

**Malawi Violence Against Women and Girls
Prevention and Response Programme**

SASA! Together Delivery Approach under COVID-19

October – December 2020

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1. Background

Based on global best practices on what works to reduce Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), The Tithetse Nkhanza (TN) programme is implementing SASA! Together as the foundational prevention approach for Output 4. This component is one of the three under TN's prevention portfolio for Phase 1 of the programme.

1.1. Overview of SASA! Together Approach

SASA! Together approach is an adaptable community mobilisation intervention that is compatible with the problem driven iterative adaptation (PDIA) approach underlying the programme, due to its participatory and reflective nature. SASA! Together uses power as the entry point rather than gender, interrogating both its positive and negative uses. In other contexts, it has had proven impact on lowering the social acceptability of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), as well as lowering past year experience of physical and sexual IPV and increasing community responses to women reporting IPV. It demonstrates impact at whole-community level rather than just with intervention participants.

1.1.1. SASA! Together strategies and phases

SASA! Together approach uses three strategies for community mobilisation against VAWG, namely:

Local Activism: With this strategy, diverse women and men are identified and trained as community activists to engage and encourage their family, friends, neighbours and others to reflect on, discuss and act to prevent violence against women. This strategy focuses on interpersonal relationships.

Community Leadership: In this strategy, local leaders, religious leaders, elders, business owners and others are identified and trained to speak out, offer support and demonstrate that violence against women is unacceptable. This strategy focuses on community-level advocacy using local leaders as activists.

Institutional Strengthening: In this strategy, Institutions such as the Police, health clinics, media houses and others are identified and supported to strengthen their operational culture, policies and procedures, and services to better prevent and/or respond to violence against women. This strategy focuses on having institutional allies who can influence change of the organisational culture towards VAWG. The SASA! Together approach encourages implementing organisations to identify at least two institutions per district to work with on this strategy.

SASA! Together uses a phased approach based on the knowledge that change is not a one-time event but rather takes place in stages that are predictable across most groups. Thus, SASA! Together has four phases: **Start, Awareness, Support and Action**. Each phase guides the community through a different stage of change, using content designed specifically for that stage. The content that is developed for each phase, which are generally communication materials in the form of posters for engaging the communities, are called activities.

Each phase and each strategy has different activities for community mobilisation. Every phase also has a specific booklet that provides guidance for reaching the objectives of the phase.

Table 1: SASA! Together strategies and activities across phases

Strategy	Activities
Local Activism	Power Posters, Community Conversations, Deeper Discussions, Bingo Games, Community Posters, Drama Sketches, Community Info sheets.
Community Leadership	Leadership Leaflets, Community Talking Points, Social Media, Quick Chats, Activities for Religious Leaders.
Institutional Strengthening	Phase PowerPoint Presentations, Institutional Info sheets, Employee Conversations, Analyse, Document & Share back, Strengthening Process.

2. TN SASA! Together Adaptation

Under the TN programme, SASA! Together was adapted to fit the context of the programme's target areas based on primary research conducted in the target areas as part of the pre-baseline research. SASA! Together is being implemented in 9 out of 12 of TN programme's target areas. With support from Raising Voices, TN went through a pre-start phase ensuring that SASA! Together content to be used was translated into local languages, implementing partners were brought on board and workplans and budgets developed.

So far, SASA! Together partners have undergone various trainings including: one train the trainer (ToT) training and two refresher trainings to ensure continuous sharpening of facilitation skills as partners engage with communities, and to continue challenging their own individual attitudes towards power and VAWG. Additionally, under the Local Activism strategy, community activists (CA) were identified in each target area. They have also undergone training, including refresher trainings, and already started community engagement activities (there are 58 CAs in Lilongwe, 121 in Karonga and 60 in Mangochi). Facilitation skills are crucial for implementing partners and more so for community activists and local leaders to ensure that no harm is caused, and that the community engages effectively in conversations on VAWG and start to reflect on their role in preventing it.

The training from partners, community activists and local leadership is a comprehensive 4-day programme that uses specific training manuals and guidance from Raising Voices. This covers the following:

- Examining Power;
- Types of Violence Against Women;
- Consequences of Violence;
- Being an Activist – what it means and the personal attributes to nurture;
- Facilitation skills – Instruct, Inform or Question techniques;
- Specific-phase training – Start Phase Activity Practice, What to Expect in the Start Phase
- Self-Care During SASA! Together;
- Getting Off to a Good Start – Check listing preparational work;
- Developing work plans.

Implementing partners have also started some work on the community leadership strategy which has included identifying local leaders to work with in their target areas. Under the institutional strengthening strategy, implementing partners have been in the process of identifying 2 institutions per district to work with as institutional allies. Raising Voices and TN organised a webinar specifically on the institutional strengthening strategy, to provide insight on how it can be executed at the district and national level. Raising Voices also developed specific assessment criteria for selecting the institutional allies and activities to engage them with.

3. SASA! Together adaptation during COVID-19

SASA! Together activities were disrupted when the COVID-19 pandemic started. The pandemic complicated many prevention activities requiring community or group engagement, due to the need for social distancing to reduce the risk of transmission. Community mobilisation activities were suspended, and selected activities were substantially adapted to radio during this time. The TN programme, under guidance from Raising Voices, also focused on collective care of partners and activists through the formation of safety circles using WhatsApp and phone trees. This helped to ensure team cohesion and checking in on each other for support. Additionally, it has proved to be effective in quickly reporting on

the status of the community with regards to VAWG to other members and seeking support when making referrals for cases of VAWG.

4. Continuing SASA! Together activities under COVID-19

As the world begins to accept that COVID-19 may not go away anytime soon, there has been the need to explore how community engagement activities can resume safely, especially as COVID-19 still poses many safety risks for staff, organisational partners, and community members working to prevent VAWG. In Malawi, as the COVID-19 new case rates initially seemed to be reducing, TN with support from Raising Voices has comprehensively assessed potential risks in order to determine safety and feasibility. With support from Raising Voices, TN will implement a blended approach using a series of new activities that have been created by Raising Voices to support activist organisations in safely engaging communities to prevent violence against women (VAW) during this global crisis with some old activities that already existed before COVID-19 that are safe to use.

Table 2: Blended activities for the SASA! Together Approach

Activity	Strategy	Description	# of people and time required
Power poster (old)	Local activism	Power Posters are full-colour images designed to encourage community members to explore the different types of power. Sometimes, discussions on power may feel abstract or overwhelming. The Power Posters break it down so community members can see and reflect on real-life situations of power.	Can be used in single- or mixed-sex groups of women, men or youth from 3-20 community members. Typical time required is from 30 to 60 minutes.
Community Conversations (new)	Local Activism	Community Conversations are simple, black and white, easily photocopied A4 images that provoke reflection and discussion. Two of the Community Conversations address intimate relationships, two address outreach from neighbours and two address community dynamics	Can be used in single- or mixed-sex groups from 2 to 20 community members. Typical time required is 15-30 minutes.
Posters (new)	Local activism	The posters are A3 colour images that ideally are professionally printed. They are designed to role model positive behaviour in relationships, in families and in our communities.	Can be used in groups from 2 to 40 community members. The posters can be used in single- or mixed-sex groups. They can also be hung in the community after other relevant discussions. Typical time required is 45 minutes.
Info sheets (new)	Community leadership	The Info sheets are A4 images that can be printed, preferably in colour. They are designed to stimulate personal reflection and simple, practical actions. One Info sheet addresses what men can do to reduce stress and maintain positive relationships and the other addresses what women can do to find support and increase their safety during this time.	Can be used in groups from 2 to 20 community members. While they can be used in mixed-sex groups, single-sex groups are encouraged to promote deeper and safe discussion for women and men. Typical time required is 30 minutes.
Quick chats (old)	Community Leadership	Quick Chats are exactly as their name implies – a quick way to get people chatting! Quick Chats are used by community leaders to engage their community members, constituents and/or other leaders in formal and informal discussions. Quick Chats are not meant to be long or complex. They are conversation starters, designed to ignite interest in SASA! Together ideas and build connections among community members.	Can be used for other leaders, community members, friends, colleagues, etc with 1-10 participants. Typically takes 5 to 20 minutes.

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Phase power poster presentation (old)	Institutional strengthening	Institutional allies use the Phase PowerPoint Presentation to introduce the upcoming phase of SASA! Together to employees. This is meant to be an inspiring and interactive presentation that explores key concepts of the phase, builds understanding and commitment among institutional employees, and invites their ideas and questions.	These are facilitated by institutional allies with support from SASA! Together staff targeting fellow employees. The activity can involve 5-50 people over a time period of 45-60 minutes.
Employee conversations (old)	Institutional strengthening	Employee Conversations are one-on-one chats and small group discussions with a diverse group of employees from across the institution. The topics are designed to gather knowledge and insights from institutional employees, which are later analysed to create the Discovery Report	
Safety circles (old)	Across strategies	Safety circles were established for community activists through WhatsApp groups and phone trees to foster collective care during COVID-19. These safety circles will be maintained as they have proved effective in quick communication and checking in on each other.	These are typically groups of 10-30 activists in the different target areas.

Notes

- Numbers of participants are the feasible range for the activity, implementing partners, community activists, local leaders and institutional allies are encouraged to follow the government/public health COVID-19 guidelines concerning the number of people who can safely gather in your community.
- More information on the new activities developed by Raising Voices can be accessed here: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/hfo7q1bme7dibg0/AAAcpIc096FWUmMuMwznhm5ba?dl=0>.

5. Key Considerations for rolling out the SASA! Together adapted delivery approach

Introducing new SASA! Together activities

TN's implementing partners were oriented on how to use the new activities. It was agreed that the activities were general enough and do not need any adaptations, particularly on the images. It was also agreed that since there is minimal amount of text on the images, partners would support activists in translations. During the SASA! Together adaption process, TN, partners and district adaption teams developed a SASA! Together dictionary with support from Raising Voices which was translated into Chichewa and Tumbuka. The dictionary captures all key terms and other associated words used in SASA! Together. This will guide the translations to ensure uniformity. Additionally, all focal SASA! Together officers are on a WhatsApp group and this has ensured fact checking and triangulation of the translations. This is a quicker and more participatory way of rolling out and coordinating between the districts, particularly because it does not require travel and is cost effective. Since effectiveness of an activity is measured after several engagements with community members, partners will support activists to gauge which activities spark more conversations and then focus on intensifying their use.

Timelines for the Start phase

As mentioned above, SASA! Together is a phased approach. Each phase has an estimated timeline, specifically:

- Start phase – takes approximately 7 months;
- Awareness phase – takes approximately 12 months;

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- Support phases – take approximately 7 months;
- Action phase – also takes 7 months.

TN is currently in the Start phase and with so many disruptions that have taken place in between, the work on the ground has only begun, of course considering that other districts like Karonga had already started engaging their communities. However, because of the lack of continuity due to COVID-19 for several months, they have only resumed this engagement. With the re-commencement of prevention work from December 2020 (October and November were used for contracting processes and refresher trainings), it is anticipated that the Start phase will run up to June 2021. However, considering that TN and partners are now working under long term COVID-19 conditions with smaller scale interactions at community level, the phases may take longer.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Provision and Covid-19 precautions

TN will continue to ensure that partners, community activists and leaders have PPE while doing their work. While TN is not able to provide PPE for individual community members, partner staff and activists will ensure adherence to all COVID-19 prevention guidance, including limited numbers of participants for meetings, sanitising constantly with sanitisers and water with soap, meeting in open places with adequate ventilation and adhering to shorter meeting times in their engagements.

Learning and Assessment

Learning and assessment tools have not been affected significantly with the introduction of the new activities. Partners have designated Learning and Assessment officers who also received refresher training together with programme officers. SASA! Together's Learning and Assessment tools have also been adapted to COSMOS ensuring that data is continuously flowing in and can be analysed.