

GBV AoR Helpdesk

TIP SHEET: Effective and Supportive GBV Technical Assistance Visits

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Introduction

This tip sheet is intended to provide practical and short guidance on conducting technical assistance support visits. It is aimed at new GBV Technical Advisors (TA) as well as existing TAs who may find it a useful reminder of key information. The focus of this resource is on in-person site visits and not remote assistance.

What is meant by a GBV technical assistance support visit?

A technical assistance support visit is when a technical assistance advisor / provider travels to a GBV programming and/or research site or office to provide technical assistance to implementers.

What types of technical assistance can be provided during visits?

There are various types of technical assistance that can be provided during the support visit. These include, but are not limited to supporting:

- **GBV capacity-strengthening of implementers** (e.g. (co-) facilitating technical training, workshops, and technical dialogues) for improved GBV prevention and response program and service delivery.
- **Monitoring, research and learning** (including practice-based learning) activities. This may include reviewing data sets and paying attention to service delivery quality through site / facility visits, observing practice and discussing challenges and successes with local implementers.
- **Resource mobilization** (e.g. providing technical reviews to funding proposals or project design TA advice and support, meeting with donors etc.)
- **Coordination.** A TA may support the local implementer to engage effectively in GBV and other relevant coordination

mechanisms. They may also support linkages with other relevant actors and agencies.

- **Advocacy:** A TA may provide guidance or technical review of an advocacy strategy, approach, product or event/meeting during a visit. They may offer technical advice to support internal (i.e. specific to the organization) as well as external advocacy during their visit.
- **Additional:** TA visits are an opportunity to provide practical assistance to implementers to promote and advance localization (i.e. delivery of GBV response and prevention programming by/with local WROs); and advance inclusion (e.g. jointly identifying barriers to inclusion and developing clear, actions that can be taken to dismantle these).

The objective(s) of a visit and therefore the types of technical assistance that will be provided should be carefully considered and determined as part of the planning process before a visit happens. It is important to align the types of technical assistance provided with the program's focal points to ensure relevance. Further information on how to do this is provided in the Before A Visit section of this tip sheet.

TAs also need to ensure that the visit itinerary and objective(s) are realistic, given it is relatively easy to be ambitious and cram in a lot of activities during a visit planning stage, however, it is relatively common to encounter challenges (e.g. transportation delays etc.) and other factors, that reduce the likelihood of completing multiple objectives / activities in emergency contexts. It will be in both the best interests of the local implementers and the TA if the visit has a manageable itinerary and objective.

What approaches are recommended?

The following approaches are recommended during technical assistance visits.

Survivor centered: Focus on the safety and empowerment of the survivor and promote their healing and recovery. This requires centering survivors' needs and wishes and following the GBV guiding principles indicated below.

Adhere to the GBV Guiding Principles: This requires those engaging with survivors, implementing and advising on GBV prevention and response programming to prioritize the safety and security of survivors, maintain confidentiality (and only share information with the consent of the survivor), and practice respect and non-discrimination.

Do No Harm Approach

Visits and activities that take place during visits must not endanger or increase the risk to the safety and wellbeing of survivors, program participants, community members or implementers.

Technical Advisors should support adherence to the [IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action](#), [The Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming](#), and other key relevant ethical guidelines. For example, the [WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting, and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies](#), and the [WHO Responding to Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence against Women: Clinical and Policy Guidelines](#).

Participatory

It is not always safe, ethical or feasible to engage with program participants on TA visits. It is important to acknowledge this from the outset during the planning stage and explore with the local implementation team what will be safe and align with a survivor-centered and do no harm approach. However, direct engagement with implementers and other relevant actors is likely to be feasible and encouraged in most instances. Activities should be participatory, value local knowledge and expertise, engage them in decision-making processes and seek to shift power. It is also important to give local implementers and actors multiple avenues to provide feedback on visit activities to promote continuous learning on how technical assistance is provided.

Image credit: Nina Rys, Shutterstock Contributor



BEFORE A VISIT

It is advisable to consider the following points before going ahead with a visit.

| DO | DON'T |
|---|--|
| <p>Do develop a draft visit itinerary and terms of reference (ToR) (including a scope of work) and consult on this with the principal focal points and those you intend to engage with on your visit. Then integrate relevant feedback before finalization. Part of this involves checking that the local focal points will be able to manage the visit alongside their regular activities without undue burden or disruption of activities to project participants.</p> | <p>Don't book travel without consulting with local actors who you're planning to visit. Agree on dates, mode and potentially (depending on organizational structure) budget to ensure the visit is viable.</p> |
| <p>Do prioritize safety and wellbeing of project participants, program staff and key stakeholders.</p> | <p>Don't plan a visit without giving adequate notice¹ to local implementers and those you intend to engage with on visits.</p> |
| <p>Be flexible and open to adjustment in planning stage – recognize that there can be multiple demands or visit requests on implementers as well as contextual factors that may mean plans need to be adjusted.</p> | <p>Don't be fixed on a specific plan / activities / dates to the extent this will create intense pressure and stress for locally based implementers if they are signaling that they have other commitments etc.</p> |
| <p>Do gather background reading and data and prepare any anticipated tools, training materials or other information that will be important to the objectives and positive results from the visit. For example, you may have specific quality assurance or monitoring tools or training curricula and facilitation guides that will be relevant to the activities you're planning.</p> | <p>Don't go on a visit without having done due diligence of background reading in relation to specific context, specific programming activities and interventions and without being ready and prepared to deliver the activities scheduled in the ToR's scope of work / planned itinerary. This includes bringing or checking that necessary equipment and supplies for visit activities are available for use.</p> |
| <p>Do prepare for your visit by obtaining relevant pre-briefings (e.g. safety and security; communications protocols, social norms and customs etc.)</p> | <p>Don't neglect to familiarize yourself with the operating environment, safety and security risks, and social norms and customs of the area you'll be visiting. A lack of understanding can increase the risk to you and others.</p> |

¹ Possible exceptions to this might be spot visits but in this case implementers should be aware that they may receive spot-checks to support quality improvements.

DURING A VISIT

It is advisable to consider the following points during a visit.

| DO | DON'T |
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| <p>Do recognize and respect local implementers' time. They will likely have a range of tasks and activities to undertake during your visit, especially within emergency contexts. Therefore, it is important to adhere to the scheduled times for each activity. If a visit activity requires more time than expected, discuss and negotiate any adjustments respectfully, recognizing other workload.</p> | <p>Don't expect focal points and local implementers to be available 24/7 to meet requests and engage in visit activities outside of regular working hours.</p> |
| <p>Do demonstrate respect and practice respectful, clear communication with all personnel, volunteers, stakeholders and project participants you engage with during a visit.</p> | <p>Don't misuse power or communicate in ways that are disrespectful or unclear. This includes having an awareness of body language and gestures and how these may be interpreted locally.</p> |
| <p>Be flexible and adaptive. It may be necessary to adjust the itinerary and / or activity plan if there are unexpected issues that arise, such as insecurity, reduced access etc.</p> | <p>Don't be rigid and accept requests to change or adapt itinerary activities or timings if there is a clear rationale and request to do so. Be willing to negotiate and be solutions-oriented.</p> |
| <p>Be clear about the visit's purpose and objectives, including how it may benefit program participants and GBV survivors, and strengthen program quality and delivery. This means taking time to communicate this clearly and being willing to answer questions that people may have about the purpose of your visit. If there is a delegation of visitors, ensure that they and their job title/role are all introduced for transparency.</p> | <p>Don't assume that everyone knows who you are and the purpose of your visit. Some participants may be unaware or have misconceptions that you are there to monitor them and their performance when, for example, you are there to support and strengthen program quality – so dialogue and clear communication on this is essential.</p> |
| <p>Do remember that men will not be able to enter Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS) and should not seek to do so during visits. Alternative relevant activities can be scheduled for men instead e.g. dialogue / interviews with community leaders outside of safe spaces.</p> | <p>Don't forget that male visitors should respect WGSS boundaries and not seek to enter or apply pressure on program or operational personnel to enter/breach WGSSs.</p> |
| <p>Do check and seek informed consent/assent for relevant activities and for documentation of relevant information arising from activities. Follow the GBV guiding principles at all times.</p> | <p>Don't begin activities without explaining what they are, their purpose and seeking informed consent from participants to engage. For group activities, set group agreements (sometimes known as 'ground rules') so that there are agreed 'ways of working' in group sessions.</p> |
| <p>Do maintain the confidentiality of visit information. Ensure that all relevant details, especially information about project participants from visit activities, are recorded in safe, secure formats in a prompt manner.</p> | <p>Don't fail to record relevant information from visit activities in a safe, confidential way. Do not record information which identifies survivors or does not correspond to data protection protocols and policies.</p> |

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| Do promote learning and exchange throughout the visit and also seek feedback on any activities you lead / facilitate | Don't adopt a top-down approach to sharing learning. Don't assume that, as the Technical Advisor, you are the prime source of GBV knowledge and expertise. Each individual and group you engage with during a visit holds experience and knowledge. Technical assistance visit activities are a valuable opportunity to support local learning exchange. It is also possible to facilitate multi-country and regional learning exchange technical assistance visits on specific aspects of GBViE programming. |
| Do consider daily debriefs with local visit focal point (consulting with them on preference for end of day / beginning of next day etc.) to check-in briefly on issues or key questions that may arise in course of activities. | Don't impose daily debriefs or fix times for these if this is not feasible or places an undue burden on local implementers / visit focal points. |
| Do practice accountability and put feminist principles into action. | Don't be unaware of the power and privilege you have as a visitor or technical assistance provider and fail to be accountable to GBV survivors or local implementers. |
| Do report safeguarding concerns or incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and ensure you are aware of the multiple channels through which you can report these. | Don't fail to report safeguarding concerns or incidents of SEA. |

AFTER A VISIT

It is advisable to consider the following points after a visit.

| DO | DON'T |
|--|--|
| Do document the visit activities and learning (this can include quantitative, qualitative and practice-based learning), recommendations and next steps for further strengthening GBV programming. It is advisable to write and share the visit report as soon as feasible after a trip whilst the observations and recommendations remain fresh and relevant. | Don't impose recommendations on implementers. These should not come 'out of nowhere' and send shock waves. It is important that all recommendations are clear and indicate what types of support or mitigation measures can be provided including from the TA provider themselves to further support improvements / strengthening of programming. |
| Do ensure that recommendations are reasonable and to the extent feasible indicate a recommended timeline for the recommendations proposed and inputs/resources (e.g. expertise/personnel support, supplies etc.) that may be needed to effect change. | Don't make recommendations that aren't SMART (specific, measurable, realistic, timed). |
| Do share the report with all relevant stakeholders (e.g. program managers and implementers) so that they are aware of the recommendations and suggested next steps. | Don't keep the report limited to yourself without sharing with the relevant focal points who will be asked to accept and take forward recommendations. |
| Do discuss the findings from the report with the relevant stakeholders and provide an opportunity for reflection and questions so that the findings are | Don't simply share the report and assume that local implementers and actors will 'run with it' without your support and the opportunity to seek support and clarifications. |

| | |
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| clear. This can support consensus-building for positive change and programming strengthening. | |
| Do make time for a visit debrief - according to the protocols of your organization, you may debrief with your supervisor or other relevant internal stakeholders on aspects of the visit report and recommendations that require their input or guidance. | Don't consider the visit finished when you arrive back at your base. It is important to discuss key aspects with supervisors or other relevant personnel if this will advance the visit's overall objectives and to put in place supportive recommendations. |
| Do report any safety and security-related near-misses or incidents and attend any debriefing meetings for safety, security or health and wellbeing purposes. E.g. staff counsellor or medical check. | Don't fail to report safety or security near-misses or incidents or prioritize medical (including psychological) debriefing after acute incidents that may occur during visits. Follow up on reports made of SEA incidents or safeguarding breaches made during visits. |
| Do check in with local actors on how the implementation of report recommendations is going and if any further support or course correction to update / amend recommendations is needed. | Don't leave local implementers unsupported to implement recommendations. Ensure you have a structure for follow-up and further provision of support. |

Additional information

Some sample formats for a pre-visit planning terms of reference and itinerary document and a post-visit report are provided below.

Sample Visit Terms of Reference & Itinerary Document

Visit Terms of Reference & Scope of Work for [Insert location] [Name], [Dates of visit]

Visit Objectives and Scope of Work

| Type of Technical Assistance | Visit Objectives | Activities | Outputs |
|------------------------------|------------------|------------|---------|
| | | | |
| | | | |

Visit Itinerary

This ToR proposes the following itinerary.

Arrival date, location and mode of transportation:

Departure date, location and mode of transportation:

And the following daily schedule during the visit:

| Date / Time | Activity description | Duration | Local Team Focal Point / Point of Contact | Supplies / Equipment or other forms of support requested | Lead Responsible | Participants / Contributors |
|-------------|----------------------|----------|---|--|------------------|-----------------------------|
| | | | | | | |

Visit Budget

| Item (E.g. Transportation, transfers, vaccinations, equipment and supplies) | Cost | Funding source (E.g. grant name / project code) | Funding confirmed (Yes/No) | Approval (Budget holder signature) |
|---|------|---|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Visit approval signature:

(NAME, JOB TITLE)

Sample Visit Report Format

Visit Report for [Insert location to be visited]
[Name], [Dates of visit]

For distribution to: [Insert names and job titles]

Please treat this report as confidential to the circulation list unless otherwise specified.

| Visit Objective(s) (as outlined in TOR) | | Status of Objective (Achieved/ Partially Achieved/Not Achieved) | Visit Findings (Indicate areas of strength, areas and opportunities for improvement) | Recommendations (Should relate to findings and be SMART) | Due by | Action Owner | Contributors |
|--|-----------|--|---|---|--------|--------------|--------------|
| [Type of technical assistance provided] | Activity: | | | | | | |
| | Activity: | | | | | | |
| [Type of technical assistance provided] | Activity: | | | | | | |

Narrative: [Here you can insert more detailed information about specific activities, visit observations, relevant data, findings and recommendations, as required]

Selected further reading and relevant resources

GBV AoR (2019). [The Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming](#).

GBV AoR Helpdesk (2024). [Briefing Note: Effective Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in GBViE Programming](#)

Global Women's Institute and Trócaire (2023) [The Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-based Violence in Emergencies Programming Minimum Standards: Monitoring and Evaluation Framework](#)

IASC (2015). [Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action](#).

IAWG (2022). [Quick Reference for the Minimum Initial Service Package \(MISP\) for Sexual and Reproductive Health \(SRH\)](#).

UNFPA (2022). [Addressing Gender-Based Violence Across Contexts: Gender-Based Violence Interagency Minimum Standards and the Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence](#).

UNICEF (2020). [Guidelines on responsible representation and reporting of violence against women and violence against children](#). UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF.

UNICEF (2021). [GBViE Programme Resource Pack: Kit 4: Evaluation](#).

UNICEF (2021). [GBViE Programme Resource Pack: Kit 4: Evaluation Tools](#).

UNICEF (2021). [GBViE Resource Pack: Kit M. Minimum GBViE Response Package](#).

USAID (2021). [How-to note: planning and conducting site visits](#). Washington (DC).

USAID (2022). [CARE-GBV. How to Use Site Visits to Strengthen Gender-Based Violence Interventions \[No. 6 in a Series\]](#). Washington (DC).

World Health Organization (2007). [Ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting, and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies](#). Geneva.

World Health Organization (2013). [Responding to intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women: Clinical and policy guidelines](#).

World Health Organization (2003). [Guidelines for Medico-Legal Care for Victims of Sexual Violence](#).

The GBV AoR Helpdesk

You can contact the GBV AoR Helpdesk by emailing us at:
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The Helpdesk is available 09.00 to 17.30 GMT Mon – Fri.
Our services are free and confidential.