



What Works 2 to Prevent VAWG: Impact at Scale

Accountability Guidance Note – for Grantee Partners, Local Research Partners and WW2 Consortium members





Content

Purpose	3
What is accountability under WW2?	3
Accountability in practice	5
Accountability while doing research	9
Process of redressal/ feedback mechanism	10
Tools and methods	10
Intersections with safeguarding	13
Reporting	13
Meet the team	14
Additional resources	14
Annexures	15





Purpose

This document has been developed to give grantee and in-country research partners an overview on accountability as envisioned under the What Works 2 (WW2) Programme. The note is aimed at clearly laying out various aspects of accountability while programming on VAWG. It will also articulate how accountability will unfold with ethical and safe research work and safeguarding aspects of the programme. As we strive to put our theoretical understanding of accountability into practice the document will guide us towards realising our promise towards upholding feminist principles. We hope grantee and local research partners would be able to refer to this document to create a programme which strongly centres voices and experiences of women and girls in all their diversity at various levels of programming.

What is accountability under WW2?

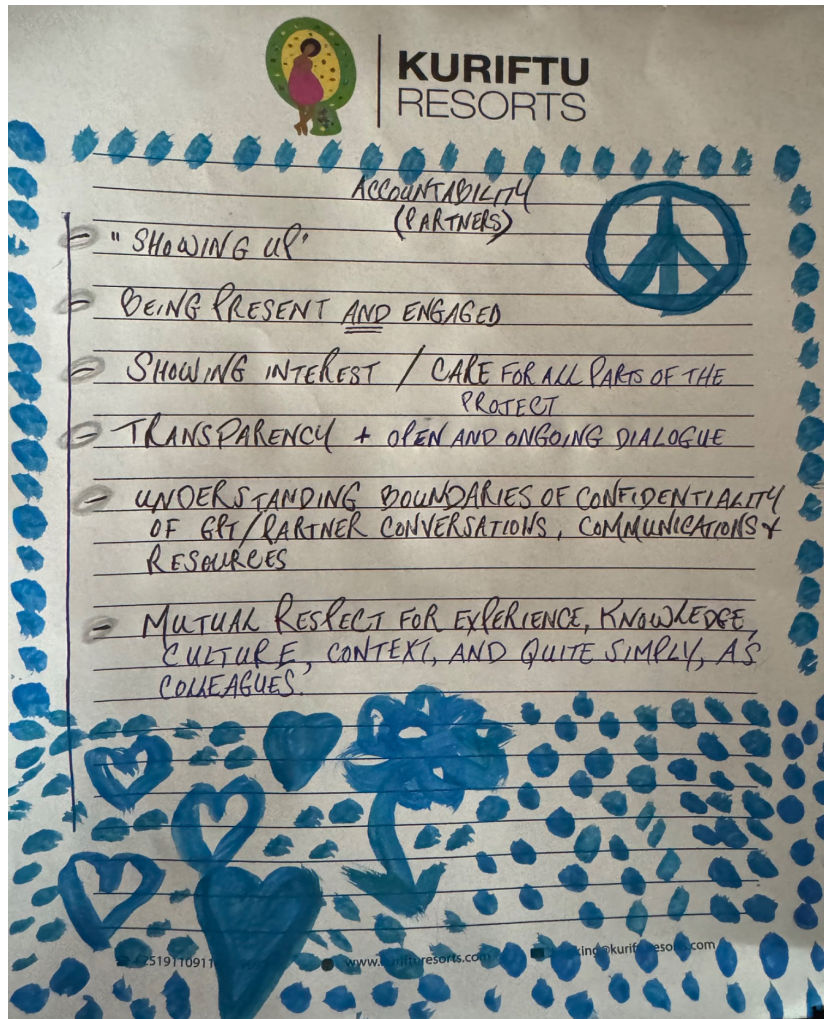
The WW2 programme seeks to foster values-based strategies, feminist ways of working and robust partnerships with each other, with women and girls in all their diversities, their organisations, and communities.

As a programme, we understand that the practise of accountability is being mindful of centering the voice and agency of women and girls into actions and structures.

"Accountability is iterative, aspirational, and transparent, it guides us to recognize how 'our words, actions, and decisions are always embedded in relations of power and to action from that recognition.'"¹ WW2 strives to be accountable at multiple levels: to women and girls affected by the programme and research at the community level; grantee partners, consortium members, consortium governance, FCDO, and contribute to the global movement ending violence against women and girls. The accountability pillar will also work in close collaboration with Safeguarding colleagues who promote and support safer programming in general and will handle any reports or violations of child or adult safety. Ethics approval must be sought for all WW2 research projects and researchers will work collaboratively with local GBV response services to ensure that the research is carried out safely, ethically, and causes minimal harm to research participants, the researchers and local communities.

¹ Russo, A. (2018). Feminist accountability. In *Feminist Accountability*. New York University Press.





(Image by Dr Lilian Artz)

Below are the overall goals and strategic aims around accountability under the WW2 programme:

1. Overall goals

- a. Build accountability measures into our governance and staffing structures of WW2.
- b. Provide guidance on accountable practices to the consortium and grantees.
- c. Establish a process for accountability reviews of the What Works 2 Programme and the Implementation Consortia.
- d. Create avenues for both active and passive feedback from project partners, women and girls in communities where projects are operational for shared learning, and the broader field of VAW prevention.





Accountability in practice

The biggest aspect of accountability in any programme lies in how we **translate theory into practice**. It is the *how*, the everyday decisions, behaviours, and systems that defines whether a programme truly upholds feminist principles.

Accountability is not a one-time activity but a **cross-cutting, iterative process** that must be embedded at every stage of programme design, implementation, and closure, ensuring we embed the voices of women and girls and the principle of '**Do No Harm**'. This includes programme management, community engagement, advocacy, and research. Using an accountability framework helps create **benchmarks and guiding principles** that can centre the voices of women and girls in all their diversities

Below are suggested steps for how feminist accountability can be practiced across three key programme stages. These are broad directions and should be **adapted to local contexts and community needs** to ensure relevance and resonance.

1. Co-design / Inception / Baseline Stage

This is the foundational stage where project priorities are set, plans are developed, and baseline assessments are undertaken. The decisions made here shape the ethos and trajectory of the entire programme.

Feminist accountability practices include:

- **Centering voices of women and girls in identifying problems and co-creating solutions.**
 - Ensure diverse women and girls meaningfully **inform the design** of the project. Ask: "Were they consulted? Do they feel this issue represents their concern?"
 - Hold **community convenings** to explain programme intent transparently and build informed consent and trust.
- **Shared leadership and inclusion:**
 - Establish inclusive spaces (e.g., an **oversight or advisory committee**) with representation from vulnerable and marginalised groups such as women with disabilities, LGBTQ+ communities, or survivors who are able to effectively inform the design.
 - Ensure co-design is not extractive but **reciprocal and co-owned**, validating lived experiences as evidence.
- **Intersectional planning:**
 - Design programmes keeping in mind age, caste, religion, disability, and socio-economic status, ensuring the programme is accessible, representative and addresses **power asymmetries**.





- **GPEA (Gendered Political Economic Analysis)**
 - The process for conducting the GPEA should involve the voices, experience and needs of the affected communities at the center of the process and guiding it. Try to talk to various impacted groups/communities to understand their needs and experiences so that the process can weave in these inputs while conducting the GPEA process.
- **Ethical and safe research and evaluation**
 - **Use survivor-centred, trauma-informed approaches and tools when designing and conducting research and evaluation.**
 - **Be guided by community reflections** on what accountability means to them. Secure **informed consent** and develop ethical baselines grounded in local realities.

2. Implementation Stage

This is the longest phase and most dynamic phase, where planned activities are carried out in communities. It requires continuous engagement, adjustment, and responsiveness to emerging feedback and challenges.

Feminist accountability practices include:

- **Ongoing community engagement and leadership:**
 - Maintain **continuous feedback loops** with the community to validate that the programme stays relevant and safe.
 - Facilitate regular **community and organisational reflection cards** to assess progress and recalibrate approach collaboratively. The Reflection card can be co-developed along with the community members.
 - Ensure women and girls continue to **influence decisions and hold leadership roles** during implementation.
- **Doing No Harm:**
 - Programme implementers should continuously strive to mitigate risk, while monitoring all stages to ensure our work does not create additional harm or trauma to the women and girls in all their diversities.
 - Proactively monitor risks to ensure programming does not unintentionally increase harm or reinforce stigma.
 - Allocate resources for safeguarding, and designate **accountability and safeguarding focal points** within partner organisations.
 - Recognise and address **power imbalances** between staff, communities, and institutions.
- **Transparency and responsiveness:**
 - Implement a **clear redressal and feedback mechanism** accessible to all genders and diversities.
 - Regularly share back with communities how their feedback shaped programme adaptations.





- **Support to local leadership and networks:**
 - Grantee Partners are encouraged to leverage their own feminist accountability practices and invest in capacity-building of **community actors** for sustainability.
- **Advocacy and policy influencing:**
 - Grantee Partners are encouraged to give platforms to women and girls impacted by violence in their advocacy work. This can be done either through story telling (print or video), bringing women and girls to advocacy platforms, forming groups for local/ community level advocacy etc. Do remember to take consent before involving women and in such initiatives.

3. Wrap-up / Endline Stage

This stage involves drawing programme activities to a close, capturing learning, evaluating impact, and communicating outcomes. It is a critical moment to ensure ethical exit and reinforce community ownership.

Feminist accountability practices include:

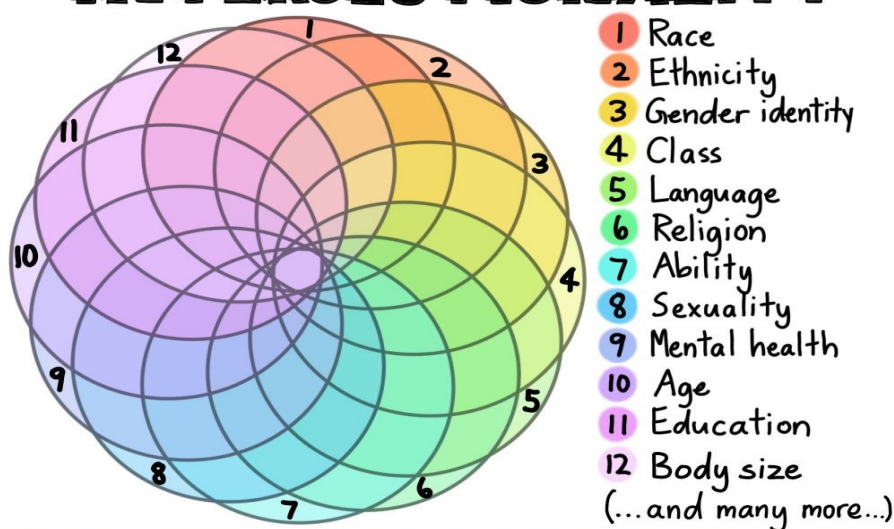
- **Exit with dignity and transparency:**
 - Communities need to be aware about the exit time much in advance.
 - Organise **community-led exit meetings** where partners and participants co-analyse what worked, what did not, and why.
 - Ensure that participants understand how their contributions impacted the programme and what will happen next.
- **Closure that upholds feminist values:**
 - Avoid abrupt disengagement. Ensure **ethical closure** through clear transition plans or linkages to local support. Focus on **transition plans**, linkages to services, or ongoing local structures to support the community post-project.
- **Shared decision-making on how research findings are communicated, disseminated, and utilised**
 - At a minimum, key research findings (which have been validated with implementers) should be communicated back to key stakeholders.
 - Research findings should be shared and utilised in ways that benefit women and girls and local communities. Implementers and researchers should jointly decide on how this can best be achieved.
- **Some cross-cutting practices throughout all stages:**
 - Embed feminist values in governance (shared power, transparency).
 - Recognise power dynamics within partnerships, not just externally.
 - Value emotional and intellectual labour of community members.
 - Practice humility, reflection, grace, and responsiveness.
 - Keep the voices and experiences of women and girls at the center of all planning, implementation and research processes.



Intersectionality

Women and girls in all their diversities will always encounter an intersection of different forms of discrimination and disadvantage depending on their lived experiences. To adequately prevent VAWG we ought to understand their intersections and how that exacerbates their experiences of violence and inequality. Applying an Intersectional lens needs to be practiced across programming and research activities. The activities should be inclusive and mindful of the privilege or oppression based on intersectionality. There is a need to examine the way people's intersecting identities (class, gender, race, ability, etc) impact the ways that they have power and privilege, and the ways they face marginalisation and discrimination.

INTERSECTIONALITY



Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it locks and intersects. It is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.

– Kimberlé Crenshaw –

@sylviaaduckworth

Possible programming considerations

- How is this programme integrating issues of key and vulnerable groups - Women living with HIV, Women with Disabilities, LBT women, Sex workers, widows, women in slums or with low-income levels?
- Will members of these key groups have any key role in the programme? Will at least two of these groups have a seat on the programme oversight committees?
- Has the program taken into consideration the different possible intersectionalities that would affect women and girls differently i.e. language, occupation, religion, age, education, sexuality, ability, ethnicity etc.





Some key points to keep in mind²

1. Being accountable to women and girls' means ensuring that our work prioritises the rights and needs of women and girls and does not cause them harm directly or indirectly.
2. Accountability requires adopting an intersectional approach within and across all gender-based violence (GBV) programming.
3. Building a strong women's rights movement and civil society is crucial to building accountability to women and girls.
4. Promoting and supporting women's leadership and decision-making is critical for effective GBV programming, policy, and advocacy, and ensures that GBV work is accountable to women and girls.
5. Being accountable to those who participate in any research activities requires adhering to strict ethical and safety guidelines and principles.

Accountability while doing research

Ethics approval for all research

We will submit all proposed research studies for ethical review and approval by the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) of one of the core partners (GWU, JHU, UCT, AKU), as well as in-country ethics review committees where available. We will identify locally specific ethical and safety concerns, and develop, implement and monitor risk mitigation strategies that are effective in the local context.

Where in-country ethics review committees do not exist, we will seek input from the Research Advisory Group on alternative ways to ensure local ethical review, including the establishment of community advisory boards. The Consortium will also obtain the necessary permissions from relevant authorities.

We will employ established survivor-centred and trauma-informed protocols to prioritise safety, security and confidentiality of the study participants, local implementing partners, research teams and Consortium members. The protocols are developed for the context in collaboration with local implementing partners using guidance from experienced WROs, NGOs and UN agencies, drawing on the WHO Ethical Guidelines including the **Researching Violence Against Women: A Practical Guide for Researchers and Activists**. We will collaboratively work with implementing partners to ensure the research team has access to a validated referral pathway for GBV response services and other relevant programmes for refugees, displaced persons and host communities in fragile settings. What Work 2 grantee partners and research partners also have access to learning modules specifically on research ethics on the 'What Works Capacity Strengthening Hub.'

² COFEM Feminist Pocketbook - Tip Sheet #4 <https://cofemsocialchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/TS4-Staying-accountable-to-women-and-girls.pdf>





Possible considerations:

- How is this programme integrating community interests into the research? Is there an oversight committee overseeing the research, is there local women and girls' representation?
- Who will share the results of the research? Will the implementer or community representative have a role?

Process of redressal/ feedback mechanism

This redressal process is related to all complaints related to grantee partners that can arise from the following: Consortium members (research and implementation), other grantee partners and their community members. Please see the [Grantee Feedback Mechanism](#).

Tools and methods

Learning from ethical programming, grant making and from WW1, the WW2 programme seeks to incorporate key mechanisms to assess, track and cause reflection about the extent to which Accountability practice is to be prioritised throughout the life of the programme and how feminist principles are upheld while addressing VAWG. The accountability pillar will deploy a range of tools to collect feedback from all involved and strive to ensure our decisions are responsive to feedback from the individuals and communities affected by our work that is in line with the goals of WW2 programme. This will include key indicators on which our consortium and project partners will report annually. Lessons learned will inform subsequent operational and programmatic decisions.





Tools by Implementation Consortium

Tools	Description	Frequency & mode of engagement
Reflection Card - The reflection cards are tools for accountability assessments/monitors and will be used for the consortium, grantees and community members. The Reflection Cards processes will be carried out in years 4 and 6. The Reflection Cards' set of indicators will be generated through dialogue and by collaboration of all stakeholders to ensure participation, agency and mutual understanding at all levels. The Reflection Cards will promote an element of grace to engage in the accountability journey with understanding and good intention through self-assessment and external assessment.		
Grantee Reflection card	The grantee partners will co-create the reflection card with the accountability pillar leads to reflect on the overall program support.	Once in every grant cycle • Online
Community Reflection Card	The grantee partner will support the pillar leads in the co-creation and in rolling out community level reflection cards. This will contribute to the programme review to better understand violence against women prevention and the impact in which we would have made over the years.	Once in every grant cycle • in-person
Grantee Collective Action Group	In upholding feminist principles and creating a safe space for all to contribute, we will create this group for open dialogue with grantees. The Accountability leads will co-convene bi-annual Grantee Collective Action Groups to provide a safe space to solicit feedback from grantee partners.	Every 6 months Virtual
Externally led Accountability Review	Accountability Reviews, led by an external consultant will be conducted to document lessons learned and promote greater accountability to women and girls to build lessons for our programme as well as other large funding initiatives.	Years 3, 5 and 7 of the WW2 programme Online and in-person
Accountability Plan of Action	Feedback received from our various processes will be exponentially addressed with those concerned through the development of the plan of action	Once in every grant cycle
Safeguarding Mechanism	This unit, under the leadership of the Safeguarding Advisors, will triage any safeguarding reports that come in but will not be responsible for conducting investigations. They will track the progress of investigations and provide readouts to the PMU.	Virtual





Tools by Research Consortium

Tools	Description	Frequency & mode of engagement
RC Accountability SURVEY	A short survey on RC member's experience collaborating on What Works 2 programme research projects, and their views of the working relationships within the WW2 Programme. The anonymised feedback gathered from this survey helps inform and improve the way the RC collaborates with project partners, communities, and with each other within the RC. This includes ensuring accountability and striving for more equitable partnerships (especially South/North partnerships) and respectful ways of working.	Annual, anonymous online survey of all RC members. Results are reported back to the consortium for discussion.

Grantee partner accountability methods and tools

The Accountability Pillar recognises that Grantee partners could choose to utilise their own accountability mechanisms as developed and established through their own practice-based knowledge.

In this case, the grantee partner will be encouraged to include these mechanisms and also demonstrate in detail how these mechanisms will deliver accountability markers hoped for. In the spirit of achieving standardisation, the pillar will encourage each grantee partner to adopt at least one or two accountability methods listed in the table above.

To be exact, grantee partners are encouraged to

1. Have a dedicated staff delivering accountability and safeguarding activities and be focal person to the WW2 accountability pillar
2. To include Accountability activities within the WW2 work plans
3. Track, monitor and generate update on quarterly basis Include Accountability data and, in the WW2, Quarterly reports

Be sure to conduct both organisational and community reflection cards at least once in the lifetime of the programme





Intersections with safeguarding

- a. Focal person on safeguarding and accountability: To ensure appropriate and effective information sharing to the wider project communities on safeguarding and accountability, a community of practice (COP) will be developed with LPT and grantee partners, to share learning and best practices. Members of the CoP will be selected from a grantee partner who is a staff member within their organisation, to serve as safeguarding and accountability focal person. Collectively, the safeguarding and accountability leads will build capacity for grantee focal persons. These individuals will directly engage with communities on issues related to safeguarding and accountability. They will also report quarterly to advisors to help track progress, concerns and feedback on the programme related to accountability and safeguarding.
- b. Reporting tracker on safeguarding and accountability: Both safeguarding and accountability leads rely on grantees partners in sharing the right information at the right time. A reporting tracker will be used by the grantee focal persons to report on safeguarding and accountability activities on a quarterly basis. The tracker will be used by advisors to measure progress made on safeguarding and accountability information sharing at community level.

Reporting

The reporting on the accountability process within the programme will happen on a quarterly basis, through the quarterly reports under **Section 9** of the document. Please share brief updates on the following aspects in your programme:

- How has the project captured feedback from community members over the past quarter? Have any specific efforts been made to capture feedback from particularly marginalised groups within your community How do you engage continuously with the community?
- What have been the main issues raised by the feedback, and how have you responded to these (please give specific examples)?
- Have you reported back to communities about how their feedback has been used and acted on?
- What plans do you have for your community feedback mechanisms next quarter (covering the systematic collection, analysis, and response to beneficiary feedback and reporting actions back to beneficiaries)?





Meet the team

The Accountability pillar is co-led by 2 Senior Accountability Advisors Mpho Mpfu from Raising Voices and Urvashi Gandhi from Samya. They also work closely with Safeguarding lead Anna Sheperd and Loksee Leung and Dr Emma Fulu who leads on Accountability from the Research Consortium.



Accountability Advisor

Mpho E. Mpfu is a development practitioner and professional criminologist with over 9 years' experience of working on tri-sector led social impact projects and programs in Africa and Europe. She is an ever-smiling happy soul and enjoys cycling.

Mpho@raisingvoices.org



Accountability Advisor

Urvashi Gandhi is the Director and CEO of Samya, a social enterprise that works on mainstreaming gender in work and workplaces across sectors. She specialised in Human Development and has been working in the development sector for over 25 years, addressing and advocating issues of Child Rights, Refugee Rights & Women's Rights at national, regional and global level. She is a reiki practitioner and loves the mountains.

urvashi@samyadev.com



Co-lead for Learning & External Engagement

Dr Emma Fulu is a researcher, feminist activist and one of the world's leading experts on violence against women. She is the founder and Executive Director of the Equality Institute, a global feminist agency working to advance gender equality and end violence against women and girls. The Equality Institute is one of the core partners of the *Evidence for Impact Consortium* of *What Works to Prevent Violence: Impact at Scale*. emma@equalityinstitute.org





Accountability Advisor and Senior Technical Advisor (Research)

Loksee Leung is the Director of Research & Evaluation at Equality Institute, where she applies intersectional-feminist approaches to research and partnerships aimed at preventing violence against women. Specialising in mixed-methods research and MEL, Loksee has worked across Australia, Asia, and the Pacific regions. Loksee is committed to producing rigorous, ethical, and actionable research that informs prevention efforts and contributes to a more just and equitable world.

Loksee@equalityinstitute.org

Additional resources

- **COFEM: Feminist Pocket book** on Accountability
- **UNTF:** Prevention Series: Learning from Practice: Lessons on preventing violence from civil society organizations funded by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women
- **COFEM: How lack of accountability undermines work on addressing VAWG**
- **DFID:** Practical Guide on community programming on violence against women and girls
- **UNESCO:** Accountability for gender equality

Annexures

- 1) Language & terminology
- 2) Process of redressal/ feedback mechanism
- 3) Safeguarding investigation guidance

Suggested Citation:

Fulu, E. Gandhi, U. Leung, L. Mpofu, M. Cooper, T. (2026): What Works 2 to Prevent VAWG: Impact at Scale Accountability Guidance Note - For Grantee Partners, Local Research Partners and WW2 Consortium Members.



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

eqi



The Global
Women's Institute
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

