

# Reimagining Technical Assistance at JSI



## **JSI is reimagining our approaches to technical assistance (TA) and capacity strengthening (CS).<sup>1</sup>**

At JSI, we are inspired by recent country-based work that surfaced a range of entrenched TA and CS practices that undermine country agency in driving health sector performance improvement and outlined nine critical shifts as a vision for the future.<sup>2</sup> JSI is leveraging these insights, and our experience implementing 2,600 projects across 107 countries since 1978, to reflect on our role as an implementer and improve our approach to TA and CS. The critical shifts are aligned with our organizational vision, inform how we partner, and shape our responses to requests for proposals.

## **WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?**

The figure on the next page depicts nine critical shifts to improve the delivery and intended outcomes of TA and CS. Co-created and validated by stakeholders—including country-based, government, local and international implementing partners and representatives of communities of interest—the critical shifts are a bridge between the identified challenges of current TA and CS approaches and the vision developed for improved TA and CS investments. Together the critical shifts envision **shifting how we:**

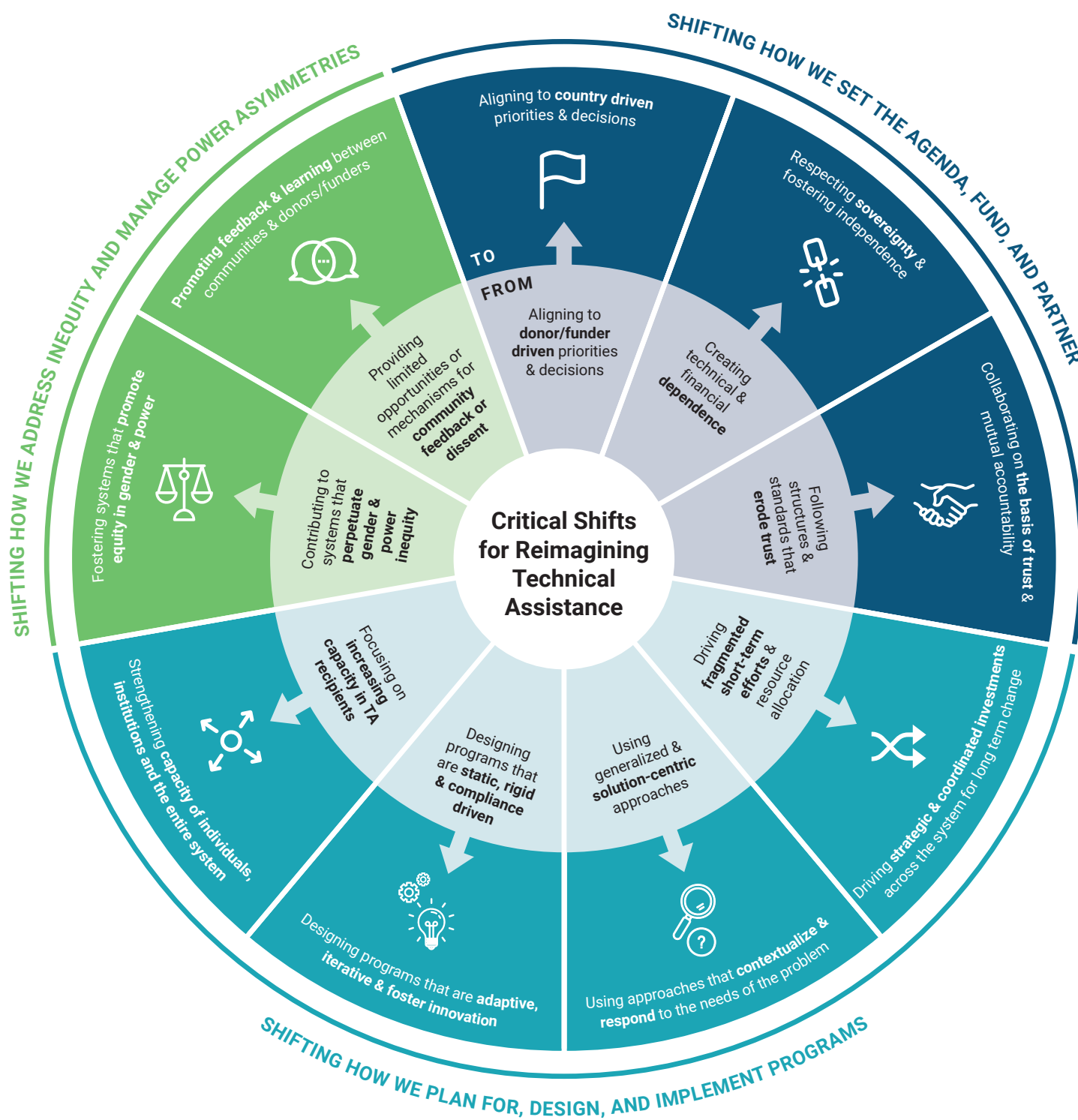
- set the agenda, fund, and partner,
- plan for, design, and implement programs, and
- address inequity and manage power asymmetries.

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1 Technical assistance (TA) and capacity strengthening (CS) (and related terms) are often used interchangeably and inconsistently throughout the global health and development literature. Strengthened capacity is often one intended outcome or objective of TA, yet TA is just one approach to CS and does not inherently contribute to CS. We use both terms in this brief to reflect a focus on TA as well as other CS approaches.

2 A JSI-led and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)-funded, two-phase project inspired the need to reimagine models for delivering TA. During [phase 1](#) (2018–2020), JSI and Sonder Design, a human-centered design firm, in partnership with the ministries of health in the DRC and Nigeria facilitated TA actors to co-create the critical shifts. In phase 2 (2020–2021), the interagency working group (IAWG) for CS, comprising BMGF, USAID, and the World Bank, with facilitation from JSI and Global ChangeLabs, a systems transformation firm, validated the critical shifts. The IAWG also broadened the critical shifts to include power and gender.

They also redefine relationships among national governments, funders, local and international implementing organizations, and communities for collaborating to build institutional and individual capacity and strengthen health systems to deliver better health outcomes for mothers, children, and their families.



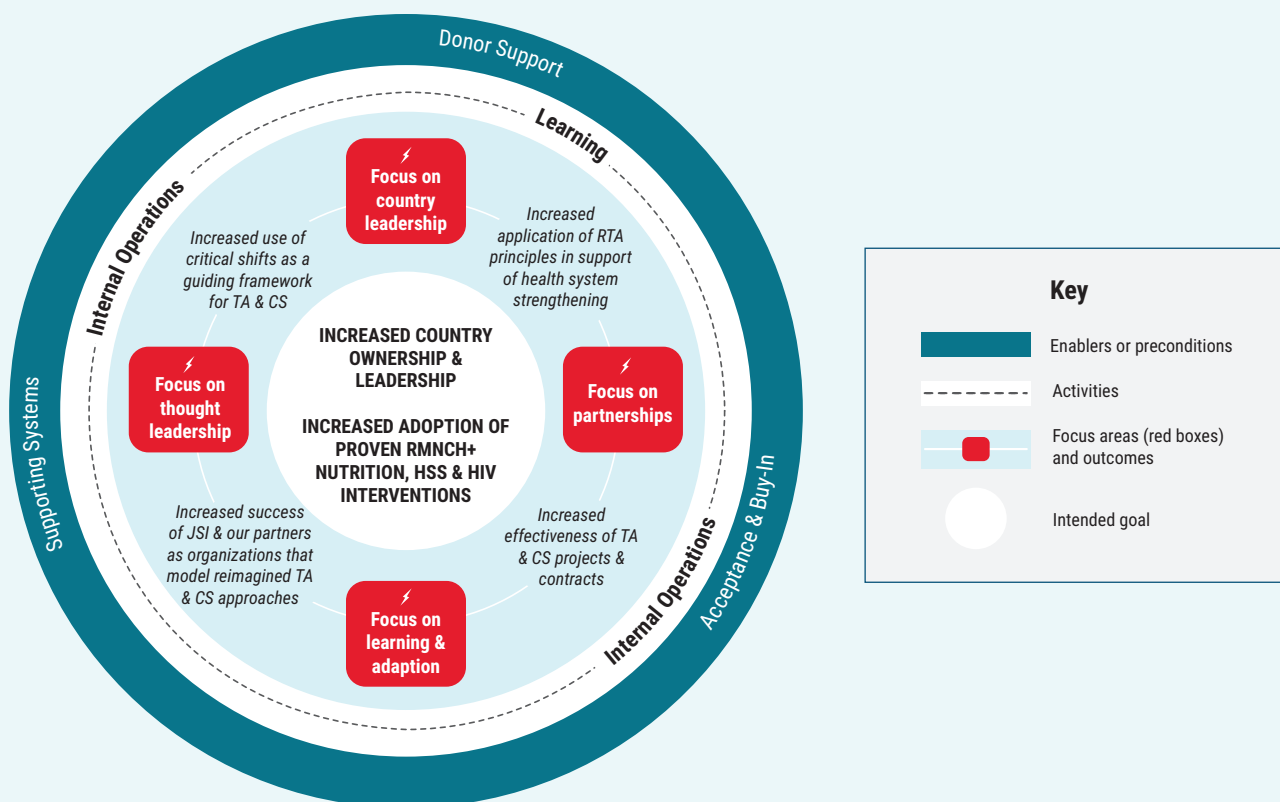
Learn more about the [critical shifts](#)

## HOW IS JSI RESPONDING?

JSI recognizes the need for technical assistance and capacity strengthening strategies that prioritize long-term and sustainable change in the country, and supports community empowerment and capacity to execute proven health sector interventions. JSI has prioritized four focus areas to advance our progress towards the critical shifts:

- Deliberate focus on the role of country governments, civil society partners and the private sector in identifying and driving health sector investment, priorities and resilience;
- Greater attention to forming and managing respectful and effective partnerships with country level actors, including ensuring transparency, promoting local interests and priorities, nurturing local ownership of capacity development, and enhancing country-level leadership;
- Increase thought leadership by JSI and our partners on the critical shifts in TA and CS practice that are needed to improve the effectiveness of health investments; and
- Integrate collaborative programming practices that promote local-level learning and tailoring of interventions to local contexts and client needs and promote adaptive management and accountability to local, instead of external actors.

## ToC to reimagine technical assistance at JSI



## WHAT DO WE SEEK TO ACCOMPLISH?

At JSI, reimagining TA and CS is a learning journey. The overall goal of reimagining TA and CS is to move toward country ownership of decisions about health priorities, investments, and leadership of the health system to achieve better outcomes. JSI is a trusted partner on this journey. JSI commits to enhancing and changing its own structures, approaches, and resources to drive greater effectiveness of TA and CS. We are focusing on aspects of internal operations, internal and collaborative learning processes, strengthening partnerships where we work, and our own leadership activities. Successful progress in transforming our TA and CS practice will result in the following outcomes:

- Increased use of the Critical Shifts as a guiding framework for TA and CS;
- Increased application of RTA principles in support of health system strengthening;
- Increased effectiveness of TA and CS projects and contracts; and
- Increased performance of JSI and our partners as organizations that models reimagined TA and CS approaches.

## HOW CAN OTHERS LEVERAGE THE CRITICAL SHIFTS?

We call on our partners and other actors in global health—including donors/funders, implementing partners, host governments, and civil society organizations—to leverage the critical shifts as a vision for how we do TA and capacity strengthening for better health outcomes for the next generation.

Join this conversation and send suggestions or questions to [reimaginingtawg@jsi.com](mailto:reimaginingtawg@jsi.com)

<https://www.jsi.com/rt/>

