Technical Assistance Guiding Principles

This document was developed by the Practice Team at Raising Voices. It explains what technical assistance (TA) means at Raising Voices, including the key characteristics that make up quality TA. This document can be used by staff to hone their TA skills, assess the quality of their TA, and identify areas for strengthening. This document will also be shared with all partner organizations/ institutions for full transparency and accountability. Partners are encouraged to use this information to deepen their understanding of the TA process and foster full and productive TA relationships with Raising Voices.

What is **technical assistance?**

Technical Assistance (TA) is a dynamic**, structured support process for improving the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency** of specific programs. It assists others in adapting and applying new knowledge, skills, technology, and innovative practices to **improve outcomes and increase impact.**[1]

Technical Assistance: **Guiding Principles**

1. Mutuality

Effective TA relationships are based on mutual respect, mutual benefit and mutual agreement.
The partners freely choose to participate in a TA relationship with Raising Voices because they believe it will strengthen their programming and add value to their work. Roles and responsibilities are mutually agreed upon and upheld. Both partners are recognized as having experience and a meaningful contribution.

2. Sustained and Systematic

Effective TA is a structured, longer-term process of engagement and learning.
Technical assistance is a process of engagement with a partner over time, not a one-off event. The process must be thoughtfully designed and planned with clear objectives and milestones. Both Raising Voices and the partner are aware of and agree on the process and commit to sustained engagement.

3. Tailored and Contextualized

Effective TA starts with a thorough understanding of the partner and their reality.
Technical advisors must invest time in knowing the partner (ie, their strengths, challenges, issues, etc) as well as their local context (ie, geography, culture, local reality, etc) to ensure relevant and tailored support. Effective TA tailors the learning processes and engagement based on the specific circumstances of the partner – it is not a 'one size fits all' approach.

4. Ownership

Effective TA allows and requires the partner organization to take active responsibility for their own learning.
Partner organizations and institutions must be fully involved and committed to learning from technical assistance. Ultimately, the learning and uptake of new skills and knowledge is up to the partner. TA or a program approach cannot be imposed (directly or indirectly) on a partner but instead requires the partner to initiate the partnership and take responsibility for making the most of the process.

5. Flexibility

Effective TA responds to opportunities and challenges as they arise.
Technical assistance, while structured and planned must also remain flexible and responsive. This may mean engaging with partners in different styles, on different issues or in different ways than originally envisioned in order to facilitate better learning. This requires that TA providers must be ready and able to modify processes and learning organically.

6. Open Communication

Effective TA requires honest, straightforward and constructive communication.
Timely, two-way, consistent and transparent communication is essential for building and maintaining trust, credibility, competence and professionalism. All communication must be constructive with the goal toward building up expertise and skills of the partners.

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