

local activism

public event

support

A Vigil

A public event for showing support

A vigil is an event that brings people together to remember someone or something. A vigil is an appropriate event for the Support phase of *SASA!* as it is a time for reaching out to those who have experienced or are experiencing violence and/or HIV/AIDS. Choose a theme for your vigil (for example, a specific woman who was recently injured or killed as a result of violence, all the women who have lost their lives to violence and/or HIV/AIDS, or women currently experiencing these problems). Vigils can be powerful emotional events where community members can express their outrage or sadness.

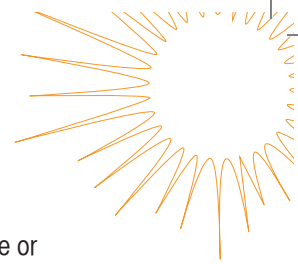
Who?


You may choose to invite a select number of people or groups, or you may want to leave it open to the whole community. Who you invite will depend on the type of vigil you plan to have.

Remember to invite journalists if you would like to use the vigil to reach larger audiences. TV stations may be particularly interested as vigils can create powerful visuals.

Where?

A vigil can be held in a central location or, if better suited to your community, many small vigils can be held all over the community at the same time. For example, women and men on each street could come out of their homes at a specified





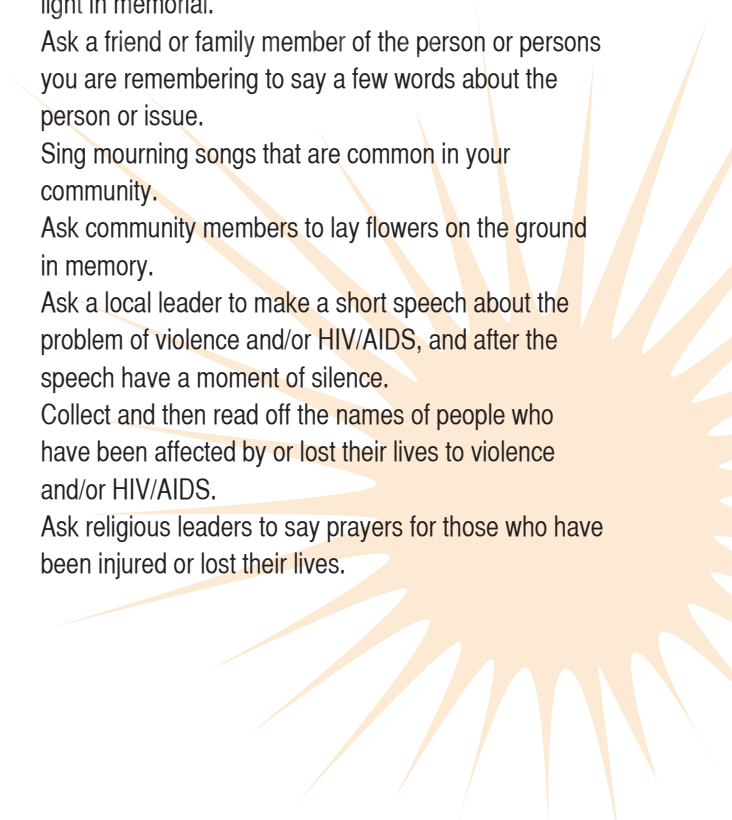
time and have a few moments of simultaneous silence. If the vigil is at one central location, be sure to get the necessary permits or permissions from your local authorities.

When?

Vigils can be held in the day or evening. Often, if held in the evening, participants hold torches, lanterns or candles to symbolize the act of remembrance. Be sure to plan according to your setting and safety needs. Safety of community members is the most important aspect of any public event.

What?

There are many ways to hold a vigil. Here are a few ideas:

- Invite community members to gather for a completely silent vigil, with only a banner announcing to others why people are gathered in silence.
 - Ask community members to bring candles or provide them at the vigil. Have participants use their candles to light in memorial.
 - Ask a friend or family member of the person or persons you are remembering to say a few words about the person or issue.
 - Sing mourning songs that are common in your community.
 - Ask community members to lay flowers on the ground in memory.
 - Ask a local leader to make a short speech about the problem of violence and/or HIV/AIDS, and after the speech have a moment of silence.
 - Collect and then read off the names of people who have been affected by or lost their lives to violence and/or HIV/AIDS.
 - Ask religious leaders to say prayers for those who have been injured or lost their lives.
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How?

Decide together on the theme of your vigil and how best to hold one in your community. Help others understand the idea of a vigil if it is new to many community members—you could do this on the radio or through community meetings. Set up an organizing committee responsible for planning and conducting the event.

Vigils can help
community members
recognize the
injustice
of violence
against women
and HIV
-- and feel
moved to do
something
about it.

www.raisingvoices.org/sasa.php