

# Scaling up *SASA! Together*: Tips & Tools

## Programming for Prevention Series, Brief No. 8

### Background

After more than 10 years of supporting partners in using the *SASA!* methodology, we are continuously encouraged by the enthusiasm for adapting and scaling the approach. There has been increased demand from donors, practitioners, activists and researchers for technical support, as well as an increase in funding calls that recommend *SASA!* in various initiatives.

*SASA!* and *SASA! Together* are being used by more than 60 organizations around the world, and many groups are attempting to work in communities larger than where *SASA!* was originally evaluated. This expansion brings new challenges and opportunities for learning. As a field, it is still early days in fully understanding and gathering evidence about what it takes to effectively and ethically scale methodologies for social norms change.

As we have supported and observed partners expand geographic coverage and increase the number of community members reached by *SASA!* and more recently, *SASA! Together* (the updated and revised version of the *SASA! Activist Kit*), our experience in going to scale has grown. This document attempts to consolidate our learning to promote safer and more impactful *SASA! Together* programming at scale. It is a working document that will continue to progress as our experience in scaling *SASA! Together* deepens.

### Who is this Brief for?

This Program Brief provides guidance for program designers, TA providers, donors, practitioners and activists exploring whether to take *SASA! Together* to scale and if so, how to do so in a way that maintains the integrity of *SASA! Together* and remains accountable to women and communities. It is our hope that this Brief can foster ethical and effective implementation of *SASA! Together* at scale.

## Key Terms in Scale-Up

These terms are used globally to define different types of scale

- ✿ **Horizontal scale:** expanding an innovation to new populations / geographic locations
- ✿ **Vertical scale:** formalizing an innovation through policy
- ✿ **Functional scale:** adding components to an existing innovation
- ✿ **Organizational scale:** growing the role and capacity of an original organization (the organization that created the methodology) and/or creating new partnerships
- ✿ **Evidence and learning scale:** investing in local national and international learning and research <sup>i</sup>

## Understanding Scale

The World Health Organization (WHO)/ExpandNet Consortium describes scale-up as “deliberate efforts to increase the impact of...innovations successfully tested in pilot or experimental projects so as to benefit more people and to foster policy and program development on a lasting basis.”<sup>ii</sup> In other words, scaling aims to achieve positive outcomes for an expanded number of people. Attempts to scale-up have now been made in multiple sectors, such as education, agriculture, and increasingly, sexual and reproductive health and rights, including violence against women prevention. While the prospect of reaching more communities is exciting, it comes with increased challenge to maintain the “do no harm” principles for women and communities.

Raising Voices defines scale-up as “**a deliberate effort to increase the uptake of piloted and tested methodologies to prevent violence against women and children and create lasting social change.**” Our scale-up strategy has consisted of creating, defining and adapting our methodologies with the intention of achieving lasting change. As such, we focus on balancing fidelity to *SASA! Together* (see [Fidelity Brief](#)) with adaptation to context and needs of the community engaged with the approach.

## In Practice

Many contend that *SASA!* is already at scale because it aims to impact population-level change (see following section), however, it has also been scaled in other ways. Raising Voices’ current model, providing technical assistance to partners globally, is a form of **organizational** scale. Many of the partners to whom we provide technical assistance (TA) are scaling *SASA!* or *SASA! Together* **horizontally**. In addition to horizontal and organizational scale, *SASA!* and *SASA! Together* have also been scaled **vertically** through national level programs, **functionally** as it is integrated with values-aligned methodologies, and through **evidence and learning** as other *SASA!* or *SASA!* inspired programs have been evaluated.

# Is SASA! Together Programming at Scale?

*SASA! Together* aims to impact community wide norms through the diffusion of ideas far beyond the community members who have direct contact with the program activities. The goal is to build "critical mass," which means ensuring that more and more community members encounter *SASA! Together* ideas and feel inspired to change themselves and others as non-violence becomes the new norm. The impact of *SASA!* was studied through a randomized controlled trial (RCT) that was the first of its kind in sub-Saharan Africa to measure population-level change in violence against women. The level of risk of physical partner violence against women was 52% lower in *SASA!* communities than in control communities. Additionally, 76% of women and men believed physical violence against a partner is not acceptable in *SASA!* communities, while only 26% of women and men in control communities believed the same.<sup>iii</sup>

During the nearly three years of implementation, over 300 community members facilitated 11,877 *SASA!* activities, both directly and indirectly reaching an estimated 260,000-plus community members. Many violence prevention initiatives would have to be scaled many times to impact that same number of community members. Furthermore, cost-effectiveness research revealed that the cost per community member reached with *SASA!* in Kampala was just \$0.52 cents, due to *SASA!*'s broad community level impact.<sup>iv</sup> As such, *SASA!*, *SASA! Together*, and other initiatives working for change at a population level can be considered a form of horizontal scale.

## Learn More: CUSP Insights at Scale

To inform our organizational understanding of scale, Raising Voices co-convenes the Community for Understanding Scale Up (CUSP), a temporary working group that shares, reflects, and documents their learning in scaling up social norm change methodologies. CUSP is comprised of nine organizations working in Latin America, Africa and South Asia with robust experience in developing social norms change methodologies that are now being scaled across many regions and contexts.

CUSP has documented several key findings and reflections through a variety of briefs, papers, and blogs:

- ✿ [Social Norms at Scale: CUSP's Collective Insights](#)  
This case study collection reveals several patterns across CUSP's members' experiences to identify key elements for success and provide recommendations for adapting and scaling the methodologies of CUSP members and – more broadly – social norms change programs. Case studies are available for 5 methodologies, including one on [SASA!](#).
- ✿ [The CUSP of Change: Effective scaling of social norms programming for gender equality](#)  
This policy brief highlights key principles and common pitfalls in social norms programming for gender equality.
- ✿ [On the CUSP: the politics and prospects of scaling social norm change. Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters 2019: 27 - 2](#)  
This article summarizes learning from methodologies and experiences from five CUSP members, raising political questions around the current donor landscape including those positioned to assume leadership to take such methodologies to scale, and the current evaluation paradigm to measure social norms change at scale.

# Guidance for Taking *SASA! Together* to Scale

The guidance below, adapted from CUSP, can help guide your decision as to whether you are prepared to scale, fund or provide TA for *SASA! Together*. If you would like support in making this decision, feel free to contact us at [info@raisingvoices.org](mailto:info@raisingvoices.org).

## Fundamental Considerations

### Do you have structures/systems in place to ensure accountability to women and communities?

Accountability means fostering meaningful community involvement and leadership in planning, implementing and monitoring *SASA! Together*. Accountability to communities also requires that organizations understand power differences within communities and that activities do not reinforce traditional gendered or intergenerational hierarchies of disempowerment, but instead promote and safeguard women's leadership, voice and agency.

### Do you fully understand the principles of, and align with, the values of the methodology?

*SASA! Together* unpacks and questions power imbalances. Therefore, it is critical that the leadership of implementing and funding organizations be willing to reflect on and discuss power inequalities, and that TA providers create time and space for such reflection and discussion in their support.

### Have you planned for adequate time and funding for *SASA! Together*?

Undoing deeply held beliefs and behaviors that have been around for generations is not easy work. *SASA! Together* is completed over a period of three years. At least 1.5 years of funding should be secured prior to implementation. The approximate three-year schedule is detailed below, however if your program is very large and needs much adaptation, these recommended times will need to increase.

Timeframe for <i>SASA! Together</i>	
Set-up	3 months
Start Phase	7 months
Awareness Phase	12 months
Support Phase	7 months
Action Phase	7 months

## Are you able to maintain fidelity to *SASA! Together* essentials?

Social norms change programming is systematic and is based on theoretically grounded work with key, structured aspects that make an approach effective. *SASA! Together*'s effectiveness has depended on implementing organizations' ability to adapt to context while maintaining fidelity to the methodology's core structure. This means understanding the key change mechanisms in *SASA! Together* that foster transformation:

- **A gender-power analysis**, addressing the root cause of violence against women—the power imbalance between women and men at individual and structural levels;
- **A phased-in approach**, using the Stages of Change Theory<sup>v</sup> to acknowledge the problem, think critically and learn about the problem, look for alternatives and build skills, and finally promote sustainable change;
- **Holistic community engagement**, engaging members of the community across three circles of influence (interpersonal, community, institutional);<sup>vi</sup>
- **Benefits-based activism**, moving beyond information giving to encourage critical self-reflection and inspire women and men to action in their lives and communities.

## Have you consulted with Raising Voices or an Accredited *SASA! Together* TA Provider?

Raising Voices has found that TA can be of great support to organizations in strengthening design and implementation of *SASA! Together*. TA Providers have extensive practice-based experience and have applied innovative ideas to overcome common challenges and leverage opportunities.

## Have you considered the role of government and international organizations in effective and ethical scaling?

Multi-stakeholder involvement is essential. However, be mindful of which individuals or institutions lead your *SASA! Together* programming. Engaging government through the Institutional Strengthening strategy can be impactful, yet having government officials *lead* the Local Activism or Community Leadership activities may be problematic. In many communities, government officials represent and even enforce power inequalities, which can be misaligned with *SASA! Together* aims. Further, community members often do not feel comfortable speaking about personal issues with officials and prefer family, friends and neighbors who do not hold an official title. Avoid putting government officials in the lead beyond the Institutional Strengthening strategy.

## Staffing

- The quality of *SASA! Together* programming at scale is dependent on the availability of enough financial and human resources. In our experience, inadequate staffing can compromise the integrity of the program, and potentially harm women and communities. For *SASA! Together*, we typically recommend the following:
  - 1 Team Leader/Coordinator/ Manager
  - 1 Local Activism staff
  - 1 Community Leadership staff
  - 1 Institutional Strengthening staff
  - Learning & Assessment (L&A) support
  - TA provision (if Coordinator/ Manager cannot provide)

- The number of staff for each strategy (Local Activism, Community Leadership, Institutional Strengthening) will change in proportion to the number of communities you are working with (see Capacity Grid, page 8).
- One accredited TA provider is likely sufficient for *SASA! Together* at scale but depending on the size of the project and the capacity of the implementing organization, the amount of their time needed will vary.
- One L&A staff can oversee *SASA! Together* at scale, however, additional support through data entry assistants may be needed in the various communities engaging with *SASA! Together*.

## Training & Mentoring

- *SASA! Together* has five formal trainings for staff, activists, leaders, and allies phased in over the life of the program, with support and mentorship provided throughout.
- Training time requirements are as follows:

	Set-Up	Start Phase	Awareness Phase	Support Phase	Action Phase
<b>SASA! Together staff</b>	4 days	4 days	3 days	3 days	3 days
<b>Community activists</b>	3 days	3 days	3 days	3 days	3 days
<b>Community leaders</b>	2 days	3 days	2 days	2 days	1 day
<b>Institutional allies</b>	3 days*		2 days	2 days	1 day

\* Note: Set-up and Start trainings are combined into 3 days for Institutional allies.

- Set-Up and Start trainings can be combined for other audiences, based on the knowledge and experience gaps of the training participants.
- Trainings can be implemented with flexibility—in short sessions rather than multi-day processes, conducted by the staff in small groups, etc.
- Staff, community activist, community leader and institutional ally support can be integrated into existing program infrastructure (e.g. introducing support activities into monthly meetings that are already scheduled).

## Strategies

Below, you will find strategy-specific suggestions on scale-up for *SASA! Together*. *SASA! Together* is not a blueprint, but a framework to adapt and contextualize based on one's own context.

### Local Activism

In Local Activism, community activists conduct informal, fun, personal activities with their family, friends, neighbors and others. Suggestions for scale-up include:

- Select community activists who have diverse, strong and positive social networks and connections to ensure a wider community reach.
- Ensure that community activists have ample support for effective *SASA! Together* programming—if staff is responsible for mentoring too many activists, the quality of support may not be maintained. See the Capacity Grid on page 8 to determine the appropriate numbers of community activists for your communities.
  - In limited resource settings, some partners using *SASA! Together* at scale have been implementing a cascade model.

- Staff identify quality community activist mentors (women and men who have more time and ideally experience/knowledge of *SASA! Together* content), who in turn, provide the mentorship and support to activists. See the box below for more details on how this cascading model works.
- Staff and community activist mentors work together to identify new community activists.
- Community activist mentors may receive a small stipend, as the work can be more demanding, and require more time than being a community activist.
- See Table 1b for recommended ratios if implementing a cascade model.

*\*Note: Community activist mentors should select activists who live reasonably close to one another, to reduce transportation time and costs.*

## Cascade Model

Using a cascade model to engage more community activists can potentially meet the desire to reach larger numbers of community members. However, there are also challenges with this model, including difficulty in maintaining the quality of activities, as well as potential power dynamics arising due to the 'special status' of mentor activists and any compensation they may receive. Community activist mentors should observe each activist's activities two times a month, while *SASA! Together* staff should also carefully monitor quality by regularly visiting community activist activities and accompanying mentor activists at least several times per week. This is especially essential in the Start & Awareness phases, when community activists are first embarking on their journey to learn *SASA! Together* content and facilitation skills.

## Community Leadership

In Community Leadership, community leaders use their role and platform to encourage, inspire and support positive change among community members. Suggestions for scale-up include:

- When selecting community leaders in *SASA! Together* at scale, identify leaders who have large platforms that reach a breadth of community members. This may include religious leaders, government officials, cultural leaders and others who have regular access to many community members.
- Community leaders can also form Leadership Circles which are smaller groups of leaders who do similar work and/or live or work near each other. These Leadership Circles foster more communication and collaboration among leaders, maximizing their efforts and impact.

## Institutional Strengthening

In Institutional Strengthening, institutional allies lead processes that support a positive operational culture and the creation or revision of protocols and guidelines that prevent and/or respond to violence against women. Suggestions for scale-up include:

- Work with institutions at the national level to change protocols/guidelines that would have significant impact across the wide geographic area of your *SASA! Together* programming.
- Engage with institutions that are already aiming to strengthening their prevention or response to violence against women.
- Depending on your organization's capacity, work with multiple institutions across different sectors for holistic change.

- Identify local institutions that don't rely on protocols/guidelines from a centralized or national headquarters. This can include:
  - Culture groups that have decision-making power themselves, and/or
  - Learning what protocols/guidelines can be changed without national level approval, such as curricula or marriage counseling guidelines.
- If your organization has limited capacity and/or if you have decided to focus your resources in the Local Activism and Community Leadership strategies, you may need to consider if implementing Institutional Strengthening is possible.

*\*Note: All Institutional Strengthening activities in SASA! Together are consecutive, designed to build upon one another. As such, all Institutional Strengthening activities will still need to be conducted, but the intensity or frequency may be lightened, if the program design requires it.*

**Table 1a. Capacity Grid**

	Type of Community		
	Densely Populated	Sparsely Populated	Barely Populated
Descriptions	Communities where residents live in close proximity and it's possible to walk around the community and interact with many people within a short period of time; there is a community center or market easily accessible by walking (within 30 minutes)	Communities where residential areas are more spread out and residents could reach the community center within a 1-hour walk	Communities where small groups of residents and/or families live more than an hour's walk from the next small group; there may be no discernible community center
Community Activist-to-Population Ratio	One community activist for approximately 1,500 community members	One community activist for approximately 800 community members	One community activist for approximately 500 community members
Staff-to-Community Activist Ratio	One staff member for approximately 25 to 30 community activists	One staff member for approximately 20 to 25 community activists	One staff member for approximately 15 to 20 community activists
Staff-to-Community Leader Ratio	One staff member for approximately 40 to 50 community leaders	One staff member for approximately 30 to 40 community leaders	One staff member for approximately 20 to 30 community leaders
Staff-to-Institution Ratio	One staff member for up to 2 institutions, each with 4 to 6 institutional allies	One staff member for up to 2 institutions, each with 4 to 6 institutional allies	One staff member for 1 institution, with 4 to 6 institutional allies



**Table 1b. Capacity Grid Annex for Cascade Model**

If you are using a Cascade Model, we recommend the following:

<b>Community Activist Mentor-to-Community Activist Ratio</b>	One community activist mentor for approximately 5-10 community activists	One community activist mentor for approximately 3-5 community activists	One community activist mentor for approximately 2 community activists
<b>Staff-to-Community Activist Mentor Ratio</b>	One staff member for approximately 25 to 30 community activist mentors	One staff member for approximately 20 to 25 community activist mentors	One staff member for approximately 15 to 20 community activist mentors
<b>Community Leader Peer-to-Peer Ratio</b>	One Community leader builds a peer-to-peer relationship with approximately 10 community leaders	One Community leader builds a peer-to-peer relationship with approximately 8 community leaders	One Community leader builds a peer-to-peer relationship with approximately 6 community leaders

## Activities

All activities in *SASA! Together* can be used at scale if there is sufficient support, mentoring and oversight by staff. All activities have guidance to support safe exploration of topics, are designed to minimize risk of backlash, and maintain a focus on the critical issues. The Deeper Discussions, however, which is a couples' curriculum embedded in the Local Activism Strategy, is particularly sensitive and if not done carefully, could put women at risk. Deeper Discussions require skilled community activist facilitators who are well-trained and closely supported by *SASA! Together* staff—the activity not recommended in the cascade model.

### Expanding *SASA! Together* Reach through Media

Media is a powerful tool to reach more community members in diverse locations, and better connect our communities. *SASA! Together* activities can both be used to share and provoke critical reflections about key messages. For example:

- Drama sketches can be adapted for mass media.
- Social media activities in the Community Leadership strategy can be used across other strategies (if appropriate in the context), and/or shared with other key violence against women prevention partners in the community.
- Activities for Religious Leaders in the Community Leadership strategy includes ideas for media.
- The *SASA! Film* can be dubbed and put in video halls (*found in the SASA! Activist Kit*).
- Soap operas can be shared on radio or in small groups (*found in the SASA! Activist Kit*).

Some activities, such as Community Conversations, Community InfoSheets, Bingo Games, Leadership Leaflets or Quick Chats, among others, are designed for easy photocopying and dissemination. Power posters, community posters and materials require more resources for professional printing. It can also be useful for activists, leaders, and allies to focus on activities (such as dramas or social media) and locations (such as marketplaces or employee meetings) that can attract larger numbers of community members.

## ***SASA! Together* at Scale: Key Areas to Keep in Mind**

Common challenges have emerged in our experience of supporting *SASA! Together* at scale. Below are some examples, and recommendations for moving forward.

### **Impact and reach**

There are many demands placed on organizations scaling *SASA! Together*. These pressures include reducing staff, shortening trainings, removing activities, curtailing timeframes, among others. These shortcuts inevitably result in lower quality programming and therefore less impact. The goal of *SASA! Together* is to transform norms in a safe and impactful way. We always encourage organizations to prioritize the quality of activities over the quantity of people reached. Our experience demonstrates that it is the nature and quality of the interaction and engagement that brings about lasting change.

### **Fidelity and adaptation**

Scaling community-based violence against women prevention initiatives such as *SASA! Together* holds much promise in creating a non-violent, gender equitable world; however, implementing sensitive programming can cause harm to communities if not done in a deliberate, ethical manner. One of the key challenges to scale-up is balancing adaptation and fidelity.

While adaptation and contextualization are encouraged, the adaptation should not compromise the essential elements of the approach. We have seen organizations pulling just a few activities from *SASA! Together* or pulling together a collection of activities from various programs while still expecting substantial results. This is unsafe for communities, can cause harm to women and tarnishes the credibility of evidence-based approaches. Therefore, it's important to appreciate the essential elements and theory of change for *SASA! Together* and work together with communities and TA providers to design, implement, and monitor a relevant, safe and effective *SASA! Together* adaptation.<sup>vii</sup>

## Expecting too many outcomes

There are multiple harmful social norms in any given community. With programs at scale, we sometimes run the risk of trying to use a program as universal solution to address everything from intimate partner violence to non-partner sexual violence, from child marriage to alcohol abuse, and more. All of these issues are important and often interconnected. When large investments are made into communities, it can be tempting to include a wide spectrum of issues in the programming. However, we find that *SASA! Together's* effectiveness and accessibility is in its ability to stay focused and consistent with core ideas. Trying to touch upon such a diversity of issues runs the risk of creating confusion among the community, remaining shallow on many topics rather than going deep on a few and talking about manifestations instead of focusing on the root cause. In *SASA! Together* (and many evidence-based violence against women prevention programs), focusing on a gender-power analysis and its relationship to violence against women has proven to be most impactful. Positively, our research indicates that using *SASA! Together's* language of power, focused primarily on intimate partner violence, is a strong launching point for tackling other related gender-power issues, and has even shown to impact children's experience of violence, including reduced exposure to intimate partner violence, changed parenting and discipline practices, and increased involvement in other community issues.<sup>viii</sup>

## Conclusion

*SASA! Together* is violence against women prevention programming at scale, creating the community-level change that is necessary to cultivate safer, healthier communities for women. *SASA! Together* resonates with communities around the world, because it takes the time needed for community members to discover their own power, foster strong relationships and join their power with others to create positive change.

Scaling *SASA! Together* and other social norm change programming that seeks to prevent violence against women holds considerable promise. Funders, activist organizations and TA providers need to ensure the reach of our violence against women prevention programming prioritizes our shared commitment to "doing no harm." Our collective challenge is to rigorously learn about the indirect and direct consequences and impact of scaled violence against women prevention programming, and share our experiences, reflections and challenges so together, we can remain accountable to the women and communities our programs aim to support.



The *Programming for Prevention Series* is a collection of briefs designed to address critical challenges and questions in VAW prevention programming.

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## Endnotes

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