

A photograph of four women standing outdoors in a rural setting. They are all smiling and looking upwards. The woman on the far left is wearing a red top and a black and white patterned skirt. The woman next to her is wearing a yellow and blue patterned top and a white skirt with colorful geometric patterns. The woman in the center is wearing a yellow and brown patterned top and a dark skirt with yellow patterns. The woman on the far right is wearing a white top and a green and yellow patterned skirt. They are standing in front of a simple building with a corrugated metal roof. The background shows trees and a blue sky with clouds.

SASA!

Mobilizing Communities to
Inspire Social Change

Photos: ©Heidi Jo Brady and Raising Voices except for p. 15, 16

Author: Cady Carlson

Graphic Design: Samson Mwaka

A warm thank you to all the partner organizations, community activists and staff who contributed their ideas, experiences and reflections to this publication. Many thanks to Stephen Lewis Foundation for its generous support.

Raising Voices

16 Tufnell Drive, Kamwokya

P O Box 6770

Kampala, Uganda

T: +256 414 531186

F: +256 414 531249

info@raisingvoices.org

www.raisingvoices.org

Background

A photograph of a wooden chair against a blue wall with peeling paint. The chair is made of dark wood and has a simple, functional design. The wall is painted a vibrant blue, but the paint is chipped and peeling away in several places, particularly near the bottom and around the chair. The overall scene suggests a modest or perhaps neglected environment.

Women are disproportionately impacted by HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, making up 60% of estimated infections.^{iv}

Violence against Women

Violence against women is a major public health and human rights issue throughout Africa and the world. For example, around 35% of women in Namibia, 56% of women in rural Tanzania,ⁱ and over 70% of women in Uganda report that they have experienced physical or sexual violence at some time in their lives.ⁱⁱ These rates are even more astounding when we consider the fact that most violence tends to be underreported. Although many people think that rape by a stranger is the most common type of violence against women, the vast majority of violence against women is committed by a male intimate partner.¹ Violence against women has devastating effects on individuals, families and communities, including long-term health and economic consequences.

Around the world, women are at increased risk of experiencing violence if they live in communities with norms that accept violence and value men over women.ⁱⁱⁱ While factors such as alcohol use or poverty contribute to the perpetration of violence, the imbalance of power between women and men is a root cause of violence against women.

Violence against Women and HIV

Violence against women is both a cause and consequence of HIV and AIDS. Women can become infected with HIV as a result of violence and an imbalance of power, particularly in their intimate relationships.^v A recent study in South Africa attributed one in seven new HIV infections among women to violence from a male partner or lack of relationship power.^{vi} In addition, women may experience violence as a result of telling their partners that they are HIV positive.^{vii}

“If there is no violence, then women are able to negotiate for safe sex, able to protect themselves, able to say no [to sex], able to choose who they want to have sex with, and able to choose a method that they want to use to keep themselves safe.”

Staff Member, Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention, Uganda



Josephine's Story

My marriage was full of problems, because my husband was very violent.

I was very worried because I was hearing rumors. People were telling me about my husband's actions. Even some of the women he was having sex with had lost their partners.

Whenever I would try to ask anything, especially about health, when I had started worrying that maybe we would get HIV, he wouldn't give me the time. He wouldn't give me a chance to talk to him about it. He told me that he could not use a condom, because he paid bride price for me. And I came to produce children for him, and he did not know how we could use condoms and still produce children.

I told him, "Maybe you have HIV, because you've been having sex with other women". He beat me.

He was the head of the family. I depended on him for everything. Whatever he decided had to be done. I found myself having sex with him by force. During that time, I had nothing to do. I had no power to refuse to have sex with him.

I had a friend. She became my great, great friend. That friend was the one who insisted I go and test. I wondered why she was telling me to go and test. I never had sex with men outside my marriage. The results showed that I was HIV positive.

I cried so much. I felt like the world was over. And yet my friend was telling me not to tell anyone. I was afraid of what my husband would do. I thought he would have killed me. And so I kept quiet. I feared to say.

Story taken from SASA Film.

**“I was afraid of what
my husband would do.
I thought he would have killed me.
And so I kept quiet. I feared to say.”**



The Need for a New Approach to Prevention

About 10 years ago, global researchers and policy makers began to call for community-based approaches to preventing violence against women which address social norms accepting violence and men's power over women.^{viii} Around the same time, those working directly with women experiencing violence began to emphasize the need to not only *respond* to violence against women but to *prevent* violence from happening. Although there was a growing recognition of the importance to prevent violence, many groups struggled to develop long-term, systematic strategies aimed at social norm change. Many prevention efforts, despite good intentions, focused on awareness raising without supporting community members through the stages of behavior change. While many groups recognized the problems of stopping with awareness raising, they did not necessarily have the time or resources to devote to developing strategies that support communities through the phases of changing social norms.

In addition, more health workers and activists began to recognize the need to engender HIV prevention approaches and link traditionally parallel prevention programs violence against women and HIV. A growing body of research showed the link between HIV and violence against women, resulting in a call for integrated

HIV and VAW prevention efforts. Despite this call for action, a gap in knowledge existed on the practical aspects of an integrated approach. Prevention efforts which did incorporate both VAW and HIV tended to

Around the world, women are at increased risk of experiencing violence if they live in communities with norms that accept violence and value men over women.ⁱⁱⁱ While factors such as alcohol use or poverty contribute to the perpetration of violence, the imbalance of power between women and men is a root cause of violence against women.

be focused on the individual and not the community. Thus, Raising Voices developed the *SASA! Activist Kit* for Preventing Violence against Women and HIV to fill a gap in prevention approaches by addressing the root cause of the power imbalance between women and men.

What is *SASA!*?



SASA! takes a benefits-based approach to violence prevention. Instead of blaming or negative messages, *SASA!* encourages community members to think about the positive effects of balancing power in relationships between men and women.

SASA! Activist Kit

SASA! is a methodology for addressing the link between violence against women and HIV/AIDS. SASA! is meant to inspire, enable and structure effective community mobilization to prevent violence against women and HIV/AIDS.



Sasa is a Kiswahili word that means *now*. Now is the time to prevent violence against women and HIV/AIDS. The name SASA! was chosen as a reminder of the urgency to act! SASA! offers tools, guidance and encouragement

for individual activists and activist organizations ready to start a process of change.

SASA! Phases and Power Concepts

To address the root causes of violence against women, SASA! is an exploration of power—what it is, who has

it, how it is used, how it is abused and how power dynamics between women and men can change for the better. SASA! demonstrates how understanding power and its effects can help us prevent violence against women and HIV/AIDS. Throughout SASA! activists focus on the “power” between “men” and “women”. By using simple, relevant language that is easily understood, rather than terminology like gender, rights-based or gender-based violence, activists and community members can meaningfully engage on the key issues.

“We have done domestic violence prevention for over 10 years but with SASA! we feel we are going to do better work. Talking about power really touches people and we want to use SASA! to really make people think about violence.”

Staff Member, Kivulini, Tanzania

SASA! is organized into four phases based on the Stages of Change Model.¹ These four phases ensure that organizations can more effectively and systematically facilitate a process of change in the community. SASA! also serves as an acronym for the phases of the approach: **Start, Awareness, Support, and Action.**

“SASA! has been an eye opener to us. It has really changed the way we do things... We are now organized on talking about power, the power imbalance, we are just not going, confusing the contributing factors and the causes of violence. Now we are concentrating on the real root causes of violence, which is power imbalance. So now our programming is very systematic... and well thought-out.”

Staff Member, Women Against Rape, Botswana

1 Adapted from: Prochaska J., DiClemente C., Norcross J., (1992). In search of how people change—applications to addictive behaviors, *American Psychologist*, 47(9), 1102-1114.

The Four Phases of SASA!

Start



During the first phase, community members are encouraged to begin thinking about violence against women and HIV/AIDS as interconnected issues and foster **power within** themselves to address these issues.

Awareness



The second phase of SASA! aims to raise awareness about how our communities accept men's use of **power over** women, fueling the dual pandemics of violence against women and HIV/AIDS.

Support



The third phase focuses on how community members can support women experiencing violence, men committed to change, and activists speaking out on these issues by joining their **power with** others'.

Action



During the final phase, men and women take action using their **power to** prevent violence against women and HIV/AIDS.



SASA! Strategies

SASA! is based on the understanding that violence against women does not occur in isolation, but within families, communities, and societies. Thus, SASA! encourages engagement within all circles of influence across the Ecological Model (e.g., individuals, families and neighbors, community institutions and groups, and broader societal members such as the media or policy makers).

SASA! encourages activists to engage people in their community while they are involved in their day-to-day lives. This helps create continued interest of community members in the program and ensures the relevance of SASA! to the everyday lives of real people.

SASA! uses multiple strategies to reach diverse people and groups in a variety of ways. Not only do multiple strategies increase the opportunity for different types of people to engage with an idea, but people often need to hear an idea multiple times before fully understanding. These strategies include Local Activism, Media & Advocacy, Communication Materials, and Training. The content in each of these strategies changes as the community moves from one phase of SASA! to the next. Activists say that one of the most helpful aspects

of SASA! is the well thought-out materials that are pre-made and ready to be translated, adapted or even used immediately, saving groups much time and ensuring that materials contain strong and focused content.

The **Local Activism** strategy includes grassroots initiatives that engage individuals, families, friends and neighbors in talking about issues often surrounded by silence and stigma. Informal opportunities are created for personal reflection, critical thinking and public dialogue about power, violence against women, and HIV/AIDS. Examples of activities in this strategy include community dramas, quick chats, community conversations, and soap opera discussion groups.

The **Media & Advocacy** strategy aims to influence public priorities by making violence against women and its connection to HIV/AIDS a popular media topic and a catalyst for new policies and practices. This strategy seeks to engage local leaders, policymakers, and journalists to effect wider change in the community. For example, the Media & Advocacy strategy includes pre-written and pre-recorded audio Soap Opera Drama for sharing with radio programs.

The **Communication Materials** strategy includes a wide range of creative materials, such as posters, comics and info sheets. These are designed to get people thinking and talking about power, violence against women, and HIV/AIDS in ways which are easily accessible, encouraging and appealing to a wide range of people. For example, each phase comes with a Power Poster and pre-written questions on the back of every material to guide the discussion with community members.

"Before [SASA!] we were having trouble just getting people to attend our sessions. But the way we are now addressing people is good... just to go to people who are there doing their business. Asking their permission and having very short discussions."

Staff Member, International Rescue Committee, Ethiopia

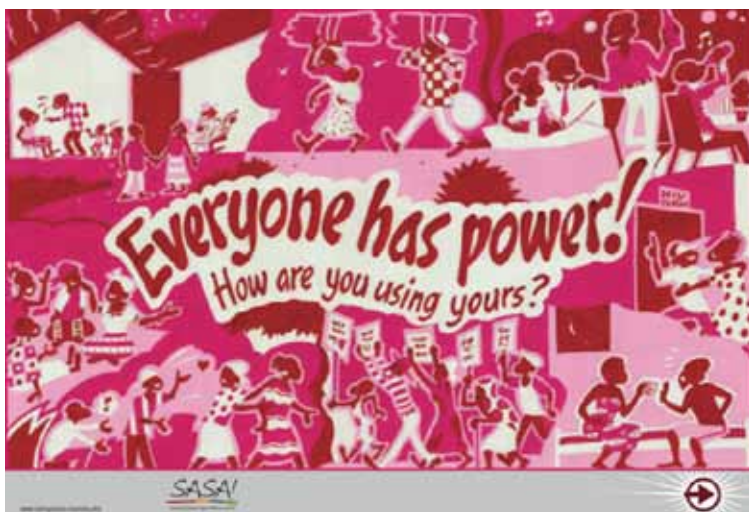
What is SASA!?

The **Training** strategy includes lively, in-depth training modules suitable for anyone exploring their potential as activists. The sessions can be used in workshops or short training sessions to guide participants in developing a passion for and practical skills in creating positive change. The Training strategy is unique in that it is a foundational strategy. Its activities will typically be the first used in each phase, since training will build the capacity of the SASA! Team and other individuals playing a lead role in SASA! efforts. In addition, the SASA! Training modules can be useful with many groups, such as journalists, police, local leaders, and others.

"[SASA] sets out clear guidelines and strategies for engaging the community at all levels. The main strategies endorsed by SASA! are clear and easy to follow and gives the team the knowledge and helps to build their skills and capacity to implement the project effectively."

Staff Member, Trocaire, Uganda

SASA! Start Phase Power Poster



The Start Phase Power Poster discussion is an example of an activity that engages the community using images that show people using their power positively or negatively. On the back of the poster are questions that Community Activists use to open and focus the discussion with community members. The scenes in the poster are used to provoke reflection and elicit community members' perceptions. After looking at this poster, Community Activists ask community members questions such as:

"What is happening in this poster? Do you see similar things happening in our community? Should men have more power than women in relationships? Why or why not? How do you use your power? Do you use power differently with different people?"

"SASA! has a number of activities so it doesn't get monotonous. And sessions are short enough for people to understand and they are interactive. It's engaging. It's a discussion with the people, not lecturing."

Staff Member, Center for Domestic Violence Prevention, Uganda

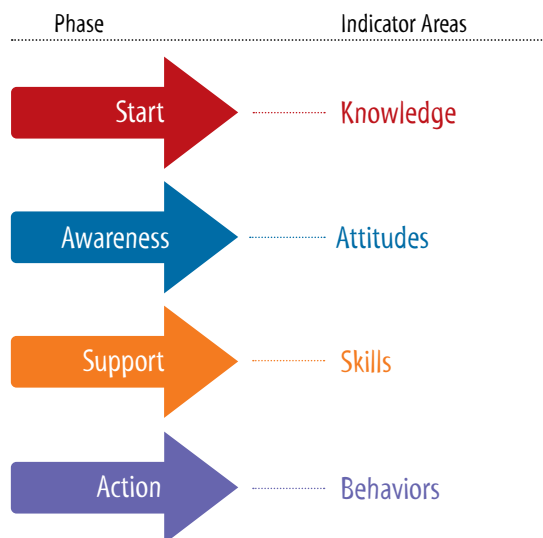


Lead by a Community Activist, a group of community members in Kampala, Uganda read and discuss one of the comic strips in *SASA!* about how to support others who may be experiencing violence.

SASA! Monitoring and Assessment

Monitoring and assessment is a key component of SASA! As any group working on violence against women prevention knows, monitoring and assessment is challenging. Much of the time activists will only record the number of participants or the number of activities aimed at changing social norms, without being able to determine the quality or impact of an activity. On the other hand, other groups spend considerable energy gathering narrative data about attitudes towards violence against women that is often difficult to collect systematically and analyze in a timely way.

To overcome these challenges, the monitoring and assessment tools used in SASA! are effective, straightforward, and easy-to-use for most organizations, not only those with special research expertise. Each phase in SASA! aims to influence one of four areas:



Indicators developed for each SASA! phase are tracked using quantitative measures to assess the quality and impact of activities. The three primary monitoring and assessment tools are:

- Rapid Assessment Survey** Conducted by program staff or M&E officers at the beginning of SASA! implementation and again when the organization wants to know whether or not the community is ready to move to the next phase. The Rapid Assessment Survey at the end of each phase uses the same questions each time, to help give comparable snapshot of change. To conduct the RAS, a small sample of male and female community members are selected from each community using a simple random sampling method.
- Community Activity Report** Developed by staff to monitor activities that are facilitated by Community Activists. This report documents simple numbers such as attendance as well as helping track the process and quality of activities and those facilitating them so gaps can be identified and programmatic adjustments can be made.
- Outcome Tracking Tool** Developed to assess the impact and/or shifts in knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors of community members participating in community activities. To complete this form, a skilled member of staff attends an activity, observes and listens carefully to the discussions raised, and assesses the resistance to or acceptance of the SASA! ideas across a simple spectrum. Activities are selected through a simple random sampling method.

Using these tools, decisions about programming are made systematically, based on empirical evidence from monitoring activities. As groups have begun to implement *SASA!*, Raising Voices has continued learning more about effective and realistic ways to monitor and assess prevention activities. As a result, the monitoring and assessment piece is the one which has been revised most since the development of the original the *SASA! Activist Kit*.

"The *SASA! Kit* provides a clear vision and allows us to see how we will meet objectives and goals and keep everyone on the same page. *SASA!* brings added value to our program, its systematic and this helps to ensure community and staff are touching every aspect in fighting GBV."

Staff Member, CARE, Burundi

The *SASA!* Study

The *SASA!* Study is a collaboration between Raising Voices, CEDOVIP, Makerere University and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. It uses a rigorous research design (a cluster randomized controlled trial) to evaluate the effectiveness of *SASA!* in preventing VAW in communities in Kampala, Uganda. The *SASA!* Study will tell us if *SASA!* had an impact on the level of social acceptance and rates of violence against women in communities. By conducting the study, we hope to generate evidence so that other groups using *SASA!* will not have to carry out a full scale trial, but simply rely on the monitoring and assessment tools to know they are on the right track to preventing violence against women.



Using *SASA!* in your Community



Herbert, a male community activist in Kampala, Uganda talks with a family in his neighborhood about the benefits of non-violence.

Today, *SASA!* has been adapted and is being used by activists and activist organizations throughout Africa. *SASA!* is also being adapted for use by activists in Haiti and Mongolia. Since beginning to use the *SASA!* approach, these groups have learned a lot about what works, the challenges of *SASA!*, and strategies for overcoming those obstacles. This section presents some of the key lessons learned and suggestions for groups thinking of using *SASA!* in their communities.

Making Systematic, Long-term Prevention Possible

As anyone who has worked to prevent violence against women knows, it is not easy and will not happen overnight. *SASA!* breaks down violence against women prevention work into manageable pieces to be done in a systematic and comprehensive way. While some activists feel *SASA!* is overwhelming at first, they later feel relieved that the approach is already thought-through and there is such a wide range of materials ready-to-use.

SASA! is changing the way that many organizations are working to prevent violence against women and HIV/AIDS. Many groups say that it has fundamentally changed the way they approach prevention work. They are now more systematic in their work, phasing in different discussions at the right point in time and not getting stuck in chronic

awareness-raising. Groups have learned that once they start *SASA!*, it is important and possible to work consistently with communities through the process of change.

What resources will we need to do *SASA!*?

Because *SASA!* relies heavily on community activists, beginning *SASA!* does not require much money or physical resources. *SASA!* does, however, require significant commitment and planning. Raising Voices is currently undertaking a cost analysis to help other groups better plan their implementation of *SASA!*

Involving Everyone

SASA! encourages activists to talk to men, women, and youth. While other approaches often target only men or only women, *SASA!* demonstrates the benefits of engaging the entire community. By including men and women and focusing on power, men are less likely to dismiss the discussion as a “women’s issue.” At the same time, *SASA!* does not focus only on engaging men. Preventing violence against women and HIV are problems that hurt the entire community. Thus, preventing violence against women and HIV requires a holistic strategy that includes everyone.

Making *SASA!* Your Own

Part of the reason that *SASA!* can feel overwhelming is because groups may assume that they have to do *all* aspects of *SASA!* and/or in many communities at once. Actually, activists have found that it is better to choose one or two communities in which they can work really well and focus their prevention work there. Furthermore, the diverse activities in *SASA!* allow organizations to think through what might work best within their communities and use only those activities which are relevant. Others have worked to find ways to integrate particular aspects of *SASA!* into their preexisting programs. These are all ways to make *SASA!* your own.

Using *SASA!* in your Community

Integrating *SASA!* into your current work – An example from CARE, Burundi

People often ask if *SASA!* can be integrated into other programming. The answer is Yes! *SASA!* can, but does not have to be a stand-alone prevention approach. For example, CARE Burundi is integrating *SASA!* into their savings and loans program by engaging loan members in *SASA!* activities during regular sessions on financial issues.



Working with Community Activists

Community Activists play a vital role in *SASA!* Being an activist is different from being a volunteer. A volunteer gives of his/her time to an organization, while an activist strives to create social change in his or her community by demonstrating taking action in one's own life and mobilizing others to do the same. *SASA!* teams identify, select and train community members who live and work in those communities and express interest in violence prevention. Then, *SASA!* encourages community activists to spearhead community mobilization efforts because they want to make positive change in their

communities. *SASA!* does not offer monetary incentive to community activists. We have found that there are other ways to motivate activists, such as fostering their own power to be change agents in their communities, providing access to skill building and learning processes, increasing their recognition and status in the community, creating realistic structures and expectations, recognizing and appreciating their work, and respecting them as colleagues. In fact, we found these strategies can be even more motivating, and certainly more sustainable, than monetary incentives.



Susanne is a community activist in Kampala, Uganda. In addition to being a mother, grandmother, and owning her own charcoal business, she leads activities in her community on balancing power and preventing violence against women.

Using *SASA!* in your Community

Activists' and Community Safety

SASA! works within a benefits framework. This means that *SASA!* focuses on the positive outcomes that can be achieved by working together to prevent violence against women and HIV. Other approaches which highlight the negative outcomes of violence or blame those who use violence can make people feel defensive or angry, putting activists at risk of violence themselves. Promoting positive, inclusive ideas about power and focusing on strengths rather than weaknesses, can reduce community backlash typically found when addressing these sensitive issues. In addition, *SASA!* includes sessions for staff and activists about how to stay safe while doing prevention work in their communities.

"I like the positive communication materials because they make it easy to talk about VAW. I keep thinking about how the community we live in will be like if families were living happily."
Staff Member, Soroti Catholic Diocese, Uganda

SASA! Begins with You

SASA! challenges staff and community members to consider power in their own lives and relationships before talking with others about power and violence. Thus, groups should be ready to take the difficult challenge of reflecting on power in their own lives and

within their own organizations before beginning *SASA!* By acknowledging that we are all challenged to use our power positively in our personal lives, individuals feel more attached to the work and see it as a personal commitment. Violence against women and holding power over another person becomes not something that

happens to others, but an issue that we all struggle with on a daily basis.

"*SASA!* is not only about talking, but reflecting...critical reflection within yourself about how you are really being, how is your relationship...and then go out to speak to others!"
Staff Member, CARE Burundi



Concluding Thoughts

"SASA! has also helped me realize how much the community needs me and how we need each other." - Community Activist, Kampala

Concluding Thoughts

SASA! is fundamentally changing how many organizations approach the prevention of violence against women and HIV. As more and more groups begin to adapt and implement *SASA!* in many countries, we are continuing to learn what works best in different contexts. Working to change the social norms perpetuating violence against women and HIV is not easy or quick. However, by focusing on the power we have within and together, *SASA!* is helping organizations be more effective, strategic and safe in their work to prevent violence against women.

If you are interested in learning more about *SASA!*, contact us at info@raisingvoices.org

SASA! does not only address [the] power imbalance among community members but it helps staff think about power in their lives; both at the work place and in their homes. The sessions are very deep and touch one profoundly.”

**Staff Member, CARE,
Burundi**



Endnotes

- i Garcia-Moreno C, Jansen H, Ellsberg M, Heise L, Watts C. (2005). WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women: Initial results on prevalence, health outcomes and women's responses. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization.
- ii Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) and Macro International Inc. (2007). Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2006 Calverton, Maryland, USA.
- iii World Health Organization/London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (2010). Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: taking action and generating evidence. Geneva.
- iv UNAIDS. (2009). AIDS Epidemic Update 2009. Geneva, Switzerland: UNAIDS.
- v Lifshay, J., Nakayiwa, S., King, R., Reznick, O. G., Katuntu, D., Batamwita, R., Ezati, E., Coutinho, A., Kazibwe, C., Bunnell, R. (2009). Partners at risk: motivations, strategies, and challenges to HIV transmission risk reduction among HIV-infected men and women in Uganda. *AIDS Care*, 21(6), 715-724.
- vi Jewkes, R. (2010). Gender Inequalities Must be Addressed in HIV Prevention. *Science*, 329, 145-147.
- vii Jewkes, R., Dunkle, K., Nduna, M., Shai, N. (2010). Intimate partner violence, relationship power inequity, and incidence of HIV infection in young women in South Africa: A cohort study. *Lancet*, 376, 41-48.
- viii Emusu, D., Ivankova, N., Pauline, J., Kirby, R., Foushee, H., Wabwire-Mangen, F., Katongole, D., Ehiri, J. (2009). Experience of sexual violence among women in HIV discordant unions after voluntary HIV counseling and testing: a qualitative critical incident study in Uganda, *AIDS Care*, 21(11), 1363-1370.
- viii Maman, S., Mbwapambo, J.K., Hogan, N.M., Kilonzo, G.P., Campbell, J.C., Weiss, E., et al. (2002). HIV-positive women report more lifetime partner violence: Findings from a voluntary counseling and testing clinic in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. *American Journal of Public Health*, 92, 1331-1337.
- viii Krug, E. G., Mercy, J. A., Dahlberg, L. L., & Zwi, A. B. (2002). The world report on violence and health. *Lancet*, 360, 1083-1088.
- viii Jewkes, R. (2002). Intimate partner violence: causes and prevention. *Lancet*, 359, 1423-1429.



With support from:

