



Guidance Note for Technical Advisers

Supporting Violence Against Women and Girls
Prevention Programming



Acknowledgements

This guidance note was developed to support the work of technical advisers in the What Works II initiatives. It builds on earlier guidance notes, the lived experience and reflections of technical advisers and other colleagues. The main authors were Alice Kerr-Wilson, Petronille Geara, Tina Musuya and Dorah Kiconco Musinguzi.

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Table of Contents

Acronyms	4
1 Introduction	5
2 Technical Support – Definition and Approach	6
3 Role of Technical Advisers	9
4 Phases of Technical Support	10
5 Determining the Level of Technical Support	20
6 Wider Technical Support Mechanisms	24
7 Monitoring the Quality of Technical Support	25
8 Support for Technical Advisers	26
Bibliography	28

Acronyms

APM	Annual programme meeting
CBO	Community based organisation
EEl	External engagement and influencing
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
LPT	Learning Partnerships Team
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PGC	Programme and grants coordinator
STA	Senior technical adviser
TA	Technical adviser
ToC	Theory of Change
VAWG	Violence against women and girls
VAC	Violence against children
WRO	Women's rights organisation



This guidance note is intended to provide guidance for technical advisers and programme teams seeking to offer high-quality, equitable support to grantee partners implementing violence against women and girls (VAWG) prevention projects. Based on the experience of the What Works II initiative, it is likely to be particularly useful for global or regional programmes that fund and support multiple grantee partners.

This note provides guidance on the technical approach adopted by technical advisers to support project design and implementation within What Works II, as well as the technical backstopping provided to technical advisers throughout this process. Funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), What Works II is an initiative supporting women's rights organisations (WROs)¹ and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to design and implement projects in Africa, Asia and the Middle East². It draws on lessons from the first phase of the What Works programme, ongoing collaboration with grantee partners during the programme's second phase, previous guidance materials³, and the collective experience of technical advisers working across diverse settings.

The note is divided into seven main sections: the definition and approach to technical support; the role of technical advisers; the phases of technical support; how to determine the level of technical support required; wider learning mechanisms across the initiative; how to monitor the quality of support; and finally how to support technical advisers. Readers can draw on the guidance as a whole or on selected sections according to their needs.

The guidance note is accompanied by a **toolkit** that provides practical tools for technical advisers during different aspects of their work with grantee partners. Links to individual tools are provided in the text next to the  symbol in the sections where the tools are most relevant. Readers are then able to review tools alongside the relevant guidance. Lessons learnt from delivering technical support in the What Works II initiative are shared in call-out boxes to illustrate key points and bring them to life.

- 1 All projects funded by What Works II are required to include a WRO, either as the lead organisation or as a partner within the implementing consortium. This reflects the central role of WROs in VAWG prevention: they are often closely connected to the communities they work with, understand the dynamics of violence against women and girls and the social norms that underpin it, and are committed to long-term, sustainable change.
- 2 As of June 2026, the What Works II initiative supported 14 projects in Asia and Africa only; however the initiative's mandate also covers the Middle East and it aims to support projects in the region by the end of the initiative.
- 3 Including Musuya, T., Kiconco Musinguzi, D., Kerr-Wilson, A., 2023, Internal Guidance Note for STAs; LPT, 2023, STA Guidance Note for Grantee Partners; Geara, P., 2024, Technical Assistance Approach in What Works II.



Definition

Technical support in What Works II is both technical and political. It is a structured, sustained process of support to individuals and organisations that aims to strengthen the design, implementation, quality, effectiveness and impact of What Works II-funded projects. Technically it involves the provision of evidence-informed guidance, sharing of relevant research and cross-project learning, and tailored problem solving support to address identified needs. It also involves providing information, knowledge and skills in relation to project implementation throughout all project phases during the grant period.

Politically, technical support is grounded in feminist principles – including power sharing, inclusivity, and respect for local knowledge and context. Through a wide range of reciprocal and equitable learning collaborations, it also supports partners to recognise and navigate power dynamics within partnerships, government and communities to deliver positive change in the lives of women and girls.

Principles and approach

The Learning Partnerships Team (LPT) approach to technical support is guided by the following seven principles:

1) Partnership

Technical support is a two-way partnership grounded in reciprocity. Technical advisers (TAs) value and learn from grantee partners' expertise, experience and contextual knowledge, while also contributing their own technical expertise. Together, TAs and grantee partners agree overall aims, roles and ways of working, and foster shared responsibility for decisions, progress, learning and outcomes. Where tensions or conflicts arise within the partnership, TAs aim to support dialogue and resolution sensitively, in line with the needs and context of the grantee partner/s

2) Tailored and contextualized

TAs adapt to the specific realities of each partner and setting, ensuring support is culturally sensitive, relevant and aligned with local priorities, constraints and opportunities. Where possible, our TAs are based in or have extensive experience of the contexts where our grantee partners work.

3) Sustained, systematic and adaptive

Technical support is an ongoing, structured process; planned, consistent and embedded across project phases, rather than a one-off activity or ad hoc inputs. Inputs are timely and provided at the time required by the grantee partner or by the programme and adapt to the grantee partner's needs.

4) Evidence-informed

Technical support is grounded in the latest evidence from research and practice-based learning. Relevant research and cross-project learning are shared throughout all project phases during the grant period.



5) Gender-transformative

TAs support partners not only to implement effective interventions, but also to advance gender equality, challenge power imbalances, and contribute to long-term social change throughout the project lifecycle. By supporting grantee partners to strengthen their programming and foster an environment that prioritises gender equality, technical support can also contribute to wider organisational change and strengthen the overall impact of violence prevention efforts.

What do we mean by a gender-transformative approach?

- A gender-transformative approach goes beyond addressing the symptoms of gender inequality to actively examine, challenge and change the underlying gender norms, power relations, and structural inequalities that sustain discrimination and violence.

Gender-transformative work:

- Focuses on root causes of inequality rather than short-term fixes.
- Seeks to shift harmful gender norms, roles, attitudes and behaviours at individual, community, organisational and institutional levels.
- Aims to redistribute power and resources, strengthening the agency and leadership of women and girls while engaging men and boys as allies in change.
- Encourages critical reflection and learning on values, norms and practices – within organisations and in the communities where programmes operate.
- Works towards lasting structural and social change, so that gains in gender equality are sustained beyond the life of a project.

Source: UNFPA, 2023

6) Flexible

Technical support remains responsive to emerging needs and changing conditions, adjusting support and priorities in collaboration with partners while staying anchored to agreed objectives and feminist values.

7) Open and clear communication

Transparent, respectful communication is prioritised. It supports trust, accountability and care – creating space for honest dialogue, feedback and timely problem solving. We work together with grantee partners to include clearly defined objectives, activities, roles and expected outcomes. The TAs will also have open conversations with grantee partners to have open conversations about power dynamics between them and other What Works II initiative staff and the grantee partners.

In 2025, grantee partners appreciated that TAs were “accessible and offer crucial support as and when needed”, highlighting their “exceptionally impactful” and “strategic support across multiple facets of the project”.

Source: 2025 grantee partner capacity assessments and bi-annual reports



Why is technical support important?

Technical support is recognised as a critical enabler of effective prevention of violence against women programming⁴. When organisations are well supported, they are better positioned to deliver high-quality, equitable and evidence-based interventions that generate the outcomes that What Works II aims to achieve. The success of VAWG prevention efforts are strengthened through the strategic use of technical support, a steadfast commitment to evidence-informed principles, and the effective adaptation and implementation of well-designed models.

TAs act as connectors, bringing together their own experience and knowledge of global evidence with grantee partners' expertise and understanding of the local context. They also connect grantee partners with other programmes, knowledge and wider learning opportunities, while supporting the strategic application of evidence-based principles, the effective implementation of well-designed models, and adherence to best practice. Technical support is not simply a compliance function; it is a collaborative thought partnership that supports organisations in navigating complexity, troubleshooting challenges, and continuously improving their programming.

'Aspirationally feminist'

The What Works II initiative is defined as 'aspirationally feminist': striving for feminist and equitable practices while remaining responsive to the objectives and frameworks set by the funders. This approach also shapes how technical support is provided in the What Works II initiative. The term 'capacity strengthening' is used to recognise and build on the abilities that organisations already possess, while the term 'grantee partners' is used to emphasise partnership and the effort to listen to their feedback, make changes and remain accountable. That said, the initiative is funded by donors from the Global North (the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and the Ford Foundation). This represents a significant source of funds to local organisations which comes with its own limitations. These include administrative and compliance barriers and a preference for large-scale projects which create complex dynamics of power and inequality⁵.

4 Raising Voices Practice Team, 2017, Technical Assistance Guiding Principles. Kampala, Uganda: Raising Voices.

5 The complex dynamics of power derived from when a programme is designed and funded by a bilateral donor based in the Global North was also identified during the first phase of the What Works initiative, see Willan et al, 2019.



The TA's role is to provide tailored technical support to grantee partners for the duration of the project to strengthen their project design, implementation and closure phases. Much of the TA's time is also dedicated to supporting partnerships, both between grantee partners, if there is more than one implementing organisation, and with research partners⁶, government representatives and communities. TAs support grantee partners throughout the entire project lifecycle, typically providing around 40+ days of assistance each year⁷, depending on grantee partners' needs, with more intensive support at the project's outset and a gradual decrease over time⁸.

TAs are assigned to projects that match their technical, contextual and linguistic expertise as much as possible. They employ a range of strategies, including consultations, training, implementation tools, peer networking, problem solving and programme monitoring to strengthen prevention capacity.

Alongside direct support to grantee partners, TAs also facilitate broader learning opportunities such as community of practice and technical sessions in the annual programme meeting (APM).

By the end of 2025, 10 TAs from five organisations provided support to 14 different innovation, mainstream and scale projects, with each TA assisting between one and four projects. This included support to international NGOs, WROs and community-based organisations (CBOs). TAs sit within the implementation consortium's Learning Partnerships Team (LPT), supported by two co-leads.

⁶ The What Works initiative is run by two separate consortia including an implementation consortium led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and a research consortium led by the Global Women's Institute at George Washington University. Part of the TA's role has been to work together with advisers from both consortia, providing support to grantee partners including on research.

⁷ At the start of the initiative, we estimated an average of 40 technical support days per year per project, which was a significant increase from the amount of technical support provided under the first phase of the project. In reality most projects have needed more technical support than this. See also text box in Section 5 on navigating TA contracts with project needs.

⁸ See also Section 5 on level of technical support.



TAs support grantee partners during the different phases of their project. The following sections outline the key activities that TAs undertake during inception and co-design, implementation, and ethical project closure. It is important that, across all phases, TAs are guided by the seven principles that underpin our approach to technical support. Also that TAs reflect on their own learning during each phase and encourage grantee partners to capture practice-based learning (see Phase 4: Documenting learning).

Phase 1: Inception and co-design (6-9 months)

The inception phase allows grantee partners time to build strong partnerships with the TAs, as well as with their own organisational, government and community partners. This ensures that grantee partners collaborate and agree a shared vision with their different government/ civil society/private sector partners, as well as receive the support and time needed for their project to be ready to start implementing an effective and high-quality VAWG prevention intervention. It is a crucial phase that sets the project up for success.

The importance of spoken communication

During the inception phase of the What Works II initiative, the LPT and other pillars shared many guidance notes with grantee partners. However, TAs soon found that discussing the work with grantee partners via phone/online calls led to greater clarity, reflection and improved collaboration. This highlights the value of spoken alongside written communication – especially when working with partners from diverse settings – in strengthening the relational aspects of the work and supporting trust and shared understanding.

TA responsibilities during the inception phase

1) Preparation and role clarity

Before engaging with grantee partners, the TA thoroughly reviews all project documents, including proposal applications, Theory of Change (ToC), logframe, workplans, budgets and any proposal reviewer feedback. They should also review any previous evaluations of the project, assessments or learning reports. TAs are also encouraged to explore the grantee partner's website and materials to understand their context. At the outset, the TA collaborates with other advisers and grantee partners to clarify everyone's roles and responsibilities, establish clear communication channels, and ensure all parties are aligned. This clarity helps streamline collaboration and prevents confusion, especially in complex consortia. The LPT co-leads and the TA's own organisations all support them to understand the programme and to prepare for the role.



Tool 1: Technical Adviser Generic Job Description

Relevant evidence from the What Works II website evidence hub

2) Building relationships

Strong partnerships are essential for effective project implementation. During the inception period, the TA works with the grantee partner to build trust, agree on ways of working, and establish open communication. The TA may need to explain their role and how they add value, especially if grantee partners are unfamiliar with technical support or have had challenging experiences working with external



advisers in the past. Supporting grantee partners to establish strong partnerships with research partners, government, donors and originators is also important.

If needed, the TA also supports the grantee partner to build relationships with their different civil society, community, research and government partners, particularly where there are complex dynamics. The TA can also help frame a narrative of the project, how it contributes to collective goals and clearly articulates how key stakeholders can be involved (or informed) about the project throughout its lifecycle.

During inception the TA also builds their own relationships with the other advisers supporting the grantee partner, including the programme and grants coordinator; accountability, external engagement and influencing, and finance advisers; principal investigator/s; and wider research team.

Tool 2: Partnership Tips for TAs

3) Project design

‘Co-design’ is “an ethical principle and practice, which enables a more equitable distribution of power, and better solutions to be developed by including multiple stakeholders (including those with lived and localised experience) in shared and transparent decision-making across all facets of research and programme design and implementation” (Tool 3: Guidance on co-design process).

During the co-design process, TAs help partners analyse the local context, key risks and drivers of violence and the forms of violence to be addressed. Also to agree impact pathways; clarify roles and responsibilities; and select evidence-based interventions suited to women’s and girls’ needs. The TA also engages in an iterative development of core project documents (e.g. ToC, plans and tools), giving on-going support to ensure that the final design is shared, feasible, and owned by all those involved.

The What Works II initiative includes a robust research component for evaluating the effectiveness of each of the interventions being implemented. During co-design, the TA works closely with the research principal investigator and the grantee partner to clarify and refine research questions to align them with the intervention, including key choices and discussions on research design and methods. The TA can also help partners navigate the research, including understanding research terminology and building effective research relationships. The aim is to ensure a strong research protocol is in place during the inception period.

Tool 3: Guidance on the Co-Design Process

Tool 4: Top Tips for TAs Involved in Co-Design

Tool 5: Practical Questions to Develop a ToC and Design a VAWG Prevention Intervention

Tool 6: Stakeholder Analysis

Tool 7: Questions to Guide Discussions on Risks

Tool 8: Defining Roles and Responsibilities

Tool 9: Co-Design Workshop Report Template

Tool 10: Guidance on Integrating Self- and Collective Care



Co-design processes example from What Works II grants

Co-design brought grantee partners and What Works II advisers together to refine the proposed project design and to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of the model through structured discussion between the grantee partners, researchers, TAs, programme and grants coordinators (PGCs) and other relevant partners, e.g. government. It typically includes online discussions over a number of weeks, a workshop (often in-country with implementers, researchers and community/government partners) and follow-up, focusing on clarifying intended impact, outcomes, activities and resources.

Depending on the grant type, co-design happened either prior to the grant being awarded (scale and mainstream grant) or once the grant had been awarded during the inception process (innovation grants). At the end of the inception phase the grantee partner submits an inception report with key annexes including a revised ToC, logframe, budget, workplan, risk matrix and capacity strengthening plan. If there is a separate co-design phase prior to inception, a revised proposal and relevant annex is submitted prior to inception.

4) Determining level of technical support

During the inception phase, the level of technical support – ranging from minimal to moderate or intense – is determined collaboratively between the TA, the grantee partner, the LPT co-leads and the TA's own organisation. This helps in laying the foundation for the rest of the project when it comes to technical support provision, activities, structure and assistance, and to avoid any confusion. The level of support required depends on several factors, including a grantee partner capacity assessment, the type of organisation, the type of grant, prior experience implementing VAWG prevention programmes, the grantee partner's level of interest in receiving technical support, and the broader contextual environment. This process requires flexibility and adaptability, particularly in cases where the level of technical support needed is significantly more or less than originally anticipated by the organisations providing the technical support (see Section 5: Determining the Level of Technical Support).

 **Tool 11: Decision-Making Tool for Assessing the Technical Support Package for Grantee Partners**

 **Tool 12: Grantee Partner Technical Support Approach Template**

5) Reflecting on current capacity and identifying areas for growth and support

Grantee partner capacity strengthening needs are assessed by using an online capacity self-reflection tool. This tool is completed online once during inception and annually thereafter by the grantee partners and includes the following areas for capacity strengthening: technical support, monitoring, evaluation and learning, accountability and safeguarding, and project and financial management.

The TA supports grantee partners to understand the tool, identify areas for growth, and develop targeted capacity strengthening plans. These plans are coordinated with other advisers and are informed by ongoing conversations and feedback, ensuring that support is tailored to evolving needs. Support may also include discussions around how to conceptualise their work within broader goals of promoting women's rights, equal opportunities for all, a stronger civil society or democracy building.



Alongside providing tools, practical resources, fact sheets, or topic-specific guidance, the TA develops a clear TA workplan that outlines the type of support to be provided. These workplans reflect the grantee partner's priorities, includes milestones to track progress, and sets a clear direction for their collaboration, ensuring accountability between the TA and grantee partner.

6) Intervention adaptation and curriculum review

Drawing on their experience from other settings, the wider evidence and relevant theoretical frameworks, the TA adds value by sharing evidence-informed approaches with the grantee partners and supporting them with collecting the relevant information to inform the adaptation process⁹, including sharing adaptation frameworks¹⁰ and successful elements of effective VAWG interventions¹¹. In addition, the TA supports the grantee partner by developing and reviewing the relevance of the project's intervention model and providing constructive and sensitive feedback. For curriculum-based projects, this may include a thorough review of any curricula the grantee partner is planning to use. This TA support to the adaptation process helps to ensure the model is well designed, grounded in evidence, responsive to participant needs, and faithful to the core elements of the original model – strengthening the likelihood of reducing VAWG.

The TA also supports the systematic documentation of any adaptations made to the intervention, especially when new participant groups or programme elements are introduced. This includes capturing information on the original model and comparing it to the adapted version, the additional resources needed and key lessons learned.



Tool 13: Documentation of Adaptations of VAWG Models and Approaches

7) Grantee partner visits

Understanding the project context first-hand is essential for the TA's work and a key part of inception. Where feasible, TAs are expected to visit grantee partners once during inception (usually for the co-design workshop), and then at least once per year during the implementation phase. This enables TAs to meet the project team and key partners, deepen understanding of local realities, goals and risks, and create space for joint reflection and hands-on technical support. Such visits also help build trust, strengthen relationships and provide valuable insights that inform ongoing support and collaboration to improve the quality and learning of the work.

Most TAs will visit the grantee partner as part of the co-design process and are unlikely to have the opportunity to visit project implementation sites. However, for scale projects where the co-design process has taken place prior to inception, TAs may be able to include site visits during inception. For TAs supporting scale projects, where co-design takes place prior to inception, they are encouraged to visit grantee partners again during the inception phase and to include site visits and meetings with partners.

9 Adaptation is "the deliberate and planned process of modifying the content, delivery or implementation of a programme to optimise its fit for a different context or population. The process upholds the original programme's core components to achieve intended outcomes and impacts". Sharma, V., et al., (2022), IPV-Adapt+ Framework

10 <https://prevention-collaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Prevention-Triad-Web-File.pdf> and <https://www.svri.org/ipv-adapt-framework-guidance-for-ethical-effective-ipv-prevention-programme-adaptations/>

11 Jewkes, R., Willan, S., Heise, L., Washington, L., Shai, N., Kerr-Wilson, A., Gibbs, A., Stern, E., & Christofides, N. (2021), Elements of the Design and Implementation of Interventions to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls Associated with Success: Reflections from the What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls? Global Programme, International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18 (22), 12129. <https://doi.org/10.3390>



TA support for developing a Gendered Political Economy Analysis

During the inception phase, TAs worked closely with the External engagement and influencing (EEI) team to support the development of a Gendered Political Economy Analysis (GPEA), a key deliverable under What Works II. The GPEA examines the political, economic and social processes that shape power relations within a given context. It looks beyond immediate programme challenges to identify the underlying drivers, including competing interests, institutional dynamics and structural inequalities. Applying a gendered lens ensures the analysis explicitly considers how gender and other intersecting inequalities affect access to power and resources, and how these dynamics influence VAWG and its prevention.

TAs played a key role in:

- Supporting collaboration between grantee partners and EEI teams throughout the GPEA process.
- Ensuring that GPEA insights inform project design, the ToC and implementation approaches.
- Facilitating reflection on how political and institutional dynamics may affect programme delivery and sustainability.

Phase 2: Implementation (1.5–2.5 years)

The implementation phase begins after the inception period and continues until the end of the grant period. It is typically 1.5 to 2.5 years long, with additional time for ethical project closure – however with scale projects, the implementation phase can be between three and 3.5 years. The main objectives are to carry out planned activities, maintain fidelity to the intervention model, and for TAs to provide technical support to partners. TAs also support partnerships and document learning. They continue to adapt approaches based on evidence and contextual feedback to address emerging challenges and opportunities to achieve the project's intended outcomes within the set timeline and budget. And they continue to engage with the partner in a collaborative process that fosters gender transformation, leading to effective VAWG prevention. Many of the activities from the inception phase are continued.

TA responsibilities during the implementation phase

1) Regular interaction with grantee partners

During the implementation phase, TAs and grantee partners meet on a regular basis – weekly, fortnightly or monthly, depending on partners' needs and the stage of implementation. In addition to joint meetings with researchers and other programme advisers, TAs often hold separate sessions with grantee partners both to discuss technical points in more depth, and for grantee partners to share any concerns about project process in a supportive space. Grantee partners and TAs are also often in touch through informal channels, such as WhatsApp, on urgent matters.



The focus of technical assistance during this phase is a range of implementation-related issues. This includes working with grantee partners to ensure that project staff and facilitators are adequately trained and supported, and that learning from monitoring and research data informs ongoing adaptation and implementation. TAs also support partners in responding to implementation challenges, such as staff turnover, institutional changes or participant drop-out, and in adjusting plans in response to unforeseen contextual events. Where relevant, TAs help partners capitalise on local or regional opportunities and support revisions to workplans, particularly where delays in implementation or research occur. Throughout this phase, TAs and grantee partners work together to document emerging learning and support the sharing of insights and stories from practice. At a programme level, grantee partners are required to submit bi-annual reports, which TAs can support grantee partners to write on request, and which TAs and other programme advisers review and share feedback on. In these bi-annual reports, grantee partners are able to raise challenges and provide feedback on the TA support, and are welcome to raise any issues in other spaces to ensure accountability (see Section 7: Monitoring the Quality of Technical Assistance).

Tool 14: Log for TA Support

Tool 15: Guidance for TAs engaging in GPT meetings

2) Develop tools and document adaptation

TAs assist partners in developing or adapting practical tools and guidance notes for effective training and project delivery as needed. This may include reviewing and providing feedback on curricula, supporting the documentation of any adaptations, and ensuring that all materials are evidence-based, contextually relevant, and tailored to the needs of the stakeholders.

Tool 13: Documentation of Adaptations of VAWG Models and Approaches

Tool 16: Guidance for Handling Disclosures

3) Update capacity strengthening plans

TAs annually review and update capacity strengthening plans with partners, providing ongoing support to ensure project staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and resources they need to deliver the project effectively, including disclosures and adaptation, based on the grantee partners' annual capacity self-assessments. This includes supporting partners in analysing results from capacity self-reflection tools, identifying areas for growth, and developing targeted plans that are responsive to evolving needs. The TA coordinates with other advisers to ensure that support is holistic and tailored.

4) TA in-person visits to the grantee partner

TAs are expected to conduct at least one visit to each grantee partner per year during the implementation phase, except where security conditions make this impractical. Where TAs are based nearby, more frequent visits are encouraged. These visits enable TAs not only to develop a deeper understanding of the project context and strengthen relationships, but also provide concrete recommendations to strengthen the intervention.



Visits provide an opportunity to observe how partnerships are functioning, engage with staff and partners, and observe training or programme activities, while reflecting on any emerging gaps or challenges. It is also a chance to discuss with the grantee partner how they are experiencing the technical assistance and other programme support. Often, issues that would not be identified during online interactions are surfaced either through TA observations or in-person conversations.

Before concluding the visit, TAs should share an agenda outlining the main activities that will be monitored (these are related to each programme's component and activities), the key people to meet, including the specific population supported by the programme (e.g. community members, girls and boys in schools, institutions, PIs, etc). Following the visit, TAs should prepare and share a brief trip report with the grantee partner, members of the LPT and the LPT co-leads which includes observations and reflections made with grantee partners, achievements, challenges, and areas where adjustments to implementation or project monitoring are recommended.

Tool 17: TA Grantee Partner Visit Report Template

5) Support grantee partners to align implementation and research

During the implementation phase, TAs work closely with grantee partners and principal investigators to ensure that programme implementation and research activities are well aligned. This paves the way for robust research and the best possible conditions to achieve positive outcomes. TAs can also help to ensure that research remains grounded in implementation realities and that grantee partners meaningfully contribute to data interpretation – for example through data validation workshops.

TAs play a key role in ensuring that research findings inform ongoing implementation and that there is continuous dialogue between implementers and researchers so that learning strengthens both the programme and the research. Where delays arise in data collection, analysis or implementation, TAs support teams to troubleshoot challenges and identify the most appropriate solutions in collaboration with research counterparts.

As part of this role, TAs can support grantee partners to:

- Ensure programme activities are delivered in ways that enable high-quality data collection.
- Review implementation plans to confirm alignment with data collection timelines.
- Support planning to avoid overlap between service delivery and research activities that could contribute to participant or staff fatigue.
- Identify and flag risks to data quality, such as inconsistent session delivery or deviations from agreed plans.

6) Work with originators

Where an originator is involved in the project, the TA works closely with the originator to ensure fidelity to the essential elements of the original design, particularly when interventions are being replicated or scaled. This collaboration recognises and values the expertise of originators, helping to ensure that adaptations are intentional and do not compromise core components of the model. While originators often bring expertise in the model design and implementation with the original population/s and context/s, grantee partners contribute critical insights into implementation realities and the new population and context. In



the case of What Works II, originator time is typically included within the grantee partner's project budget.

TAs support early and ongoing engagement with originators, starting during co-design, to build shared understanding of fidelity, make document adaptations, and clarify roles and expectations and the different responsibilities between themselves and the originator. This directly contributes to avoiding overlap in responsibilities between the TA and the originator as well as avoiding confusion for the grantee partner related to their different responsibilities.



Tool 18: Guidance on Collaboration Between TAs and Originators Working on the Same Project

Phase 3: Ethical project closure (3–6 months)

Ethical project closure should be discussed and agreed from the inception stage, laying the foundations for a responsible and empowering close-out process. The ethical project closure phase marks the transition from active implementation to closure and typically begins six months before the end of the implementation period. Its primary objective is to ensure that project goals are achieved, outcomes are sustainable, and outstanding tasks are completed before formal closure. Many grantee partners will continue working in the communities where the project is implemented, so closure is likely to refer only to the specific project funded under the programme. Where project activities are taken forward by community activists, other funders, organisations or government actors, this may be better understood as a transition phase rather than closure, with the work continuing in a different form.

For TAs, this phase is not only about winding down activities, but also about accountability to partners, communities and the wider field of violence against women and girls (VAWG) prevention. TAs play a key role in ensuring that closure is ethical and well documented, while also preparing for their own transition out of the TA role. The level of technical support should be adjusted to reflect project progress – shifting to lighter engagement focused on learning and responsible closure when implementation is on track, while scaling up support if emerging risks or challenges arise to ensure ethical and effective completion.

What Works II project closure requirements

Grantee partners are required in their grant agreement to have an exit plan in place and to reflect on lessons learnt at the end of their project.

TA responsibilities during the ethical project closure phase

1) Prepare partners for transition

Communicate early and clearly with grantee partners about the gradual reduction of direct technical support, while supporting them and their allies to sustain and grow VAWG prevention work beyond the programme. Ensure that the grantee partner has an exit plan in place that includes phasing down activities, transition, final exit/transition meetings with communities and partners and how they will disseminate the practice-based learning and evaluation findings.



Tool 19: Guidance for TAs to Support Grantee Partners' Ethical Closure



2) Complete final technical assistance activities

TAs' final technical assistance activities should include:

- Review partners' final programme reports and provide technical feedback on how results, challenges and lessons learned are documented.
- Continue to provide on-demand technical advice to partners as they finalise activities, documentation and interpretation of endline research and programme outcomes.
- Support partners to finalise practical resources that can continue to be used after the project ends.
- Conduct technical debriefing meetings with programme staff to reflect on the implementation.
- Support partners in interpreting monitoring data and evaluation findings. Support the review of briefs and articles related to the intervention.

3) Support outcome documentation and dissemination

Guide partners and their allies to document programme outcomes, milestones and practice-based learning, and to think through how they will disseminate these achievements widely within local communities as well as with key partners, government and potential donors.

4) Sustain positive change and collaboration

Help grantee partners establish mechanisms to maintain positive changes and foster collaborations with current partners and other actors, ensuring the continued impact of the project. This could be through additional funding, mainstreaming into government systems or supporting other actors to implement parts of the project. Where no continued funding is available, consider ways in which positive changes and partnerships can be sustained at minimal financial cost.

5) Celebrate and graduate communities

Work with partners to celebrate successes, honour activists, and support communities in defining their next steps for transformation and feminist movement building beyond the grant period.

6) Plan their own transition from the role

The TA should also prepare their own transition from the role, including completing documentation and handover notes, sharing final reflections with the grantee partner and the LPT, including about the TA journey, and close out relationships with the grantee partners in a respectful and thoughtful way.



Phase 4: Documenting learning across all phases of technical support

Alongside the external research and internal monitoring processes, TAs are encouraged to support grantee partners to capture practice-based learning (PBL). Our understanding of practice-based learning is based on the Raising Voices definition: “Practice-based learning is the cumulative journey of intentional learning over time, informed by insights gained from direct experiences, observations, stories, informal reflections, monitoring processes and more.”

Throughout the project lifecycle, TAs encourage grantee partners to identify key learning questions, capture insights from their practice, and share knowledge with others. This practice-based learning complements formal monitoring and evaluation by focusing on what partners find most useful for strengthening their work and fostering a culture of continuous learning. Opportunities to share learning include through our quarterly Communities of Practice (CoPs), regional events and through external platforms including the What Works II website and social media. We have also collaborated with the UN Trust Fund and other partners to facilitate workshops on practice-based learning at the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) Forum.

TAs are also encouraged to document and reflect on their own technical support journey, including interactions with grantee partners, successes, challenges and adaptations made over time. These reflections can be shared during fortnightly LPT meetings with other TAs and during monthly meetings with LPT co-leads.

 **Tool 13: Documentation of Adaptations of VAWG Models and Approaches**

 **Tool 20: Practice-Based Learning Report/Brief**

Practice-based learning in the What Works II initiative

Learning from practice is a core component of the What Works II initiative and cuts across all the phases of the grantee partner's and TA's work. With 14 projects across Asia and Africa, the initiative presents a significant opportunity to generate and consolidate learning across diverse contexts, organisations and grant types.



There are three main levels of technical support – minimal, moderate and intense – which differ according to the frequency, type of support they provide, and the degree to which they engage with the project.

Tool 11: Decision-Making Tool for Assessing the Technical Support Package for Grantee Partners

Tool 12: Grantee Partner Technical Support Approach Template

Navigating TA contracts with project needs

The budget for TA days in What Works II was estimated during the initial bidding process, and implementation consortium organisation contracts reflected those estimates. In practice, however, more time was needed for reviewing grant proposals and providing TA support than originally anticipated. TAs were also recruited by consortium organisations before projects were selected for funding, partly so they could serve as reviewers during the selection process. As a result, TA time requirements had to be estimated in advance (approximately 40 days per year), and TAs received contracts based on these estimates. A key challenge has therefore been to allow for flexibility based on grantee partners' evolving needs and at the same time to bear in mind the number of days in TAs' contracts. No-cost extensions may extend implementation timelines but do not always increase TA capacity. It is therefore important to revisit technical support levels on a regular basis to ensure expectations remain realistic and aligned with available support.

Factors influencing levels of technical support

Internal and external factors affecting the level of TA support include:

Internal factors

- **Staff capacity and training:** Projects with limited experience in VAWG work or high staff turnover require more intensive technical support, while experienced and well-trained teams may need less.
- **Resources and funding:** Well-funded grantee partners with access to internal or external technical support may need only limited support, whereas those with fewer resources require more.
- **Programme scope and stakeholders:** Large-scale projects with complex models and/or a combination of models with multiple stakeholders and new locations often need higher levels of support for effective coordination.
- **Project phase:** Intense support is typically needed during the design phase; moderate to intense is needed during implementation; and minimum is required during the project closure phase, with flexibility to adjust as challenges arise.



- **Project type:** Innovative, pilot or scale projects generally require more intensive technical support to facilitate functional partnerships, learning and adaptation.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Projects with sophisticated monitoring and evaluation frameworks or high data quality standards may need ongoing, high-level technical support.
- **Programme approach:** Innovative, complex or newer, untested approaches require more intense levels of TA support, as do those employing different types of research.

External factors

- **Political and socio-cultural context:** Projects in sensitive/hostile environments require strategic, intense technical support, while those in stable contexts need less.
- **Emerging issues:** New trends or crises may necessitate flexible and responsive support.
- **Donor requirements:** Rigorous donor and research expectations can increase the need for documentation and intense technical support.

Levels of technical support

The following section sets out the three different levels of technical support. Across all levels, a set of core activities is expected. These include reviewing and providing feedback on proposal documents, curricula and bi-annual reports, as well as attending monthly meetings with grantee partners. They also include sharing tools, resources and evidence as needed; supporting practice-based learning; connecting grantee partners with other advisers; supporting participation in the APMs; and acting as a bridge between implementation and research if required. TAs may also recommend relevant regional and global events for grantee partners to attend.

Determining levels of technical support in What Works II

The level of technical support required by grantee partners in What Works II is determined by a combination of internal and external factors, which are assessed collaboratively by TAs, grantee partners, the fund management team and LPT co-leads. Ideally support is tailored to the evolving needs of each project and can be flexibly increased or decreased as required.

Minimal Support

- Periodic check-ins when needed
- General advice
- Engagement with 1-2 staff members
- Periodic monitoring and feedback
- Reactive problem solving

Moderate Support

- Regular engagement, bi-weekly or monthly
- Strategic input
- Tailored guidance and contextual advice and strategic input and design assistance, moderate capacity building and training
- Engagement with different staff members and research partners
- Supporting documentation of PBL
- Involvement in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and limited feedback
- Responsive problem solving

Intense Support

- Daily or weekly support
- Hands-on involvement and support in design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E)
- Engagement across the project including with various staff members and research partners
- Supporting documentation of PBL
- Comprehensive M&E and constant feedback and oversight
- Proactive problem solving



1) Minimal technical support

Key principle: With minimal support, the TA maintains connection and ensures partners are supported in the areas where they have identified a need.

Minimal technical support is suitable for projects with highly experienced teams, stable staffing, robust internal resources and substantial experience working with a research team. Minimal support may also be appropriate during the project closure phase or when the project is well-established, when monitoring and evaluation needs are basic, the external environment is politically and culturally stable, and there are no major emerging issues.

Minimal engagement means the TA's role is mainly to provide occasional guidance or answer questions, rather than being involved in daily operations. The TA's involvement focuses on general advice, references to existing resources, and stepping in only when necessary or when asked for specific support. The TA provides basic support including check-ins, usually only once a month or every six weeks; ensures that the project is on track; provides minimal capacity strengthening, such as one-off workshops; and responds to specific requests or complex issues when needed.

Minimum technical support provision is approximately 25 to 30 days per year, including one visit per year to the project.

2) Moderate technical support

Key principle: Moderate technical support includes hands-on, focused support to strengthen partner capacity, address implementation challenges and ensure alignment with programme objectives, while maintaining flexibility in regard to partner context.

Moderate support is appropriate for projects where teams have some experience of implementing similar VAWG prevention projects, but may face staff turnover or training gaps or have particular areas where they need support. It suits projects of moderate complexity, often involving several different stakeholders or locations, and is particularly relevant during the implementation phase when adaptation, problem solving and ongoing monitoring are needed. This level of support is also suitable for projects involving some innovation or scaling, with relatively sophisticated monitoring and evaluation frameworks that require regular input. Moderate technical support can be needed when projects operate in environments with occasional political or cultural sensitivities, may encounter emerging issues or trends that require flexible and responsive support, and where grantee partners are not familiar with the level of documentation and reporting required from a bilateral initiative such as What Works II.

TAs are more actively involved than at the minimal level, providing regular engagement and frequent communication, such as bi-weekly or monthly meetings, and offering tailored guidance, contextual advice and strategic input through practical tools, resources and hands-on training. This support includes participation in essential meetings, development of project-specific materials, and involvement in strategic discussions and capacity-strengthening activities. TAs help refine workplans, adapt models and troubleshoot challenges, while also mentoring key team members, assisting with monitoring and evaluation frameworks and providing regular, structured feedback. Problem solving is more active, with TAs supporting the team in adjusting strategies and addressing issues as they arise and proactively identifying broader challenges and suggesting improvements.



Moderate technical support provision is approximately 30 to 40 days per year, including one to two visits per year to the project.

3) Intense technical support

Key principle: Intense support includes close, sustained and hands-on support to ensure partners can implement complex interventions effectively, maintain fidelity to evidence-based models, and navigate implementation challenges, without creating long-term dependence on the TA.

Intense technical support is required by grantee partners with limited experience in VAWG work or working on sensitive issues such as inclusion of marginalised groups or on areas of strategic importance to the programme or funder. It may also be appropriate for grantee partners with restricted resources and little access to internal technical support. It is likely to be needed by large-scale and complex projects that involve multiple stakeholders and diverse activities. It is also needed by grantee partners working in politically or culturally sensitive environments, when major emerging issues or crises demand flexible and intensive assistance.

Intense technical support is particularly necessary during the co-design inception phases to support the development of the project design, partnerships, and understanding of the research. For this type of support, the TA is deeply engaged with all aspects of the project, providing ongoing, hands-on and proactive support. The TA is often immersed in the work, providing daily or weekly engagement and real-time support for urgent issues, and attends essential meetings. Responsibilities include supporting curriculum development; intensive capacity strengthening; strengthening quality and fidelity; acting as a bridge between implementation and research; support to document adaptation processes and PBL; to document their work; and to set up essential systems and processes. The TA is proactive in problem solving, collaborates closely with the project team to address challenges and suggest improvements, and empowers technical staff and focal points through tools, coaching and documentation so they can independently support the implementing team after the project concludes.

Intense technical support provision is approximately 40+ days per year, including two or more visits per year to the project.

Support to grantee partners supported by bilateral or multi-lateral funders

In What Works II, we saw that smaller organisations and WROs unfamiliar with the requirements needed by a bilateral initiative such as What Works II required intense support to meet administrative and reporting requirements.



Beyond direct support to grantee partners, TAs connect them with each other and other programme advisers through wider technical support mechanisms, including:

- Quarterly CoP meetings to share grantee partner practice-based experiences, co-facilitated by TAs together with grantee partners.
- Annual capacity strengthening meetings which create the opportunity to meet the programme and donor teams and other grantee partners, and to build connections and skills in relevant areas.
- Peer-to-peer technical support; connecting partners with other grantee partners doing similar efforts in the same thematic or geographic region to support cross-cutting learning from each other's experiences.
- Connecting grantee partners with other advisers with relevant expertise if there is a need for support in a specific area e.g. on finance, M&E, external engagement or influencing.

What Works II Communities of Practice in 2025

In 2025 we held four CoPs facilitated by TAs together with grantee partners on technology-facilitated gender based violence (TFGBV), working in protracted crises, accountability to women and girls through men's allyship, and activism and solidarity. Each CoP was attended by an average 40 participants: 93% indicated that the CoP was one of the What Works II support mechanisms they found particularly useful in 2025 (annual capacity assessments).



Grantee partners can provide feedback on their TA support, through a range of different internal programme mechanisms and directly to the donor. It is particularly important that the TAs apply core principles in the way that they work with grantee partners; that support is provided in a timely manner when needed; and that TAs contribute to meaningful change. If there are significant challenges in the TA and grantee partner relationship, then the technical team lead can ask the TA's line manager from their own organisation and any other programme staff representatives for support.

- **Grantee partner reports:** These can include a section on technical support, where grantee partners summarise technical support activities over the reporting period and reflect on how this support has contributed to their work.
- **Annual reflection tools:** Programmes can use structured reflection tools, co-created with grantee partners, to gather feedback on different aspects of the programme, including the quality and relevance of technical support.
- **Closed feedback sessions during programme convenings:** Grantee partners can be invited to take part in confidential or closed feedback sessions during annual or periodic programme meetings. These sessions can create space to reflect on their interactions with advisers, raise concerns and identify actions for improvement.
- **Technical team leads:** Grantee partners should have a clear route to provide feedback on TAs to the technical team leads who backstop technical advisers. Team leads can also observe adviser-partner interactions, share feedback with advisers and create regular spaces for advisers to reflect on what is working well and where they need support.
- **Programme leadership or grants management staff:** Grantee partners should also be able to access programme leadership or grants management staff if they have serious concerns about the technical support they are receiving.
- **Donor feedback mechanisms:** Where appropriate, donors can gather feedback directly from grantee partners on the quality and relevance of support provided by implementation and research partners, including technical support.
- **External or annual programme reviews:** Programmes can use external reviews, annual assessments or donor review processes to assess the quality and effectiveness of technical support against agreed indicators, milestones or standards.

Examples of ways in which grantee partners were able to provide feedback on technical assistance in the What Works II initiative

- Periodically, the LPT co-leads created space for grantee partners to provide direct feedback on TAs, for example through an online call. The co-leads are also able to observe the TAs interacting with grantee partners during online meetings or at the APM, and share feedback with TAs, including during their monthly one-to-one meetings, where TAs are also able to share what is working well and where they feel stretched.
- During the programme's annual meeting, FCDO advisers meet with grantee partners to gather feedback on implementation and research consortia, including TA support. FCDO also contacts grantee partners annually for feedback on support from both the implementation and research consortia.



TAs are often supported by the technical team leads, their line managers (if employed by different organisations) and TA peers, all of whom can support TAs to strengthen the effectiveness of their work, as well as self and collective care. Potential mechanisms of support to TAs are outlined below.

1) Support from technical team lead

Technical team leads can provide backstopping support to TAs to ensure consistent, high-quality and values-based technical support. They can act as brainstorming partners to help TAs navigate challenges, adapt support as needed, and connect with other projects and advisers. Ways in which technical team leads can support TAs include:

- Regular sessions between each SA and the technical team lead, focusing on reflection, troubleshooting and strategic guidance. TAs can also complete a short monthly log in advance, sharing key activities, progress and any challenges, to help focus the discussion on emerging themes and priority challenges.
- Weekly updates for the whole technical team highlighting key activities and achievements and sharing relevant resources and tools to help TAs respond to emerging issues.

Examples of self- and collective care for TAs in What Works II initiative practices

- Online end of year LPT parties and collective celebration of successes and team members birthdays.
- Wellness sessions and wellness room during the annual programme meeting led by members of the accountability and LPT pillars.
- Technical Advisory Group comprised of TA line managers and technical leads from their own organisations to strengthen support and troubleshoot challenges.

2) Peer support

TAs may be based in different regions and often work alone or from home. Creating spaces for peer support enables TAs to share practical approaches and navigate challenges together as well as to share their diverse experiences and strengthen consistency in the technical support approach. Key activities could include:

- Regular team meetings to discuss technical support and capacity strengthening, and to explore key themes in depth, including dedicated time for informal engagement.
- Opportunities for in-person meetings with other TAs based in the same country or region and one or two global in-person meetings for the whole team each year.
- Establish issue based working groups to bring TAs together around priority themes to collaboratively co-create and deliver learning events or knowledge products.



Tool 21: Guidance for Backstopping Support for TAs



Tool 22: Guidance for Supporting Transition of TAs in VAWG Prevention Projects



3) Self- and collective care

The wellbeing of both TAs and grantee partners is important for both individuals and organisations, particularly as VAWG prevention work can be emotionally demanding. It is also essential to focus on wellbeing and self and collective care to be able to deliver high-quality programming and technical support. Some wellbeing activities for TAs include:

- Spaces for check-ins during regular team or one-to-one meetings with team leads.
- WhatsApp groups for TAs to check-in with each other, exchange greetings during festivals and birthdays, or share key achievements and photos from trips to grantee partners.
- Technical team lead check-ups with individual TAs on a regular basis during particularly challenging times.
- Supporting TAs to manage heavy workloads flexibility to fulfil family/community commitments.
- Protecting time for rest by scheduling meetings within working hours across time zones as far as possible.
- Sending thoughtful messages acknowledging specific contributions.



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