



GENDER EQUALITY LEARNING FROM PRACTICE SERIES

PART 3: GENDER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

JULY 2025



BACKGROUND

The A360 and Gender Equality Learning from Practice series was launched as a way to share best practices and lessons learned from A360's experiences in integrating gender equality throughout its programming for adolescent girls. The intention of this learning series is to improve gender equality outcomes by equipping practitioners with relevant tools, knowledge, and resources, anchored in what A360 has learned about what works on the ground. This paper, the third in the series, is focused on A360's approach to gender Technical Assistance (TA). It showcases how A360 contextualizes gender TA to meet the needs of staff across different geographies and how it ensures local ownership in gender integration efforts.



BOX 1: WHAT IS A360?

Adolescents 360 (A360) is an adolescent girl-centered project focused on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) implemented in Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Kenya. A360's interventions make contraception relevant to girls' goals and aspirations and support their voluntary uptake of modern contraceptive methods. In A360's current investment phase, the project is providing technical assistance to governments to sustainably scale these approaches and strengthen the health system for adolescent-responsive programming. The project is funded by the Gates Foundation (GF) and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF).

WHAT IS GENDER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TA), AND WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

The provision of gender TA by gender equality experts, commonly termed gender advisors, ensures that an organization dedicates the necessary time and space to think about and take concrete steps towards advancing gender equality across its programming and within the organization.

The specialized knowledge and expertise of gender advisors can be leveraged to ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed or integrated into a specific project, or more broadly across all aspects of internal and external operations and implementation, depending on the organization's desired impact. A gender advisor utilizes a frame of analysis and gender lens to assess, review and provide specific recommendations to improve project and gender equality outcomes. The gender advisor can be a permanent staff member or an external consultant who provides strategic inputs as and when needed.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN GENDER TA ACTIVITIES?

Gender TA can take many forms, from capacity building initiatives to the development and dissemination of knowledge products. The core components of gender TA activities are described in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Gender TA Activities

CAPACITY BUILDING ON GENDER EQUALITY



Capacity building on gender equality is a type of gender TA intended to strengthen the ability of individuals and organizations to understand, promote, and implement gender responsive and transformative programs, policies, and practices. It can range from training on basic gender equality knowledge and technical skills to more advanced training in gender equality integration in programming or organizational culture and practice. Training sessions can be conducted virtually or in person and may be facilitated by an internal or external gender expert. Training methodologies vary, but the most effective capacity building ensures that participants not only learn theoretical best practices but also how to apply these skills within their communities and workplaces. These include participatory methods such as role plays and case studies, the use of locally relevant scenarios, facilitated self-reflection on bias and privilege, and structured action planning to support real-world application and institutional change.

Tool: The European Institute for Gender Equality offers a range of resources on gender equality training, including a [12-step guide to effective gender equality training](#), which provides a useful overview of how to prepare for and deliver capacity-building to organizations.

STRATEGIC INPUT TO PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION



Gender TA can also involve strategic input to program design and implementation, focused on integrating gender equality considerations throughout a program's lifecycle. The gender advisor(s) can co-design programs to ensure that program objectives, strategies, and processes address relevant gender gaps and inequalities that impede the achievement of project sector outcomes, thereby maximizing gender-equitable outcomes. If introduced at a later stage, a gender advisor can also review existing programming to identify strengths and gaps and formulate evidence-based recommendations. This would ensure that interventions are adapted to achieve greater impact and are implemented equitably and inclusively. Ultimately, this gender TA helps organizations achieve programmatic outcomes across sectors at a higher rate and in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

Tool: [UNICEF's gender equality marker](#) is used internally to review and assess UNICEF programs based on a four-point scale ranging from 0 (no expected contribution to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls) to 3 (gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as the principal objective). This tool, and others like it, can be adapted to different organizations and contexts. Program and operations teams can use the marker as a point of discussion to identify concrete actions to improve gender integration.

INPUT TO MEL FRAMEWORKS AND TOOLS



A gender expert can also provide strategic input to Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) frameworks and tools from a gender perspective. This type of TA involves making certain that MEL design includes the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data, appropriate indicators to capture gender equality results, and robust methodologies to collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data, identifying key gender gaps relevant to the program and uncovering the program's impact on all genders. A gender expert can also assess existing data collection tools, analysis methods, and reporting templates, and provide targeted recommendations to ensure that programs effectively track progress in gender equality.

Tool: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) [Tool Kit on Gender Equality Results and Indicators](#) provides program practitioners with a menu of gender equality outcomes, results, and indicators in several sectors, including health, energy, and education and training.

REVIEW OF INTERNAL OPERATIONS



A gender advisor can play a key role in assessing and enhancing an organization's internal culture and systems to facilitate an enabling environment for the promotion of gender equality. This may include conducting a gender audit—a comprehensive review of policies, practices, and workplace culture that examines recruitment, pay equity, promotion criteria, work-life balance, organizational attitudes, and strategies to prevent and respond to Gender-Based Violence and harassment to ensure a safe and gender-equitable workplace. A gender audit highlights areas where attitudes and practices may be holding back the advancement of women or marginalized groups. Using the results of a gender audit, the gender advisor, in collaboration with senior management and operations staff, can provide practical recommendations to redesign policies, develop targeted training, and promote an inclusive organizational culture that supports equitable professional growth and benefits overall performance.

Tool: The International Labour Organization (ILO) has developed a [Manual for Gender Audit Facilitators](#), which includes detailed guidance on conducting a participatory gender audit, along with suggested exercises and templates

COORDINATING A GENDER FOCAL POINT SYSTEM



A gender advisor does not have to act alone. A gender focal point system, made up of staff members, can be instrumental to sustainability and also guarantees that the organization has strong buy-in and shares responsibility for gender equality priorities across staff. It is best practice for senior management to work with their staff to nominate relevant and interested staff across project or office teams. The gender advisor plays a crucial role in mentoring and training Gender Focal Points, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively carry out their responsibilities. The gender advisor may also be responsible for coordination and supervision, outlining the roles, responsibilities, and activities of focal points to facilitate the sustained and effective implementation of gender strategies throughout the organization. Ideally, Gender Focal Point roles and responsibilities should be formalized in a job description or embedded within professional performance metrics.

Tool: The International Training Centre of the ILO has developed this [Terms of Reference for a Gender Focal Point](#), which provides an overview of the role, profile, functions, and suggested tasks.

PRODUCTION AND DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS, TOOLS, AND OTHER RESOURCES



Gender TA can also involve the production of gender equality-related knowledge products, tools, and other resources for internal or external use. These may include toolkits, guidelines, case studies, research reports, policy briefs, and digital platforms that provide insights on best practices, lessons learned, and innovative strategies for gender integration. The development of a resource hub on gender equality can help inform decision-making, drive sustainable, inclusive change, and elevate a project's successes vis-a-vis gender equality to support project development and fundraising efforts.

Tool: [A360's Resource Library](#) includes numerous open source knowledge products such as blog posts, case studies, design, implementation and research tools, webinars, and technical publications, including these learning from practice papers, to share insights and knowledge with program practitioners and those interested in learning about gender transformative programming for adolescent girls.

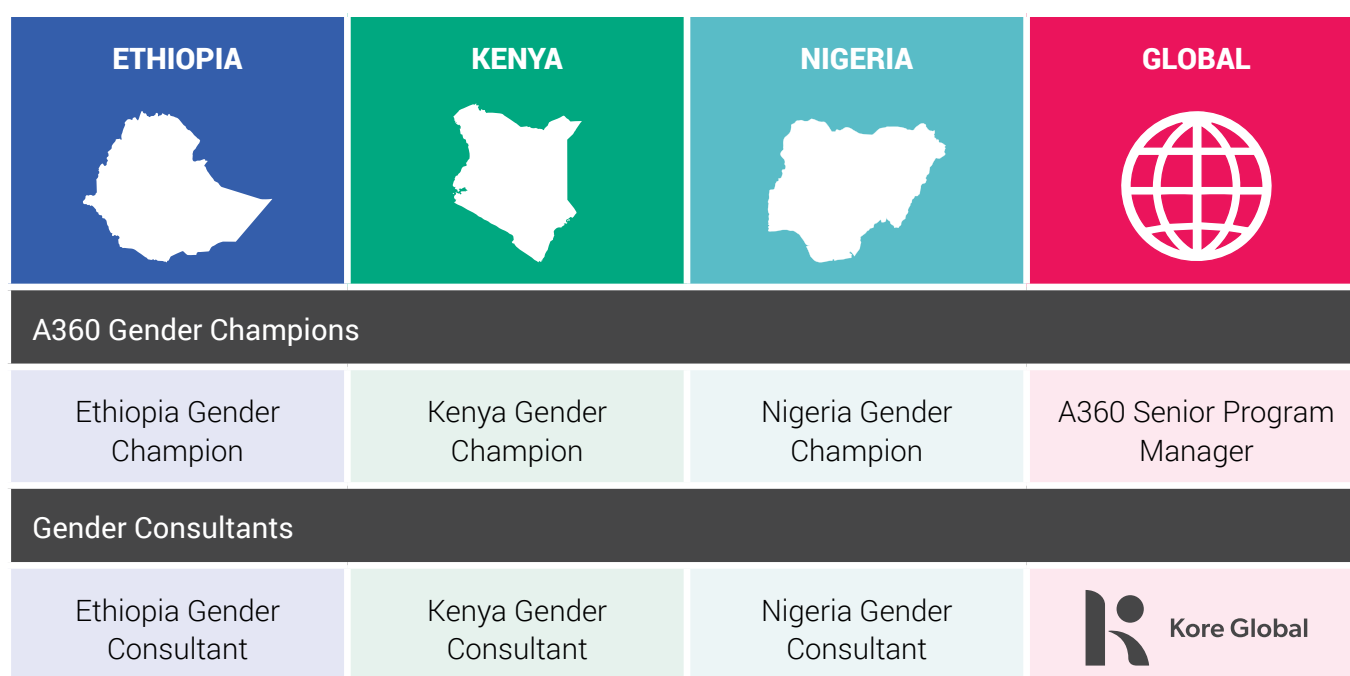
CASE STUDY

A360'S GENDER CHAMPIONS NETWORK

WHAT IS IT?

A360 launched its Gender Champions Network in 2021 in order to support the implementation of the project Gender Strategy. It is composed of gender focal persons (Gender Champions), appointed from among A360 staff members in each country of program implementation (Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nigeria), supported by an external in-country Gender Consultant. The Gender Consultants are brought in at strategic stages to provide technical gender expertise that is localized and contextualized to the realities in each setting. At the global level, A360's dedicated gender expert and gender equality consultants at [Kore Global](#) provide overarching support and coordinate the Network. Together, these interconnected roles ensure that gender integration is both locally grounded and globally aligned, strengthening the impact and coherence of A360's Gender Strategy across all program geographies.

Figure 2: Gender Champions Network



As the Gender Champion in Nigeria notes:

"What works well about A360's approach to gender TA is that it is multilayered, with support at both the global and country levels. This enables us to approach TA from different angles."

-Joy Otsanya Ede, former A360 Gender Champion, Nigeria.

The Gender Champions Network meets quarterly and reports on progress and challenges at both the global and country levels. The Terms of Reference (TOR) for Gender Champions¹ outline key roles and responsibilities, as well as the percentage of time Gender Champions should dedicate to their role.

¹ See Annex 1

WHAT DOES IT DO?

Gender Champions are responsible for spearheading the process of gender equality integration across A360's programming and operations, with the support of senior leadership and the country team. This work takes many forms, including coordinating and delivering capacity building initiatives for A360 staff in gender equality, assessing and improving the gender equality integration of programming, and supporting the production and dissemination of gender equality-related learning, internally and externally. Central to Gender Champion roles is developing country roadmaps to implement the Gender Strategy, outlining, implementing and monitoring activities to advance gender equality in each geography, and socializing the strategy with the country teams.

According to the Gender Consultant in Kenya:

"The technical gender expert is key to interpreting the Gender Strategy. The Gender Champion needs to sit down with the country teams and translate the strategy at the program level."

- Wendy Okolo, Gender Consultant, Kenya.

Importantly, Gender Champions are not responsible for implementing all gender equality-related activities in-country. Rather, their role is to support the strengthening of staff capacity and work with their colleagues to identify areas to improve gender equality outcomes across Human Resources, communications, program implementation, and MEL. This collaborative approach ensures that gender equality is embedded across all aspects of A360's work, fostering shared ownership and sustainable change within each country team.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS?

A360's Gender Champions have been instrumental in advancing and institutionalizing the achievement of gender transformative results across A360's programming for adolescent girls. Gender Champions ensure that A360's work with government stakeholders to institutionalize A360 approaches into government policies and systems keeps gender transformation front and center and retains the core focus on girls' agency in program scale-up. In Nigeria, A360 staff meet regularly with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Health to discuss shared agendas, promote A360's Gender Strategy, and plan joint events, including the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and International Women's Day (IWD).

Gender Champions also provide strategic inputs to program content and messaging. In Kenya, for example, during a 'Pause and Reflect' moment in 2024, the Gender Champion and Consultant, alongside A360 staff and management, identified several key areas to enhance the gender transformative impact of program components in [Binti Shupavu](#), A360's SRH program in Kenya. [Paper 1](#) of this Learning from Practice series features a case study detailing this process and analysis.

Across all three geographies, Gender Champions ensure that A360 staff have access to the latest knowledge and skills in gender equality. Learning modules on key themes, including gender and M&E, GBV, and use of the gender continuum, have been developed to increase staff capacity. The Gender Champion in Ethiopia notes the usefulness of conducting a pre-training assessment to gain an understanding of staff members' knowledge and adapting training content accordingly.



BOX 2: HOW DOES A360 DO GENDER TRAINING DIFFERENTLY?

Gender training at A360 is not a one-off, standalone activity. Rather, it is an ongoing process that involves frequent follow-up activities and staff support. Gender Champions lead a discussion on gender strategy implementation during weekly staff meetings and are available to their colleagues to answer their questions and discuss any concerns. A360 recognizes that people often learn best from on-the-job training. As the Gender Consultant in Nigeria notes:

“One training session does not make you gender sensitive or receptive - it takes continuous efforts.” Hadeezah Haruna-Usie, Gender Consultant, Nigeria.

Another key achievement of the Gender Champions is the training and mentoring of countrywide Gender Focal Points, appointed among A360 staff in the field offices across Nigeria and Ethiopia. These Gender Champions are responsible for gender integration activities at the local level in their respective sub-geographies, which is important given their proximity to program participants and their communities. State-level Gender Champions in Nigeria have received comprehensive training on the Gender Strategy and its implementation, and they meet regularly to report on progress and results. In Ethiopia, the appointment of local Gender Focal Points is more recent, but as the Gender Champion notes, it demonstrates the serious commitment of senior leadership to gender equality integration through a decentralized approach. This growing network of trained Gender Focal Points highlights A360's deepening commitment to gender equality, ensuring that gender integration efforts are responsive, community-centered, and embedded at every level of program implementation.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

After four years of facilitating the Gender Champions network, several key lessons have emerged for A360 in terms of what has worked well, and what might need to be reconsidered along the way. Some of these learnings are outlined below.

Firstly, it is essential to set up TORs for the country Gender Consultants with a reasonable amount of flexibility to offer 'on-demand' services. As Gender Consultants are external to the organization and do not work solely with A360, they must be available and have adequate time to offer support as and when needed. It is not always possible to predict what needs may crop up over time, so this flexibility is necessary.

Related to this, solid partnerships between in-country Gender Champions and Gender Consultants are vital. Champions and Consultants must have a strong working relationship to complement and support each other. Whilst the external Consultant brings technical gender expertise, the Gender Champion has an in-depth working knowledge and understanding of the project, both in terms of programming and operations. This symbiotic relationship is the backbone of effective gender integration.

It is important to clarify the central role of the Gender Consultant as building the capacity of the Gender Champion, rather than producing technical deliverables. Ideally, the Gender Consultant should be ‘working themselves out of a job’ by mentoring Gender Champions and guiding and supporting them as they build their own knowledge and skills in gender integration.

Finally, Gender Champions should be made aware that they have the support of local and global leadership to take the initiative with the Gender Consultants to leverage their time and knowledge.

Sometimes there may be hesitancy to consult with an external consultant whose time costs money, but where resources are available, this expertise is vital to draw on to ensure that Gender Champions are fully supported to take concrete action on gender strategy objectives.

TOP TIPS

Based on A360’s learning and experience in developing and delivering Gender TA, the following top tips may be useful to other program practitioners:

- 1. Prioritize localization and contextualization:** Ensure that the technical assistance provided is adapted to the specific local context, including cultural nuances and practical realities in each setting. Engaging in-country experts or consultants helps provide relevant, localized support.
- 2. Build a multi-layered support network:** Effective Gender TA can be delivered through a layered approach that includes support at global, country consultant, and internal staff levels. This structure ensures comprehensive and accessible expertise.
- 3. Cultivate and empower internal Gender Champions:** Establishing a network of internal staff members dedicated to promoting gender equality can spearhead integration efforts across programming and operations. Training and ongoing support of these focal points, and clear Terms of Reference outlining roles and responsibilities are crucial success factors.
- 4. Secure senior leadership commitment:** Active buy-in and support from senior leadership are vital for ensuring that gender technical assistance is prioritized, adequately resourced, and drives accountability for gender equality outcomes.
- 5. Dedicate time and space for gender integration work:** Effectively integrating gender equality requires allocating specific time and space for technical assistance and related activities, acknowledging that it requires specialized focus and effort.

REFERENCES AND USEFUL RESOURCES

A360: [Open source Resource Library with knowledge products](#)

A360: [Gender Equality Learning from Practice Series: The Gender Equality Continuum](#)

A360: [2024-2025 Gender Strategy](#)

Asian Development Bank (ADB): [Tool Kit on Gender Equality Results and Indicators](#)

European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE): [12 steps to good gender equality training](#)

International Labour Office (ILO): [Manual for Gender Audit Facilitators](#)

International Labour Office (ILO; Training Centre): [Terms of Reference for a Gender Focal Point](#)

UNICEF: [Gender equality marker tool](#)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND CITATION

The authors wish to thank Hadeezah Haruna-Usie, Hibiete Tesfaye, Joy Otsanya Ede, Lidiya Berihun, Peris Waithaka, and Wendy Okolo for their invaluable insights in developing this learning paper.

Suggested citation: Cutherell, M., Bhuvanendra, D., Walton, K., Groggel, L., and Nichol, K. (2025). 'Gender Equality Learning from Practice Series: Gender Technical Assistance.' Population Services International.

ANNEX 1: A360 GENDER CHAMPIONS TERMS OF REFERENCE

BACKGROUND

A360 is committed to promoting gender equality as an integral part of achieving the overall program vision by identifying strategic opportunities to incorporate gender issues throughout the objectives, goals, and flagship interventions.

The main role of Gender Champions is to facilitate the process of gender integration in their respective country offices and program units as well as to spearhead the implementation of the A360 Global Gender Strategy at the country level. While they may be directly involved in implementing certain gender-specific activities, their contribution should focus on supporting colleagues in identifying strategies to integrate gender equality in their work and build the capacity of their country team. It is critical to view gender equality as a collective responsibility and avoid assigning all gender-related work solely to the Gender Champion.

APPOINTING GENDER CHAMPIONS

The A360 country lead will appoint the Gender Champion, who should demonstrate an interest and enthusiasm to support the implementation of the A360 Gender Strategy at country level and an eagerness to expand their capacity on gender equality. At the global level, consultation with the country point of contact will be useful. The Gender Champion position can also rotate every two years, as appropriate, or more frequently if the A360 country lead desires. Efforts should be made to alternate between male and female staff members, and to avoid consistently appointing one gender (the tendency is to always appoint women).

ALLOCATING TIME AND RESOURCES

Management will need to ensure that adequate time, conditions, and financial resources are allocated to enable the Gender Champions to perform their tasks. We expect this to take around 5-10% of each gender champion's LOE to participate in this network and support gender mainstreaming across their respective country program. It is also important for managers to bear in mind that these are add-on functions to an already full workload but are encouraged to find innovative ways to accommodate this new role.

Additionally, it is vital to strive to integrate these responsibilities into everyone's MBO / performance plan for the year so that the work they do as a gender champion can be recognized within that performance cycle. A360 country leads and/or the champion's manager should be asked to make sure that this happens.

ACTIVITIES

The Gender Champions should be systematically involved in meetings and decision-making processes related to the programming of activities of the country office or program unit, as these are critical entry points for gender integration. The relevant work should be included in the country-level Gender Action Plans, and integrated into the annual work plans, and reflected in their program performance appraisals as well. It is imperative to prioritize capacity building opportunities on gender equality for the Champion. The Program Management Team (PMT), country leads, as well as the Human Resources Department (HRD) have a responsibility in this regard, especially in areas such as cost sharing and allowing time for training.

The responsibilities of the Gender Champion will include the following:

1. Support the A360 country program team's efforts in integrating gender in all activities as guided by the A360 Gender Strategy, in alignment with the gender-specific objectives, outcomes, indicators, and activities in the country-level interventions, in conjunction with the global A360 gender focal person, Global Gender Expert consultant(s) and Country Gender Expert consultant.
2. In cooperation with the Country Gender Expert consultant, act as a "help desk" and link of the country office to share information and materials on gender issues related to A360's mandate. Contribute to knowledge sharing by supporting the identification and documentation of best practices to measure the extent of gender integration and highlight the outcomes in program reports at the country level.
3. Assist in the logistics for organizing capacity building initiatives for colleagues related to gender equality.
4. Assist the global A360 gender focal person, Global Gender Expert consultant(s), and Country Gender Expert consultant in engaging a variety of stakeholders from the government and other relevant partners in gender integration activities, in order to strengthen links with gender equality actors and expertise at the program level, including representation at the program related Multisectoral Gender Technical Working Groups.
5. Serve as a key focal point for the Country Gender Expert Consultant, including supporting onboarding and regular check-ins on the progress of the implementation of country-level gender action plans.

GENDER CHAMPIONS NETWORK SUPPORT

All the Gender Champions will automatically become members of the Gender Champions Network (GCN) and will receive information, access to A360's gender-related tools and resources, and technical support from the Gender Expert Consultants and the PSI Gender Community of Practice. The Gender Champions will have the opportunity to participate in quarterly meetings of the Gender Champions Network, its thematic panels at the CoP, as well as in relevant A360 inter-regional strategic consultations on gender. The Gender Champions will also be considered for all related gender training towards enhancing their skills and capacity for gender integration.