

## Engaging Men as Change Agents in the Fight against Gender Based Violence.

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### Background

There is growing evidence on the importance of engaging men in violence prevention efforts and the potential impact thereof. This is particularly important because men are mostly perpetrators of violence. Research indicates that between 27.5 -31.8% of South African men enact violence towards partners<sup>1</sup>. Despite efforts to engage men and boys in preventing violence against women and girls reports of male perpetrated violence remains high and their participation in GBV prevention efforts is not optimal. Anecdotal evidence also showed that some men are not willing to participate in GBV prevention programs because of the fear of being stigmatized or labelled as perpetrators or victims of violence if seen or heard to be attending such programs. Therefore, addressing violence against women and girls in the fight against HIV/AIDS requires targeted interventions for men as a form of creating an enabling environment for women to openly engage men without the fear of being violated.

### Method

From April 2016, Wits RHI in collaboration with ten community based organizations (CBOs) implemented an adapted gender norms intervention (SASA!) as a strategy for preventing violence against women and HIV in three districts of South Africa, namely Ekurhuleni, eThekweni and uMgungundlovu. At the individual level, men were trained as community activists; at organisational level, men's networks were trained and mentored, and at societal and cultural level community leaders were engaged as champions. Male dominated spaces like sports clinics, taxi ranks, taverns and hostels were targeted.



Image 1: Church leaders trained on SASA!.

### Results

Over a seven month period, 3,303 men between the ages of 10 and 49 years were reached with an adapted gender norms and GBV prevention intervention. The strategy which yielded the highest volume of men was the men's networks i.e. Footballers for Life and Umphithi Men's Forum which respectively reached 52% (509) and 44% (392) of men against their total numbers reached, of which 33.5% of men were between the ages of 25 and 34 years.

### Results Cont.

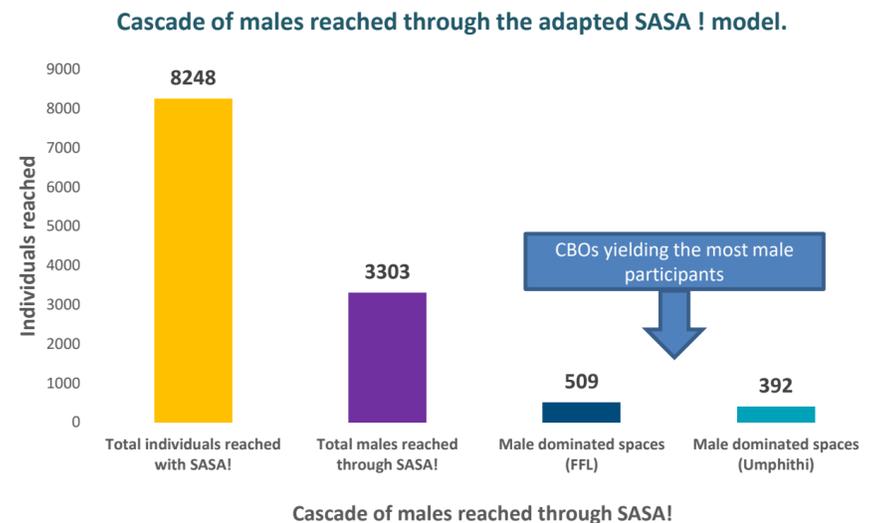


Figure 1: Cascade of males reached through the adapted SASA ! model.

### Conclusion

#### Scalability

GBV programs which are designed to be responsive to men's preferences for engagement are most likely to be successful. All communities have gendered activities and or events that can be used as platforms to engage and share information pertaining to GBV. Sustainability and scalability of such activities is largely dependent on layering and focused efforts on capacitating existing community structures and networks thereby enabling the integration of GBV programming into their main stream activities.

#### Cost Implications

The approximate cost per person reached through SASA! is R307. However; it is important to note that the technical assistance provided by Wits RHI to inform scalability of similar interventions has not been costed and would be a critical piece to inform future programming.

#### Lessons learned

Utilizing male dominated spaces and sports in addition to engaging community leaders as gate keepers and influencers are key strategies for increasing male participation in GBV prevention interventions. More efforts are required to mobilize and reach younger men below the age of 18 as a preventative measure. A strategy which could be scaled with more resources is GBV programming coupled with support for skills and development thereby addressing the issue of high unemployment. Reaching older men (>34) through couple interventions could also be beneficial.

#### References:

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