A Beyond Borders staff member conducted data transcription and entry procedures. Electronic transcripts were later sent to the research team at the University of California, San Diego, along with a preliminary report summarizing the findings, for full analysis.

All qualitative transcripts from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were imported into Dedoose, a cross-platform program for analyzing qualitative and mixed-methods research data.[9] Information from the transcripts was analyzed by a University of California, San Diego researcher experienced in qualitative data analysis. A codebook was developed after an initial review of the transcripts, with "parent codes" for: (1) strengths of TA service delivery; (2) challenges of TA service delivery; (3) strengths of the *SASA!* approach; (4) challenges to implementing the *SASA!* approach; and (5) recommendations, as well as a "what's missing" category for both *SASA!* and TA provision.

E. Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from institutional review boards at the University of California, San Diego Human Research Protections Program in the US and Comité National de Bioéthique in Haiti for qualitative data analysis, as well as from Comité National de Bioéthique in Haiti for the survey. All research planning and procedures were designed to adhere to ethical guidelines on conducting safe research on VAW,[10] emphasizing confidentiality, informed consent, and providing referral services and ongoing support. All qualitative participants provided oral informed consent to take part in an interview or focus group. Online survey participants were prompted to read a consent paragraph prior to the questionnaire and then click "YES" to indicate that they were aged 18 or older and that they consented to participate in the survey. No compensation was provided for participation in the online survey. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were audio recorded with the express consent of all participants. Snacks were provided to focus group discussion participants, but there was no other compensation.

Throughout the project, great care was taken to minimize the potential for distress or harm; for example, questions were carefully worded to ensure they were non-judgmental. All in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in private spaces where discussions could not be overheard by others. Comprehensive training was provided to all researchers, including clear protocols regarding how to respond if someone discloses violence or requests assistance or additional information. In addition, each potential participant was offered a careful explanation about the purpose of the research and the voluntary nature of participation, as well as an opportunity to ask questions before starting the focus group discussion or in-depth interview.

F. Strengths and limitations

Although this study was small in scale and scope, a notable strength was its use of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Thus, while only two in-depth interviews were conducted, the information gathered from the 30 focus group participants and 19 survey respondents expanded the breadth and depth in answering the research questions. Also advantageous were Beyond Borders' positive presence in the community and long-term relationships with local people and organizations.
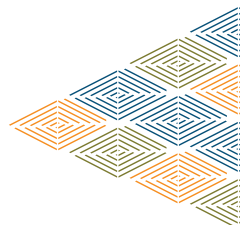
There were also limitations. A main shortcoming of this assessment was its relatively small scope and scale. Additionally, despite efforts to carefully introduce the research and build rapport, it is possible that some participants provided socially desirable responses, wishing to say positive things about TA they had received. This is often a challenge in assessments since partner organizations worry that negative feedback will impact future support. Additionally, successes and barriers related to TA were measured via rapid interviews and a brief online survey, and various biases could have distorted these estimations. For instance, participants could have inaccurately recalled their memories or felt persuaded to inflate their experiences. However, participants did not receive incentives for study involvement, and thus, there was no exterior motive to respond in any preferred manner.

Finally, in the focus group discussions with partners, administrative staff who were less aware of and involved in *SASA!* were asked to participate alongside the people they supervised. This could have contributed to some assertions and recommendations by higher-level staff that lower-level staff directly involved in *SASA!* did not feel they could counter.

3. Key findings

A. Types of technical assistance provided

In the in-depth interviews, TA providers described three main types of TA offered by Beyond Borders to long-term partners implementing *SASA!* in its entirety. These included facilitation of staff trainings, remote and in-person TA, and organized information-exchange events.

Staff trainings typically fell into two categories: single-topic trainings (e.g., on engaging with media or community mobilization) or guidance on implementing a specific phase of *SASA!*. Typically, implementing partner organization staff initiated the trainings when they were ready to implement a new stage of the *SASA!* methodology, seeking to improve their implementation of a specific *SASA!* phase, or in need of a focused training around a single *SASA!* programmatic area. Beyond Borders' Rethinking Power team would then organize a training for that organization, working with its staff in advance to determine the material to be covered during the trainings. Training content was always tailored to meet the needs and interests of the implementing partner organization, and thus, there could be variation in training implementation among organizations. Interviewees reported that Beyond Borders facilitators used their knowledge of each partner organization to ensure materials were appropriately adapted.

> *"First, we consider the environment, the participants [we] have, the number of sessions [we] have to do. One group might adapt better, more quickly. [We] look at the education level of the group for that training; for example, [we] might go do a training for a group of people on the same theme, but [we are] not obliged to use the same training method or the same language. When face to face, we decide the best way to make people comfortable, in order to facilitate the training."*
> – TA provider (in-depth interview)

Remote and in-person technical assistance

Although the interviewees said in-person trainings were the most common mechanism for TA, they explained that assistance was also available in the form of remote support via phone, email, and Skype. They noted that calls were supposed to be made to each partner organization on a monthly basis (at a minimum), and trainings for each phase of the *SASA!* methodology included up to two in-person site visits per year. However, the number of visits that actually occurred depended on the implementing partner's needs and if an organization felt it needed more than two visits.

Organized information-exchange events

The interviewees described the final component of TA as "experience sharing," referring to an arranged information exchange for a cohort of all partner organizations implementing a particular phase of *SASA!*. Rethinking Power staff organized these exchanges on an as-needed basis based on funding availability, ideally once per cohort in the "Awareness" and "Support" phases. The interviewees reported that during these exchanges, partner organization staff would share their implementation experiences, challenges, and successes, as well as collectively troubleshoot potential solutions to common problems. Those who attended the exchanges transmitted lessons learned to other staff members at their organization. Participants explained that these exchanges were often prompted when implementation challenges arose at more than one implementing organization. Rather than providing guidance to each organization individually, Beyond Borders would organize an exchange so solutions to common issues and challenges could be crowdsourced, discussed, and solved together.

B. What motivated organizations to choose the *SASA!* approach?

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:

1. **Curiosity about the methodology** (and the absence of a violence prevention methodology of their own);

2. That the intervention **is established, is structured, and has high-quality support materials** (e.g., activities and posters); and

3. *SASA!'s* **emphasis on prevention** (i.e., stopping violence before it happens).

Across the focus group discussions, participants candidly spoke of the pervasiveness of violence in their communities (e.g., towards women, children, and spouses, and in the workplace). Participants also disclosed how they witnessed violence in their community and recognized that many members of their societies were unaware of what constituted violence or that violence was a problem (versus a normal part of life).

Two of the organizations participating in this assessment (Children's Academy and MCI) had previously worked to prevent violence against children. Participants from both organizations recognized and discussed their understanding of how violence begets violence and that a synergistic relationship exists between VAW and violence against children. Participants from the focus group discussions with members of both Children's Academy and MCI believed strongly that reducing VAW would reduce violence against children.
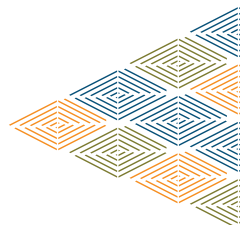
C. Partner feedback on *SASA!* as a methodology

Strengths of *SASA!*

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.

> *"This method gives us the opportunity to reduce and eliminate violence in the community."*
> – TA partner (focus group discussion)

> *"The defining characteristic is human rights. It helps a lot. We see that we were born with rights and nobody can take them away from you. This training brings people to accept this for themselves, without you having to say anything. They decide on their own to do something."*
> – TA partner (focus group discussion)

> *"The way training is done in SASA!, it is truly a method that doesn't impose itself on people, but instead the person becomes aware on their own. They see that it's good, and they change the way they were living with their husband or wife. Their mentality is changed, their way of looking at life [is changed], without SASA! imposing [on] them. In the beginning, the training calls for a lot of change, but today people see that power must be balanced; they agree and go about their business."*
> – TA partner (focus group discussion)

Challenges to Implementing *SASA!*

Five main challenges to implementing *SASA!* emerged from focus group discussion respondents: insufficient implementation funding (the most commonly reported challenge); initial community resistance to *SASA!* ideas; retention of Community Activists; community resistance to participation in monitoring and evaluation activities; and ability to effectively replicate what they had learned during TA in their implementation. Below, these challenges are explored in greater depth as they pertain to TA provision's role in helping to reinforce skills and navigate common challenges.

1. Insufficient implementation funding

Beyond Borders provides TA but not financial support to partner organizations for implementation. Insufficient resources for implementing *SASA!* within partner organizations (e.g., money, personnel, working phones, decent cell phone coverage, and laptops) was the most commonly reported challenge across the focus group discussions and two in-depth interviews. This challenge was perceived to affect every stage of training and implementation, from planning to monitoring and evaluation, including the ability to offer food or transportation refunds to community participants in trainings held at the partner site. Beyond Borders' recent approach to troubleshooting this issue has included collective fundraising, given that TA providers perceived this resource gap was beyond the control of partner organizations.

> *"With a series of partners, we are looking at how we can establish a collective of organizations that are having trouble due to funding for SASA!, and see how we could at least consolidate our efforts and advocate for them. We are currently studying this, to see how we can better manage it, because we don't provide funding, we offer TA. The idea emerged from organizations who are struggling with this; that's how we started discussing it."*
> – TA provider (in-depth interview)

2. Initial community resistance to SASA! ideas

Focus group discussion participants said some of the men in their communities were especially resistant to *SASA!* messaging in the first phase of the intervention because they thought of power as a finite resource—that is, empowering women is at the expense of men. Over time and repeated exposure to *SASA!* ideas, men (and other skeptics) often became more open to *SASA!*'s focus on power. Participants emphasized the importance of ongoing dialogue with community members and transparency about community relationships from the beginning of the intervention to address and dispel this misunderstanding.

3. Retention of Community Activists

Community activists are unpaid community volunteers who conduct one to two hours of activities per week within the course of their everyday lives (e.g., market sellers in a market or taxi drivers with their passengers), as well as participate in multi-day trainings for each *SASA!* phase and in monthly check-in meetings. Focus group discussion participants noted high attrition among the trained Community Activists as a major program challenge. In most cases, attrition stemmed from frustration that the Community Activist role was voluntary and would not translate into a paying job. Currently, none of the four partner organizations participating in the focus group discussions offer any form of incentive to Community Activists. Focus group discussion participants recognized the lack of incentives as problematic and felt that, at a minimum, beverages should be provided during trainings and meetings; however, their organizations lacked the resources.

> *"It was such a problem when people would come out, and we talk and talk and talk and can't give them a snack even. Now and then, someone gets up and goes, and then you are left with three people. They aren't too interested and say that if they aren't going to get paid, they can't be involved. They say that because we don't offer beverages, people are less interested. It discourages others from coming."*
> – TA partner (focus group discussion)

4. Community resistance to participation in monitoring and evaluation activities

Participants said it is sometimes difficult to recruit community members to complete the interviews conducted as part of the monitoring and evaluation exercises within *SASA!*. Implementing partner staff reported that community members sometimes indicate they do not want to answer certain questions and/or wonder why they are not receiving compensation for their participation.

5. Ability of partner staff to effectively replicate learning from technical assistance in their implementation

The final challenge relates to both *SASA!* implementation and TA provision. Participants explained how the *SASA!* approach differed greatly from what their organizations had been doing. A common theme across the four focus groups was that it was initially difficult to roll out what had been learned during the Rethinking Power trainings because the material was so new and unfamiliar. However, focus group discussion participants said this challenge became less of an obstacle as staff became increasingly familiar and comfortable with *SASA!*
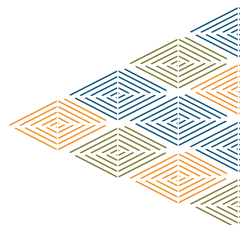
"What was difficult was replicating the training we received in Jacmel with our network members who we were supposed to train in the 'Start' phase. It was a new method for us, and it was very difficult to implement well in the community. Rethinking Power had to come give us technical assistance when we were doing the trainings. After a while, we got used to their training format, because we committed ourselves to it, and we are still doing training. We still gather network members to continue discussing Rethinking Power themes. They chose someone to help strengthen our capacity, to make our trainings more effective for network members."
– TA partner (focus group discussion)

D. Effectiveness of technical assistance

The 19 online survey respondents were asked how well Beyond Borders trainings had prepared them in 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 of 1 to 4 (1=Not well prepared/still have a lot of questions about this; 2=Slightly prepared/I am not yet comfortable but can function; 3=Well prepared; and 4=I could train others on this). Table 2 provides average scores among respondents.

Table 2: Survey of participants' feelings of preparedness to implement specific *SASA!* activities after receiving technical assistance from Rethinking Power

Type of skillset within *SASA!*	Average score
Local activism	2.43
Using communication materials	2.64
Media and advocacy	2.07
Training	2.87
Monitoring and evaluation	2.07

Most online survey participants (68 percent, n=13) had taken part in short courses, and 31.5 percent (n=6) identified as long-term partners. 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. 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.

E. Perceived strengths 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." For example, partners noted that TA providers made consistent efforts to set up phone and Skype calls and in-person visits, and that they felt welcome and engaged during training sessions.

Long-term partners responding to the survey reported learning a great deal from the trainings and appreciating the mentoring over time, including the exchange visits. They particularly mentioned liking the *SASA!* Start Phase Power poster. Online respondents said they valued the *SASA!* methodology and Beyond Borders' approach to TA, as well as trainings in which they had participated. One participant mentioned appreciating the TA's flexibility to adapt to different contexts and organizational needs:

> *"From what I already know about technical support, the training for people who will implement SASA is really important because without a good understanding about the methodology, someone will not be able to implement it as it should be in the community."*
> – Participant in Beyond Borders *SASA!* "Start" phase course

TA providers also evaluated their own strengths and cited flexibility, with trainings and support tailored to each organization's needs. In addition, the format and frequency of site visits, calls, and exchanges are up to the implementing organization and its trainees.

> *"It could happen that we have a partner where the Local Activism staff are excellent in the sense that they understand the methodology well and the field work is not difficult for them; in that case, we could visit them twice [a year], or less. But if, for example, I have partners who aren't so excellent, both in the sense of their understanding and in [their] communication . . .that might cause a partner to receive more support. You would see that I not only call them more, but I plan more activities for them, as a way for Local Activism staff to better strengthen their capacity to implement the methodology."*
> – TA provider (in-depth interview)

The TA provider also cited exchange opportunities among partners as a particular strength:

> *"I recognize that [having an] exchange is the best way for me to truly know what is going on. That is why now we plan more exchanges with our partners rather than simply calling them on the phone, or we plan a visit. Visits are good, too, but the exchange is what brings change to how they are implementing. Because it could happen that they say everything is working well, but when they are amidst other partners doing the methodology, they discover a series of things that were hidden, coded messages; they really put their problems on the table because they are with other partners. Yes! They have more trust."*
> – TA provider (in-depth interview)

F. Perceived challenges of technical assistance

Perceptions of challenges differed somewhat between partner organizations and the Beyond Borders TA providers, but there were several common threads: implementation funding challenges (as mentioned above) 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.

1. Funding challenges

In terms of implementation, focus group and survey participants cited—as TA challenges—the need to provide transportation and even overnight accommodation (especially in rural areas) to ensure full participation in multi-day trainings at their sites and other resource needs. It should be noted that as a TA provider, Beyond Borders is not responsible for securing implementation funds, but confusion on that role remains among some partners. Indeed, it has become a TA challenge, as Beyond Borders staff report the number of long-term partners implementing *SASA!* has steadily decreased over the past couple of years as organizations that begin implementation have to phase it out midway (posing ethical risks) due to lack of implementation funds.

2. Communication challenges

Focus group discussion participants described communication as both a strength and a challenge, with a desire for more frequent communication with TA providers, including reminders of what partners should be accomplishing in that phase and feedback on progress. TA providers also listed communication as a main challenge, saying poor phone reception can make it difficult to plan and coordinate TA, as well as provide quality support.

3. Insufficient technical assistance support to build skills in key areas

There were a number of recommendations on shifting the TA offered. Survey respondents suggested a need for more on-site visits by their TA providers, more opportunities for skill-building with Local Activism (*SASA!* implementing) staff, and more exchange opportunities. Specific areas identified for further support include:

- *Training facilitation (from survey and focus group discussions):* More practice sessions in training to build skills was mentioned as a need, as well as support by Beyond Borders TA providers at partner sites when facilitating trainings for the first time (already a practice when requested).

- *Monitoring and evaluation skills (from survey and focus group discussions):* The need for increased training and guidance on *SASA!* monitoring and evaluation was mentioned in every focus group discussion and also came out in survey responses. Hands-on TA was recommended for this, and the lack of available tools (e.g., an Excel database) was mentioned as a particular challenge.

- *Media and advocacy (from focus group discussions):* A general lack of familiarity with journalism and advocacy means a lack of basic understanding to build on during training. Participants mentioned that more time needed to be spent on this material during the trainings to ensure understanding. Notably, TA providers also mentioned this content was difficult to teach and required specialized knowledge. It was further noted that some partner organizations tried to implement the approaches covered in the media and advocacy training but ultimately stopped because it was not going well.

- *Guidance on referrals (from survey and focus group discussions):* Several survey participants mentioned the need for increased support on how to ensure women experiencing violence in *SASA!* communities receive services (given that *SASA!* focuses on primary prevention).

4. Limited leadership and accountability within the partner organizations

TA providers noted some partner organizations lacking strong leadership or accountability structures struggled given that full cooperation and teamwork are required to achieve success with *SASA!.*

"Remember, these are grassroots organizations. Some don't have much structure, they don't have someone responsible for finances, or an office, or are not very mobilized to seek funding. These are problems. In addition, we have a partner organization that has big problems with its leadership. It could happen, for example, that the director of an organization is absent, and the organization is paralyzed; their work, too, is paralyzed."
– TA provider (in-depth interview)

G. 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 the six "Technical Assistance Guiding Principles" developed by Raising Voices: (1) mutuality; (2) being sustained and systematic; (3) being tailored and contextualized; (4) ownership; (5) flexibility; and (6) open communication. Partners and Beyond Borders staff were both asked to rank their TA relationship from 1 to 4 (1=Very concerned about how we demonstrate this principle; 2=We need improvement/we are weak in demonstrating this principle; 3=We demonstrate this principle well; and 4=We are excellent at demonstrating this principle). Overall scores were consistently high for all six principles, averaging between 3 and 4.

Table 3. Assessing Beyond Borders' technical assistance according to six "Technical Assistance Guiding Principles"

Mean scores are presented (maximum score=4) based on online survey responses (n=13 for principles 1 to 5, and n=14 for principle 6); qualitative interpretations are based on the two in-depth interviews with Beyond Borders TA providers.

Principle and definition	Mean survey scores by TA partners	Qualitative interpretations by TA providers
1. Mutuality. A strong relationship in TA work is based on mutual respect, added value, and agreement between the parties. When mutuality is strong, partners choose whether or not to participate in a TA relationship; roles, responsibilities, and time frames are mutually agreed upon and upheld; and both partners are recognized as having experience and a meaningful contribution.	3.46	TA providers felt the TA relationships were wanted by the partner organizations, pointing out that partners approached Beyond Borders to ask for TA to strengthen their work. Both participants also felt Beyond Borders facilitated a clear process for developing and agreeing on roles, responsibilities, and time frames. Both participants believed that staff from Rethinking Power and the implementing organizations were equally valued and their unique contributions recognized and appreciated.
2. Sustained and systematic. A good partnership for TA work is recognized as a long-term process that is structured for engagement and learning.	3.23	Both TA providers indicated they feel that clear objectives and milestones are always set jointly for partner capacity building and that progress is assessed regularly.

| Principle and definition	Mean survey scores by TA partners	Qualitative interpretations by TA providers
3. Tailored and contextualized. Good partnership for TA work begins with a detailed understanding of the partner and its reality. Effective TA tailors the learning processes and engagement based on the specific circumstances of the partner—it is not a "one-size-fits-all" approach.	3.38	The TA staff are responsive to needs expressed by the implementing partners. However, it is possible that some needs are not relayed to them and subsequently are not directly addressed through the TA relationship.
4. Ownership. Good TA work allows and requires partner organizations to take appropriate responsibility for their own team members' learning. Partner organizations and institutions must be fully involved and committed to learning from the TA. A program approach cannot be imposed (directly or indirectly) on a partner but instead requires the partner to initiate the partnership and take responsibility for making the most of the process.	3.31	TA providers indicated there are specific ways in which partners are encouraged to take responsibility for their team's learning and for the TA relationship. As one noted, "It is happening, but not totally. I think that's what comes up when I talk about the difficulties we have with some partners, because the organization often leaves things in the hands of a few Local Activism staff, when it is they who should be managing it. Ensure that you ask the organization several times; I ask for a meeting with the director of the organization in order to remind them of what they agreed to, for them to be more involved with the Local Activism staff, in order for things to be done better in the community."
5. Flexibility. Good TA work seizes new opportunities and meets challenges head on each time they arise. TA, while structured and planned, must also remain flexible and responsive. This requires the TA providers to be ready and able to modify processes and learning organically.	3.31	TA providers try to accommodate requests for adaptation, but feel they are limited in the amount of oversight and support they can provide due to budgetary constraints.
6. Open communication. Good TA work requires communication that is honest, direct, and constructive. Timely, two-way, consistent, and transparent communication is essential for building and maintaining trust, credibility, competence, and professionalism.	3.64	TA staff indicated that any reticence to openness was on the end of partner organizations. It was noted that this improves over time as trust deepens within the relationship. As one TA provider noted, "If it doesn't work well, [they think] Rethinking Power might not support them further. That causes them to be a bit reticent. But I should say, when we first started, I could say it was at '1.' But little by little, we make progress, there is more trust between us."

4. Respondent recommendations

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

A. 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.** Establish greater clarity around communications expectations and establish backup protocols to troubleshoot communication breakdowns (e.g., multiple forms of Internet connection or more on-site visits where phone and Internet communication is impossible).

2. **Strongly encourage organization heads to attend trainings.** If partner organization directors are more familiar with the *SASA!* methodology, they will be more proactive in monitoring implementation. The TA provider who suggested this said implementation is often left up to the two trained Local Activism staff at each organization and should instead be taken on by the organization as a whole.

3. **Mandate progress reporting from partner organizations.** TA providers and partner organizations' Local Activism staff already provide reports to their respective leadership. Regular reporting from partner organizations to TA providers would provide a more comprehensive picture of what is going on between site visits and allow issues to be flagged and addressed in a timely fashion.

4. **Train multiple staff members of partner organizations.** Multiple individuals from each agency should be trained to increase institutional capacity, according to partner organization staff. Beyond Borders invites up to five staff from each partner organization; however, it seems not all organization staff are aware of this policy, and organizations sometimes send only one or two Local Activism staff to trainings.

5. **Offer refresher trainings.** It was suggested in multiple focus groups that periodic, supplementary refresher trainings would be beneficial.

6. **Strengthen TA on monitoring and evaluation.** Both TA staff and implementing partner staff mentioned a need for more effective programming and practices to build monitoring and evaluation capacity. Greater onsite support was recommended to supplement training.

7. **Expand training and mentoring offerings.** Implementing partner staff identified a number of other areas where they felt additional training would also be of great benefit, including:
   a. Use of technology (computers and projectors)
   b. Use of *SASA!* communication materials
   c. Networking with other organizations
   d. Connections between HIV and violence
   e. HIV (without violence)
   f. Conflict prevention and management
   g. Sustaining change (once it happens in the community)
   h. Written and oral communication skills
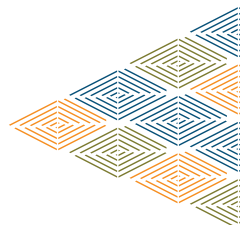
B. Promoting sustainability

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.** While the TA role typically does not include fundraising for organizations, VAWG funding is scarce in Haiti, and funding uncertainty was a ubiquitous challenge mentioned throughout the focus groups and interviews. Suggestions included:

    a. Advocate to funders on behalf of the partner organizations for additional funding;

    b. Establish a pooled general fund on behalf of all partner organizations to supplement funds if needed; and

    c. Provide training and support to build fundraising capacity.

2. **Proactively recruit new implementing partner organizations.** One TA provider suggested that Beyond Borders actively recruit new partner organizations instead of waiting for them to reach out first; a survey participant suggested focusing on organizations already working with VAWG issues.

C. 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.** This is particularly important for multi-day trainings, according to focus group discussion participants. (Beyond Borders covers the cost of transportation, hotel, and food for partner staff at all TA provision workshops, suggesting this comment refers to trainings facilitated by partner organizations themselves.)

2. **Provide more materials for media use.** Participants expressed appreciation for print materials in *SASA!* but also suggested additional supplementary media materials, including videos, support in using the soap opera, and the creation of a radio show and drama group.

3. **Ensure enough, and timely, distribution of *SASA!* materials.** Realizing partner funds are limited and small print jobs are more costly, Beyond Borders provides a small number of materials like posters to each long-term partner. However, during two of the focus group discussions, participants said there were challenges in *SASA!* materials distribution and pages missing from training binders. Some organizations felt that they did not get enough copies of the posters to effectively engage community members. MPP mentioned waiting on implementing the next phase in a community because of a lack of copies of the *SASA!* materials for that phase.

5. Research into action

This section attempts to frame participant recommendations in terms of practical insights that may be of use to others providing or planning TA. Participant recommendations must be considered in light of appropriate roles and boundaries for TA organizations. 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. However, 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:
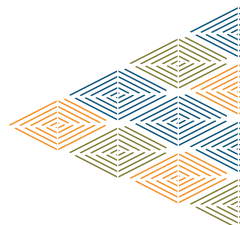
1. Organizations providing TA should periodically solicit recommendations on improving TA, and follow up as appropriate within the boundaries of their role as a TA provider.

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.

6. Final word

As a TA hub, Beyond Borders is the only organization besides Raising Voices to provide regular TA for *SASA!*. Thus, this assessment provides valuable insights into strengthening dedicated support for quality *SASA!* implementation, as well as highlights the importance of long-term TA relationships. Both the strengths of the TA relationships developed by Beyond Borders and the challenges can help point *SASA!* implementers around the world toward quality implementation. Additionally, the success of the TA hub model offers promise as a way to take *SASA!* to scale in a quality way. Lessons learned also potentially can be expanded to other long-term social change methodologies and the support required for scale-up.

Acronyms

AFASDA	Association Femmes Soleil d'Haiti (Association of Women of the Sun of Haiti)
IPV	Intimate partner violence
MCI	Model Community Initiative
MPP	Mouvman Peyizan Papay (Papaye Peasant Movement)
TA	Technical assistance
VAW	Violence against women
VAWG	Violence against *w*omen and girls

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Endnotes

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