



Charlotte Makope Community Activist (ward 13) captured by Talent Manditsera



BUILDING AWARENESS FOR CHANGE

SASA! Faith Awareness Phase Implementation Report — Years 2 and 3

Faith, Power and Change: Documenting Two Years of SASA! Faith Awareness Phase Implementation in Bikita District
(2024–2025)

Partner:	Union for the Development of Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe Africa (UDACIZA)
District:	Bikita District, Masvingo Province
Reporting Period:	January 2024 to December 2025
Programme:	Ireland Civil Society Partnership (ICSP)
Methodology:	SASA! Faith
Prepared by:	Donna Nyadete

A publication documenting faith-based, gender-transformative community mobilisation to prevent violence against women and girls.



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Foreword

“Faith in Action”

It is with great pleasure that I present this edition of the UDACIZA report which highlights the inspiring journey of the SASA! Faith Project being implemented in Bikita District. This publication celebrates the collective efforts of religious leaders (RLs), Community Activists (CAs), communities, local authorities, and development partners who are working together to build safer, more just and more inclusive communities.

The SASA! Faith approach recognizes the unique influence of faith communities in shaping values, attitudes and behaviors. By engaging RLs and CAs as champions of positive change, the project is helping to transform harmful social norms, strengthen families, promote gender equality and prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG). It demonstrates that faith can be a powerful force for justice, dignity, changing lives and peaceful coexistence.

Throughout this report, readers will encounter stories of hope, resilience and transformation from individuals and communities in Bikita District. This publication highlights the immense impact of partnerships between UDACIZA, Trocaire and Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denomination (ZHOCD) leaders. Christian communities possess unparalleled reach, moral authority and deep roots within local societies. Testimonies shared in this report remind us that lasting change is possible when faith leaders and community members unite around shared values of love, respect, compassion and mutual accountability.

As UDACIZA, we remain committed to empowering faith communities to become catalysts for social norms change, sustainable development, social justice and the protection of the rights and dignity of every person especially targeting women and girls. We are grateful to Trocaire and the Irish Aid for their technical and financial assistance, government departments, traditional leaders, community volunteers and all those whose dedication has contributed to the success of this initiative. It is our hope as UDACIZA that the experiences and lessons captured in this publication will inspire other faith communities to embrace their role in preventing VAWG promoting equality, and strengthening community cohesion.

Together, let us continue to build communities where women, men, girls, and boys live free from violence, discrimination and fear and where faith is reflected through love, justice and service to humanity.

May the love of God continue to inspire and guide the SASA! Faith Project

Rev. Dr. Innocent

UDACIZA General Secretary



OVERVIEW

Executive Summary

Two years of transformation in Bikita District



Female Community Activists celebrating IWD in their church uniforms captured by Tafadzwa Ndaarombe

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents a synthesis of two years of implementing the SASA! Faith Awareness Phase in Bikita District under the Irish Aid Civil Society Partnership Programme. It consolidates learning from the 2024 and 2025 implementation periods, drawing on programme monitoring data, Rapid Assessment Survey findings, assessment dialogues, community reflections and implementation experience.

The report documents not only what was implemented but also how the programme contributed to changes in social norms, relationships and community structures that influence violence against women and girls. Throughout the implementation period, SASA! Faith sought to transform harmful beliefs about power by engaging faith leaders, community structures, women, men and local institutions in critical reflection and dialogue.

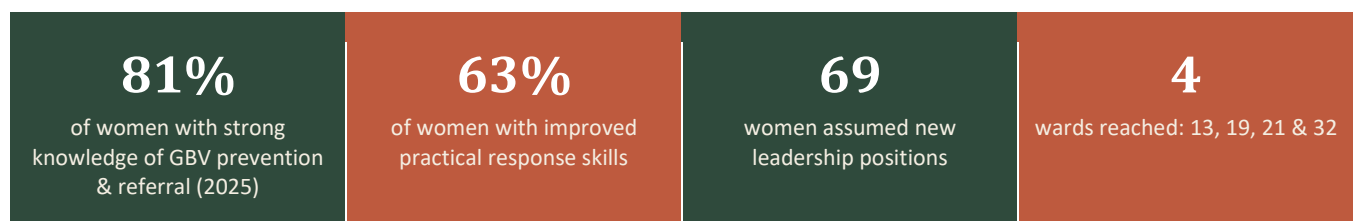
The findings demonstrate that the Awareness Phase successfully laid the foundation for longer-term social norms change by increasing knowledge, shifting attitudes, strengthening survivor support systems and increasing community ownership of violence prevention.

Programme Overview

The programme was implemented across four wards in Bikita District, an area characterised by strong Apostolic faith traditions, patriarchal social norms and high levels of gender inequality. Women and girls continue to experience multiple forms of violence, while faith institutions play a significant role in shaping community beliefs, values and behaviours.

Recognising this influence, UDACIZA implemented SASA! Faith through Community Activists, Religious Leaders, Traditional Leaders, Community Action Groups and Women's Leadership initiatives. Rather than delivering awareness campaigns alone, the programme sought to facilitate critical reflection on power and relationships using scripture, community dialogue and participatory learning approaches.

Between 2024 and 2025 the programme expanded from introducing SASA! Faith concepts to strengthening community ownership of violence prevention and increasing institutional commitment among churches and community leaders.



Major Results

Across the two-year period, several significant outcomes emerged.

Knowledge of violence against women and girls increased substantially among women, men, faith leaders and community structures. The 2025 Rapid Assessment Survey found that 81% of women demonstrated strong knowledge of gender-based violence prevention and referral pathways, while 63% demonstrated improved practical skills for responding to violence. Community dialogue, repeated messaging and organised diffusion contributed to these improvements.

Attitudes towards violence also shifted positively. Approximately four out of every five respondents rejected violence against women, representing sustained improvement from findings reported during Year 2. Assessment dialogues further demonstrated increasing recognition that violence is neither acceptable nor a private family matter.

Faith leaders emerged as influential advocates for change. Churches increasingly integrated SASA! Faith messages into sermons, Bible studies and church meetings. Several churches revised constitutions to allow women to occupy leadership positions that had previously been reserved for men. Religious leaders also demonstrated improved understanding of survivor-centred referral practices, moving away from relying solely on prayer towards linking survivors with professional services.



SASA! Faith Team planning and Coordination quarterly meeting captured by Simangaliso Nyamangara

Women's participation and leadership expanded during implementation. Women increasingly reported improved confidence, stronger "power within" and greater participation in decision making within churches and communities. By 2025, sixty-nine women had assumed new formal and informal leadership positions across programme areas, illustrating growing acceptance of women's leadership within traditionally male-dominated institutions.

Community referral systems also strengthened considerably. Community Activists, Religious Leaders and Traditional Leaders increasingly understood their distinct responsibilities within the referral pathway. Service providers reported increased referrals originating from community structures established through SASA! Faith, indicating improved confidence in formal support mechanisms.

The programme further demonstrated that engaging men and boys contributes positively to violence prevention. Male engagement sessions encouraged reflection on masculinity, respectful relationships and shared decision making. Increasing numbers of men acknowledged women's right to participate in leadership while recognising violence as harmful to families and communities.

Progression Between Year 2 and Year 3

The two implementation years reveal a clear progression in programme maturity.

During Year 2, the programme primarily focused on establishing Community Activists, introducing SASA! Faith concepts, strengthening facilitation skills and generating awareness within participating faith communities. Most reported outcomes related to increased knowledge, community dialogue and initial changes in attitudes.

By Year 3, implementation shifted towards institutional and community ownership. Religious leaders actively championed gender equality through sermons and constitutional reform. Traditional leaders strengthened referral practices. Community Action Groups began identifying advocacy priorities affecting women and girls. Women increasingly occupied leadership positions while communities demonstrated greater willingness to challenge harmful social norms.

This progression illustrates the cumulative nature of social norms change. Knowledge generated during Year 2 created the conditions for behavioural and institutional changes observed during Year 3.

Good Practices

- Working through trusted faith leaders increased community acceptance of discussions on violence against women and girls.
- Repeated community dialogue created opportunities for individuals to question long-standing beliefs regarding gender and power.
- Organised diffusion extended SASA! Faith beyond participating churches into burial societies, Internal Savings and Lending Schemes, village meetings and other community platforms.
- Continuous mentoring strengthened the quality of Community Activists' facilitation skills.
- Women's Leadership initiatives complemented SASA! Faith by strengthening women's confidence to participate in decision making.
- Strong collaboration with service providers reinforced survivor-centred referral pathways.

Remaining Challenges

- Deeply rooted patriarchal beliefs continue to limit women's participation in leadership.

- Economic hardship and prolonged drought increased household stress and heightened risks of intimate partner violence.
- Drug and substance abuse emerged as a growing contributor to violence.
- Some families continued resolving sexual violence through informal arrangements rather than formal justice processes.
- Negative attitudes surrounding sexual and reproductive health, consent and bride price remained widespread among some men.
- Limited resources among district service providers constrained timely support for survivors.

These findings demonstrate that awareness alone is insufficient to eliminate violence and reinforce the importance of progressing into the Support Phase.

Lessons

- Faith institutions are capable of becoming powerful agents of gender transformation when leaders are equipped to critically examine scripture alongside issues of power and justice.
- Community ownership increases when local structures lead implementation rather than external facilitators.
- Men respond positively when discussions focus on positive power rather than blame.
- Women's leadership requires deliberate engagement with institutional gatekeepers rather than women alone.
- Repeated dialogue is essential because social norms change gradually through ongoing reflection rather than single awareness events.
- Referral systems become stronger when every community structure understands its role and limitations.

Looking Ahead

The Awareness Phase has established a solid foundation for the Support Phase. Communities now possess stronger knowledge of violence against women and girls, greater understanding of positive power, improved referral systems and increasing ownership of violence prevention. Faith leaders have demonstrated willingness to challenge harmful norms, while women increasingly occupy leadership positions within churches and communities.

The next phase should build on these achievements by strengthening survivor support, deepening behaviour change among men, addressing persistent harmful norms surrounding sexuality and consent, supporting women's meaningful leadership and expanding organised diffusion beyond participating faith communities.

The journey documented in this report demonstrates that transforming social norms requires time, trusted leadership and sustained community engagement. While harmful beliefs remain, Bikita District has taken important steps towards creating faith communities where dignity, equality and non-violence are increasingly recognised as shared values.



Programme Snapshot — One-Page Overview

At a Glance

- Partner: UDACIZA, in partnership with Trócaire Zimbabwe
- Donor: Ireland Civil Society Partnership (ICSP)
- Location: Bikita District, Masvingo Province — Wards 13, 19, 21 and 32
- Methodology: SASA! Faith Awareness Phase
- Reporting period: January 2024 – December 2025
- Reach: 200+ SASA! Faith sessions; 2,200+ faith community members engaged

69

Women in new leadership roles

81%

Women with strong GBV knowledge

4/5

Respondents reject violence

3

Churches revised constitutions



Religious Leaders quarterly engagement captured by Simangaliso Nyamangara



SECTION ONE

1. Background

Why UDACIZA and Trócaire Zimbabwe turned to faith communities



CA facilitated session in Zion Apostolic Church of God ward 21 Captured by Talent Manditsera

1. Background

Introduction

Violence against women and girls remains one of Zimbabwe's most pervasive human rights and development challenges. Its persistence is sustained by unequal power relations, harmful gender norms, discriminatory cultural practices and social acceptance of violence within intimate and family relationships. In many rural communities, faith institutions influence these norms by shaping beliefs about gender roles, marriage, authority and leadership.

Recognising both the influence of faith communities and their potential to promote positive social change, Trócaire Zimbabwe partnered with the Union for the Development of Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe Africa (UDACIZA) to implement the SASA! Faith methodology in Bikita District under the Irish Aid Civil Society Partnership Programme.

SASA! Faith adapts the internationally recognised SASA! community mobilisation methodology to faith settings, equipping religious leaders and faith communities to examine how power is understood, exercised and shared within relationships, churches and communities. Rather than viewing violence solely as an individual issue, SASA! Faith addresses the social norms and power imbalances that enable violence against women and girls to persist.



SASA! Faith team planning and coordination meeting captured by Simangaliso Nyamangara

This report documents two years of implementing the Awareness Phase between January 2024 and December 2025. It synthesises implementation experience, monitoring evidence, Rapid Assessment Survey findings, assessment dialogues and partner reflections to examine how awareness activities contributed to emerging social norms change.

Unlike annual narrative reports that describe implementation by reporting period, this publication analyses the cumulative contribution of the Awareness Phase to transforming attitudes, behaviours, institutions and

community relationships. It therefore serves both as an accountability document and as a learning resource for future implementation.

Key Insights

- The Awareness Phase established the social foundations required for longer-term violence prevention.
- Faith institutions demonstrated significant potential to influence community norms.
- The implementation journey illustrates that sustainable change requires sustained engagement rather than one-off awareness activities.

Implications for SASA! Faith

The findings reinforce the importance of investing in community ownership, trusted faith leadership and continuous dialogue before expecting sustained behaviour change.



SECTION TWO

2. Programme Context

Bikita District: geography, gender inequality and faith influence



Masvingo Province- Bikita District Geographical Map by Donna Nyadete

2. Programme Context

Context of Bikita District

The SASA! Faith Awareness Phase was implemented in Wards 13, 19, 21 and 32 of Bikita District in Masvingo Province. The district is predominantly rural, with most households relying on subsistence agriculture as their primary source of food and income. During the implementation period, recurring droughts, poor agricultural yields and rising economic hardship increased household vulnerability, placing considerable strain on family relationships and community wellbeing. Programme monitoring consistently showed that financial stress contributed to conflict within households, often increasing the risk of intimate partner violence.

Alongside economic pressures, Bikita remains characterised by deeply rooted patriarchal norms that shape decision making within households, churches and community institutions. Men are widely perceived as household heads and primary decision makers, while women are expected to occupy supportive domestic roles. These norms influence how violence is understood, how disputes are resolved and whether women participate in leadership. Although gradual progress was observed over the two-year period, programme findings demonstrate that these beliefs continue to shape everyday interactions and limit women's agency.

Gender Inequality and Violence Against Women and Girls

Women and girls continue to experience multiple forms of violence that are often hidden within families and faith communities. Throughout implementation, Community Activists and Religious Leaders reported cases of intimate partner violence, emotional abuse, sexual violence, child marriage and economic abuse. Many survivors delayed seeking help because violence was viewed as a private family issue or because communities prioritised preserving family reputation over accountability.

The 2025 reporting period revealed growing concern regarding sexual violence against adolescent girls. Community structures reported that some cases continued to be settled through informal family negotiations involving compensation instead of legal action. Community Activists who attempted to facilitate referrals occasionally experienced intimidation from perpetrators or families seeking to avoid prosecution. These findings demonstrate that harmful social norms continue to undermine access to justice despite increasing awareness of referral pathways.

Monitoring findings further demonstrated that many women continued to experience violence without recognising certain behaviours as abusive. Emotional abuse, controlling behaviour, restrictions on women's movement and unequal decision making were often normalised within intimate relationships. This finding reinforced the importance of the Awareness Phase in helping communities recognise violence in all its forms before meaningful behaviour change could occur.

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Harmful social norms continue to undermine access to justice despite increasing awareness of referral pathways.

— Programme monitoring findings, 2025

The Influence of Faith Communities

Faith institutions occupy a central place within Bikita District. Apostolic churches in particular influence community beliefs regarding marriage, gender roles, leadership, discipline and family relationships. Religious leaders command significant respect and often serve as the first point of contact when families experience conflict.

This influence presents both opportunities and challenges. Historically, some interpretations of scripture reinforced women’s submission, discouraged public discussion of domestic violence and encouraged reconciliation without addressing survivor safety. At the same time, these same institutions possess considerable influence to reshape community norms when religious leaders promote messages of justice, equality and shared responsibility.

Recognising this dual role, SASA! Faith deliberately positioned faith communities as agents of social transformation rather than passive observers. Religious leaders were supported to reflect on scripture through the lens of power, justice and dignity, encouraging congregations to reconsider long-held beliefs that perpetuate violence.

By Year 3, many religious leaders had moved beyond discussing violence only within church meetings. They were actively incorporating SASA! Faith messages into sermons, Bible studies, marriage counselling and youth engagement, demonstrating increasing institutional ownership of violence prevention.

Community Leadership and Existing Systems

Before implementation, community responses to violence frequently relied on informal structures such as traditional courts, church mediation and extended family negotiations. While these mechanisms often resolved disputes, they did not consistently prioritise survivor safety or legal accountability.

Traditional leaders sometimes attempted to resolve criminal cases within customary structures, while religious leaders frequently relied on prayer or reconciliation without referring survivors to specialised services. Community understanding of formal referral pathways remained limited.

The programme therefore recognised that preventing violence required strengthening existing community structures rather than replacing them. Community Activists, Traditional Leaders, Religious Leaders and Community Action Groups were equipped to understand their distinct responsibilities while strengthening collaboration with formal service providers including the Zimbabwe Republic Police, Musasa, Zimbabwe Women

Lawyers Association and the Department of Social Development. This approach sought to improve both prevention and response while promoting survivor-centred practice.

Why the Awareness Phase Was Necessary

The context analysis clearly demonstrates why the Awareness Phase represented an essential first step. Violence against women and girls was not sustained solely through individual behaviour. It was reinforced by shared beliefs regarding authority, marriage, leadership, masculinity and family privacy. Without first questioning these beliefs, communities were unlikely to support survivors, challenge perpetrators or promote gender equality.

The Awareness Phase therefore sought to create opportunities for communities to critically examine how power operates within relationships, churches and communities. Rather than prescribing solutions, SASA! Faith encouraged dialogue, reflection and collective learning. Through repeated conversations, participants began recognising that violence is neither inevitable nor acceptable and that everyone has a responsibility to promote respectful relationships. This gradual process established the conditions necessary for communities to move beyond awareness towards collective action during the Support Phase.

Key Insights

- Poverty, drought and social stress increased vulnerability to violence but did not cause violence. Harmful gender norms remained the underlying drivers.
- Faith institutions represent one of the most influential platforms for changing social norms in Bikita District.
- Strengthening community leadership and referral systems was essential for creating an environment where survivors could safely seek support.

Implications for SASA! Faith

The contextual realities reinforce the need for sustained engagement with faith leaders, traditional authorities and community structures throughout the Support Phase. Future programming should continue addressing structural gender inequalities while strengthening institutional accountability and survivor-centred responses.



SECTION THREE

3. Understanding the SASA! Faith Awareness Phase

Power as the foundation of change



Community dialogue session captured by Simangaliso Nyamangara

3. Understanding the SASA! Faith Awareness Phase

Overview

The Awareness Phase represents the second stage of the SASA! Faith methodology and builds upon the relationships established during the Start Phase. Its primary purpose is to encourage communities to recognise violence against women and girls as a consequence of unequal power relations rather than as isolated incidents or private family matters.

Rather than attempting immediate behaviour change, the Awareness Phase stimulates critical thinking. Communities are encouraged to question long-standing assumptions about gender, authority, leadership and relationships through structured dialogue grounded in faith values and lived experiences.

For UDACIZA, the Awareness Phase provided an opportunity to engage faith communities in conversations that had historically been considered sensitive or inappropriate within religious spaces. These conversations gradually created a common understanding that violence is preventable and that faith leaders have an important role in promoting justice, dignity and equality.

Objectives

Implementation during 2024 and 2025 sought to achieve several interconnected objectives.

- Increase knowledge of violence against women and girls, including its causes, consequences and available referral pathways.
- Strengthen understanding of power and how unequal power contributes to violence within families, churches and communities.
- Build the confidence and capacity of Community Activists, Religious Leaders and Traditional Leaders to facilitate dialogue and promote positive social norms.
- Strengthen women's confidence to participate in leadership and decision making.
- Increase community ownership of violence prevention by encouraging collective responsibility rather than individual action alone.

Power as the Central Concept

The defining feature of SASA! Faith is its focus on power. Throughout implementation, discussions centred on four dimensions of power:

Power Within Individual confidence, dignity and self-worth	Power Over Control and dominance that enable violence	Power With Collaboration and collective responsibility	Power To Positive action and leadership
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Community dialogues consistently demonstrated that understanding these different expressions of power enabled participants to reinterpret relationships within households and faith communities. Women described increased confidence to participate in decision making, while men increasingly recognised that leadership does not require control or violence.

Community Mobilisation Approach

Rather than relying on external facilitators, SASA! Faith adopts a community mobilisation model that places local actors at the centre of implementation. UDACIZA invested in strengthening Community Activists, Faith Teams, Religious Leaders, Traditional Leaders and Community Action Groups so that they could facilitate conversations within their own communities.

This approach enhanced credibility because messages were delivered by trusted individuals who understood local realities, cultural norms and faith practices. It also strengthened sustainability by ensuring knowledge remained within communities beyond the lifespan of individual project activities.



SASA! Faith team Quartely planning and coordination Meeting captured by Simangaliso Nyamangara

Roles of Key Structures

Structure	Role
Community Activists	Primary facilitators of SASA! Faith sessions; expanded from awareness sessions (Year 2) to mentoring, referrals and organised diffusion (Year 3).
Religious Leaders	Integrated SASA! Faith messages into sermons, Bible studies and pastoral counselling; became advocates for gender equality in church governance.
Traditional Leaders	Supported community dialogue while strengthening collaboration with formal referral systems.
Community Action Groups	Identified emerging issues affecting women and girls and facilitated advocacy with district stakeholders.
Faith Teams	Coordinated implementation within participating churches while encouraging broader community participation.

Together these structures created multiple entry points for challenging harmful norms across both faith and non-faith settings.

Key Insights

- The Awareness Phase focuses on changing how communities think before expecting changes in behaviour.
- Understanding power proved to be one of the strongest catalysts for challenging harmful gender norms.
- Community ownership increased because implementation relied on trusted local actors rather than external facilitators.

Implications for SASA! Faith

The programme demonstrated that social norms change is strongest when communities themselves facilitate reflection and dialogue. The Support Phase should therefore continue investing in these community structures while deepening their facilitation and mentoring capacity.



SECTION FOUR

4. Implementation Journey

From awareness to community ownership



Male Engagement Session captured by Simangaliso Nyamangara

4. Implementation Journey

Introduction

The implementation of the SASA! Faith Awareness Phase between 2024 and 2025 was characterised by gradual but meaningful progression in how communities understood and responded to violence against women and girls. Rather than viewing implementation as a series of isolated activities, the programme followed a deliberate pathway of social norms change. Each intervention built upon previous learning, enabling individuals and institutions to move from awareness towards ownership of violence prevention.

Year 2 focused primarily on introducing SASA! Faith concepts, establishing community structures and creating safe spaces for dialogue. By Year 3, implementation had matured into community-led action, stronger institutional commitment and increased integration of SASA! Faith principles into church and community life. This evolution reflects the cumulative nature of social norms change, where repeated exposure to new ideas gradually reshapes beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

Implementation Timeline

Period	Focus
Year 2 (2024)	Establishing Community Activists; introducing SASA! Faith concepts; facilitation skills-building; generating initial awareness and dialogue.
Year 3 (2025)	Institutional and community ownership; sermons and constitutional reform; strengthened referral practice; women assuming leadership; organised diffusion.

Building Community Awareness

The first stage of implementation centred on increasing community understanding of violence against women and girls and introducing the concept of power as the root cause of violence. Community Activists facilitated discussions within churches using SASA! Faith materials that encouraged participants to reflect on their own experiences rather than simply receiving information.

Initially, many participants understood violence primarily as physical abuse. Emotional abuse, controlling behaviour, economic abuse and psychological violence were often considered normal aspects of marriage or family life. Through repeated dialogue, participants began recognising violence in its multiple forms and understanding how unequal power contributes to abuse.

Community monitoring showed that attendance and participation improved over time. Couples increasingly attended sessions together, while participants sought additional discussions outside formal sessions to explore issues affecting their relationships. This demonstrated growing trust in Community Activists and increased demand for continued dialogue beyond scheduled activities.

By Year 3, awareness activities had moved beyond increasing knowledge to stimulating community reflection. Assessment dialogues demonstrated that participants were beginning to challenge beliefs they had previously

accepted without question, including the assumption that violence is a private family matter or that women should remain silent to preserve family honour.

Strengthening Faith Leadership

Faith leaders played a central role throughout implementation. During the early stages, many Religious Leaders viewed violence primarily as a pastoral issue requiring prayer, counselling or reconciliation. Their understanding of survivor-centred referral systems was limited.

Capacity strengthening enabled Religious Leaders to critically examine scripture alongside concepts of justice, dignity and positive use of power. As their understanding developed, they increasingly recognised that preventing violence requires both spiritual leadership and practical action.

By Year 3, Religious Leaders were actively incorporating SASA! Faith messages into sermons, Bible studies, marriage counselling and youth meetings. Some churches established gender desks, developed youth policies addressing violence and publicly condemned harmful practices such as child marriage and substance abuse. These developments demonstrate increasing institutional ownership rather than dependence on project staff.

One of the most significant achievements was the willingness of several Apostolic churches to review internal constitutions. Churches including Kuratidzwa KwaJohane Apostolic Church, Zion Church of God and Six Stars Apostolic Church revised governance arrangements to create leadership opportunities for women. These changes illustrate institutional transformation rather than individual attitude change alone.



Religious Leaders' Quarterly Meeting captured by Simangaliso Nyamangara

Supporting Women to Find Their Voice

Women's empowerment formed a consistent theme across implementation. While SASA! Faith sessions addressed violence and power broadly, Women in Leadership initiatives complemented these discussions by strengthening women's confidence to participate in public life.

During Year 2, many women described fear, limited confidence and cultural expectations as barriers to leadership. Women often reported requiring approval from husbands before accepting leadership positions or participating in community meetings. Some believed leadership belonged exclusively to men because of religious teaching or cultural practice.

By Year 3, women increasingly described improvements in confidence, decision making and self-worth. Many spoke about experiencing greater "power within", enabling them to express opinions during meetings, participate in church governance and influence household decisions.

Programme monitoring documented sixty-nine women assuming formal and informal leadership positions across churches and community structures during implementation. These included church committees, burial societies, watershed committees and Internal Savings and Lending Schemes. Although challenges remained, these appointments demonstrate growing acceptance of women's leadership within institutions where women had previously been excluded.

Importantly, implementation recognised that increasing women's confidence alone would not transform leadership opportunities. Religious Leaders, Traditional Leaders and men were deliberately engaged to address institutional barriers preventing women from assuming meaningful leadership roles.



Community dialogue session in ward 13 captured by Simangaliso Nyamangara

Viola Mapurisa newly elected Chairperson under Caritas Structures

Engaging Men as Partners

The programme deliberately positioned men as partners in preventing violence rather than portraying them solely as perpetrators. Male engagement sessions encouraged participants to reflect on masculinity, responsibility and the positive use of power.

Many men reported that the discussions challenged long-held beliefs regarding authority within marriage. Increasing numbers acknowledged that shouting, controlling women's movements or denying women opportunities to work undermined healthy relationships.

By Year 3, assessment dialogues demonstrated increasing support among men for women's leadership and greater willingness to intervene when violence occurred. Participants increasingly rejected the belief that family violence should remain hidden. Instead, many recognised that silence protects perpetrators rather than families.

However, implementation also highlighted areas requiring continued engagement. Discussions surrounding sexual consent, condom negotiation and bride price remained particularly sensitive. Some men continued associating payment of bride price with ownership of women, illustrating the persistence of deeply embedded patriarchal beliefs despite broader improvements in attitudes.



Male Engagement Session captured by Simangaliso Nyamangara

Strengthening Referral Systems

Another important aspect of implementation involved strengthening community understanding of survivor-centred referral pathways.

Initially, many community structures attempted to resolve violence through mediation or customary processes. Community Activists therefore received specialised training on referral pathways while Religious Leaders and Traditional Leaders strengthened collaboration with district service providers.

By Year 3, Community Activists had become the primary source of referrals within programme communities. Religious Leaders increasingly recognised that prayer should complement rather than replace professional

services. Traditional Leaders demonstrated greater willingness to refer criminal cases to formal justice systems instead of resolving them locally.

These improvements contributed to increasing confidence among survivors and strengthened collaboration between community structures and formal service providers.

Expanding Beyond Faith Spaces

One of the programme's most important adaptations involved extending SASA! Faith beyond participating churches.

While implementation began within faith communities, Community Activists increasingly facilitated discussions during village meetings, Internal Savings and Lending Schemes, burial societies, garden groups and other community gatherings.

This organised diffusion significantly expanded programme reach while reinforcing the principle that violence prevention is a community responsibility rather than solely a church concern.

The programme also observed spontaneous demand from churches that had not originally been selected for participation. Several Religious Leaders requested inclusion after observing positive changes within neighbouring congregations. This organic expansion demonstrates increasing credibility and ownership of the methodology.



Community Dialogue (organised Diffusion) during ISALs meeting captured by Simangaliso Nyamangara

Key Insights

- The implementation journey demonstrates that social norms change followed a clear progression from awareness to ownership.
- Faith leaders evolved from participants to advocates.

- Community Activists became trusted facilitators and referral agents.
- Women's leadership shifted from aspiration towards practical reality.
- Communities increasingly accepted responsibility for preventing violence.
- Organised diffusion enabled SASA! Faith principles to spread beyond formal project structures.

Implications for SASA! Faith

Future implementation should continue investing in community ownership rather than expanding direct project delivery. The greatest evidence of sustainability emerged where local actors adapted SASA! Faith principles to their own institutions and community platforms.



SECTION FIVE

5. Key Achievements

Impact and Achievements Dashboard



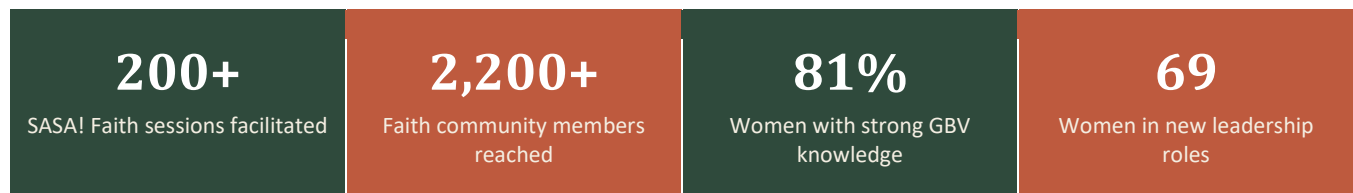
Women commemorating 16 Days of Activism Against GBV in ward 19 Captured by Tafadzwa Ndarombe

5. Key Achievements

Introduction

The achievements documented during the Awareness Phase extend beyond numerical outputs. They represent gradual changes in how individuals, families, churches and communities understand power, relationships and violence against women and girls. Across the two implementation years, progress was observed at multiple levels, including individual knowledge, institutional practice, community leadership and social norms.

Impact at a Glance



5.1 Increased Awareness of Violence Against Women and Girls

Perhaps the most significant achievement was the substantial increase in community awareness regarding violence against women and girls.

During Year 2, the programme concentrated on helping participants recognise different forms of violence and understand that violence extends beyond physical assault. Community Activists facilitated more than 200 SASA! Faith sessions, reaching over 2,200 faith community members with messages on violence prevention, power and referral pathways.

By Year 3, Rapid Assessment Survey findings demonstrated considerable improvements in knowledge. Eighty-one percent of women achieved high knowledge scores regarding violence prevention and referral pathways, exceeding programme targets. These findings suggest that repeated dialogue and community mobilisation were effective in increasing understanding of violence and available support services.

Knowledge also translated into action. Women increasingly approached Community Activists and Religious Leaders for referral information while encouraging other survivors to seek support.



International Women's Day Commemorations in ward 32 captured by Tafadzwa Ndaarombe

5.2 Improved Understanding of Power

A second major achievement involved transforming community understanding of power.

- Participants increasingly recognised that violence results from misuse of power rather than anger or conflict alone.
- Women described increased confidence to participate in decision making and challenge controlling behaviour.
- Men increasingly acknowledged that respectful leadership does not require dominance or violence.
- Religious Leaders incorporated discussions on positive power into sermons and family counselling.

These shifts illustrate the central contribution of SASA! Faith. Rather than focusing exclusively on violence, the programme addressed the unequal power relations that sustain violence.

5.3 Faith Leaders Becoming Champions of Change

The programme successfully transformed Religious Leaders from passive observers into active advocates for gender equality. By the end of Year 3:

- Religious Leaders regularly delivered sermons addressing violence against women.
- Churches established gender desks.
- Church constitutions were amended to increase women's participation in leadership.

- Religious Leaders actively referred survivors to formal service providers.
- Churches increasingly rejected the belief that violence should remain hidden within families.

These changes demonstrate institutional transformation within faith communities, one of the programme's most significant achievements.



Male Engagement Session in ward 32 captured by Simangaliso Nyamangara

5.4 Transforming Social Norms Around Violence Against Women and Girls

One of the defining achievements of the Awareness Phase was the gradual transformation of community attitudes towards violence against women and girls. While changes in knowledge were anticipated, the programme also documented emerging shifts in the collective beliefs that had historically legitimised violence within households and faith communities.

During the early stages of implementation, violence was commonly regarded as a private family matter, with intervention from outsiders viewed as inappropriate. Community discussions frequently reflected beliefs that women should endure abuse to preserve family unity and church reputation. These attitudes discouraged survivors from seeking support and reinforced impunity for perpetrators.

By the end of Year 3, assessment dialogues demonstrated that these beliefs had begun to change. Participants increasingly rejected the notion that violence should remain hidden. Men and women alike acknowledged that silence protects perpetrators and exposes survivors to continued harm. Religious Leaders reported that members of their congregations were increasingly approaching them for guidance on preventing violence rather than simply seeking reconciliation after violence had occurred. These changes suggest that violence is gradually becoming recognised as a community concern requiring collective action rather than private resolution.

Importantly, the programme also documented increased willingness among community members to challenge harmful behaviours when witnessed. Discussions revealed growing acceptance that neighbours, church members and relatives have a responsibility to intervene appropriately when violence occurs. This represents an important shift in collective efficacy, a key component of social norms change.

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Violence is gradually becoming recognised as a community concern requiring collective action rather than private resolution.

— Assessment dialogue findings, Year 3

5.5 Increased Engagement of Men and Boys

Engaging men and boys remained a strategic priority throughout implementation because of their influence in shaping household decision making, church leadership and community norms. The programme deliberately created safe spaces where men could openly discuss relationships, masculinity and power without fear of judgement. Rather than portraying men as perpetrators, SASA! Faith encouraged them to become allies in preventing violence against women and girls.

Monitoring evidence indicates that this approach yielded positive outcomes. Men increasingly recognised the importance of respectful communication within intimate relationships and acknowledged women’s right to participate in leadership and decision making. During community dialogues, several men reflected that controlling women’s movements or restricting economic participation contributes to unequal power and conflict. Religious Leaders also reported improved participation by men in church discussions on violence and gender equality. Men increasingly sought advice regarding relationship challenges and demonstrated greater willingness to support women seeking services.

However, implementation also identified areas requiring continued attention. Harmful beliefs concerning bride price, sexual consent and women’s reproductive autonomy remained persistent among some participants. These findings suggest that while awareness has improved substantially, further work is required to transform deeply embedded patriarchal norms surrounding sexuality and marriage.

5.6 Increased Women’s Leadership and Participation

Women’s leadership emerged as one of the programme’s strongest areas of achievement.

At the outset of implementation, women described numerous barriers preventing meaningful participation in leadership. These included limited confidence, religious restrictions, domestic responsibilities, lower education levels and resistance from both men and women.

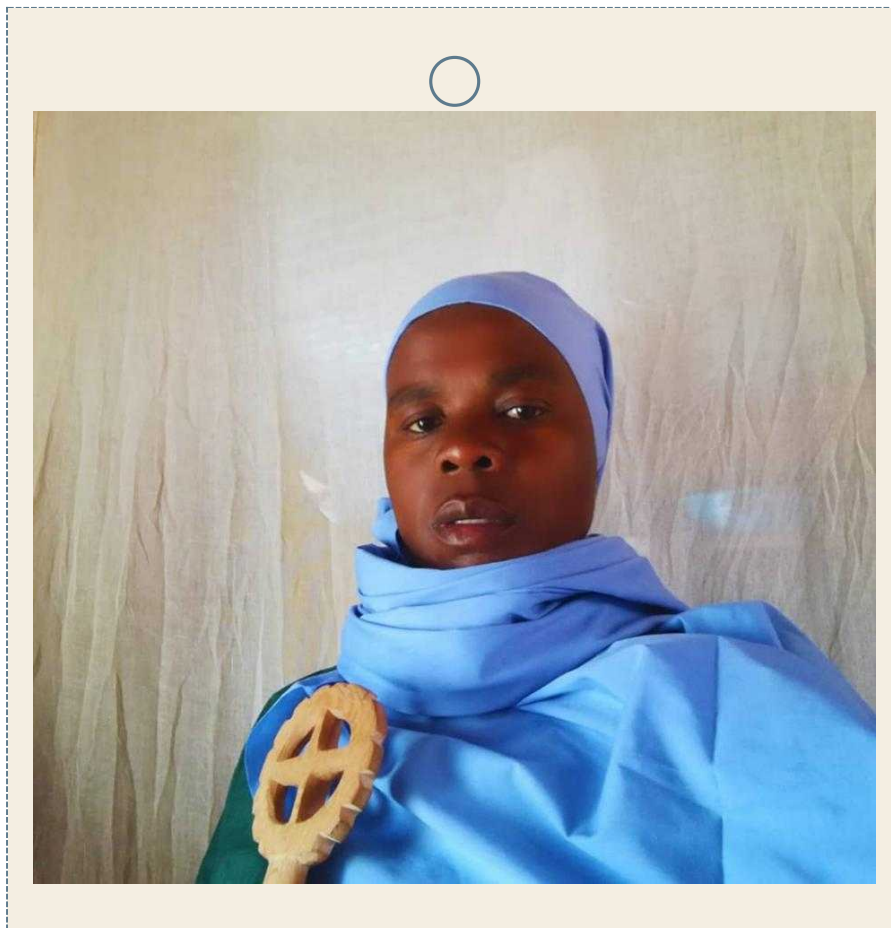
Throughout implementation, Women in Leadership training, Religious Leader engagement and SASA! Faith dialogues consistently reinforced the message that leadership is determined by ability rather than gender.

By the end of Year 3, sixty-nine women had assumed new formal and informal leadership positions across churches and community structures. Several Apostolic churches that had historically excluded women from influential positions revised their constitutions to allow women to serve in senior leadership roles. At Gundidza

Zion Apostolic Church, women became the majority of committee members, while Kuratidzwa KwaJohane Apostolic Church appointed women to senior prophetic positions previously reserved for men.

Equally important were the changes in women's confidence. Women increasingly described having "power within" to express opinions, contribute to community meetings and participate in household decision making. Some also reported improved economic confidence following complementary livelihood support, illustrating the interconnected nature of economic empowerment and violence prevention.

Despite these gains, monitoring findings indicate that meaningful participation remains uneven. Some women continue to occupy leadership positions without significant influence over decision making, while others remain constrained by household responsibilities or limited educational opportunities.



Prophetess who was appointed to a Rabaoma position in Kuratidzwa KwaJohane Apostolic Church captured by Anna Ngwarirai

5.7 Strengthened Survivor-Centred Referral Systems

The programme achieved significant improvements in community understanding and utilisation of referral pathways.

Before implementation, survivors often relied exclusively on family mediation, church counselling or traditional mechanisms. Community leaders frequently attempted to resolve cases internally, sometimes without involving specialised service providers.

Over the two implementation years, Community Activists, Religious Leaders and Traditional Leaders developed a clearer understanding of their respective responsibilities within the referral system. Rather than replacing professional services, community structures increasingly recognised their role as facilitators of access to justice and support.

Service providers reported increased referrals originating from Community Activists and Religious Leaders. Religious Leaders increasingly encouraged survivors to seek medical, legal and psychosocial support while continuing to provide spiritual care. Traditional Leaders also demonstrated greater willingness to refer criminal matters to formal justice systems rather than resolving them solely through customary mechanisms.

Practical examples further illustrate these improvements. Community Activists successfully facilitated referrals leading to prosecution of perpetrators, while Religious Leaders increasingly challenged families attempting to resolve sexual violence through informal compensation.

These changes demonstrate growing community confidence in survivor-centred approaches and represent a significant departure from previous practices.

5.8 Strengthened Community Ownership

Another notable achievement was the increasing ownership of violence prevention by community structures themselves.

By Year 3, Community Action Groups had moved beyond supporting project implementation to identifying and advocating around broader issues affecting women and girls. Priority concerns included drug and substance abuse, child marriage, inadequate gender-based violence services and women's exclusion from leadership.

Community structures actively engaged district stakeholders regarding these concerns, contributing to renewed district discussions on substance abuse and advocacy for improved gender-based violence services.

Organised diffusion further strengthened ownership. Community Activists extended SASA! Faith conversations beyond participating churches into village meetings, burial societies, Internal Savings and Lending Schemes and community gardens. Churches outside the original intervention voluntarily requested participation after observing positive changes among neighbouring congregations.

These developments demonstrate that SASA! Faith increasingly became a community process rather than a project activity.



Community Activists during practice session captured by Donna Nyadete

Key Insights

- The programme achieved significant progress across multiple levels of change.
- Knowledge increased substantially among women, men and community leaders.
- Faith institutions increasingly promoted gender equality and non-violence.
- Women's participation in leadership expanded within churches and community structures.
- Referral systems became more survivor-centred and collaborative.
- Communities increasingly accepted collective responsibility for preventing violence.

These achievements illustrate that meaningful social norms change begins with dialogue but becomes sustainable through institutional ownership and community leadership.

Implications for SASA! Faith

The achievements documented during the Awareness Phase demonstrate that future implementation should prioritise consolidation rather than expansion. Strengthening the capacity of existing community structures, supporting women leaders, deepening engagement with men and reinforcing referral systems will enable communities to translate awareness into sustained collective action during the Support Phase.



SECTION SIX

6. Evidence of Change

What the data tells us



Community Activists after the First Line Support Training Captured by Batsirai Zhou

6. Evidence of Change

Introduction

Evidence gathered during the implementation period demonstrates that the Awareness Phase contributed to measurable changes in knowledge, attitudes, institutional practices and community behaviour. Importantly, these findings extend beyond programme outputs and provide insight into how social norms are beginning to shift within Bikita District.

The programme adopted a mixed-methods approach to monitoring change, drawing on Rapid Assessment Surveys, assessment dialogues, routine monitoring data, partner reflections, key informant interviews, case examples and participant testimonies. Together, these sources provide a comprehensive picture of the programme's contribution to violence prevention.

Increased Knowledge on Violence Against Women and Girls

Knowledge gains represent one of the programme's strongest areas of evidence.

By 2025, the Rapid Assessment Survey found that 81% of women demonstrated strong knowledge of violence prevention, gender equality and referral pathways. Nearly half achieved the highest possible knowledge score, indicating that repeated exposure to SASA! Faith discussions had significantly strengthened understanding of violence and available support services.

Compared with Year 2, discussions had progressed from identifying different forms of violence to exploring the underlying power dynamics that sustain abuse. Participants increasingly recognised emotional abuse, controlling behaviour and unequal decision making as forms of violence rather than normal marital behaviour.

This improvement suggests that the programme succeeded in moving beyond information sharing towards critical reflection on social norms.

Improved Skills to Respond to Violence

Knowledge improvements were accompanied by increasing confidence to act.

Sixty-three percent of women demonstrated improved practical skills in responding to violence, including understanding referral pathways and supporting other survivors to seek assistance. Community monitoring also documented increasing numbers of women approaching Community Activists and Religious Leaders for information on available services.

Although skills development lagged behind knowledge acquisition, this pattern is consistent with social norms theory, where behaviour change typically follows improvements in awareness and attitudes.



DATA & EVIDENCE

Tables and Figures

Activity summaries, outcomes, and monitoring data

Project participants	2024				2025			
		Male	Female	Total		Male	Female	Total
People reached through SASA! Faith sessions		591	1683	2274		581	1383	1964
Community Activists		13	24	37		17	28	45
Religious Leaders		12	8	20		15	5	20
Community Action Group Members		18	23	43		13	35	48
Traditional Leaders		45	5	50		28	7	35
Women in leadership		0	26	26		0	67	67

Reached project participants (2024-2025)

Activity Summary

Activity	Year 2 (2024)	Year 3 (2025)
SASA! Faith community sessions	Introductory awareness sessions launched	200+ sessions cumulative
Faith community members reached	Initial cohort engaged	2,200+ cumulative
Faith leader trainings	Foundational training	Advanced training + mentoring
Male engagement sessions	Piloted in select wards	Scaled across all 4 wards
Women in Leadership sessions	Introduced	Institutionalised with follow-up coaching
Community dialogues / CAT activities	Establishing structures	Community-led, self-initiated dialogues

Outcome Table

Outcome Area	Evidence of Change
Knowledge	81% of women with strong knowledge of GBV prevention and referral pathways.
Attitudes	Approx. 4 in 5 respondents reject violence against women.
Skills	63% of women with improved practical response skills.
Institutional practice	Gender desks established; 3+ church constitutions revised.
Leadership	69 women assumed new formal/informal leadership roles.
Referral systems	Increased referrals from Community Activists and Religious Leaders to formal services.

Challenges and Responses

Challenge	Programme Response
Deeply rooted patriarchal beliefs limiting women’s leadership	Deliberate engagement of institutional gatekeepers alongside women’s confidence-building
Economic hardship and drought increasing household stress	Complementary livelihood support; continued dialogue on positive power
Drug and substance abuse contributing to violence	Advocacy with district stakeholders; Community Action Group prioritisation
Informal resolution of sexual violence cases	Strengthened referral training for Community Activists and Traditional Leaders

Challenge	Programme Response
Harmful norms on consent, sexuality and bride price	Continued male engagement sessions and faith leader dialogue
Limited resources among district service providers	Strengthened collaboration with ZRP, Musasa, ZWLA and Department of Social Development

Lessons Learned Summary

Theme	Lesson
Faith institutions	Become powerful agents of gender transformation when leaders critically examine scripture alongside power and justice.
Community ownership	Increases when local structures lead implementation rather than external facilitators.
Engaging men	Men respond positively when discussions focus on positive power rather than blame.
Women's leadership	Requires deliberate engagement with institutional gatekeepers, not women alone.
Pace of change	Repeated dialogue is essential; social norms change gradually rather than through single events.
Referral systems	Strengthen when every community structure understands its role and limitations.

Participant Demographics

Insert final verified figures from routine monitoring data before publication. The categories below reflect the participant groups engaged throughout implementation.

Participant Group		Engagement Type
Women	3066	SASA! Faith dialogues, Women in Leadership training, referral support
Men	1172	Male engagement sessions, couples' dialogues, community campaigns
Religious Leaders	20 (5F 15M)	Faith leader trainings, sermon integration, referral practice
Traditional Leaders	35 (7F 28M)	Community dialogue facilitation, referral collaboration
Community Activists	45 (17M 28F)	Session facilitation, mentoring, organised diffusion
Community Action Group members	48 (13F 35M)	Advocacy and district-level engagement

Faith Leader Spotlight



Captured by Talent Manditsera

Profile

- Name: Phanuel Gundidza
- Church: Zion Apostolic Church of God
- Ward: Ward 21
- Role in SASA! Faith: Bishop

The bishop's engagement with the SASA! Faith approach marked a turning point in his congregation. Through his advocacy he successfully influenced the amendment of the church constitution to open leadership and decision-making spaces to women ensuring their voices and perspectives were recognized at the highest levels of faith governance. In addition he championed the development of a youth policy designed to safeguard the younger generation from the risks of drug abuse, early marriages and teenage pregnancies. These reforms not only strengthened the moral fabric of his faith community but also created a safer more inclusive environment where both women and youth could thrive.

“ Church haivakwi negender imwe, chitendero ngachiratidze ruenzasisonekufungawo kuti muono wemunhu wese wakakosha kubva kuvarume, vakadzi, vakomana nevasikana” — Phanuel Gundidza Religious Leader, Bikita District

“ A church is not built by one gender. Religion/ Faith must show equality. Every person's perspective matter, from men, women, boys, and girls.” — Phanuel Gundidza Religious Leader, Bikita District

Two Years in Pictures — Photo Collage

A visual retrospective of implementation across Wards 13, 19, 21 and 32.



Community dialogue session



Faith leader Awareness training



Women in Church and Community Leadership Session



Male engagement session



IWD Ruwadzano Commemorations



District-level- CAG Meeting

Impact at a Glance — Dashboard



J



CLOSING

Conclusion

Closing Reflections



CAs Commemorating IWD in church uniforms Captured By Tafadzwa Ndaarombe.

Conclusion

The SASA! Faith Awareness Phase marked an important milestone in UDACIZA's journey towards preventing violence against women and girls in Bikita District. Over two years of implementation, the programme evolved from introducing concepts of power, gender equality and violence prevention to fostering meaningful shifts in attitudes, relationships, institutional practices and community ownership. While the programme began by creating awareness, its contribution extended far beyond increasing knowledge. It initiated a process of critical reflection that enabled individuals, families, faith communities and local leaders to question long-held beliefs and practices that have historically sustained violence against women and girls.

The findings presented throughout this report demonstrate that change occurred at multiple levels. Women gained greater confidence to speak out against violence, seek support and participate in leadership. Men increasingly reflected on their use of power and began embracing more equitable and respectful relationships. Religious leaders transitioned from being observers of violence to becoming advocates for justice, dignity and gender equality within their congregations. Traditional leaders, Community Activists and Community Action Groups strengthened referral pathways and reinforced the message that violence is a concern for the entire community rather than a private family matter.

Perhaps the most significant achievement of the Awareness Phase was the gradual transformation of faith communities into spaces where conversations about violence against women and girls became both possible and acceptable. Churches that had previously reinforced restrictive gender norms began opening leadership opportunities for women, integrating messages on gender equality into sermons and strengthening support for survivors. These institutional changes demonstrate that faith can serve as a catalyst for positive social norms change when religious teachings are grounded in justice, compassion and the equal dignity of women and men.



Ruwadzano IWD Commemorations Captured by Talent Ndatserwa

The programme also demonstrated the value of community mobilisation as a strategy for preventing violence. Community-led facilitation, repeated dialogue and organised diffusion enabled SASA! Faith principles to spread beyond participating churches into wider community structures. This increased local ownership and strengthened the likelihood that positive changes will continue beyond the life of the project. The growing confidence of Community Activists and Faith Teams, together with the willingness of churches outside the original intervention to adopt SASA! Faith approaches, provides strong evidence that the methodology has gained credibility and acceptance within the district.

Despite these achievements, the findings also highlight that social norms change is an ongoing process. Harmful beliefs regarding gender roles, sexual and reproductive decision making, bride price, women's leadership and family privacy continue to influence behaviour in many communities. Economic hardship, substance abuse, child marriage and limited resources within the formal service delivery system also continue to heighten the vulnerability of women and girls. These challenges reinforce the understanding that awareness alone is insufficient to eliminate violence. Sustained engagement is required to translate changing attitudes into lasting behaviour change and stronger systems of accountability.

The implementation experience offers several important lessons for future programming. Social norms are most effectively transformed through trusted local leadership, continuous community dialogue and active participation by women and men alike. Faith leaders have demonstrated that they can play a central role in promoting gender

equality when they are equipped to critically engage with issues of power and justice. Similarly, strengthening women's leadership requires engagement not only with women themselves but also with the institutions and gatekeepers that shape opportunities for participation. The programme further demonstrated that strengthening referral pathways and survivor-centred responses must remain an integral component of community mobilisation if increased awareness is to result in improved protection and access to justice.

The progress achieved during the Awareness Phase provides a strong foundation for the next stage of the SASA! Faith methodology. Communities now possess greater knowledge of violence against women and girls, stronger referral systems, more confident local leadership and increased willingness to challenge harmful social norms. These achievements position UDACIZA, Trócaire Zimbabwe and their partners to transition confidently into the Support Phase, where communities will deepen collective responsibility, strengthen support for survivors and translate emerging changes in attitudes into sustained action.

Ultimately, the journey documented in this report demonstrates that preventing violence against women and girls is not achieved through isolated activities or short-term interventions. It requires a sustained process of transforming how power is understood and exercised within families, churches and communities. Over the past two years, faith communities in Bikita have taken important steps along this journey. By building on the relationships, structures and local leadership established during the Awareness Phase, they are well positioned to continue creating communities where women and girls live with dignity, participate equally in decision making and leadership, and enjoy lives free from violence.

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Preventing violence against women and girls is not achieved through isolated activities or short-term interventions. It requires a sustained process of transforming how power is understood and exercised.

— Report Conclusion

Recommendation Highlights

Priority	Recommendation
1	Transition to the SASA! Faith Support Phase, building on established community ownership.
2	Deepen survivor-centred referral systems through continued training and service-provider collaboration.
3	Sustain and expand male engagement on consent, sexuality and bride price.
4	Support women’s meaningful (not only nominal) leadership through institutional gatekeeper engagement.
5	Expand organised diffusion into further community platforms beyond participating churches.
6	Strengthen Community Action Group advocacy on substance abuse, child marriage and service gaps.

Acknowledgements

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SASA! Faith Project staff (from left to right, Simangaliso Nyamangara (Project Intern), Petronellah Sisimai (Project Officer) and Batsirai Zhou (Assistant Project Officer))

Report prepared by Donna Nyadete
Women Empowerment Advisor, Trócaire Zimbabwe