

SASA! Guidance on Facilitation

The SASA! tips booklet also provides guidance and helpful hints for facilitating different activities aimed at mobilizing communities and assessing progress in galvanizing change, organized into four categories, local activism, media & advocacy, communication materials and training. The following is a compilation of the guidance provided in SASA! and tips for facilitation collated from other community mobilization and participatory experiences.

The key message around facilitation is that not everyone can or should be a facilitator. Good facilitation requires a really in-depth understanding of the issues. But even more critical than this factual knowledge, are the skills required to develop trust in a group, foster and guide safe discussion about sensitive issues, deal with personal responses to disclosures of violence, address and respond to intense, emotional disagreement, and be dynamic, creative and fun as well. One-time gender trainings are not enough preparation for facilitating these kinds of discussions. Facilitators need to demonstrate a personal understanding of and commitment to fostering a discussion around gender equality and the root causes of violence against women. They need to start with intense reflection and training focusing on their own beliefs and attitudes before facilitating group discussions. Any intervention that involves facilitation of discussions should also emphasize continual training, check-ins and debriefing sessions to provide feedback and to ensure facilitators receive emotional support.

Tips for facilitators:

- Do start by reflecting on your own process of change, your own personal situation, and your own set of beliefs, attitudes and practices around gender, and violence against women.
- Do always show respect and appreciation for participants in participatory exercises.
- Do portray all characters in role plays with dignity.
- Do role model the positive. Don't only reflect negative reality.
- Do keep your cool! Don't become confrontational.
- Don't shy away from conflict. Use disagreement to galvanize discussion and understanding.
- Don't push or force anyone to do anything s/he is uncomfortable with.
- Do ensure that everyone has a chance to participate in the discussion and express their views.
- Do gauge how the conversations are going so that you don't draw out a discussion for too long or cut an important one short simply to move on to the next item on the agenda.
- Do prepare yourself for facilitating any activity – become familiar with the methodology, the tools, the materials, the issues that may be raised, and the community you are working with.
- Do use a lot of fun energizers as a way of building group trust and a positive dynamic.
- Do remember that participants may be dealing with issues they may not be prepared to share.

- Do be prepared to respond appropriately to those who share/ disclose personal situations, whether in the context of a group discussion or in a private aside. In general:
 - Refrain from making judgmental or critical statements
 - Refrain from offering simplistic solutions or unsolicited suggestions
 - Focus on listening and providing a safe space for the person to share
 - Emphasize confidentiality and safety for anyone disclosing personal situations
 - Have a list of referrals for medical, legal, social and other services handy
- Do ask for and keep yourself open to continual feedback on your facilitation.
- Do seek assistance and guidance on challenging issues, and help with dealing with your own response to emotionally difficult situations.

For additional information, see the [SASA! Tips Booklet](#).