

REVIEW OF GRÓ
International Centre for Capacity Development – Sustainable
use of Natural Resources and Societal Change, a Category 2
Centre under the auspices of UNESCO
Reykjavík, Iceland

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\ ABBREVIATIONS

C2C	Category 2 Centre (under the auspices of UNESCO)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FTP	Fisheries Training Programme
GEST	Gender Studies and Training Programme
GRÓ	International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change
GTP	Geothermal Training Programme
IOC	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LMIC	Lower Middle Income Countries
LRT	Land Restoration Training Programme
MAB	Man and the Biosphere Programme (UNESCO programme)
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

GOPA Worldwide Consultants conducted a **renewal evaluation of the GRÓ** ("International Centre for Capacity Development – Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change"). It was established in 2019 as a Category 2 Centre (C2C) under the auspices of UNESCO. It is based in Reykjavík, Iceland.

The main purpose of the review of GRÓ is to evaluate the performance of the C2C since the entry into force of the current Agreement and hence to provide UNESCO and the Government of Iceland with a recommendation on the possible renewal of its current status as a C2C under the auspices of UNESCO.

The evaluators recommend that the Agreement between UNESCO and the Government of Iceland on the status of GRÓ as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO is renewed.

Evaluation findings and conclusions

A comprehensive external evaluation of GRÓ C2C and of each of its four capacity development training programmes, commissioned by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, was completed in 2024.¹ The evaluation concluded that the results achieved by GRÓ are impressive, highly successful in terms of the delivery of knowledge transfer, capacity and skills enhancement benefiting individuals and organizations in lower- and middle-income developing countries. This renewal evaluation reaffirms those findings.

The **key evaluation findings linked to GRÓ** as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO are:

- **Achievement of the GRÓ functions and objectives**

The objective of GRÓ is to strengthen individual, organizational and institutional capacities in low- and middle-income developing countries focusing on four thematic fields of Icelandic expertise where it can offer added value, namely **geothermal energy, gender equality, land restoration and science for sustainable management of fisheries and aquatic resources**. This is primarily achieved by the delivery of specialist capacity development training and support for conducting original research projects and knowledge production in the four thematic fields. **The primary target group of beneficiaries for the four GRÓ programmes is young to mid-career postgraduate professionals** from institutions and organizations in the partner countries targeted. The scope of GRÓ's results is international. During the period 2020-2024, GRÓ activities supported direct beneficiaries from approximately seventy countries, primarily in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Our analysis shows that **GRÓ has successfully delivered its intended development results** (outputs, outcomes, and impact).

- **Relevance of the contribution by GRÓ to UNESCO's programme and budget and strategies**

The work of GRÓ C2C is primarily relevant to the following UNESCO programme areas: Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, Natural Sciences, Social and Human Sciences, and Education. **The work of GRÓ is also relevant to UNESCO's global priorities Africa and Gender Equality.** However, while the work of GRÓ C2C is relevant to UNESCO's guiding strategies, priorities and programmes, to date the extent of the contribution of GRÓ to the achievement of UNESCO's approved programme and budget is largely complementary, coherent, rather than via direct synergies created.

- **Relevance of the contribution by GRÓ to global development agendas**

The development objectives of GRÓ and the results delivered via the training programmes closely align with global development policy frameworks and strategies. The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a key frame of reference for the work of the GRÓ Centre and the four GRÓ training programmes. The principal SDGs that individual programmes reference and seek to contribute towards are **SDG 5** Gender Equality, **SDG 7** Affordable and Clean Energy, **SDG 14** Life below Water, and **SDG 15** Life on Land. The work of GRÓ also contributes to other international development agendas such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the African Union Agenda 2063. The programmes also reference specific UN and international norms, policy frameworks, instruments and organizations of relevance to their field of expertise.

¹ GOPA Worldwide Consultants (2024), External Evaluation of GRÓ, 2018-2023 – https://www.government.is/library/01-Ministries/Ministry-for-Foreign-Affairs/Evaluations/GOPA_GRO_Evaluation_Final_Report.pdf

- **Quality of coordination and interaction between GRÓ and UNESCO**

As reported in the 2024 external evaluation of GRÓ, **the operational partnership of GRÓ C2C with UNESCO is still in the development phase**. Stakeholder consultations undertaken as part of this review highlighted **room for improvement in the coordination and interaction realized by GRÓ C2C with partners at UNESCO headquarters**. It is only partially structured on the side of GRÓ as to how it seeks to undertake periodic interaction. **Joint collaboration of GRÓ and UNESCO is soundly established in the programme area of biodiversity and climate change resilience**. In the field, GRÓ has prioritized its cooperation efforts with UNESCO partners in Africa (reflecting that the majority of alumni are from Sub-Saharan Africa), and more recently also building links with UNESCO partners in Asia. **GRÓ Centre has established and works to further embed its partnership and collaboration with UNESCO Regional Office in Kenya, and Country Offices and National Commissions in Uganda and Malawi.**

- **Quality of partnerships developed and maintained with other organizations and partners**

GRÓ Centre and the GRÓ programmes maintain **good partnerships with relevant government agencies, public or private partners and with other donor development partners**. These include partners in Iceland and in the partner countries targeted by each programme. Partner organizations are commonly government, public sector or public service oriented institutions, including public service utilities, universities, research institutes, and civil society and community based groups.

- **Nature and efficiency of the GRÓ's governance and management**

The governance and organizational framework set-up for operation of GRÓ C2C is coherent. GRÓ Centre operates under its own legal identity as an agency of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland. Each GRÓ programme operates based in its independent educational and research host institution. **GRÓ Centre concludes a service agreement with each host institution linked to the provision of its individual GRÓ programme. Strategic governance and oversight** of the GRÓ Centre and GRÓ programmes is provided via the **GRÓ Governing Board**. Its main function to form policy and supervise the activities of the Centre. GRÓ Centre is responsible for setting the common strategic framework, approach, and vision for the operation of the GRÓ Centre and its thematic programmes. The Director General of GRÓ Centre and Directors of the four training programmes undertake regular follow-up on overall programme implementation, and the development of common frameworks. The efficiency of the governance and management systems is generally good, but with some room for improvements.

- **Funding to ensure sustainable institutional capacity and viability**

The Government of Iceland, via the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, is the primary source of funding for the GRÓ – as part of its international development cooperation policy and budget. The GRÓ training programmes are a flagship product of and longer-term financial sustainability of GRÓ is thereby assured. In addition to the core funding provided by the Ministry, the individual GRÓ programmes obtain external funding for their activities, for instance to co-fund short courses in partner countries. Currently GRÓ C2C operates its funding on the basis of an annual budget planning and approval process, not multi-annual.

- **Autonomy and legal capacity of the GRÓ**

GRÓ complies with the legal and governance requirements for C2Cs under the auspices of UNESCO. GRÓ has the functional autonomy and the legal capacity necessary for the execution of its activities.

Recommendations

The evaluators recommend the renewal of the Agreement between the partners.

Specific **recommendations are provided to GRÓ C2C** linked to (1) its development of a medium-term strategy and priorities for the concrete development of GRÓ's cooperation with UNESCO partners, (2) improving communication and visibility of the work and the results delivered by GRÓ C2C, to strengthen its profile within UNESCO, (3) improving operational efficiency of GRÓ C2C management and reporting systems, and (4) developing a medium-term financial and strategic vision for operations of the GRÓ C2C.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW (RENEWAL EVALUATION)

GRÓ ("International Centre for Capacity Development – Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change"), **was established in Iceland as a Category 2 Centre (C2C) under the auspices of UNESCO following the decision of the General Conference of UNESCO at its 40th session in 2019** (40 C/Resolution 18.IX). The Agreement between UNESCO and the Government of Iceland regarding the establishment of GRÓ as a C2C was signed on 16 December 2019, with a duration period of six years.

GRÓ, operational since January 2020, was established as a **multidisciplinary C2C**. It brings together **four thematic capacity development training programmes** that have been an important part of and one of the main pillars of Iceland's international development cooperation policy offer over the past decades. Core funding for the GRÓ C2C and the GRÓ programmes is provided by the Government of Iceland, as part of the **Official Development Assistance** budget managed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. **The four capacity development training programmes provided under the GRÓ Centre are:**

- **GRÓ Fisheries Training Programme (GRÓ FTP)**, operational since 1998, promoting the protection and sustainable use and management of marine and aquatic resources.
- **GRÓ Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme (GRÓ GEST)**, operational since 2009, promoting gender equality, women's empowerment and social justice.
- **GRÓ Geothermal Training Programme (GRÓ GTP)**, operational since 1979, promoting the utilisation and sustainable management of reliable, economically viable, and environmentally sound geothermal energy resources.
- **GRÓ Land Restoration Training Programme (GRÓ LRT)**, operational since 2007, focused on limiting land degradation, protecting, restoring, and the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems.

The **development objective (goal) of the GRÓ Centre and the four GRÓ training programmes** is to strengthen individual, organizational, and institutional capacities in developing and conflict/post-conflict countries to deliver development results in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For each GRÓ programme **the primary target group of beneficiaries is young to mid-career postgraduate professionals** from institutions and organizations in the partner countries targeted.

***The main purpose of the review of GRÓ** is to evaluate the performance of the C2C since the entry into force of the current Agreement and hence to provide UNESCO and the Government of Iceland with a recommendation on the possible renewal of its current status as a C2C under the auspices of UNESCO.*

The evaluation is also intended to inform the Member States of UNESCO, the UNESCO Secretariat and other stakeholders on the GRÓ Centre's overall performance, its contribution to the strategic objectives of UNESCO and on the implementation of its 2019 Strategy for C2Cs under the auspices of UNESCO, and to provide suggestions for potential improvements for the future functioning of the C2C.

1.2 SCOPE OF THE REVIEW (RENEWAL EVALUATION)

The evaluation adopts both a retrospective and prospective approach. It should result in evidence-based and action-oriented recommendations, **guided by the following overarching questions** (parameters):

1. The extent to which the Centre's functions and objectives as set out in the Agreement signed with UNESCO were achieved.
2. The relevance of the contribution of the Centre's programmes and activities to the achievement of UNESCO's prevailing Approved Programme and Budget (C/5) at the time in which its Agreement entered into force and thereafter, including global strategies and action plans as well as sectoral programme priorities, as defined in the Agreement.
3. The relevance of the contribution of the activities of the Centre to global development agendas.

4. The quality of coordination and interaction with UNESCO, both at Headquarters and in the field, as well as with National Commissions, other thematically related Category 1 and 2 Institutes or Centres, with regard to planning and implementation of programmes.
5. The partnerships developed and maintained with government agencies, public or private partners and donors.
6. The nature and efficiency of the Centre's governance, including organizational arrangements, management, human resources and accountability mechanisms.
7. The financial resources available for ensuring sustainable institutional capacity and viability.
8. The extent to which the Centre enjoys within the national territory the autonomy necessary for the execution of its activities and legal capacity to contract, institute legal proceedings, and to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property.

In addition to analysing the above-mentioned topics, the review will **propose recommendations** on the following aspects:

- The decision to renew the Centre's status as a Category 2 Centre.
- The relevance and effectiveness of the Centre's activities.
- The collaboration of GRÓ-International Centre for Capacity Development – Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change with other UNESCO entities.
- If required, options for aligning GRÓ-International Centre for Capacity Development – Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change with the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy.
- If required, proposals for amendments to the Agreement.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

UNESCO document 40 C/79 and annexes contains the **2019 Strategy for C2Cs under the auspices of UNESCO**, which applies to all proposals for the establishment of C2C and outlines the procedure for the renewal of existing agreements. The principles of evaluation processes are set out in the same document.

The framework for the review of GRÓ is established by the eight overarching questions noted above. Based on these the review encompasses three areas of analysis: (1) **performance assessment of GRÓ** (relevance and effectiveness), (2) **GRÓ collaboration and partnerships with UNESCO and with other partners** (coherence and effectiveness), and (3) **GRÓ governance and resources** (effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability). As the review corresponds to a renewal evaluation, the methodological approach is both retrospective (2019-2024) and prospective (2025-2029). The review combines both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection, content analysis and data validation. Furthermore, the methodology reflects that a comprehensive **external evaluation of the GRÓ Centre and also of each GRÓ Training Programme was undertaken during 2024.**² It was commissioned by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland within its framework for periodic evaluation of key programmes within a project cycle frame of every five-to-six years. The evaluation was conducted by GOPA Worldwide Consultants. The experts undertaking this review were both engaged in that evaluation (as Team Leader, and as Questionnaire Survey expert). The external evaluation assessed GRÓ based on the six OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, presented lessons learned and recommendations (see brief summary in Annex 9). Field visits to meet with GRÓ partners and stakeholders, including interviews with the direct beneficiaries of the training programmes, were part of that evaluation, as was the use of an online Survey to reach former beneficiaries (GRÓ alumni) of the five-to-six month fellowship training programmes in Iceland.

The consultant and UNESCO thereby agreed that a field visit to Iceland and the use of Surveys were not necessary as part of this review. Key data collection methods thereby included: (1) **Document Review** (analysis of strategic and operational documentation linked to GRÓ Centre and the GRÓ programmes, Icelandic international development cooperation policy, UNESCO strategies, approved programme and budget), and (2) **Stakeholder Consultations** (remote interviews with 16 stakeholders, including UNESCO staff across different Sectors/Divisions and programmes, and GRÓ Centre and GRÓ programmes' staff).

² GOPA Worldwide Consultants (2024), "External Evaluation of GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change, 2018-2023" – https://www.government.is/library/01-Ministries/Ministry-for-Foreign-Affairs/Evaluations/GOPA_GRO_Evaluation_Final_Report.pdf

2 FINDINGS

2.1 OVERALL FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis shows that **GRÓ has successfully delivered its intended development results** (outputs, outcomes, and impact). The scope of GRÓ's capacity development, research and knowledge production results is international. During the period 2020-2024, GRÓ activities supported direct beneficiaries from approximately seventy countries, primarily in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The results closely align with global development policy frameworks, and strategies, and contribute to deliver development results in line with the SDGs and with the strategies and priorities of UNESCO.

Each GRÓ programme has successfully developed and maintains partnerships and collaboration with partner institutions/organizations in the countries they support, including partnerships of long-term collaboration, and others more recently developed in new partner countries. The target group of beneficiaries for the GRÓ programmes work in these institutions/organizations. Each GRÓ programme collaborates on specific projects with other donors and UN organizations/entities in their field of work.

Linked to the **partnership and collaboration between GRÓ C2C with UNESCO**, joint collaboration with positive results is soundly established between GRÓ LRT and UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB). For the other GRÓ programmes collaboration is more ad hoc. GRÓ Centre has established, and works to further embed, its partnership and collaboration with UNESCO Regional Office in Nairobi, and with UNESCO Field Offices and National Commissions for UNESCO in key partner countries for GRÓ, linked to its existing alumni. Looking forward, there is clear potential for closer engagement between UNESCO with the GRÓ alumni in partner countries. The GRÓ alumni are postgraduate professionals, with capacity as "agents of change" in their area of expertise. Looking forward, there is also clear potential for closer collaboration between GRÓ and UNESCO relating to knowledge exchange and shared learning. Via the GRÓ programmes a rich resource of original research papers is generated by programme beneficiaries from the Global South. There is clear potential for closer cooperation between GRÓ C2C and UNESCO in the organization of short courses in partner countries.

GRÓ has **autonomy and legal capacity** for its operational activities, and **governance** structures to ensure accountability for the use of financial resources. In addition to core **funding** for GRÓ provided by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, each GRÓ programme seeks to obtain co-funding from partners as practical, notably linked to the delivery of short courses or capacity building support in partner countries.

In light of the analysis and findings, the evaluation review concludes that a **renewal of the Agreement between UNESCO and the Government of Iceland regarding GRÓ as a C2C is mutually beneficial**.

2.2 THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE CENTRE'S FUNCTIONS AND OBJECTIVES AS SET OUT IN THE AGREEMENT SIGNED WITH UNESCO WERE ACHIEVED

The extent to which the Centre's functions and objectives, as set out in the Agreement signed with UNESCO in 2019, were achieved is evidenced below. Our analysis shows that **GRÓ has successfully delivered its intended activities and via this progress is realized in promoting development results**.

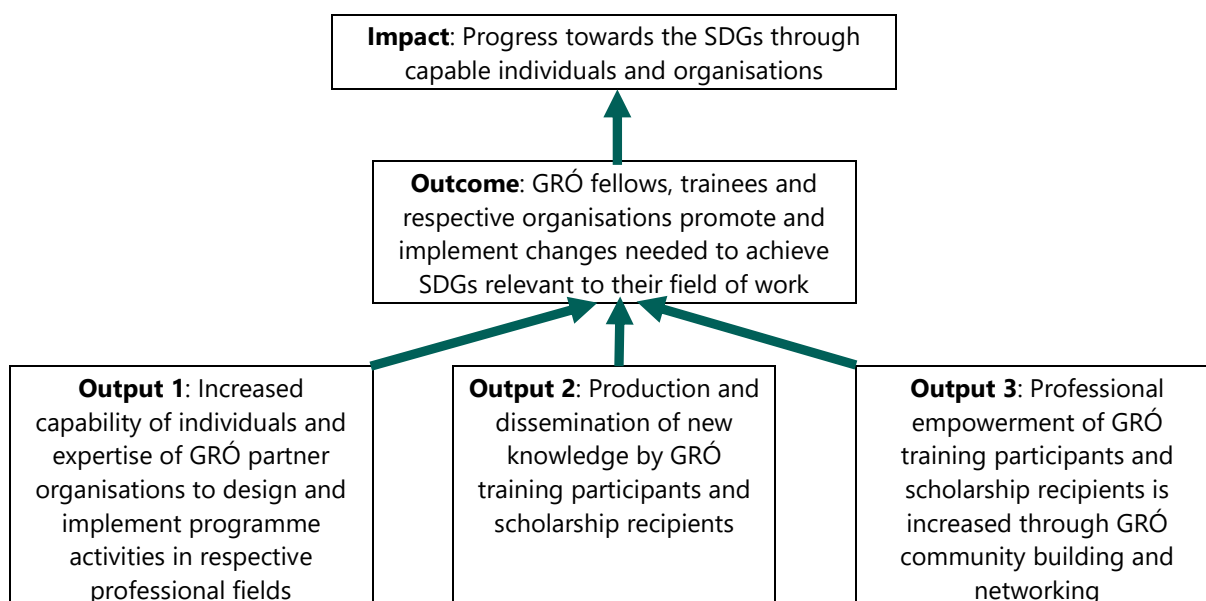
Objectives

GRÓ C2C's objective is to strengthen individual, organizational and institutional capacities focusing on the fields of geothermal energy, gender equality, land restoration and science for sustainable management of fisheries and aquatic resources, to support developing countries in:

1. Achieving sustainable development and economic growth,
2. The fulfilment of international agenda and initiatives, such as the UN 2030 Agenda and Paris Climate Agreement,
3. Promoting multidisciplinary and integrated approaches for sustainable use of natural resources,
4. Promoting gender equality in line with UNESCO's Global Priority Gender Equality.

In 2022, GRÓ formally adopted its **Theory of Change** and **Strategic Priorities** for the period up to 2027. In 2023, GRÓ formally adopted its **Results Framework**. These provide a clear framework via which the objectives, interventions and the results of the four GRÓ programmes, each working in its own specific field of expertise, is commonly understood and the performance of the GRÓ programme is measurable.

Table 1: GRÓ programme intervention logic, intervention strategies and development results



Intervention strategies

Postgraduate level training programmes	In-country and regional training	Research and knowledge creation	Networking
Scholarships (Master's and Doctoral degrees)	Innovative online content creation	Workshops and conferences	Advisory Services and Knowledge Sharing

As reported in the 2024 external evaluation of GRÓ, the **direct results of the GRÓ programmes establish a strong basis to promote behavioural change of the individuals** (direct beneficiaries of the training) **and their home organizations**. This is achieved via GRÓ alumni and training beneficiaries applying the new learning, skills, and tools obtained via the GRÓ programmes **in order to advance local development change** in their field of expertise and work. The GRÓ fellows return to their home country and organization on completing the training and research in Iceland empowered to share and apply their learning and skills obtained. The beneficiaries of the short courses return to their institution prepared to share and utilize their new knowledge and skills, and the practical tools provided via the courses, to promote reform initiatives and change at the local level. **Feedback obtained from the beneficiaries strongly suggests that the programmes**, chiefly via the GRÓ alumni, but also training and capacity development partnerships with institutions/organizations in the partner countries, **have delivered concrete changes within the countries to achieve development change and real impact**.

The intended outcome of the programmes is to empower the alumni in their individual career advancements, to enable them to disseminate and apply their knowledge in order **to drive sustainable change and promote longer-term local development outcomes and impact pursuant to the SDGs**.

As reported in the 2024 external evaluation of GRÓ, feedback from the alumni responding to the evaluator's survey indicated that **90% of the fellows report achieving moderate, good, or substantial progress in their professional career in follow-up to the fellowship training in Iceland.**³ The vast majority of the 2018-2023 alumni reported taking on greater responsibilities within their organisations (74%), while 33% indicated career promotions, moving into higher roles or leading departments, 30% indicated a salary increase, and 25% were awarded a scholarship by an organization for further study.

Alumni also reported important micro-, meso-, and macro-level results they have contributed to post-fellowship, with 73% of the 2018-2023 alumni reporting actions **contributing to advance the SDGs**. Almost half of the alumni respondents indicated that they have contributed advice and support at the level of local communities (48%) with 22% reporting contributions to changes at the regional or district level. Moreover, 31% reported contributing to changes in policies or processes at the national level, and 9% contributing to the development or the application of international policy frameworks. Most frequently, alumni indicated contributing to **SDG 5** Gender Equality (42%), **SDG 13** Climate Action (37%), **SDG 2** Zero Hunger (30%), **SDG 7** Affordable and Clean Energy (28%), **SDG 4** Quality Education (24%), **SDG 1** No Poverty (23%), **SDG 14** Life below Water (20%), and **SDG 15** Life on Land (17%).

Functions

As detailed in the current Agreement, fourteen **functions of GRÓ Centre** are defined. These **correspond to the key GRÓ intervention approaches** each programme utilizes, namely provision of support via:

- **Five-to-six months training course in Iceland (fellowship programme)** for practicing young to mid-career postgraduate professionals from developing countries, *(three functions are defined)*
- Scholarships to former fellows to complete **MSc and PhD studies**,
- The **creation and dissemination of new knowledge by the fellows** (research project papers),
- Development/delivery of **short courses in partner countries** in collaboration with local partners,
- The creation and provision of innovative **electronic learning platforms**, online training content,
- Provision of training of high quality by **experienced and knowledgeable lecturers**,
- **Alumni networking and empowerment**, *(two functions are defined)*
- **Capacity development** support to strengthen the organizational and institutional capacities of key training and academic partners **to develop and deliver high quality local training content**,
- Provision of **advisory services** to partner organisations at the national and international level,
- **Coordination and collaboration with UNESCO** *(two functions are defined)*.

Fellowship programme

Function: Five-to-six months training courses in the four thematic areas of Icelandic expertise

The postgraduate level training and research programme (fellowship) in Iceland, in the thematic areas of Icelandic expertise, is **the principal capacity development intervention of the GRÓ programmes**.

Each GRÓ programme, relevant to its thematic area of expertise, is **structured to combine and balance theory, professional skills training, project field work, and an individual research project paper**. The individual research project, commonly undertaken over a period of two-to-three months, is intended to be specific to the needs of the organization and/or country of the fellow. It is to provide evidence-based research so as to contribute to the further development of its policy, operations or management.

³ For example, two GRÓ LRT 2022 fellows from Lesotho promoted within their national ministry post-fellowship to coordinate and facilitate an IFAD funded project Regeneration of Landscapes and Livelihoods. A GRÓ FTP 2022 fellow from El Salvador promoted within their ministry to Head of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Management Department. A GRÓ GTP 2022 fellow became a specialist adviser at the World Bank on geothermal development in the Latin America region. Two GRÓ GEST 2022 fellows, one from India, one from Malawi, returned to their universities to lead on efforts to design and develop new gender studies courses.

Table 2: Postgraduate fellowship in Iceland - Overview of the core course modules

GRÓ FTP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module 1: International/Regional Perspectives of Fisheries Module 2: Specialized Training (linked to one of GRÓ FTP's four lines of specialization) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fisheries Policy and Management Aquatic Resource Assessment and Monitoring Quality Management of Fish Handling and Processing Sustainable Aquaculture Module 3: Individual research project paper under the supervision of expert(s) 	GRÓ GEST <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module 1: Theories and Concepts of Gender Module 2: Project Development Tools Module 3: Gender, Violence and Security Module 4: Gender, Labour and Migration Module 5: Gender, Environment and Climate Change Module 6: Individual research project paper under the supervision of expert(s)
GRÓ GTP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module 1: Introductory to Geothermal Energy Module 2: Specialized Training (linked to one of GRÓ GTP's eight lines of specialization) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geothermal Geology Geothermal Exploration Reservoir Engineering and Borehole Geophysics Chemistry of Thermal Fluids Environmental Science Geothermal Utilization Drilling Technology Project Management and Finances Module 3: Individual research project paper under the supervision of expert(s) 	GRÓ LRT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module 1: Scientific methods and dissemination skills Module 2: Course principles and frameworks Module 3: Biophysical fundamentals of land management Module 4: Sustainable land management and restoration planning Module 5: Implementation Module 6: Evaluation and lessons learned Module 7: Key global environmental challenges Module 8: Individual research project paper under the supervision of expert(s)

During the period 2020-2024, a total of 386 young to mid-career postgraduate professionals were enrolled on the programmes. Of this cohort, 55% are female and 45% are male, while for 56% their country of origin is in Africa, for 27% in Asia, for 12% in LAC, for 3% in Oceania, and 2% in Eastern Europe, with 35% of the cohort from Least Developed Countries, and 48% from Lower Middle Income Countries.⁴

The main partner countries (number of fellows enrolled during the period 2020-2024) included:

- Africa:** Kenya and Uganda (each via all four GRÓ programmes), Malawi, Ghana and Nigeria (each via GRÓ FTP, GRÓ GEST, GRÓ LRT), Tanzania (GRÓ FTP, GRÓ GEST, GRÓ GTP), Sierra Leone, Liberia and Namibia (each via GRÓ FTP, GRÓ GEST), Lesotho (GRÓ LRT).
- Asia:** Mongolia (GRÓ GEST, GRÓ GTP, GRÓ LRT), Indonesia (GRÓ FTP, GRÓ GTP), India (GRÓ GEST, GRÓ GTP), Sri Lanka (GRÓ FTP, GRÓ GEST), Kyrgyzstan (GRÓ LRT), Nepal (GRÓ GEST).
- LAC:** El Salvador (GRÓ FTP, GRÓ GTP), Nicaragua (GRÓ FTP, GRÓ GTP), Colombia (GRÓ GTP).

Table 3: Postgraduate fellowship (five-to-six months) programmes in Iceland – 2020-2024

GRÓ fellowship	GRÓ FTP	GRÓ GEST	GRÓ GTP	GRÓ LRT	GRÓ Centre
2020-2024	97 fellows	109 fellows	98 fellows	82 fellows	386 fellows
	50 F, 47 M	81 F, 28 M	44 F, 54 M	36 F, 46 M	211 F, 175 M
	41% LDC	37% LDC	13% LDC	50% LDC	35% LDC
	37% LMIC	45% LMIC	62% LMIC	50% LMIC	48% LMIC

As reported in the 2024 external evaluation of GRÓ, **feedback of the direct beneficiaries and partner organizations attests to the relevance and high quality of the training provided.** Feedback from the GRÓ alumni (fellows) indicated a high level of satisfaction with the relevance of the training and research opportunities offered, and the value and benefits of their new knowledge and understanding, and skills to their profession. GRÓ alumni reported large improvements in technical skills relevant to their field that has fostered their professional career development (such as substantial career promotions, moving into higher roles, leading departments, and taking on greater responsibilities within their organizations).

⁴ In 2025, the GRÓ programmes plan to enrol a total of 97 young to mid-career professionals on the GRÓ fellowship programmes.

Function: Robust recruitment process of fellows

The selection of fellows for the postgraduate training in Iceland follows **a rigorous application, review and interview process**. Each GRÓ programme receives nominations of candidates for the postgraduate training from its partner organizations in the programme's partner countries.⁵ Candidates must be young to mid-career professionals whom are permanent employees of the organization. The organizations also guarantee that nominated candidates can return to their position upon completing the programme in Iceland. This is designed to minimize brain drain from the partner countries and maximize the chance that the enhanced capacity of participants contributes within their respective institution and their home country at large. Partner organizations are commonly public sector or public service oriented institutions, including public service utilities, universities, and civil society and community based groups.

Each programme assesses the applications submitted by the nominated candidates for its programme, and subsequently conducts interviews with candidates, in collaboration with their partner organization. Each programme aims to finalize the formal selection process and communication to partner organizations and candidates minimally five- or six-months before the start of its fellowship programme.

Function: Cater to the practical and social needs of the fellows in Iceland

The **practical and social needs of the fellows in Iceland are fully catered for via the GRÓ Centre and GRÓ programmes**. This includes issues of housing, medical insurance and access to services, per diem, and guidance on utilizing local transport systems and networks in the Reykjavík region. In addition, GRÓ Centre offers organized swimming lessons for fellows attending the programmes. GRÓ fellows have mentioned Icelandic swimming pool culture and learning to swim as an empowering part of their stay in Iceland. **Each GRÓ programme provides full pastoral care and support to its fellows during their stay**. This includes support to help fellows acclimatize to their stay in Iceland, support during their training and research project, as well as responding to individual personal needs/issues that may arise. It also includes the organization of field visits to introduce fellows to Iceland, its culture and heritage.

Scholarship programme

Function: Provide scholarships to former fellows to complete MSc and/or PhD studies

The provision of grant for scholarships for postgraduate university degree studies is available to GRÓ programme alumni seeking to undertake further academic study, research and advancement. Scholarship programme grant is awarded to alumni based on their motivation, the research potential of their initial outline of topics and issues, and performance exhibited during the fellowship programme. The **research and production of new knowledge by the scholars relates to issues in their country's context**. The scholarships are fully funded, including travel, accommodation, and sustenance. The scholarship programme has great potential to bring sustainable impacts. Scholars commonly work at a university or research institute in their home country, which by nature have the incentive to further use and disseminate the benefits in terms of the new knowledge obtained and created by the scholars.

During the period 2020-2024, a total of 28 fellows completed their MSc studies and thesis (graduated), one fellow completed her MA studies and thesis (graduated), and a total of eight fellows completed their PhD studies and defended their thesis (graduated). As of the end of 2024, there were four fellows currently enrolled on MSc programmes, studies on-going into year 2025, and there were 14 fellows continuing to pursue their PhD studies and research into year 2025.

An independent evaluation of GRÓ's master's and doctoral scholarship programme was completed in 2023.⁶ It attested **the scholarship programme overwhelmingly positive as regards to its effectiveness**. A major benefit cited by the beneficiaries is that postgraduate study in Iceland provides them with access to individuals and institutions with significant expertise in their subject area. The topics

⁵ GRÓ GEST operates an open call for nominations

⁶ Gollifer, Harðardóttir, Bottomley (2023), An evaluation of GRÓ's master's and doctoral scholarship programme.

and research undertaken during postgraduate study in Iceland were reported by 94% of the graduated students to be extremely relevant to the development challenges within their home countries.

Creation and dissemination of new knowledge (research products)

Function: Conduct applied research and support in creating and disseminating new knowledge

The creation and dissemination of new knowledge is a fundamental goal of the GRÓ programmes. **Via the fellowship programme and the scholarship programme approximately 100 new research products (original research projects) are developed and completed by the GRÓ fellows per annum.** The research projects target the specific needs of the partner countries and organizations of the fellows, and bring to light new knowledge and potential solutions benefitting development in their countries. The research activities also help to strengthen research capacity in partner countries and organizations.

Table 4: Research products (the creation and dissemination of new knowledge) – 2020-2024

GRÓ	Fellows – individual research project papers	Master's Degree – final thesis papers	PhD – research papers and final thesis papers
GRÓ FTP	97 research/project papers	6 thesis papers	4 research and 4 thesis papers
GRÓ GEST	109 research/project papers	No scholars	5 research papers
GRÓ GTP	98 research/project papers	22 thesis papers	9 research and 3 thesis papers
GRÓ LRT	82 research/project papers	1 thesis paper	1 thesis paper
GRÓ Centre Total	386 research project papers completed by GRÓ fellows	29 thesis papers completed by GRÓ fellows	18 research and 8 thesis papers completed by GRÓ fellows

As reported in the 2024 external evaluation of GRÓ, **feedback from GRÓ alumni indicates that fellows consider the research project paper as the most useful component of the training programmes.** In addition to publication of research on the GRÓ programme webpages, in some instances, research conducted by the fellows can form the basis of publications in peer-reviewed journals, or presentation at conferences and symposiums relevant to their work, or supplement their postgraduate research. Among the GRÓ alumni responding to the 2024 external evaluation survey, 59% indicated that they had subsequently produced a master's thesis based on their research during the fellowship programme. Other common knowledge products reported among the respondents were conference papers and proceedings (23%), policy reports (15%), and journal articles (13%). In addition, 69% of respondents disseminated their research via presentations for colleagues within their organization, 20% via presentations for partners at local community level, and 17% via presentations to senior policy-makers.

Short courses in partner countries

Function: Develop and deliver short courses in partnership with UNESCO, local, and/or international organisations

Each of the GRÓ programmes provides short courses in/for partner countries, in response to the demand of its programme partners. **Each GRÓ short course is developed and delivered in close cooperation with partner institutions and stakeholders in the target countries,** to ensure that short courses are tailored to the country context and partner organization(s) needs. Commonly the partner organization(s) provide some form of co-funding, logistical and technical support for the delivery of the short courses. Commonly the GRÓ programmes collaborate with long-standing partner organizations in the target countries for training delivery, as part of GRÓ's support to develop local professional training capacity.

For **GRÓ GEST** and for **GRÓ LRT** the direct beneficiaries of the short courses are commonly local professionals and experts working in regional/district governments and local communities, academic or research institutes, as well as civil society or community-based groups. For **GRÓ FTP** the direct beneficiaries are professional staffs working in the fisheries and aquatic sector in the partner country and/or partner region institutions, such as national government, regulatory bodies, local public services, fisheries agencies, research institutes, and universities. For **GRÓ GTP** the direct beneficiaries are policy-

makers, professional staffs and specialists working in the field of geothermal energy policy, in national governments, regulatory agencies, research institutes, and in geothermal energy companies.

Recent examples of short courses delivered by the GRÓ programmes include the following:

- **GRÓ FTP: Fisheries Assessment and Data Modelling**, a 'training of trainers' initiative in 2023 supporting national partners from the Caribbean region, focused on strengthening the capacity of key stock assessment specialists and fisheries data analysis specialists working in the region.
- **GRÓ GEST**: offers two short training courses, tailor-made to the partner country context and local needs. **Gender and Climate Change** was delivered on five occasions in Malawi (2021-2024). **Teaching Gender to Youth** was delivered on five occasions in Uganda (2023-2024).
- **GRÓ GTP**: Traditionally delivers, on an annual basis, short courses on issues of **Geothermal Energy Utilization, Exploration, Development and Management** in Kenya and in El Salvador. Both are targeted at geothermal experts based within the region (Eastern Africa, and LAC region).
- **GRÓ LRT: Integrated approaches for land restoration through sustainable land management** delivered in Ethiopia in 2022, and **Community-Based Forest Landscape Restoration for Environmental Sustainability** delivered in Sierra Leone in 2024.

The **short courses are highly effective** in raising awareness on specific topics and issues. The **short courses are oriented towards the practical application of new understanding and skills**, commonly providing the trainees with practical tools to support their development and implementation of suitably tailored actions to address specific development challenges. As reported in the 2024 external evaluation of GRÓ, **feedback from the trainees as to the beneficial value of the training is strongly positive** in terms of the relevance and usefulness of the training course and content to their job and/or profession.

While all of the courses are tailored to specific needs and country context, the core scope, content and training methodology of many of the **courses are capable of being replicated** in other country contexts. This is dependent on local need in potential additional partner countries for short course training support, and the identification by programmes of strong local partners for course development.

Innovative online learning content

Function: Create innovative electronic learning platforms

Over the past years the GRÓ programmes have progressively developed a set of **online digital learning tools and content** in their area of expertise, **primarily provided open access to all participants and accessible online free of charge**. The approach of each programme is specific to its needs and the ambition as to how such online training content contributes to its overall training offer package, and the potential synergies that can be developed between such tools with its other programme interventions.

Each GRÓ programme recognizes that online content is **a means for the programme to reach a significantly larger audience of people** interested to engage in expanding their knowledge and understanding of specific issues linked to the advancement of sustainable socio-economic development.

- **GRÓ FTP**: has developed a series of five videos⁷ focused on the relationship of fisheries and the SDGs, with specific focus on SDG 14. There are ten targets within SDG 14, five of which deal with fisheries and how humans can use the living aquatic resources to build sustainable futures.
- **GRÓ GEST**: has developed a series of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in the field of gender equality and gender studies. GRÓ GEST has released four MOOCs⁸ to date, with a fifth presently in the earlier stages of development indicatively to be launched online in 2026.

⁷ GRÓ FTP SDG 14 Videos: (1) "Introduction to the SDG 14 Videos series"; (2) "Preserving the value of fish"; (3) "Small projects for big impacts in fisheries"; (4) "Data for sustainable fisheries management"; and (5) "Defining and defending small-scale fisheries".

⁸ GRÓ GEST MOOCs: (1) "Gender and Intersectionality"; (2) "Gender and Development: Critical Theories and Approaches"; (3) "Gender Violence and Post-Conflict States"; (4) "Men, Boys and Masculinities".

- **GRÓ GTP:** has delivered online short courses on geothermal energy tailored to the context of regional partners and participants in Africa, in Asia, and in the LAC region. GRÓ GTP is currently investigating the feasibility to develop digital learning tools to complement the online courses.
- **GRÓ LRT:** has developed three MOOCs⁹ focused on how the restoration of degraded land and the utilization of sustainable land management practices based on sustainable business models provides a return of financial-, natural- and social capital and a return of inspiration.

Provision of training of high quality by experienced and knowledgeable lecturers

Function: High quality training by experienced and knowledgeable lecturers

The **GRÓ programmes under GRÓ Centre are hosted within four Icelandic institutions** that work in the fields of fisheries, gender equality, geothermal energy, and land restoration. These are independent educational and research institutions, with significant expertise in higher learning and capacity development, which were involved in the creation of their individual programme and subsequently its operation. In addition to its employment of the staff that manages and implements its GRÓ programme, **the host institution provides from its staff access to other senior lecturers and research project supervisors that contribute to programme implementation.** Each programme also has collaboration agreements and works with other relevant institutions to access specialist lecturers. Host institutions also provide their GRÓ programme with full access to technical facilities for its activities and operations.

As reported in the 2024 external evaluation of GRÓ, **feedback from GRÓ alumni indicates that the fellows appreciate the high level of expertise of the lecturers and the individual research project supervisors,** the integration of theoretical and practical training and the relevance of the curriculum. Feedback on the short courses also indicates the quality of the training and the lecturers is well received.

Alumni networking and empowerment

Function: Facilitate networking among fellows and institutional partners and

Function: Facilitate the active involvement of former fellows in workshops and conferences

GRÓ aims to empower the alumni professionally through networking and community building activities. Each GRÓ programme manages direct engagement with its alumni. The most common alumni forums used by all programmes are email lists, WhatsApp and Facebook, as well as channels such as LinkedIn, Instagram and Zoom. Each programme provides regular Newsletter updates to its alumni, once or twice per year, and has held periodic online networking meetings for its alumni. Programmes also engage with the alumni via occasional meetings held in specific partner countries. Each programme also **actively seeks to involve its alumni in the organization and/or in the delivery of the short courses in the partner countries.** This further builds their experience and empowers them as change agents.

GRÓ FTP and GRÓ GTP also actively encourage their alumni to submit their subsequent original research papers to leading international conferences and symposiums relevant to their field of expertise, supporting the alumni with papers selected by the convenors to participate in the conferences.¹⁰ **GRÓ LRT** has supported its alumni to participate within leading conferences on an ad hoc basis. **GRÓ GEST** has established an innovative small-scale grant mechanism to co-fund local development projects proposed and led by its alumni, with the direct support of their organization/institution. Projects directly focus on advancing gender equality and gender transformative approaches to achieve real social change in the local context. GRÓ GEST has supported four projects since its launch of the March 8 Fund. In addition to their contribution to SDG 5, the direct effects of the projects align with SDGs 3, 7, 8 and 16.

GRÓ Centre has also advanced promotion of the collective GRÓ programme alumni and network, with a focus on supporting the formal development of GRÓ country and/or regional chapters. The

⁹ GRÓ LRT MOOCs: (1) "A Business Approach to Sustainable Landscape Restoration"; (2) "A Business Model Innovation for Sustainable Landscape Restoration"; (3) "Sheep in the Land of Fire and Ice"

¹⁰ For GRÓ FTP the leading global event for its alumni is the International Institute of Fisheries Economics and Trade (IIFET) Conference and for GRÓ GTP the leading global event for its alumni is the World Geothermal Congress (WGC).

aim is for the alumni, from across all programmes, to promote local community building and networking initiatives specific to their needs. The approach has been successfully **piloted by GRÓ Centre in Uganda**, one of the main country beneficiaries of GRÓ support across all programmes over the decades of their operation, where the alumni has established a registered GRÓ country chapter. There is strong potential to replicate the model in other key country beneficiaries of GRÓ support, with Kenya and Malawi currently foremost in GRÓ Centre's plan to roll-out the model. As detailed in GRÓ's Alumni Strategy and guidelines, **via the promotion of such networking actions GRÓ also supports build connections between the GRÓ alumni in key countries with UNESCO Regional and/or Country Offices**. This is a means to promote the expertise and capacity that the GRÓ alumni can offer within their countries, and can potentially contribute to the wider development efforts of UNESCO and/or of other donor partners.

Support for the development of the training and research capacity of partner organizations

Function: Joint plans for capacity development and research with organisations and universities

GRÓ has successfully trained individuals from a diversity of organizations in the countries the fellows originate from, with a core part of the fellowship programme the **individual research project intended to contribute to the research and policy needs of the organization** and country of the fellow. While not always strategically steered via a formal joint plan for research, due to the range of potential partners that nominate prospective candidates, the organizations are benefitted by the access to new knowledge.

Beside this, **each GRÓ programme formally partners with a core group of organizations on specific knowledge exchange initiatives and the development of partners' organizational and institutional capacity** to design and implement high quality training, capacity development and research. These are commonly universities and professional training organizations in key countries for the programme, with collaboration traditionally undertaken over a period of years. Over the recent decade, GRÓ programmes have sought to work with fifteen or so such partners, for example Makerere University in Uganda, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Malawi, Pangea Educational Development International in Uganda, Samarkand State University in Uzbekistan, Mongolian University of Life Sciences, KenGen and Geothermal Development Company in Kenya, and LaGeo in El Salvador. The collaboration is demand driven by the partners, and mutually beneficial to the programmes in terms of achieving the scaling-up of GRÓ programme effort to provide high quality training in partner countries.

Advisory services

Function: Provide advisory services to partner organisations at national and international level

Each GRÓ programme, in cooperation with their host institution, has been involved in the **provision of ad hoc advisory services to partner organisations at the national and international level**. These include ad hoc requests from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland to the individual programmes for their support in the implementation of specific actions (for instance support to facilitate study tours and training for visiting partners and dignitaries in Iceland, or via training and advisory actions delivered in partner countries). Programmes have also partially engaged in undertaking consultancy projects to support specific development programmes of other donor actors, for instance UN organizations, World Bank, or OECD-DAC donor country partners, and GRÓ GTP also services for geothermal energy utilities.

Coordination and collaboration with UNESCO

Function: Promote the Centre's activities and the role of UNESCO in the four priority areas and

Function: Make recommendations to the UNESCO Secretariat on matters related to the four priority areas

Since 2020, led by GRÓ Centre, each of the GRÓ programmes has **engaged with its primary partners at UNESCO Headquarters** (sectors, sections and programmes), and to variant extent each programme also UNESCO partners at the level of specific countries (i.e. **UNESCO Country Offices and National Commissions for UNESCO**). For GRÓ the purpose of such engagement is primarily to promote the activities of the programmes, and to request support from UNESCO partners to assist GRÓ programmes identify

prospective local professional candidates for the fellowship and/or to identify local training organization partners the GRÓ programmes could potentially collaborate with to develop and deliver local courses.

GRÓ Centre promotes the collective actions and priorities of the GRÓ to UNESCO partners, notably in coordination with UNESCO Headquarters, and UNESCO regional/country partners in Eastern Africa. GRÓ Centre also compiles and finalizes the C2C annual report submitted to UNESCO on GRÓ's activities.

2.3 THE RELEVANCE OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CENTRE'S PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF UNESCO'S APPROVED PROGRAMME AND BUDGET (C/5), INCLUDING GLOBAL STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

The GRÓ training, research and knowledge production activities promote the capacity enhancement of individuals and organizations in low- and middle-income countries, in the fields of **geothermal energy, gender equality, land restoration, and sustainable management of fisheries and aquatic resources**.

Linked to UNESCO's 2014-2021 Medium-Term Strategy (37 C/4), the results achieved by GRÓ aligned with three UNESCO strategic objectives.¹¹ Linked to the 2022-2029 strategy (41 C/4), the work of GRÓ primarily aligns with three UNESCO outcomes.¹² Linked to UNESCO's prevailing Approved Programme and Budget (C/5), including global strategies and action plans, at the time that GRÓ was designated as a C2C under the auspices of UNESCO, the **work of GRÓ is primarily relevant to the following major programmes and expected results, and global priority (Africa and Gender Equality) outcomes**.

Table 5: GRÓ programme – main contribution to UNESCO's Programme and Budget (C/5)

UNESCO	UNESCO major programme expected results / UNESCO global priority outcomes		
Major Programme – Education	Improved national policies and capacities to increase access for all women and men to equitable, affordable and quality-assured higher education and to advance the recognition of studies	National capacities strengthened to equip learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to live healthy lives, promote sustainable development and engage with the world as responsible global citizens	
	National capacities strengthened to address gender equality holistically in national education systems	Research and foresight, monitoring and reporting have effectively generated evidence, recommendations and insight to advance progress towards SDG 4	
Major Programme – Natural sciences	Member States have strengthened their capacity to develop and monitor inclusive science, technology and innovation (STI) policy and knowledge systems	Member States have strengthened their institutional and human capacity to produce, disseminate and apply science, technology and innovation (STI)	SIDS Member States, local communities and indigenous peoples have increased their capacity to mobilize local knowledge systems, and build synergies with science, so as to address challenges of sustainable development
	Member States have strengthened management of both geological resources and geohazards risk towards the achievement of related SDG and targets	Member States have strengthened management of natural resources towards the achievement of SDGs and targets related to biodiversity and climate change resilience	Member States have developed UNESCO-designated sites as learning sites for inclusive and comprehensive approaches to environmental, economic and social aspects of sustainable development

¹¹ UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2021: Strategic Objective 4 (Strengthening science, technology and innovation systems and policies – nationally, regionally and globally), Strategic Objective 5 (Promoting international scientific cooperation on critical challenges to sustainable development), and Strategic Objective 6 (Supporting inclusive social development, fostering intercultural dialogue for the rapprochement of cultures and promoting ethical principles).

¹² UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029: Outcome 3 (Enhance knowledge for climate change action, biodiversity, water and ocean management, and disaster risk reduction), Outcome 4 (Advance international cooperation in science, technology and innovation), and Outcome 7 (Promote inclusion and combat discrimination, hate speech and stereotypes).

UNESCO	UNESCO major programme expected results / UNESCO global priority outcomes		
Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)	Science-informed policies for reduced vulnerability to ocean hazards, for the global conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources, and increased resilience and adaptation to climate change, developed and implemented by Member States, towards realization of Agenda 2030		
Major Programme – Social and human sciences	Public policy-making in Member States strengthened, based on scientific evidence, humanities-based knowledge, ethics, and human rights frameworks	National institutional and human capacities strengthened at all levels to generate, manage and apply knowledge for inclusive, equitable development that is based on ethical values and human rights	
	Youth-led action enabled, from local to global level, to address societal challenges and consolidate peace	Member States' commitments to global agendas in favour of inclusive, sustainable and peaceful societies demonstrated through targeted advocacy campaigns and awareness-raising initiatives	
Global Priority Africa	Improvement of the quality of education through the development of inclusive and holistic policies and programmes adapted to the needs of African States	Policy development and institutional capacity-building to support the production and dissemination of knowledge in Africa as well as the use and validation of scientific knowledge and their application; Participation of youth and especially women in science and engineering activities reinforced through mentoring activities	Institutional and technical capacity-building and cooperation reinforcement in the field of science, technology and innovation for the sustainable management of natural resources, resilience to natural disasters and the development of green and blue economies
Global Priority Gender Equality	Ensure that gender equality is a constituent element of the global education agenda with a focus on "equality of opportunity" as well as "equality of outcome", especially in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	Ensure that international science cooperation for peace, sustainability and social inclusion allows for representation and a voice for everyone in a gender-inclusive manner and provides the conditions for all to be agents of mitigation, adaptation, resilience and sustainability	
	Ensure that processes supporting social transformations and intercultural dialogue acknowledge and take into consideration the roles, contributions, and voices of people from all walks of life in a gender-inclusive manner	Ensure that policies for sustainable development aim to be gender transformative by adopting gender inclusiveness in capacity-building efforts in order for those policies to serve the needs of as broad a constituency as possible	

UNESCO Approved Programme and Budget 2018-2019 (C/5) and Approved Programme and Budget 2020-2021 (C/5)

While the work of GRÓ C2C is relevant to UNESCO's guiding strategies, priorities and programmes, to date **the extent of the contribution of GRÓ to the achievement of UNESCO's approved programme and budget is largely complementary, coherent, rather than via direct synergies created.** GRÓ LRT and UNESCO MAB have established an explicit partnership to guide their collaboration over the medium-term, linked to aligning efforts supporting capacity development of UNESCO partners within the African Biosphere Reserves Network. For the other GRÓ programmes their extent of collaboration with UNESCO partners is more ad hoc, and their contribution to UNESCO programmes less explicit. *Specific analysis of GRÓ's coordination and interaction with UNESCO is presented in chapter 2.5.*

As this is a renewal evaluation, the evaluator also assessed the relevance of the GRÓ programmes in terms of their alignment with and potential contribution to UNESCO strategic plans going forward. In this context, the linkage of the GRÓ programmes to the preliminary proposals by the Director-General concerning the Draft Programme and Budget of the Organization for 2026-2029 (43 C/5) is clear. The GRÓ FTP, GRÓ GTP and GRÓ LRT programmes principally link to outcomes two and three in the preliminary proposals, while GRÓ GEST principally links to outcomes one and six.¹³

¹³ UNESCO (2024), Preliminary proposals by the Director-General concerning the Draft Programme and Budget of the Organization for 2026-2029 (43 C/5): Outcome 1 (A world where inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities are ensured), Outcome 2 (A world where biodiversity, water and the ocean are valued and sustainably managed), Outcome 3 (A world where the sciences, technology, and innovation are responsive to current and emerging challenges and accessible to all), Outcome 6 (A world of peace and inclusion, free from discrimination, disinformation and hate speech).

2.4 THE RELEVANCE OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CENTRE TO GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDAS

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its associated SDGs provide a key frame of reference for the work of the GRÓ Centre and the four GRÓ training programmes. Prior to adoption of the SDGs, the UN Millennium Development Goals formed the key international frame of reference. The GRÓ Theory of Change and Results Framework specifically reference the SDGs and impact of the programmes in terms of progress toward the SDGs through capable individuals and organizations.

The principal SDGs that the individual programmes reference and seek to contribute towards are SDG 5 Gender Equality for GRÓ GEST, SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy for GRÓ GTP, SDG 14 Life below Water for GRÓ FTP, and SDG 15 Life on Land for GRÓ LRT. Recognizing that the SDGs are interrelated, GRÓ's Theory of Change indicates other SDGs of particular relevance for GRÓ's work, namely – SDG 1 No poverty, SDG 2 Zero hunger, SDG 3 Good health and wellbeing, SDG 4 Quality education, SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth, SDG 10 Reduced inequalities, SDG 12 Sustainable consumption & production, SDG 13 Climate action, SDG 16 Peace, justice, and strong institutions, and SDG 17 Partnership for the goals (enhancing SDG capacity in low or middle-income countries).

Beside the SDGs, the work of GRÓ also contributes to other international development agendas such as the **Paris Agreement on Climate Change**, the **African Union Agenda 2063**, and the **SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway**. The individual programmes also reference specific UN and international norms, policy frameworks, instruments and organizations of relevance to their field of expertise, such as:

- **GRÓ FTP:** UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) and other international conventions that deal with environmental science and the eradication of poverty, such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). The technical and operational focus of GRÓ FTP also relates closely to the work of UN FAO.
- **GRÓ GEST:** UN instruments relevant to gender equality and the protection of women's rights and fundamental freedoms, notably UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Security Council Resolution 1325/2000 on Women, Peace, and Security and related resolutions. Within the UN, partners include UN Women, UNDP, and UNEP.
- **GRÓ GTP:** Contributes to Iceland's commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and aspects of the UNFCCC. GRÓ GTP has worked with UNEP, the Nordic Development Fund (NDF), the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), and the World Bank Group.
- **GRÓ LRT:** Strongly relates to the three Rio Conventions, primarily the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the UNFCCC and CBD, plus the UN's Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

2.5 QUALITY OF COORDINATION AND INTERACTION WITH UNESCO HEADQUARTERS AND IN THE FIELD, AS WELL AS WITH NATIONAL COMMISSIONS, AND OTHER THEMATICALLY RELATED CATEGORY 1 AND 2 INSTITUTES OR CENTRES

As GRÓ is a multidisciplinary C2C, GRÓ has interacted with UNESCO headquarters across a range of UNESCO sectors and programmes. In the field, GRÓ C2C has actively prioritized its cooperation efforts with UNESCO partners in Africa (reflecting that the majority of GRÓ alumni are from Sub-Saharan Africa), and more recently also on building links with UNESCO partners in Asia. **The operation of the partnership between GRÓ C2C and UNESCO is reviewed by the GRÓ Governing Board at each Board meeting.** The GRÓ Board also provides strategic guidance and decision-making linked to further development of the partnership by GRÓ with UNESCO, and sets the strategic vision for GRÓ as a C2C. **The representative of UNESCO on the GRÓ Board is appointed by the Director-General of UNESCO.**

As reported in the 2024 external evaluation of GRÓ, **the operational partnership of GRÓ C2C with UNESCO is still in the development phase.** Stakeholder consultations undertaken as part of this review

highlighted that **the extent of coordination and interaction realized by GRÓ C2C with its partners at UNESCO headquarters should be strengthened and more clearly structured by GRÓ, as a C2C.** Stakeholder partners at UNESCO headquarters emphasized the need for GRÓ C2C to build a common approach, as a C2C, to guide its engagement with UNESCO and in building its contribution to UNESCO programmes, as opposed to following a GRÓ sub-programme silo-mentality approach to collaboration.

Reflecting that the Government of Iceland formally notified UNESCO in spring-2024 of its request to renew the status of GRÓ as a C2C under the auspices of UNESCO, the **2024 external evaluation of GRÓ specifically recommended that GRÓ prepare a medium-term strategy and priorities for GRÓ C2C and GRÓ programmes linked to the promotion of GRÓ C2C's cooperation with UNESCO partners.**

Coordination and interaction with UNESCO Headquarters

Over the period 2020-2024, **GRÓ C2C has primarily interacted with UNESCO partners in the:**

- Bureau of Strategic Planning,
- Division for Gender Equality,
- Earth Sciences and Geoparks Section, and the International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (IGGP),
- Education Sector,
- Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), and the UNESCO Ocean Programmes,
- Natural Sciences Sector, Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences, and the Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB), and the
- Social and Human Sciences Sector.

As noted in chapter 2.3, to date the extent of contribution of GRÓ C2C to the achievement of UNESCO's approved programme and budget is largely complementary, rather than via direct synergies created.

This reflects that **the extent of coordination and interaction realized by GRÓ C2C and by the individual GRÓ programmes with partners at UNESCO headquarters is only partially structured on the side of how GRÓ C2C seeks to undertake periodic interaction and information exchange.** GRÓ C2C has not provided detailed guidance to the GRÓ programmes as to a common approach for their periodic dialogue and coordination with UNESCO sectoral partners, or on approaches that GRÓ can utilize to build closer collaboration with UNESCO in the area of programme implementation and coordination. Each GRÓ programme has consulted with its UNESCO headquarters partners to introduce the programme and to discuss potential areas for closer cooperation and interaction, but for three of the four GRÓ programmes few concrete partnership actions were actually realized by them as a result.¹⁴ A common constraint highlighted by the GRÓ programmes is their limited financial space for the realization of new programme intervention actions beyond their existing portfolio of interventions.

A notable example of very successful coordination and interaction between GRÓ C2C and UNESCO is the joint collaboration established between GRÓ's LRT and UNESCO's MAB programme. Since 2022, the programmes have worked together in order to support the capacity development of partners within the UNESCO African Biosphere Reserves Network, with GRÓ LRT receiving candidates for its fellowship training programme in Iceland from MAB partners in the Network. This is financed by GRÓ in the framework of the core budget grant for the fellowship training programme. GRÓ LRT and UNESCO MAB both report positive results, and good engagement. There is a good level of coherence between the goals and strategic objectives of the two programmes, which has facilitated the cooperation. GRÓ LRT benefits via its access to new partners and new partner countries in its priority region, Africa. MAB benefits in terms of the capacity development gains the fellowship programme brings to its partners.

¹⁴ GRÓ GEST consulted with UNESCO to discuss the development by GRÓ GEST of its series of MOOCs and the experience of UNESCO in the area of gender and masculinities, but the cooperation was only partially successful. IOC has periodically discussed with GRÓ FTP the potential for collaboration on IOC's OceanTeacher Global Academy network, but GRÓ FTP is uncertain as to how its specialist training content aimed at fisheries professionals fits within the wider OTGA training offer. GRÓ GTP and UNESCO have started to consult more closely, since late-2023, as to potential areas for closer cooperation on geoscience training provision.

UNESCO has indicated its interest to explore similar arrangements with the other GRÓ programmes, linked to building collaboration with specified UNESCO programme partners (such as biosphere reserves and geoparks), to nominate potential candidates for the fellowship training programme in Iceland.

UNESCO stakeholders consulted as part of this evaluation also indicated an interest to explore closer coordination and interaction with GRÓ C2C in the delivery of short training courses in partner countries.

Coordination and interaction with UNESCO Regional/Country Offices, and National Commissions

GRÓ C2C has built connections with UNESCO Regional and/or Country Offices and National Commissions for UNESCO, notably in Kenya and Uganda, **with the aim to promote the expertise the GRÓ alumni can offer within their countries**. There is clear potential for closer engagement between UNESCO with GRÓ alumni in partner countries. They are postgraduate professionals with capacity as “agents of change” in their area of expertise, and can potentially contribute to the development activities of UNESCO and/or other donors in their country. The interaction is initially driven by GRÓ Centre, which seeks to support networking opportunities for GRÓ alumni in key partner countries for GRÓ, as a means to support their further empowerment, professional advancement, and contribution to change. GRÓ Centre reports a good level of cooperation developed with its UNESCO partners in Uganda and Kenya.

There is clear potential, and a good level of interest from UNESCO stakeholders consulted as part of this evaluation, to explore the modalities for building closer interaction with GRÓ alumni in other countries.

2.6 THE PARTNERSHIPS DEVELOPED AND MAINTAINED WITH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PARTNERS AND DONORS

GRÓ Centre and the GRÓ programmes maintain **good partnerships with relevant government agencies, public or private partners and with other donor development partners**. These include partners in Iceland and in the partner countries targeted by each programme.

Partners in Iceland

Key partners in Iceland are the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Icelandic National Commission for UNESCO. In addition, via long-standing partnerships, each GRÓ programme formally collaborates with other specific Icelandic institutions providing relevant expertise to support GRÓ programme delivery.

The **Government of Iceland and Ministry for Foreign Affairs recognize the importance of GRÓ**. The four training programmes have been **an important part and one of the main pillars of Iceland’s international development cooperation portfolio for decades**. Iceland’s international development cooperation policy (i.e. policy adopted by Parliamentary Resolutions) explicitly identifies the four training programmes as one of the core modalities to be utilized for the implementation of the policy. For the Ministry for Foreign Affairs **the GRÓ programmes are a flagship product**. The programmes provide capacity development training in fields of recognized Icelandic expertise, with a strong focus on support to the world’s poorer countries (lower- and middle-income countries). The principal region targeted by GRÓ programme support is Sub-Saharan Africa, a priority focus region for Iceland. The training programmes are a relevant modality to complement other Icelandic efforts in the area of international development cooperation, and to extend the reach of Iceland’s support to a broader range of countries.

Cooperation with the **Icelandic National Commission for UNESCO** is good. The Chair of the National Commission is a member of the GRÓ Governing Board. GRÓ collaborates with the National Commission linked to its events in Iceland, presenting its work to the other entities in Iceland working with UNESCO.

GRÓ GEST and GRÓ LRT also maintain a good level of cooperation with the **Icelandic Red Cross**. It provides occasional co-funding for the programmes to undertake specific training actions that benefit partner countries for GRÓ. For instance, co-funding for individuals nominated by Red Cross organizations in GRÓ GEST partner countries to attend the fellowship programme, or collaboration with GRÓ LRT to deliver a short Course in Sierra Leone on Community-Based Forest Landscape Restoration.

Partners in the GRÓ partner countries for support

Each GRÓ programme has successfully developed and maintains partnerships and collaboration with partner institutions/organizations in the countries they support, including partnerships of long-term collaboration, and others more recently developed in new partner countries. The target group of beneficiaries for the GRÓ programmes work in these partner institutions/organizations. Partner organizations are commonly government, public sector or public service oriented institutions, including public service utilities, universities, research institutes, and civil society and community based groups. **Linked to the fellowship programme**, GRÓ FTP, GRÓ GTP and GRÓ LRT each collaborates with approximately 30-40 partner institutions in the main countries that they support. It is via those institutions that prospective candidates for the fellowship are formally nominated. GRÓ GEST collaborates with approximately 10-15 partner universities to assist in the identification of prospective candidates, and via its open call process a diversity of civil society and community based groups. **Each GRÓ programme also supports a core group of organizations on specific knowledge exchange initiatives and the development of partners' organizational and institutional capacity**. Over the recent years, the GRÓ programmes have worked with fifteen or so such partners, commonly universities and professional training organizations in key countries for the programme, with collaboration traditionally undertaken over a period of years. The purpose of the collaboration is to develop capacity linked to the design and implementation of high quality training (such as short courses and university course programmes) and research initiatives. The collaboration is demand driven by the partners, mutually beneficial to the programmes in terms of its scaling-up of training in partner countries.

Other donor partners

Each GRÓ programme cooperates with donor partners in its field of expertise. Cooperation is linked to the implementation of specific actions or projects, usually in the form of advisory services. Over the past years this included cooperation with EU programmes, UN Women, UNEP, Norway, and the World Bank.

2.7 THE NATURE AND EFFICIENCY OF THE CENTRE'S GOVERNANCE, INCLUDING ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS, MANAGEMENT, HUMAN RESOURCES AND ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

Governance and organizational arrangements

GRÓ was established in December 2019, operational since January 2020, as a multidisciplinary C2C under the auspices of UNESCO. GRÓ Centre operates under its own legal identity as an agency of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland. GRÓ brings together four Icelandic international development cooperation capacity development training programmes, operational over the past decades, under the framework of a single Icelandic entity and training offer.¹⁵ Each GRÓ programme continues to operate based in its independent educational and research host institution. **GRÓ Centre concludes a service agreement with each host institution linked to the provision of its individual GRÓ programme**.

Strategic governance and oversight of the GRÓ Centre and GRÓ programmes is provided via the **GRÓ Governing Board**, with the main function to form policy and supervise the activities of the Centre.¹⁶ GRÓ Governing Board meets frequently in order to review programme progress, strategic planning and the budget, issues linked to the partnership with UNESCO, as well as to discuss specific topics or issues for potential resolution. The GRÓ Governing Board held 27 meetings during the period 2020 to 2024.

¹⁵ Prior to 2020, each of the four programmes independently functioned based on a multi-party agreement between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the host institution, and the UN University (UNU) as a UN entity partner for institutional affiliation.

¹⁶ In accordance with the Government of Iceland Regulation on GRÓ, the Board is composed of six representatives. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs appoints one representative (as Board Chairperson), one is appointed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, one by the Director-General of UNESCO, one by the Icelandic National Commission for UNESCO, and one is designated independently by the Icelandic Development Cooperation Committee. The GRÓ Centre Director General is a non-voting member.

The scope of each programme, in terms of the detailed budget provided directly via financial grant of GRÓ Centre to each GRÓ programme, is determined by the GRÓ Governing Board on an annual basis.

At the **operational level**, GRÓ Centre oversees provision of the collective GRÓ programme offer, in accordance with the policy of the GRÓ Governing Board. GRÓ Centre is responsible for setting the common strategic framework, approach, and vision for the operation of the GRÓ Centre and its thematic programmes. The Director General of GRÓ Centre and Directors of the four programmes undertake regular follow-up on overall programme implementation, and the development of common frameworks. The development of the GRÓ Theory of Change, Strategic Priorities, and Results Framework, by the GRÓ Centre in collaboration with the four programmes, was a significant step forward to define specific, but common, development objectives and results that the GRÓ programmes, in their thematic field, each contribute to. Development of the collective GRÓ Alumni Strategy and operational guidance tools is also a significant step forward in terms of how GRÓ seeks to engage with and further empower GRÓ alumni.

Each host institution is independently responsible for the operational delivery of its GRÓ programme, in accordance with its strategic plan and annual action plans to guide programme operations. The strategic and operational plans are developed by each programme in collaboration with their programme partners in Iceland and key stakeholder and national organizations in partner countries.

The overall governance and organizational framework set-up for operation of the GRÓ C2C is coherent.

Efficiency of management

As reported in the 2024 external evaluation of GRÓ, the evaluator judged that **operational efficiency at the level of the GRÓ programmes is good**. Delivery of the intended programme results, in terms of quantity and quality, is on time. The majority of different programme interventions function based on clearly defined processes and timelines for their planning, development and delivery. However, **at the level of GRÓ Centre**, the evaluator judged **operational efficiency as adequate**. While the programmes have clearly defined internal processes and timelines for the implementation of their programme interventions, GRÓ Centre lacked detailed internal rules of procedure and timelines for collaboration with the programmes. Other than certain deadlines included in the service agreements, for the purposes of internal reporting by the programmes to GRÓ Centre, the annual programme management cycle by GRÓ Centre, in partnership with the programmes and host institutions, was not precisely defined. This is a constraint to promoting an efficient (and effective) operational partnership between GRÓ Centre and programmes. The **2024 external evaluation of GRÓ presented specific recommendations**, directed to GRÓ Centre as the lead actor, including the need (1) to formalize GRÓ Centre operational processes for collaboration with the programmes, (2) to establish a framework for periodic structured dialogue between the GRÓ Centre and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and (3) to create a framework for structured dialogue between GRÓ Centre and programmes and Icelandic embassies in partner countries.

Efficiency of accountability mechanisms

The efficiency and effectiveness of the GRÓ accountability and programme monitoring and reporting mechanisms has been strengthened in the past years with a clearer focus on results-based management.

Each host institution is responsible to submit **quarterly financial information to the GRÓ Centre** on its GRÓ programme, and **end-of-year final accounts** linked to the individual programme's overall financing. The host institution provides GRÓ Centre an **annual technical report** on the programme's activities and the specific outputs delivered. The format for the technical report covers each of the GRÓ programme intervention approaches, with output data reported as per GRÓ's Results Framework. **GRÓ Centre prepares the GRÓ annual reports**, which are reviewed by the GRÓ Governing Board prior to formal completion and adoption. This includes a C2C annual report prepared as per UNESCO format.

Adoption of the **GRÓ Results Framework** significantly strengthens the GRÓ monitoring systems, via its inclusion of common key performance indicators against which each programme should now collect and report data. It also establishes **specific indicators against which to measure the outcomes of the programmes** as assessed by the alumni and their partner organization three-years after graduation.

This is vital if GRÓ seeks to collect credible data as to the GRÓ programme outcomes and impact. Previously, the individual programmes had only periodically used formal tracer surveys of their alumni.

As reported in the 2024 external evaluation of GRÓ, the **programme monitoring, reporting, and steering mechanisms are generally good, though with some room for improvement** in collecting and reporting standard statistical data on the feedback received from the beneficiaries of the training provided. The **2024 external evaluation of GRÓ presented specific recommendations**, including the need (1) for the GRÓ programmes to ensure the collection and reporting of standard statistical data on the feedback from the direct beneficiaries of the programmes, (2) for GRÓ to introduce systematic formal tracer surveys of the GRÓ alumni over the medium- and longer-term period (post-fellowship), and (3) for GRÓ to prepare a formal communication strategy to guide its efforts to raise awareness of the GRÓ.

Human resources

Human resources consist of the **core GRÓ programme staffs**, that directly manage each programme, as well as the diversity of **lectures and supervisors** that the host institutions and partner organizations provide to support the implementation and delivery of the programmes. Each GRÓ programme works with a pool of specialist lecturers and supervisors that can support programme actions and fellows' research projects. Overall, **human resources available to the programmes are efficiently deployed**.

It is evident that **the level of core staffing made available to directly manage the work of the GRÓ programmes has decreased over the recent years and is now somewhat limited**. GRÓ Centre has a core staffing level of 1.5 persons Full-Time Equivalent (FTE), while each GRÓ programme now only has a core staffing level of approximately 2.5 to 4 persons FTE. The management of each GRÓ programme is heavily reliant on the institutional memory of its long-term serving core staffs, their knowledge of local partners and their strong awareness of the nature of the collaborative partnerships that programmes have built with core institutions in partner countries over the past years. As reported in the 2024 external evaluation of GRÓ, the extent of core staff FTE managing the GRÓ GTP and the GRÓ LRT programmes is low considering the amount of work required. The extent of core staff FTE at GRÓ Centre is also low.

2.8 THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR ENSURING SUSTAINABLE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY AND VIABILITY

The Government of Iceland, via the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, is the primary source of funding for the GRÓ – as part of its international development cooperation policy and budget. The Ministry's core contribution to the training programmes from 2010 to 2023 equalled approximately 8,600 million ISK (Icelandic krona), equivalent to approximately 60.6 million USD in current exchange rates. **In 2023, the Ministry's contribution to the GRÓ Centre and the GRÓ programmes was 897 million ISK, representing approx. 6.7% of Iceland's total international development cooperation budget**. In addition to the core funding provided to GRÓ by the Ministry, the individual GRÓ programmes obtain external funding for their activities through counterpart contributions from partner institutions, grants for specific actions, and their participation in international projects. While the extent of **co-funding raised by each programme fluctuates annually**, GRÓ GEST and GRÓ GTP commonly receive between 10-20% external funding for their programme. GRÓ GTP commonly receives co-funding from its key partner organizations in El Salvador and Kenya. GRÓ GEST and GRÓ LRT, via their respective university host institution, have accessed co-funding from the Erasmus+ programme for staff and student (fellow) exchange, and for international cooperation to develop innovative training offer in the form of MOOCs.

Reflecting that GRÓ is a flagship product and one of the main pillars of Iceland's international development cooperation portfolio, the longer-term financial sustainability of GRÓ Centre and the GRÓ programmes is assured via the core funding provided by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The primary internal constraint for the GRÓ programmes is the lack of mid- to long-term budgetary planning security, or even a broad financial perspective and framework. Currently GRÓ operates on the basis of an annual budget planning and approval process, not multi-annual. The lack of

an indicative medium-term financial framework for the GRÓ programmes hinders the programmes' capacity to plan substantial capacity development initiatives in collaboration with core partner organizations over the medium-term period needed to build local capacity and results sustainability. Currently the **GRÓ programmes lack adequate annual budget to meet the extent of the programme output result targets set for GRÓ Centre and GRÓ programmes as Strategic Priorities up to 2027**. The **2024 external evaluation of GRÓ presented specific recommendations in this area**, including the need (1) for GRÓ Centre and GRÓ programmes to prepare medium-term plans as to the extent of their anticipated delivery of programme outputs for the period up to 2030, and (2) for GRÓ Centre to provide the Ministry for Foreign Affairs with an outline of the broad financial perspective and framework required by GRÓ Centre and programmes to deliver the ambition of the Strategic Priorities up to 2030.

2.9 THE CENTRE'S AUTONOMY WITHIN ITS NATIONAL TERRITORY AND ITS LEGAL CAPACITY FOR OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

GRÓ complies with the legal and governance requirements for C2Cs under the auspices of UNESCO, as defined in UNESCO document 40 C/79 and annexes (2019 Strategy for C2Cs). GRÓ Centre operates under its own legal identity as an autonomous agency under the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland. GRÓ has the functional autonomy and the legal capacity necessary for the execution of its activities.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Agreement between UNESCO and the Government of Iceland regarding GRÓ as a C2C

In light of the analysis and findings, the evaluation review concludes that **renewal of the Agreement between UNESCO and the Government of Iceland regarding GRÓ as a C2C is mutually beneficial for the partners. The evaluators recommend the renewal of the Agreement between the partners.**

The current Agreement sets a clear framework for GRÓ as a C2C under the auspices of UNESCO. Stakeholder consultations did not indicate the need for specific amendments to the Agreement.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS TO GRÓ C2C

The comprehensive external evaluation of GRÓ C2C and of the four GRÓ training programmes, commissioned by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, and completed in autumn 2024, presented 15 recommendations at GRÓ programme level, where change or reinforcement of GRÓ's operations would be beneficial. A summary of the recommendations is provided in Annex 9 of this report. Building on the principal recommendations presented in the 2024 evaluation, this review (renewal evaluation) of GRÓ C2C under the auspices of UNESCO presents the following further recommendations to GRÓ C2C.

Strategic partnership and collaboration between GRÓ C2C with UNESCO

The evaluators recommend that **GRÓ C2C prepare a medium-term strategy linked to the further development of GRÓ's cooperation with UNESCO partners.** This should be developed during 2025, setting the key priorities for GRÓ's cooperation during 2026-2027 (UNESCO's next biennial programme), and define the broad longer-term goals for GRÓ as a C2C over the duration of the C2C renewal period.

The strategy should clearly define the UNESCO strategic goals, focus areas, and specific C/5 outputs and actions that the intended results of GRÓ C2C and the actions of the GRÓ programmes directly contribute to. The strategy, to be developed in close consultation with UNESCO partners and with GRÓ's principal Icelandic partners, should address how GRÓ C2C will promote structured engagement with UNESCO partners for closer collaboration and cooperation supporting (1) knowledge exchange and shared learning,¹⁷ (2) programme implementation,¹⁸ and (3) policy influence and advocacy.¹⁹ The strategy should clearly define the entry points and modalities for collaboration, mutually agreed with UNESCO.

¹⁷ Recognizing that the GRÓ programmes support the creation of approximately 100 research products (original research) by the GRÓ fellows per annum, there is clear potential that this knowledge can be suitably shared by GRÓ and further disseminated within the context of UNESCO programmes, with UNESCO Country Offices, and other UNESCO partners. In total, there are more than 1,800 research products currently available on the GRÓ programme websites. UNESCO partners at country level could support and utilize the GRÓ alumni to further disseminate their research and knowledge at symposia or workshops in partner countries.

¹⁸ As evidenced by the collaboration between GRÓ LRT and UNESCO MAB, there is potential to build similar cooperation between GRÓ C2C and UNESCO programme partners linked to the identification and nomination of potential candidates for the fellowship programmes in Iceland.

There is also clear potential for closer cooperation between GRÓ C2C and UNESCO in the organization of short courses in partner countries. This could include the development of new courses by GRÓ in response to UNESCO demand, support from UNESCO to facilitate the GRÓ programmes identify suitable training organization partners in new partner countries for the delivery of short courses, and/or support from UNESCO to identify potential participants to attend the GRÓ short courses.

¹⁹ There is significant potential to strengthen collaboration between the GRÓ alumni with UNESCO partners at country level in the area of policy influencing and policy advocacy and the promotion of reform initiatives in partner countries. To this end, GRÓ should consult with UNESCO as to the systems available for the GRÓ alumni in partner countries to register their interest to be involved in UNESCO's work (for instance on registers of local professional experts for training, for research, or consultancy opportunities).

Improving communication and visibility of the work and the results delivered by GRÓ C2C

Despite the evidenced success of GRÓ C2C in the delivery of its intended development results (outputs, outcomes, and impact), many partners are not familiar of the full extent and breadth of GRÓ's capacity development, research and knowledge production interventions and outputs. **It is recommended that GRÓ Centre and programmes strengthen efforts to raise visibility of GRÓ C2C within UNESCO and awareness of its results in key partner countries.** This could entail specific information on the GRÓ programme goals, annual results, research products, short courses planned and delivered in partner countries or online, etc. This could be in the form of GRÓ programme briefs, factsheets, or more detailed presentations of major results. These should be visibly user-friendly in terms of conveying information.

Improving the operational efficiency of GRÓ C2C management and reporting systems

While the overall operational efficiency of GRÓ's management systems and reporting systems is good, there is room to further improve the systems. The **2024 external evaluation of GRÓ provided specific recommendations linked to strengthening the GRÓ management systems**, principally the need for GRÓ C2C to formalize its annual programme management and decision-making cycle and its operational processes for collaboration with and decision-making in partnership with the GRÓ programmes. Recognizing that adoption of the GRÓ Results Framework in 2023 significantly strengthens the GRÓ monitoring systems, the **2024 external evaluation of GRÓ provided specific recommendations linked to embedding the GRÓ results-based management and reporting systems**, including the need for GRÓ programmes to ensure the collection and reporting of standard statistical data on the feedback from direct beneficiaries of the programmes, and the need for GRÓ to introduce systematic formal tracer surveys of the GRÓ alumni over the medium- and longer-term period (post-fellowship).

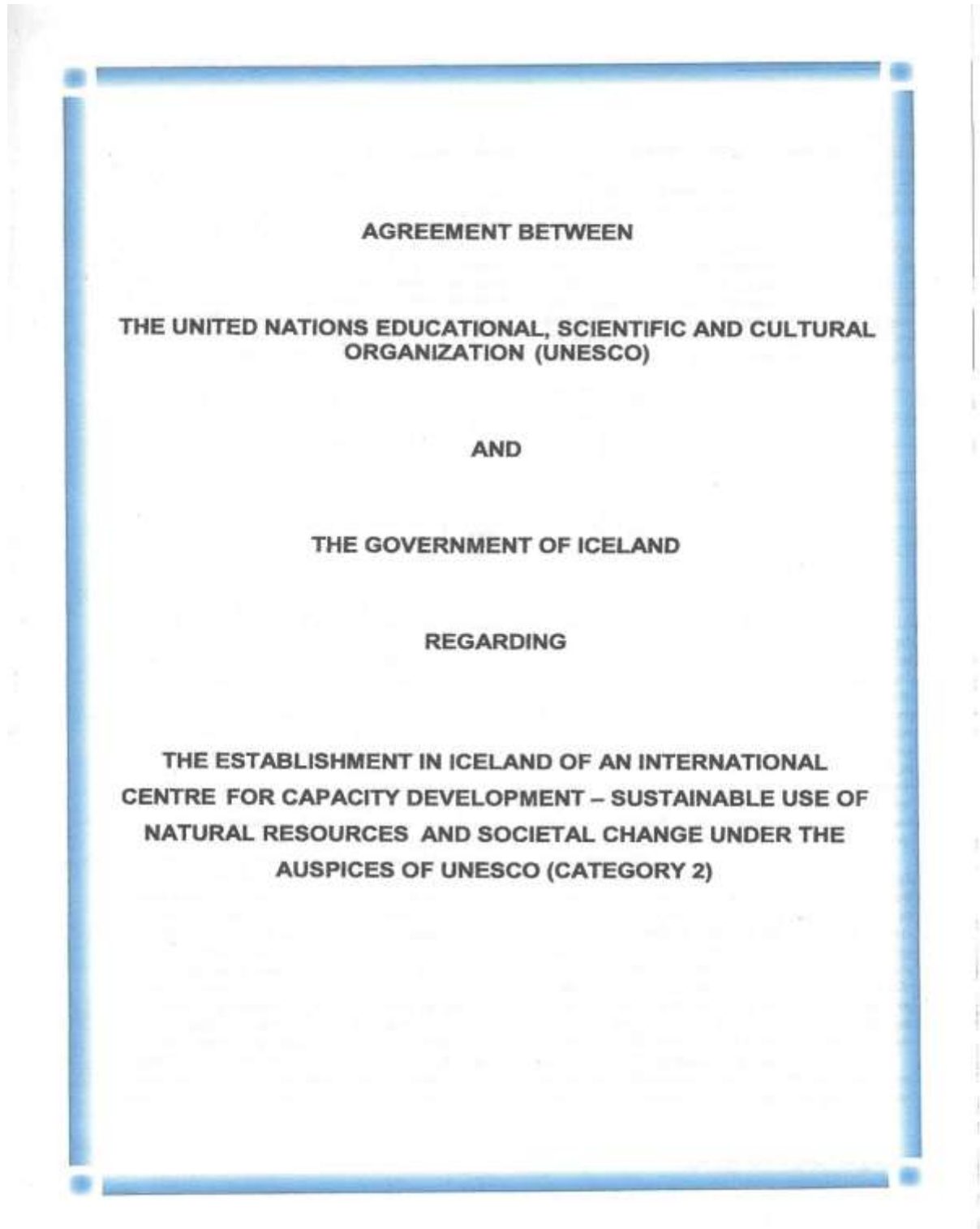
Developing a medium-term financial and strategic vision for operations of the GRÓ C2C

While the longer-term financial sustainability of GRÓ C2C and the GRÓ programmes is assured via the core funding provided by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the funding allocation is an annual budget planning and approval process. **There is no medium-term, multi-annual broad financial perspective and framework.** This hinders the GRÓ programmes' capacity to plan substantial capacity development initiatives in collaboration with core partner organizations over the medium-term period. The current level of core funding is not sufficient for GRÓ C2C and the GRÓ programmes to meet the extent of the programme output targets set for GRÓ C2C and GRÓ programmes as Strategic Priorities up to 2027. The **2024 external evaluation of GRÓ presented specific recommendations in this area**, including the need for the GRÓ programmes to prepare medium-term plans as to the extent of their anticipated delivery of programme outputs for the period up to 2030, and for GRÓ Centre to provide the Ministry for Foreign Affairs with an outline of the broad financial perspective and framework required by GRÓ Centre and programmes to deliver the ambition of the Strategic Priorities by 2027 and up to 2030. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is encouraged to provide the GRÓ Centre with a clear indicative financial perspective and framework within which it can anticipate to operate going forward, medium-term.

4 ANNEXES

Annex 1	Agreement between UNESCO and the Government of Iceland regarding the establishment in Iceland of an International Centre for Capacity Development – Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change under the auspices of UNESCO (as a Category 2 Centre) (2019)
Annex 2	Government of Iceland Regulation (No. 1260/2019) on GRÓ – Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change
Annex 3	GRÓ – Organizational Framework
Annex 4	GRÓ – Map of Programme Stakeholders
Annex 5	GRÓ – Training Programmes (main outputs delivered)
Annex 6	List of Documentation Reviewed
Annex 7	List of People Consulted (Interviewed)
Annex 8	Data collection instruments (interview guidance questions)
Annex 9	“External Evaluation of GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change, 2018-2023” – Summary of the 2024 external evaluation of GRÓ commissioned by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland
Annex 10	Terms of Reference: Review of GRÓ ... a C2C under the auspices of UNESCO

ANNEX 1 AGREEMENT BETWEEN UNESCO AND THE GOVERNMENT OF ICELAND REGARDING THE ESTABLISHMENT IN ICELAND OF GRÓ AS A C2C (2019)



The Government of Iceland and

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,

Having regard to the resolution whereby the UNESCO General Conference seeks to favour international cooperation in respect of the establishment and operation of International Centre for Capacity Development – Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change, in Reykjavik, Iceland as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO,

Considering that the Director-General has been authorized by the General Conference to conclude with the Government of Iceland an agreement in conformity with the draft that was submitted to the General Conference,

Desirous of defining the terms and conditions governing the framework for cooperation with UNESCO that shall be granted to the said Centre in this Agreement,

HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1 – Definitions

1. In this Agreement, "UNESCO" refers to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
2. "Government" means the Government of Iceland.
3. "Parties" means the Government of Iceland and UNESCO.
4. "Centre" means the International Centre for Capacity Development – Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change.

Article 2 – Establishment

The Government shall agree to take, in the course of the year 2019, any measures that may be required for the establishment of a Category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO as provided for under this Agreement.

Article 3 – Purpose of the Agreement

The purpose of this Agreement is to define the terms and conditions governing collaboration between UNESCO and the Government concerned and also the rights and obligations stemming there from for the Parties.

Article 4 – Legal status

- 4.1 The Centre shall be independent of UNESCO.
- 4.2 The Government shall ensure that the Centre enjoys, in accordance with Icelandic law and regulations and within its territory, the functional autonomy necessary for the execution of its activities and the legal capacity:

- to contract;
- to institute legal proceedings;
- to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property.

Article 5 – Constitutive Act

The constitutive act of the Centre must include provisions describing precisely:

- (a) the legal status granted to the Centre, within the national legal system, the legal capacity necessary to exercise its functions and to receive funds, obtain payments for services rendered, and acquire all means necessary for its functioning;
- (b) a governing structure for the Centre allowing UNESCO representation within its governing body.

Article 6 – Functions/objectives

The functions/objectives of the Centre shall be to strengthen individual, organizational and institutional capacities focusing on the fields of geothermal energy, gender equality, land restoration and sustainable management of fisheries and aquatic resources, to support developing countries in the following areas:

1. in achieving sustainable development and economic growth;
2. the fulfilment of international agenda and initiatives, such as UN 2030 Agenda and Paris Climate Agreement;
3. promoting multidisciplinary and integrated approaches for sustainable use of natural resources;
4. on gender equality in line with UNESCO's global priority on gender.

The Centre shall undertake the following activities:

- a. Provide a five-to-six months training course for practicing professionals from developing countries in Iceland that draws on Iceland's expertise within: i) geothermal energy; ii) gender equality; iii) land restoration; and iv) sustainable management of fisheries and aquatic resources to build capacity of participants from developing countries or conflict/post-conflict countries.
- b. Provide training of high quality by experienced and knowledgeable lecturers that combine and balances theory, professional skills training, and project work;
- c. Undertake a robust recruitment process of fellows to which much attention, time, and resources are devoted;
- d. Facilitate networking and fruitful cooperation among fellows and institutional partners;
- e. Conduct applied research and support partners in creating and disseminating new knowledge;
- f. Create innovative electronic learning platforms, including communities of practice;
- g. Provide scholarships to former fellows to complete MSc and PhD studies, based on applied research in home countries;
- h. Develop and deliver short courses in partnership with UNESCO, local, and/or international organisations;
- i. Facilitate the active involvement of former fellows and other partners in topical

- national, regional, international, and UNESCO workshops and conferences;
- j. Strengthen the infrastructure of organisations, institutions, and universities in partner countries through the development of joint plans for capacity development and research;
- k. Provide advisory services to partner organisations at the national and international level;
- l. Cater to the practical and social needs of the fellows in Iceland during the training programmes
- m. Promote the activities of the Centre and the role of UNESCO in the four areas i) to iv), including herein the coordination and collaboration with UNESCO global and regional programmes and activities;
- n. Make recommendations to the UNESCO Secretariat on matters related to the mandate of the Centre and formulate proposals regarding the four areas i) to iv);

Article 7 – Governing Board

1. The Centre shall be guided and overseen by a Governing Board renewed every six (6) years and include:
 - (a) up to two representatives of the Government or his/her appointed representative;
 - (b) representatives of Member States of UNESCO, primarily developing countries, which have sent to the Centre notification for membership, in accordance with the stipulations of Article 10, paragraph 2 below and have expressed interest in being represented on the Board;
 - (c) a representative of the Director-General of UNESCO;
 - (d) The director of the Centre or his/her substitute (as a non-voting member);
 - (e) a representative of the Icelandic National Commission for UNESCO;
 - (f) a representative from outside of government (e.g. civil society or private sector).
2. The Governing Board shall:
 - (a) approve the long-term and medium-term programmes of the Centre;
 - (b) approve the annual work plan of the Centre, including the staffing table;
 - (c) examine the annual reports submitted by the director of the Centre, including a biennial self-assessment reports of the Centre's contribution to UNESCO's programme objectives;
 - (d) examine the periodic independent audit reports of the financial statements of the Centre and monitor the provision of such accounting records necessary for the preparation of financial statements;
 - (e) adopt the rules and regulations and determine the financial, administrative and personnel management procedures for the Centre in accordance with the laws of the country;
 - (f) decide on the participation of regional intergovernmental organizations and international organizations in the work of the Centre.
3. The Governing Board shall meet in ordinary session at regular intervals, at least once every calendar year; it shall meet in extraordinary session if convened by its Chairperson, either on his or her own initiative or at the request of the Director-General of UNESCO or of majority of its members.
4. The Governing Board shall adopt its own rules of procedure. For its first meeting the procedure shall be established by the Government and UNESCO.

Article 8 – UNESCO's contribution

1. UNESCO may provide assistance, as needed, in the form of technical assistance for the programme activities of the Centre, in accordance with the strategic goals and objectives of UNESCO by:
 - (a) providing the assistance of its experts in the specialized fields of the Centre; and
 - (b) engaging in temporary staff exchanges when appropriate, whereby the staff concerned will remain on the payroll of the dispatching organizations; and
 - (c) seconding members of its staff temporarily, as may be decided by the Director-General on an exceptional basis if justified by the implementation of a joint activity/project within a strategic programme priority area.
2. In all the cases listed above, such assistance shall not be undertaken except within the provisions of UNESCO's programme and budget, and UNESCO will provide Member States with accounts relating to the use of its staff and associated costs.

Article 9 – Contribution by the Government

1. The Government shall provide all the resources, either financial or in kind, needed for the administration and proper functioning of the Centre.
2. The Government undertakes to:
 - (a) make available to the Centre premises for its activities;
 - (b) entirely assume responsibility for the maintenance of the premises of the Centre;
 - (c) make available to the Centre necessary financial resources for its operation through a funding arrangement with the respective host institution(s);
 - (d) make available to the Centre the administrative staff necessary for the performance of its functions and objectives as outlined in Article 6.

Article 10 – Participation

1. The Centre shall encourage the participation of Member States and Associate Members of UNESCO which, by their common interest in the objectives of the Centre, desire to cooperate with the Centre.
2. Member States and Associate Members of UNESCO wishing to participate in the Centre's activities, as provided for under this Agreement, shall send to the Centre notification to this effect. The director shall inform the Parties to the Agreement and other Member States of the receipt of such notifications.

Article 11 – Responsibility

As the Centre is legally separate from UNESCO, the latter shall not be legally responsible for the acts or omissions of the Centre, and shall also not be subject to any legal process, and/or bear no liabilities of any kind, be they financial or otherwise, with the exception of the provisions expressly laid down in this Agreement.

Article 12 – Evaluation

1. UNESCO may, at any time, carry out an evaluation of the activities of the Centre in order to ascertain:
 - (a) whether the Centre makes a significant contribution to the UNESCO's strategic programme objectives and expected results aligned with the four-year programmatic period of C/5 document (Programme and Budget), including the two global priorities of the Organization, and related sectoral or programme priorities and themes;
 - (b) whether the activities effectively pursued by the Centre are in conformity with those set out in this Agreement.
2. UNESCO shall, for the purpose of the review of this Agreement, conduct an evaluation of the contribution of the category 2 Centre to UNESCO strategic programme objectives, to be funded by the host country or Centre.
3. UNESCO undertakes to submit to the Government, at the earliest opportunity, a report on any evaluation conducted.
4. Following the results of an evaluation, each of the contracting parties shall have the option of requesting a revision of its contents or of denouncing the Agreement, as envisaged in Articles 16 and 17.

Article 13 – Use of UNESCO name and logo

1. The Centre may mention its affiliation with UNESCO. It may therefore use after its title the mention "under the auspices of UNESCO".
2. The Centre is authorized to use the UNESCO logo or a version thereof on its letter headed paper and documents including electronic documents and web pages in accordance with the conditions established by the governing bodies of UNESCO.

Article 14 – Entry into force

This Agreement shall enter into force, following its signature by the Parties, when they have informed each other in writing that all the formalities required to that effect by the domestic law of Iceland and by UNESCO's internal regulations have been completed. The date of receipt of the last notification shall be deemed to be the date of entry into force of this Agreement.

Article 15 – Duration

This Agreement is concluded for a period of six (6) years as from its entry into force. The agreement shall be renewed upon common agreement between the parties once the Executive Board made its comments based on the results of the renewal assessment provided by the Director-General.

Article 16 – Denunciation

1. Each of the Parties shall be entitled to denounce this Agreement unilaterally.
2. The denunciation shall take effect within 30 days following receipt of the notification sent by one of the contracting parties to the other.

Article 17 – Revision

This Agreement may be revised by written consent between the Government and UNESCO.

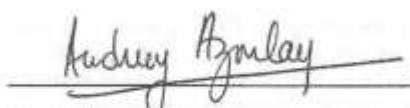
Article 18 – Settlement of disputes

1. Any dispute between UNESCO and the Government concerning the interpretation or application of this Agreement, if not settled by negotiation or any other appropriate method agreed to by the parties, shall be submitted for final decision to an arbitration tribunal composed of 3 members, one of whom shall be appointed by the Government, another by the Director-General of UNESCO, and a third, who shall preside over the tribunal, shall be chosen by the first two. If the two arbitrators cannot agree on the choice of a third, the appointment shall be made by the President of the International Court of Justice.
2. The Tribunal's decision shall be final.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned have signed this Agreement,
DONE in two copies in English language, on 16 December 2019.

For the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization

For the Government of Iceland



Ms. Audrey Azoulay
Director-General



H. E. Mr. Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland

ANNEX 2 GOVERNMENT OF ICELAND REGULATION NO. 1260/2019 ON GRÓ

REGULATION

On GRÓ - Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change

1. Article 1

Scope and objective

This regulation applies to the operations of GRÓ – Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change, an independent legal body with a legal capacity to conclude agreements in accordance with the provisions of this Regulation.

The Centre was established for the purpose of building human resource capacities in developing countries. It operates under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) pursuant to an agreement between Iceland and UNESCO in fields where Icelandic expertise can be utilised in international development cooperation.

Article 2

GRÓ - Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change

The Centre falls under the Ministry for Foreign Affairs which supervises and handles contributions to the Centre. The Centre operates on the basis of Act No 121/2008 on Iceland's International Development Cooperation, Act No 115/2011 on the Government Offices of Iceland, the Public Finance Act No 123/2015, Iceland's policy in the field of international development cooperation, the UN SDGs and international obligations. The Centre employs a multidisciplinary and integrated approach to strengthening organizational, institutional and individual capacities in developing countries in the following fields of expertise in order to promote:

- a. increased gender equality, social justice and peace-building (pursuant to Global Goals No 5 and 16);
- b. increased use of geothermal energy (pursuant to Global Goal No 7);
- c. the protection and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources (pursuant to Global Goal No 14);
- d. the restoration and sustainable use of land (pursuant to Global Goal No 15).

Article 3

Projects and collaboration

The Centre is intended to utilise Icelandic development cooperation funds in the best possible way and maximise cumulative effects and efficiency between the programme areas in conformity with UNESCO policies and focus. The Centre makes cooperative agreements with parties in the relevant fields of expertise in Iceland, the Gender Equality Studies Training Programme, the Geothermal Training Programme, the Land Restoration Training Programme and the Fisheries Training Programme, which focus on the following activities:

- a. Training for professionals from developing countries.
- b. Support for former students.
- c. Course work and internet-based courses.
- d. Research and advanced studies.
- e. Advisory services for regional and international partner institutions and organisations.

Article 4

Governing Board

The Minister appoints a Governing Board for the Centre for a period of six years. The Governing Board shall be composed of five representatives. One representative, who is also Chairperson, is appointed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, one is appointed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, one by the Director-General of UNESCO, one by the Icelandic National Commission for UNESCO and one representative is designated independently of the authorities by the Development Cooperation Committee. Representatives may also be appointed from UNESCO member states, in particular developing countries, if they wish to participate in the Centre's programmes. Substitutes are appointed in the same manner.

The Director shall call regular meetings, typically five times in every calendar year. The Governing Board shall hold special meetings if called by the Director, whether on their initiative, that of the Director-General of UNESCO, or that of the majority of Board members. The Governing Board shall draw up clear rules of procedure and processes.

Article 5

Function of the Governing Board

The main function of the Governing Board is to form policy as well as supervise the activities of the Centre. Its primary tasks are as follows:

- a. deliberate and approve the annual result-based work plans of the Centre;
- b. deliberate the reports submitted by the Director of the Centre, including an annual report on results and biennial self-assessment reports from the Centre on its contribution to UNESCO's programme objectives;

- c. deliberate larger issues on an ad-hoc basis;
- d. deliberate regular audit reports on the financial statements of the Centre and supervise the submission of necessary accounting records for the preparation of financial statements;
- e. approve rules and determine the financial and personnel management procedures of the Centre in accordance with laws;
- f. to assume responsibility for the operations being in accordance with laws and regulatory acts as well as requirements that may derive from international obligations.

Article 6

Director

The Director of the Centre is appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs pursuant to the provisions of Act No 70/1996, and manages daily operations and the conclusion of cooperative agreements according to Article 3 and the follow-up on those agreements. The Director attends the meetings of the Governing Board as a non-voting member.

The Director leads the consultation forum of the Directors of the Gender Equality Studies Training Programme, the Geothermal Training Programme, the Land Restoration Training Programme and the Fisheries Training Programme. Each programme furthermore has a cooperation council where the Director of the Centre, the Director of the relevant Programme and a representative of the institution that houses the Programme are members.

Article 7

Finances

The costs of operating the Centre and its programmes are paid partly by the State Treasury in accordance with the government budget where they fall under a special budget line in policy area 35 on public development cooperation. The Centre shall set objectives for raising special revenue in the relevant fields of expertise, which will be reflected in the cooperative agreements, e.g. by obtaining grants, counterpart contributions from partner institutions and by participation in international projects.

Article 8

Work plans and supervision

Annual result-based work plans that the Centre prepares in consultation with its partners shall be put forth as the basis for financing of operations in each policy area and the results presented in an annual report submitted to the Governing

Board of the Centre and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The Centre shall also carry out a self-assessment every two years that is submitted to the Board.

The Centre shall submit annual reports and annual accounts to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and UNESCO. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs audits the operations and the Centre shall grant access to data as requested by the Ministry.

Article 9

Entry into Force, etc.

This Regulation, issued on the basis of Article 10 of Act No 121/2008 on Iceland's International Development Cooperation, shall enter into force on January 1, 2020. At the same time, Regulation No 854/2019 on the International Centre for Capacity Development is repealed.

Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 December 2019.

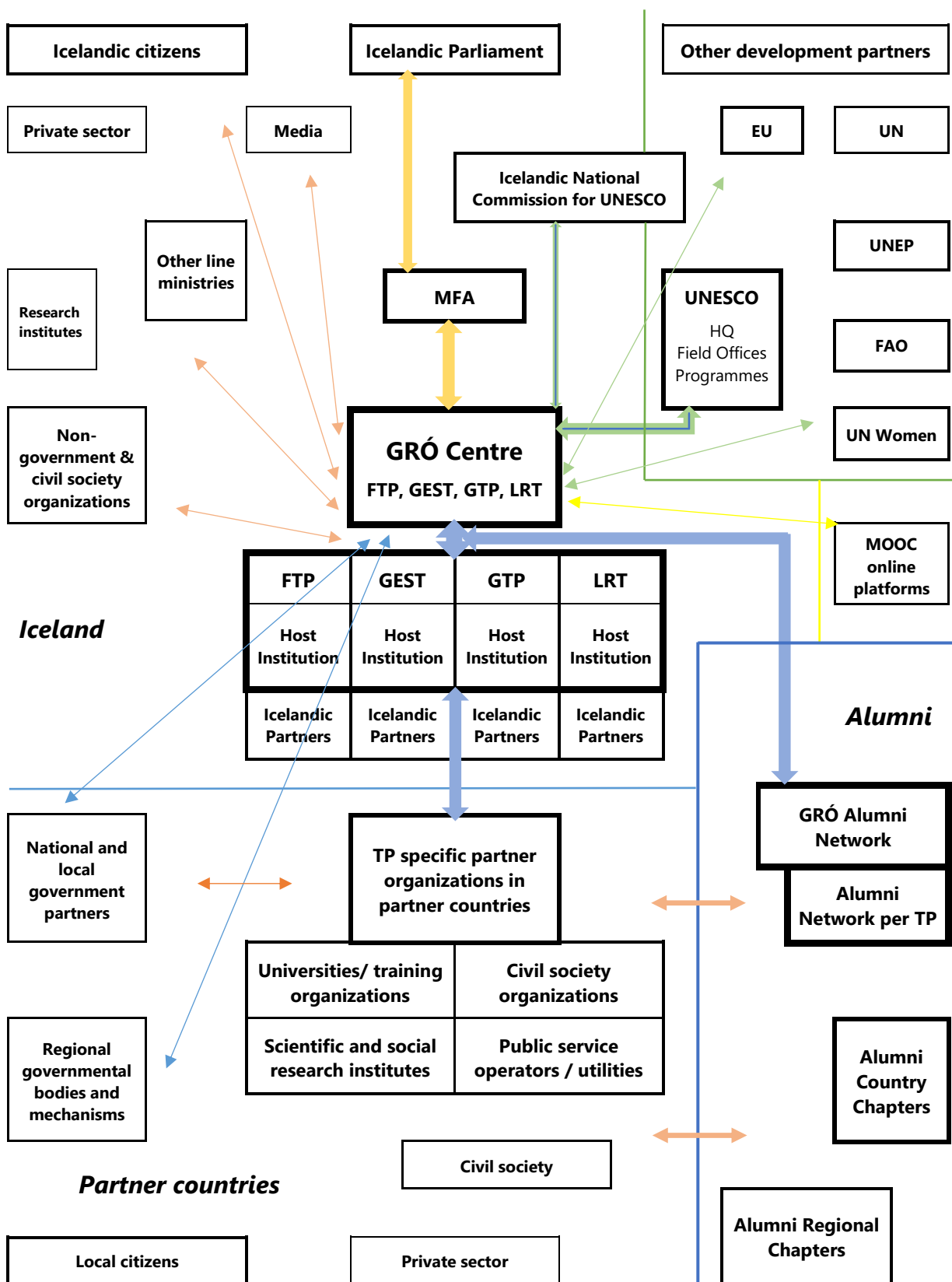
Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson

Sturla Sigurjónsson

ANNEX 3 GRÓ – ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK



ANNEX 4 GRÓ – MAP OF PROGRAMME STAKEHOLDERS



ANNEX 5 GRÓ – TRAINING PROGRAMMES (MAIN OUTPUTS DELIVERED)

Postgraduate fellowship (five-to-six months) training programmes in Iceland – fellows enrolled

GRÓ Centre	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
GRÓ FTP	0 (COVID)	27 fellows 15 F, 12 M 44% LDC 37% LMIC	23 fellows 12 F, 11 M 30% LDC 39% LMIC	24 fellows 11 F, 13 M 42% LDC 38% LMIC	23 fellows 12 F, 11 M 48% LDC 35% LMIC	97 fellows 50 F, 47 M 41% LDC 37% LMIC
GRÓ GEST	20 fellows 14 F, 6 M 55% LDC 35% LMIC	20 fellows 19 F, 1 M 30% LDC 40% LMIC	23 fellows 18 F, 5 M 13% LDC 61% LMIC	23 fellows 16 F, 7 M 48% LDC 43% LMIC	23 fellows 14 F, 9 M 39% LDC 43% LMIC	109 fellows 81 F, 28 M 37% LDC 45% LMIC
GRÓ GTP	0 (COVID)	25 fellows 12 F, 13 M 20% LDC 60% LMIC	23 fellows 9 F, 14 M 4% LDC 65% LMIC	24 fellows 9 F, 15 M 17% LDC 71% LMIC	26 fellows 14 F, 12 M 12% LDC 54% LMIC	98 fellows 44 F, 54 M 13% LDC 62% LMIC
GRÓ LRT	0 (COVID)	17 fellows 8 F, 9 M 59% LDC 41% LMIC	19 fellows 7 F, 12 M 53% LDC 47% LMIC	23 fellows 12 F, 11 M 48% LDC 52% LMIC	23 fellows 9 F, 14 M 43% LDC 57% LMIC	82 fellows 36 F, 46 M 50% LDC 50% LMIC
GRÓ Centre Total	20 fellows 14 F, 6 M 55% LDC 35% LMIC	89 fellows 54 F, 35 M 37% LDC 45% LMIC	88 fellows 46 F, 42 M 24% LDC 53% LMIC	94 fellows 48 F, 46 M 38% LDC 51% LMIC	95 fellows 49 F, 46 M 35% LDC 47% LMIC	386 fellows 211 F, 175 M 35% LDC 48% LMIC

By the end of 2024, the GRÓ programmes have collectively enrolled 1,790 individuals on the fellowship programmes in Iceland. GRÓ FTP has enrolled 512 fellows since 1998 from 71 countries, GRÓ GEST has enrolled 241 fellows since 2009 from 41 countries, GRÓ GTP has enrolled 816 fellows since 1979 from 67 countries, and GRÓ LRT has enrolled 221 fellows since 2007 from 15 countries.

Partner countries for the GRÓ, with more than fifty GRÓ fellows/alumni, include:

Country	GRÓ FTP	GRÓ GEST	GRÓ GTP	GRÓ LRT	GRÓ Total
Kenya	29	10	160	2	201
Uganda	30	37	19	38	124
Malawi	12	34	4	24	74
Ethiopia	-	4	48	14	66
Ghana	13	10	-	32	55
Tanzania	28	1	24	-	53
China	29	1	92	-	122
Indonesia	13	-	50	-	63
Mongolia	-	1	16	37	54
El Salvador	3	-	49	-	52

Scholarships to former fellows to conduct MSc and/or PhD studies and research – 2020-2024

GRÓ Centre	Master's Degree (MA or MSc)	Doctoral Degree (PhD)
GRÓ FTP	6 MSc graduates (4 F, 2 M) 1 fellow on-going MSc studies 2024-25	4 PhD graduates (1 F, 3 M) 4 fellows on-going PhD studies/research
GRÓ GEST	No scholarships awarded	2 fellows on-going PhD studies/research
GRÓ GTP	22 MSc graduates (9 F, 13 M) 1 fellow on-going MSc studies 2024-25	3 PhD graduates (3 M) 8 fellows on-going PhD studies/research
GRÓ LRT	1 MA graduate (1 F) 2 fellows on-going MSc studies 2024-25	1 PhD graduate (1 F)
GRÓ Centre Total	28 MSc and 1 MA graduates (14 F, 15 M) 4 fellows on-going MSc studies 2024-25	8 PhD graduates (2 F, 6 M) 14 fellows on-going PhD studies/research

As of year 2024, the GRÓ programmes have collectively awarded 156 scholarships/grants to the fellowship programme alumni for the purpose of their undertaking Master's or Doctoral programme studies in Iceland.

GRÓ FTP has awarded 21 for MSc studies and 23 for PhD studies/research, GRÓ GEST has awarded two for PhD studies/research, GRÓ GTP has awarded 94 for MSc studies and 13 for PhD studies/research, and GRÓ LRT has awarded one grant for MA studies, three for MSc studies and one for PhD studies/research.

The main partner countries (country of origin of the fellows) since the scholarship grants were offered include: Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Indonesia, Vietnam, Mongolia, and China.

Research products (the creation and dissemination of new knowledge) – 2020-2024

GRÓ Centre	Fellows – individual research project papers	Master's Degree – final thesis papers	PhD – research papers and final thesis papers
GRÓ FTP	97 research/project papers	6 thesis papers	4 research and 4 thesis papers
GRÓ GEST	109 research/project papers	No scholars	5 research papers
GRÓ GTP	98 research/project papers	22 thesis papers	9 research and 3 thesis papers
GRÓ LRT	82 research/project papers	1 thesis paper	1 thesis paper
GRÓ Centre Total	386 research project papers completed by GRÓ fellows	29 thesis papers completed by GRÓ fellows	18 research and 8 thesis papers completed by GRÓ fellows

In total there are more than 1,800 original research products, completed by the GRÓ programme fellows, currently available on GRÓ programme websites. There are approximately 470 research products/papers available on the GRÓ FTP website, approximately 240 papers on the GRÓ GEST website, approximately 930 papers on the GRÓ GTP website, and approximately 175 papers available on the GRÓ LRT website.

[Publications | GRÓ FTP](#)

[Publications | GRÓ GEST](#)

[Publications | GRÓ GTP](#)

[Publications | GRÓ LRT](#)

Short courses in/for partner countries

GRÓ Centre	Short Courses in/for partner countries
GRÓ FTP	<p>GRÓ FTP has offered tailor-made short training courses and workshops in partner countries and regions since 2005, focused on promoting knowledge and skills for the sustainable use and management of living aquatic resources. GRÓ FTP has delivered more than 50 short courses or workshops, in more than 20 countries, plus five specific tailor-made study tours for partners in Iceland, regarding the fisheries sector, policy and management, with the total number of course participants approximately 1,500 people. GRÓ FTP courses have been delivered in partner countries in Africa, and in Asia, as well as for partners in the Caribbean region, and from the South Pacific region. Courses commonly have a delivery duration period of one-to-two-weeks.</p> <p>GRÓ FTP's tailor-made short courses cover issues across four lines of policy focus and expertise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisheries Policy and Management • Aquatic Resource Assessment and Monitoring • Quality Management of Fish Handling and Processing • Sustainable Aquaculture <p>The primary target audience for the courses are professional staffs working in the fisheries and aquatic sector in the partner country and/or partner region institutions, such as national government, regulatory bodies, local public services, fisheries agencies, research institutes, and universities. All courses are developed and delivered in partnership with an organisation in the country where the course is held, often one of GRÓ FTP's partner organisations and with the participation of former fellows, with the goal to strengthen the capacity of partner countries in the delivery of fisheries training at the local level.</p> <p>The most recent GRÓ FTP tailor-made short regional course was delivered in 2023, in Barbados, in partnership with the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisheries Assessment and Data Modelling, a 'training of trainers' initiative supporting national partners from the Caribbean region, focused on strengthening the capacity of key stock assessment specialists and fisheries data analysis specialists working in the region. <p>Ordered by year Fisheries Training Programme under the auspices of UNESCO</p>
GRÓ GEST	<p>GRÓ GEST offers two short training courses, tailor-made to the partner country context and local needs: (1) Gender and Climate Change (GCC), and (2) Teaching Gender to Youth (TGY).</p> <p>The primary target audience for both short courses are staffs working in the targeted partner country at the District and the local level of public service delivery, plus community-based and civil society stakeholders. Each course commonly has a delivery duration period of one-week, delivered at District level. In total, approximately 700 people have participated in the courses.</p> <p>The GCC course has been delivered by GRÓ GEST and its local country partners on four occasions in Uganda (2012-13, 2019), and on five occasions in Malawi (2021-24). It was also tailored for use in the context of a joint short training course delivered in cooperation by GRÓ LRT and GRÓ GEST (2023) in Kyrgyzstan (Gender, Environment and Sustainable Land Management). The TGY course has been delivered by GRÓ GEST and its local country partners on five occasions in Uganda (2023-24), once for partners in Malawi (2019), and once for partners in Saint Lucia (2021).</p> <p>All of the courses are developed and delivered in partnership with an educational or training organisation in the country where the course is held, with the goal to strengthen the capacity of partner countries in the delivery of gender equality and empowerment training at the local level.</p> <p>Short Courses GRÓ GEST</p>
GRÓ GTP	<p>GRÓ GTP has offered tailor-made short training courses and workshops in partner countries and regions since 2005, focused on promoting the utilisation and sustainable management of reliable, economically viable, and environmentally sound geothermal energy resources. GRÓ GTP has provided more than 80 short courses or workshops, delivered in thirteen countries, with the total number of course participants exceeding 2,800 people. The primary target audience for the courses are policy-makers, professional staffs and specialists working in the field of geothermal energy, in national governments, regulatory agencies, research institutes, and in geothermal energy companies. The principal regions of focus for delivery of GRÓ GTP's short courses are countries in the Eastern Africa region, and countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region. A limited number of GRÓ GTP courses have been provided for country partners in Asia.</p>

	<p>GRÓ GTP's tailor-made short courses cover the spectrum of disciplines needed for geothermal development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geothermal Project Management, Project Financing and Project Development • Exploration and Development of Geothermal Resources • Geothermal Drilling Technology and Drilling Management • The Future of Geothermal Energy Utilization <p>Via its long-term partnerships with geothermal partners and training organizations in Kenya, and via its long-term partnerships in El Salvador, GRÓ GTP has developed and delivered tailor-made short courses on geothermal issues for regional country participants in Eastern Africa since 2005, and in LAC since 2006. Traditionally on an annual basis, tailor-made courses delivered in Kenya usually have a duration of three-weeks, the annual courses in El Salvador a duration of one-week. With its partners in El Salvador, GRÓ GTP also developed and supports a five-month Geothermal Diploma Course for Latin America – the frequency of course delivery is dependent on external funding sources. Beyond the regular provision of short courses for partners in the two regions, GRÓ GTP has delivered tailor-made, one-off short courses in response to the demand of specific partners, primarily for countries in Eastern Africa, and specific requests from countries in Asia.</p> <p>Workshops and Short Courses Publication GRÓ GTP</p> <p>Additional Short Courses GRÓ GTP</p>
GRÓ LRT	<p>GRÓ LRT has offered tailor-made short training courses and workshops in partner countries since 2017, focused on combatting land degradation, protecting and restoring degraded land, promoting sustainable land management and the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems. GRÓ LRT has delivered nine short course training events, with approximately 205 participants trained. GRÓ LRT and its partners have delivered three short course trainings in Uganda (2017-2019), three in Mongolia (2018-2021), with one course delivered in Ethiopia (2022), one in Sierra Leone (2024), and one delivered in cooperation between GRÓ LRT and GRÓ GEST in Kyrgyzstan (2023).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable land management, land restoration and linkages to climate change (Uganda) • Communicating Knowledge for Sustainable Rangeland Management under Climate Change / Sustainable management of ecosystems (Mongolia) • Integrated approaches for land restoration through sustainable land management (Ethiopia) • Gender, Environment and Sustainable Land Management (Kyrgyzstan) • Community-Based Forest Landscape Restoration for Environmental Sustainability (Sierra Leone) <p>The primary target audience for the courses are staffs working in the targeted partner country at the District and the local level of public services, plus community-based and civil society stakeholders. Each course commonly has a delivery duration period of up to one-week or so. All of the courses are developed and delivered in partnership with an educational or training organisation in the country where the course is held, with the goal to strengthen the capacity of partner countries in the delivery of training on sustainable land management at the local level.</p> <p>Short Courses GRÓ LRT</p>

Innovative online training/learning courses (electronic learning platforms)

GRÓ Centre	Innovative online training/learning courses (electronic learning platforms)
GRÓ FTP	<p>SDG 14 Videos</p> <p>SDG 14 videos Fisheries Training Programme under the auspices of UNESCO</p> <p>GRÓ FTP has developed a series of five videos focused on the relationship of fisheries and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), focused on SDG 14 which relates to life in water and the path towards conserving living aquatic resources in the oceans and seas. There are ten targets within SDG 14, five of which deal with fisheries and how humans can use the living aquatic resources to build sustainable futures. All over the world people rely on these systems to provide them with food, income, livelihoods, and ecosystem services like regulation of the global climate. In this way, work towards achieving the targets of SDG 14 also links to other SDGs including Ending Poverty, Ending Hunger, Good Health, Quality Education, and Climate Change.</p>

	<p>The SDG 14 video series draws upon GRÓ FTP's more than 20 years of experience working with fisheries in developing countries. Through conversations with experts, the videos dissect the SDG 14 fisheries targets, including topics such as the economic, the environmental, and the social importance of fisheries. Building on research projects developed by the programme's fellows, the videos explore some of the major issues facing the development of fisheries across the world today, and what might be done to meet the ambitious targets of SDG 14.</p> <p>Access to the SDG 14 Videos is open to all participants and available free of charge online via the GRÓ FTP Website, as well as available on social platforms such as YouTube.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Introduction to the SDG 14 Videos series": an introduction to the SDG 14 targets related to fisheries, and to the work of GRÓ FTP • "Preserving the value of fish": addressing post-harvest losses, the video relates to SDG target 14.7 • "Small projects for big impacts in fisheries": addressing how incremental changes can have a substantial effect on the sustainable management of fisheries, the video relates to SDG target 14.4 • "Data for sustainable fisheries management": outlining the importance of stock assessment, the video relates to SDG target 14.4 • "Defining and defending small-scale fisheries": presenting the trend in fisheries in the context of small-scale fisheries, the video relates to SDG target 14.b
GRÓ GEST	<p>Online courses in International Gender Studies</p> <p>Online education GRÓ GEST</p> <p>Since 2020, GRÓ GEST has developed a series of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in the field of gender equality and gender studies. GRÓ GEST has released four MOOCs to date, with a fifth presently in the earlier stages of development by GRÓ GEST and the University of Iceland. Three of the MOOCs were developed by GRÓ GEST in partnership with other universities in the global north and the global south, with the University of Iceland the lead project coordinator.</p> <p>The goal of GRÓ GEST's series of Free Online Courses in International Gender Studies has been to provide aspiring development workers, young gender equality professionals, policymakers, students and activists around the world with a knowledge base they can use to change the world for the better. Each MOOC contains a set of specific curriculum modules, one per week, with an indicative online study engagement of about five hours per week, for which each MOOC commonly requires five-to-six-weeks of engagement by learners. Progressively the modules provide learners with an understanding of core theories and topics, an understanding of real-world case study examples that explore the theories and topics in practice, and also an understanding of the international normative and policy framework relevant to the subject area.</p> <p>Access to the GRÓ GEST MOOCs is open to all participants and available free of charge online via the edX Website, a leading international online learning and education platform.</p>
	<p>MOOC "Gender and Intersectionality"</p> <p>UlceldX: Gender and Intersectionality edX</p> <p>Gender intersects with everything. This course offers an introduction to gender studies for people seeking a basic understanding and cohesive overview of gender and gender equality issues. Course participants learn how to analyse religious texts and traditions, class divisions, racial inequality, sexualities, and nationalism through a gendered lens.</p>
	<p>MOOC "Gender and Development: Critical Theories and Approaches"</p> <p>UlceldX: Gender and Development: Critical Theories and Approaches edX</p> <p>Learning about the theoretical and practical interplay between gender and international development is of utmost importance to anyone working in or considering a career in this field. Course participants learn about the main critical theories, policy frameworks, and topics necessary for understanding a complicated and sometimes contradictory relationship between gender equality and international development initiatives.</p>
	<p>MOOC "Gender Violence and Post-Conflict States"</p> <p>UlceldX: Gender, Violence and Post-Conflict States edX</p> <p>Understanding the gendered dynamics of violence in conflict and post-conflict situations is crucial to addressing conflict situations in ways that are more just and inclusive. Course participants learn about the interplay between gender and violence and gendered dynamics of</p>

	different types of violence, restorative justice, peacekeeping, and international policy frameworks on sexual and gender-based violence (GBV).
	<p>MOOC “Men, Boys and Masculinities” UlcelandX: Men, Boys and Masculinities edX</p> <p>This course addresses gendered issues relating to men, boys, and masculinities across a variety of fields. Course participants learn about the basic theories and terminology in masculinity studies and examine the processes that construct masculinities in the areas of education, media, digitalisation, global politics, climate change and more.</p>
	<p>MOOC “Ending Violence: International Human Rights Frameworks” (working title) <i>Indicatively, to be released as an open access MOOC in 2026.</i></p>
GRÓ GTP	GRÓ GTP has not yet developed a specific digital learning product permanently accessible online. GRÓ GTP has, however, very successfully engaged in the delivery of specific online short courses on geothermal energy, tailored to the demands and geothermal context of regional partners and participants in Africa, in Asia, and in the LAC region. GRÓ GTP has delivered four such online courses, reaching approximately 400 online participants in total. GRÓ GTP is currently investigating the feasibility to develop digital learning tools to complement the online courses.
GRÓ LRT	<p>“Bridging the gap between Ecology and Economy” Bridging the gap between ecology and economy GRÓ LRT</p> <p>GRÓ LRT is a part of the ENABLE consortium, which was established to develop high-quality education targeted at business students and professionals to create awareness about the functioning of ecosystems and the benefits of restoration based on sustainable business models. The ENABLE consortium has developed two Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) on how restoration of degraded land and sustainable land management provides a return of financial-, natural- and social capital and a return of inspiration. Each MOOC requires seven-to-eight-weeks of engagement by learners, with an online study engagement of four-to-five hours per week. Access to the MOOCs is open to all participants and available free of charge online via the Coursera Website, a leading international online learning and education platform.</p> <p>MOOC 1: “A Business Approach to Sustainable Landscape Restoration” A Business Approach to Sustainable Landscape Restoration Coursera</p> <p>The MOOC offers comprehensive knowledge on landscape degradation and landscape restoration, combining a natural sciences perspective with an economics and business perspective. It is designed for business students and professionals as well as anyone with an interest in business-driven landscape restoration. Learners are introduced to tools that they can use in their professional lives when working in landscape restoration and land management.</p> <p>MOOC 2: “A Business Model Innovation for Sustainable Landscape Restoration” Business Model Innovation for Sustainable Landscape Restoration Coursera</p> <p>This MOOC builds on the first, and is designed in three phases that move participants forward from the development of ideas towards the successful implementation of a new business model for sustainable landscape restoration with four returns: the return of natural capital, the return of social capital, the return of inspiration and the return of financial capital. The course takes a partnership approach to large-scale landscape restoration, reflecting the interconnectedness of ecology, society and economy in landscape management. Each step of the process is illustrated with three real-life cases of landscape restoration to show how the theory looks in practice.</p>
	<p>MOOC “Sheep in the Land of Fire and Ice” Sheep in the land of fire and ice GRÓ LRT</p> <p>“Sheep in the Land of Fire and Ice” is a short MOOC (about 3 hours to complete) whereby users learn about sheep grazing, management and land conservation in Iceland. It discusses the sustainability of sheep grazing in Iceland and explores how history, socioeconomic factors and environmental conditions have shaped the management of grazing resources. The MOOC was co-developed by GRÓ LRT and its key academic and research partner organizations in Iceland.</p>

ANNEX 6 LIST OF DOCUMENTATION REVIEWED

\ ESTABLISHMENT OF GRÓ AS A CATEGORY 2 CENTRE UNDER THE AUSPICES OF UNESCO

- Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, Report by the Expert Advisory Committee appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Institutional arrangements, operations and organisation of the Icelandic Capacity Development Programmes in International Development (April 2019)
- Technopolis group, Establishment of a Category 2 Centre in Reykjavik under the auspices of UNESCO, Feasibility Study conducted on behalf of UNESCO (June 2019)
- UNESCO, Main findings of the feasibility study for the proposed Institute in Reykjavik (August 2019)
- UNESCO, draft resolution for the approval of the granting to the Centre (in Reykjavik) the status of a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO (November 2019)
- Agreement between UNESCO and the Government of Iceland regarding the establishment in Iceland of an International Centre for Capacity Development – Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change under the auspices of UNESCO as a Category 2 Centre (December 2019)
- Government of Iceland regulation on GRÓ: Regulation No. 1260/2019 (December 2019)

\ OPERATIONS OF THE GRÓ CENTRE AND GRÓ CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

- Rules of Procedure for the Governing Board of GRÓ (rules adopted 2020, and rules adopted 2023)
- GRÓ Governing Board meeting minutes (27 Board meetings from April 2020 to November 2024)
- GRÓ Theory of Change 2022-2027
- GRÓ Results Framework 2023-2027
- GRÓ Strategic Priorities 2022-2027
- GRÓ Self-assessment Report 2020-2022
- GRÓ Annual Report 2020 and 2021, GRÓ Annual Report 2022, GRÓ Annual Report 2023
- GRÓ C2C annual activity report 2021, GRÓ C2C annual activity report 2022, GRÓ C2C annual activity report 2023
- GRÓ Service Agreement with the Host Institutions for GRÓ FTP, GRÓ GEST, GRÓ GTP, GRÓ LRT (GRÓ Service Agreement 2020-2023, and GRÓ Service Agreement 2024-2025)
- GRÓ Guidelines for Launching a national GRÓ Alumni Network (draft version 2024)

\ UNESCO

- UNESCO (2019), Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres under the auspices of UNESCO (40 C/79)
- UNESCO (2014), Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2021 (37 C/4)
- UNESCO (2022), Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029 (41 C/4)
- UNESCO (2018), Approved Programme and Budget 2018-2019 - First biennium of the 2018-2021 quadrennium (39 C/5)
- UNESCO (2020), Approved Programme and Budget 2020-2021 - Second biennium of the 2018-2021 quadrennium (40 C/5)
- UNESCO (2022), Approved Programme and Budget 2022-2023 - First biennium 2022-2023 of the 2022-2025 quadrennium (41 C/5)
- UNESCO (2024), Approved Programme and Budget 2024-2025 - Second biennium 2024-2025 of the 2022-2025 quadrennium (42 C/5)
- UNESCO (2024), Preliminary proposals by the Director-General concerning the Draft Programme and Budget of the Organization for 2026-2029 (43 C/5)

\ OTHER DOCUMENTATION (EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS)

- Gollifer, Harðardóttir, Bottomley (2023), "An evaluation of GRÓ's master's and doctoral scholarship programme"
- GOPA Worldwide Consultants (2024), "External Evaluation of GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change, 2018-2023"

ANNEX 7 LIST OF PEOPLE CONSULTED (INTERVIEWED)

	NAME	GENDER	ORGANIZATION
1	Henrik Oksfeldt Enevoldsen	M	UNESCO, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, IOC Ocean Science Section
2	Zazie Schafer	F	UNESCO, Bureau of Strategic Planning
3	Justine Sass	F	UNESCO, Education Sector, Section for Gender Equality, Inclusion and Education
4	Melika Medici Caucino	F	UNESCO, Division for Gender Equality
5	Aylin Taftali	F	UNESCO, Division for Gender Equality
6	Anna Maria Majlöf	F	UNESCO, Social and Human Sciences Sector, Inclusion, Rights and Intercultural Dialogue Section
7	Hans Dencker Thulstrup	M	UNESCO, Natural Sciences Sector, Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences
8	Özlem Adiyaman Lopes	F	UNESCO, Earth Sciences and Geoparks Section, International Geosciences Programme
9	Nína Björk Jónsdóttir	F	GRÓ International Centre, Director General
10	Sjöfn Vilhelmsdóttir	F	GRÓ LRT, Programme Director
11	Thor Heiðar Ásgeirsson	M	GRÓ FTP, Programme Director
12	Julie Ingham	F	GRÓ FTP, Deputy Director
13	Bjarni Richter	M	GRÓ GTP, Programme Director
14	Gudni Axelsson	M	GRÓ GTP, Senior Specialist
15	Irma Erlingsdóttir	F	GRÓ GEST, Programme Director
16	Thomas Brorsen Smidt	M	GRÓ GEST, Project Manager and Academic Coordinator

ANNEX 8 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS (INTERVIEW GUIDANCE QUESTIONS)

Review of the GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change, a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO

Meetings (remote interview) with the GRÓ Training Programme Directors

Please find below **five generic questions** to assist our remote meeting consultation linked to the on-going **Review of the GRÓ as a C2C**.

The first four questions are primarily aimed to obtain brief factual and operational information. The fifth question looks forward to potential issues or areas that should be considered for continuation or new coordination and interaction between the GRÓ/TPs with UNESCO, 2025-2029.

- What **outputs did the TP deliver in 2024** (incl. Scholarships, Short Courses or Alumni empowerment)?
- What are the **indicative/anticipated outputs in 2025** (fellows, scholars, short courses, conferences)?
- Please briefly summarize main **partnerships** developed/maintained by the TP (in partner countries, regionally, or internationally) **with government agencies, public or private partners and donors**.
 - The indicative number and types of organizations the TP currently works with linked to the fellowship programme (the announcement, identification, nomination, selection of fellows),
 - The core organizations the TP has (e.g. 2020-2024) and/or currently formally works with to promote local institutional capacity development and training delivery in partner countries,
 - Formal partnerships or agreements with regional or international organizations (e.g. other UN, WB) and/or with leading international professional or scientific organizations and/or networks,
 - Recent examples where the TP provided advisory services (other donors, research projects).
- Please briefly summarize how you assess **the quality of coordination and interaction with UNESCO** (HQ, Field Offices, National Commissions, other C2Cs etc.), achieved to date, with regard to the planning and implementation of programmes. Please provide examples, as relevant, of:
 - Areas where coordination/interaction with UNESCO is operative and successful, and
 - Potential challenges faced to establishing meaningful coordination/interaction with UNESCO.
- Looking forward (the potential renewal of GRÓ as a C2C under the auspices of UNESCO), what would you highlight as the key issues or areas to be considered, between the partners, for the **potential closer strategic or operational cooperation between UNESCO** (HQ and/or Regional/Field Offices and/or programmes, etc.) **with GRÓ C2C and your TP**? For instance,
 - **Capacity development training, knowledge production and information exchange**, international scientific cooperation, and translating knowledge into policy action,
 - Coordination of specific **programme implementation actions or areas of focus** in order to promote potential synergy of the development effort between UNESCO and GRÓ/TPs,
 - Coordination of **policy influence and advocacy actions or areas of focus**,
 - Including potential areas to boost **synergy and delivery of regional- or country-level results**.

Meetings (remote interview) with UNESCO Headquarters, programmes, sectors/divisions

GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development – Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change, was established as a C2C under the auspices of UNESCO following decision of the General Conference of UNESCO at its 40th session in 2019 (40C/Resolution 18.IX). The current agreement on GRÓ was signed between UNESCO and the Government of Iceland on 16 December 2019. The Centre's **overall objective** is to strengthen individual, organizational and institutional capacities in developing countries in the following fields of programme expertise in order to promote:

- **Fisheries Training Programme** - The protection and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources (pursuant to SDG 14);
- **Gender Equality Studies Training Programme** - Increased gender equality, social justice and peace-building (pursuant to SDGs 5 and 16);
- **Geothermal Training Programme** - Increased use of geothermal energy (pursuant to SDG 7);
- **Land Restoration Training Programme** – The restoration and sustainable use of land (pursuant to SDG 15).

The principle intervention strategies (deliverable outputs) of the GRÓ programmes include:

- **Fellowships** - A five-to-six-months intensive training course delivered in Iceland for practicing young to mid-career professionals from developing countries or conflict/post-conflict countries;
- **Scholarships** - Support for former students (fellowship alumni) to undertake Masters and/or Doctoral degree programme studies and research in cooperation with universities in Iceland;
- **Short Courses** - Training courses delivered in partner countries, in collaboration with local partners, tailored to specific needs and demand, of duration from a few days to several months;
- **Online learning/ training content** - Primarily in the form of Massive Open Online Courses;
- **Research products** - Original research and knowledge products of the fellows and scholars;
- **Advisory services** - For national partners (e.g. universities and training organizations), regional and international partner institutions and organizations

- Reflecting the diversity of C2Cs under the auspices of UNESCO, what would you describe is the 'norm'/traditional extent of strategic or operational cooperation that exists between UNESCO (HQ and/or Regional/Field Offices) with C2Cs of relevance to your policy sector?
- What is your current level of overall awareness of the GRÓ C2C capacity development programmes, the extent of its training offer and the range of programme interventions?
- What is the extent of strategic or operational cooperation to date (or currently planned) between UNESCO with the GRÓ C2C in your policy sector?
- Looking forward (the potential renewal of GRÓ as a C2C under the auspices of UNESCO), what would you highlight as the key issues or areas to be considered, between the partners, for the potential closer strategic or operational cooperation between UNESCO (HQ and/or Regional/Field Offices and/or programmes) with GRÓ C2C in your policy sector? For instance,
 - **Capacity development training, knowledge production and information exchange**, international scientific cooperation, and translating knowledge into policy action,
 - Coordination of specific **programme implementation actions or areas of focus** in order to promote potential synergy of the development effort between UNESCO and GRÓ/TPs,
 - Coordination of **policy influence and advocacy actions or areas of focus**,
 - Including potential areas to boost **synergy and delivery of regional- or country-level results**.

ANNEX 9 EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF GRÓ INTERNATIONAL CENTRE, 2018-2023 – SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS (2024)

Subject Description

The evaluation analyses the GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability, and Societal Change, and its four training programmes: the Fisheries Training Programme (GRÓ FTP), the Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme (GRÓ GEST), the Geothermal Training Programme (GRÓ GTP), and the Land Restoration Training Programme (GRÓ LRT) covering the period from 2018 to 2023. The development objective of the GRÓ Centre and the four training programmes is to strengthen individual, organizational, and institutional capacities in low- and middle-income countries so that supported partners deliver development results in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Evaluation Objectives and Methodology

The evaluation's objective is to provide an independent assessment of the GRÓ Centre and its programmes, offering insights into their past successes, strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. The evaluation also assesses the organizational changes from 2020, when the programmes moved under the UNESCO auspices as a Category 2 Centre (C2C). The evaluation uses the OECD-DAC criteria and Icelandic international development policy priorities, combining desk reviews, field visits, and various data collection methods, including interviews, a large alumni survey, and focus group discussions.

Main Findings and Conclusions

Relevance: The GRÓ programmes are highly relevant and aligned with Iceland's international development policies and strategic goals, particularly targeting Sub-Saharan Africa. They provide capacity development training in fields of Icelandic expertise, supporting young to mid-career professionals from low- and middle-income countries. The programmes are demand driven.

Coherence: The GRÓ programmes complement Iceland's wider development efforts internationally and in partner countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, there is only partial evidence of coordination and synergy with other MFA-supported efforts.

Effectiveness: The programmes have effectively delivered capacity development results, supporting professionals and organizations in 76 countries. From 2018-2023, they supported 534 individuals through in-depth training, 1699 through short courses, and reached 39,161 learners online. Feedback indicates high satisfaction with the quality of training, with 73% of alumni reporting substantial career advancement due to the training. The programmes supported 239 GRÓ alumni to attend leading international conferences and GRÓ alumni were also involved by the programmes in the organization of and/or engaged in the delivery of 35 of 48 (73%) of the short courses supported by the programmes during 2018-2023.

Efficiency: The operational efficiency of the GRÓ programmes is good, with timely delivery of results. The adoption of the GRÓ Results Framework has strengthened monitoring and oversight. However, the GRÓ Centre lacks detailed internal rules of procedure as to how it works in partnership with the programmes and their host institutions.

Sustainability: The prospects for sustainability are good, with alumni successfully utilizing their new skills. The long-term partnership approach of the programmes, and the fact that the programmes are demand driven are key design factors that promote the prospects for sustainability. However, challenges

include insufficient resources and the lack of a medium-term financial framework, hindering the ability to plan long-term initiatives.

Impact: The programmes have strong potential for long-term development effects, contributing to concrete changes and progress towards the SDGs. Alumni have made significant contributions at various levels, with 73% of the alumni reporting contributions to advancing the SDGs in term of projects and initiatives.

Lessons Learned

The evaluation presents **10 key lessons learned** drawn from the evaluation findings:

1. The branding value of the GRÓ programmes relies on Iceland's name and long-term reputation.
2. The high quality of the fellowship programme in Iceland is crucial but limited in quantitative outputs.
3. Targeting short courses in specific regions over several years ensures a critical mass of trained individuals.
4. Long-term partnerships with key organizations in focus countries enhance local training capabilities.
5. Success in building local partnerships for short courses can be replicated in other regions.
6. Long-term funding from the Icelandic government is essential for programme continuation and expansion.
7. An evidence base of alumni success stories is needed to inform key stakeholders and advocate for the programmes.
8. The GRÓ Results Framework strengthens programme monitoring with common indicators.
9. Systematic tracer surveys of alumni are needed to collect data on impacts over their careers.
10. Establishing formal alumni country chapters can promote links between alumni and development partners.

Recommendations

The evaluation presents **15 recommendations at GRÓ programme level**, summarized below:

1. Formalize GRÓ Centre operational processes and rules for overall governance.
2. Specify the detailed job description of the GRÓ Centre Director General.
3. Appoint the next Director General through an open advertisement, based on a clear definition of the post.
4. Establish a framework for periodic structured dialogue between the GRÓ Centre and MFA.
5. Create a framework for structured dialogue between the GRÓ Centre, programmes, and Icelandic embassies in partner countries.
6. Negotiate and finalize service agreements for the GRÓ Centre for a period starting in 2026, considering a duration of up to six years.
7. Prepare medium-term plans for the anticipated delivery of programme outputs up to 2030.
8. Outline the broad financial perspective required by GRÓ Centre and programmes to deliver strategic priorities up to 2030.
9. Ensure the collection and reporting of standard statistical data on beneficiaries' feedback.
10. Introduce systematic formal tracer surveys of GRÓ alumni over the medium- and longer-term.
11. Undertake specific impact assessments of the programmes in leading partner countries or regions.
12. Prepare a formal communication strategy for Development Education Awareness Raising efforts.
13. Finalize the draft GRÓ alumni strategy and support the establishment of local alumni chapters.
14. Develop a medium-term strategy for the partnership with UNESCO partners.
15. Encourage partner organizations to nominate female candidates for all training activities, addressing the under-representation in short courses.

Links to Evaluation Resources *(available at Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland Webpage links)*

GRÓ:	GRÓ Final Evaluation Report	GRÓ Evaluation Executive Summary
FTP:	Evaluation Report for GRÓ FTP	Case Study for GRÓ FTP
GEST:	Evaluation Report for GRÓ GEST	Case Study for GRÓ GEST
GTP:	Evaluation Report for GRÓ GTP	Case Study for GRÓ GTP
LRT:	Evaluation Report for GRÓ LRT	Case Study for GRÓ LRT
Survey:	GRÓ Evaluation Survey	GRÓ Evaluation Infogram

ANNEX 10 TERMS OF REFERENCE: REVIEW OF GRÓ INTERNATIONAL CENTRE, A C2C UNDER THE AUSPICES OF UNESCO, REYKJAVÍK, ICELAND

1. Background

UNESCO delivers on its mandate through a broad variety of activities, including those implemented through Category 1 and Category 2 Institutes/Centres, where Category 1 refers to the Centres which are legally a part of UNESCO and Category 2 refers to those which operate under the auspices of UNESCO. These Centres serve in their fields of specialization as international or regional centres and poles of expertise to provide services and technical assistance to Member States, cooperation partners and also internally to the network of UNESCO field offices. In this context, the UNESCO Category 2 Centres are expected to contribute directly to attaining UNESCO's strategic programme objectives and expected results aligned with the four-year programmatic period of the C/5 document (Programme and Budget).

GRÓ-International Centre for Capacity Development – Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change, was established following the decision of the General Conference of UNESCO at its 40th session in 2019 (40C/Resolution 18.IX). Initial Agreement was signed between UNESCO and the Government of Iceland on 16 December 2019.

Under the provisions of the current agreement signed in 2019 and as stated in the document 207 EX/Decision 15.VII which is referred in the agreement, the Centre's overall objective is to strengthen individual, organizational and institutional capacities focusing on the fields of geothermal energy, gender equality, land restoration and science for sustainable management of fisheries and aquatic resources, to support developing countries in the following areas¹:

1. in achieving sustainable development and economic growth;
2. the fulfilment of international agenda and initiatives, such as the UN 2030 Agenda and Paris Climate Agreement;
3. promoting multidisciplinary and integrated approaches for sustainable use of natural resources;
4. on gender equality in line with UNESCO's Global Priority Gender Equality

The Centre will contribute to the execution of UNESCO's programmes by strengthening the capacity of UNESCO Member States. It also will contribute to facilitating and increasing technical cooperation among developing countries.

The functions of the Centre are

- a. Provide a five-to-six months training course for practicing professionals from developing countries in Iceland that draws on Iceland's expertise within: i) geothermal energy; ii) gender equality; iii) land restoration; and iv) science for sustainable management of fisheries and aquatic resources to build capacity of participants from developing countries or conflict/post-conflict countries.
- b. Provide training of high quality by experienced and knowledgeable lecturers that combine and balances theory, professional skills training, and project work;
- c. Undertake a robust recruitment process of fellows to which much attention, time, and resources are devoted;
- d. Facilitate networking and fruitful cooperation among fellows and institutional partners;
- e. Conduct applied research and support partners in creating and disseminating new knowledge;
- f. Create innovative electronic learning platforms, including communities of practice;
- g. Provide scholarships to former fellows to complete MSc and PhD studies, based on applied research in home countries;
- h. Develop and deliver short courses in partnership with UNESCO, local, and/or international organisations;

¹ Source document: Agreement signed in 2019 and referenced document therein 207 EX/Decision 15.VII

- i. Facilitate the active involvement of former fellows and other partners in topical national, regional, international, and UNESCO workshops and conferences;
- j. Strengthen the infrastructure of organisations, institutions, and universities in partner countries through the development of joint plans for capacity development and research;
- k. Provide advisory services to partner organisations at the national and international level;
- l. Cater to the practical and social needs of the fellows in Iceland during the training programmes
- m. Promote the activities of the Centre and the role of UNESCO in the four priority of the areas detailed in point a. from above including herein the coordination and collaboration with UNESCO global and regional programmes and activities;
- n. Make recommendations to the UNESCO Secretariat on matters related to the mandate of the Centre and formulate proposals regarding the four priority areas of the center detailed in point a. from above;

The Centre shall pursue the above objectives and perform the above-mentioned functions in close coordination with UNESCO through its Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences and the Bureau of Strategic Planning.

In 2019, during its 40th session, the General Conference amended the document 37 C/18 Part I and its annex, the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centers under the auspices of UNESCO. The primary objective of this amendment was to enhance the operation and effectiveness of individual UNESCO Category 2 Institutes/Centres, as well as the effectiveness of their network. As part of this amendment, the Director-General was requested to apply 40 C/Resolution 79, as outlined in the strategy, to all proposals for establishing new Category 2 Institutes and Centres, as well as renewals of existing agreements. This integrated comprehensive strategy supersedes all relevant prior resolutions by the General Conference on the subject. The General Conference has mandated that each existing agreement with Category 2 Institutes or Centre be reviewed in consultation with the Member State(s) with a view to bringing it into conformity with the new strategy for Category 2 entities and respective sectoral strategies. To that effect, it is necessary to carry out a first formal review before a decision is taken to renew the existing agreement concerning the renewal of the GRÓ-International Centre for Capacity Development – Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change located in Reykjavik (Iceland), as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO.

2. Rationale for the evaluation

Document 40 C/79 and its annexes, as adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in November 2019, contains the 2019 Strategy for Category 2 Centres under the auspices of UNESCO, which applies to all proposals for the establishment of Category 2 Centre and outlines the procedure for the renewal of existing agreements. The principles of evaluation processes are set out in the same document.

3. Financial obligations

Further to paragraph E.2 (i) (c) of the 2019 Strategy, the Centre or the Government of the Republic of Iceland in which the Category 2 Centre is located, shall meet all costs related to the renewal evaluation. The 2019 Strategy also foresees that the process shall be managed by UNESCO and the renewal evaluation shall be conducted by a team of gender-balanced independent experts.

- a. UNESCO shall have no financial obligations or accountability for the operations, management and accounting by any Category 2 Institute or Centre and shall not provide financial support for administrative or institutional purposes.
- b. UNESCO Member State(s) or individual institutions concerned shall meet the costs of the feasibility study related to the establishment of a Category 2 Institute and Centre proposed, the costs of the renewal review assessments, as well as the costs of UNESCO staff participation in a governing body of Institute or Centre, as appropriate.
- c. If a Category 2 Institute or Centre ceases to receive financial support from sponsoring Member State(s) or any other funding source the Director-General shall invite sponsoring Member State(s) to explore other funding possibilities within the period of six months. Should there be no result, the Director-General may propose to the Executive Board to terminate the agreement signed and cancel the designation as Category 2 entity.

4. Purpose

The main purpose of the review is to evaluate the performance of Category 2 Centre since the entry into force of the current Agreement and hence provide UNESCO and Government of Iceland with a recommendation on the possible renewal of its current status as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO.

As per paragraph E.2 ("renewal procedures") of document 40 C/79, the UNESCO Intersectoral Review Committee examines all renewal evaluation reports and the corresponding draft agreements during the months of: April, for

submission of recommendations to the autumn session of the Executive Board, and October, for submission to the spring session of the Executive Board. On the basis of the assessment of the Intersectoral Review Committee, the Director-General shall provide a recommendation, in her report to the Executive Board, as to whether the designation as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO should be renewed or not. The responsible Sector's focal point shall inform the concerned Member State(s) and Centre of this recommendation and prepare the related documents for submission to the Executive Board.

In addition, the evaluation is also intended to inform the Member States of UNESCO, the UNESCO Secretariat and other stakeholders on the Centre's overall performance, its contribution to the strategic objectives of UNESCO and on the implementation of the 2019 Strategy and may provide suggestions for potential improvements for the future functioning of the Category 2 Centre.

The conclusions of the renewal evaluation will be shared with the respective MS and the Category 2 Centre. The final report of the evaluation will be made available on the website of the Executive Board corresponding to the Natural Sciences Sector.

In this respect, the findings of the review will serve as the basis for the Director-General's recommendation to the Executive Board as to whether the Agreement between UNESCO and the Government of Iceland should be renewed or not.

5. Scope

The evaluation, which will include a field visit to the Centre, will adopt both a retrospective and prospective approach. It should result in evidence-based and action-oriented recommendations and will be guided by the following overarching questions, to be further refined by the evaluators during the inception phase of this assessment. In order to meet the objectives of the evaluation, as described above, the following parameters shall be considered by the independent experts contracted to undertake the renewal evaluation:

1. The extent to which the Centre's functions and objectives as set out in the Agreement signed with UNESCO were achieved.
2. The relevance of the contribution of the Centre's programmes and activities to the achievement of UNESCO's prevailing Approved Programme and Budget (C/5) at the time in which its Agreement entered into force and thereafter, including global strategies and action plans as well as sectoral programme priorities, as defined in the Agreement.
3. The relevance of the contribution of the activities of the Centre to global development agendas.
4. The quality of coordination and interaction with UNESCO, both at Headquarters and in the field, as well as with National Commissions, other thematically related Category 1 and 2 Institutes or Centres, with regard to planning and implementation of programmes.
5. The partnerships developed and maintained with government agencies, public or private partners and donors.
6. The nature and efficiency of the Centre's governance, including organizational arrangements, management, human resources and accountability mechanisms.
7. The financial resources available for ensuring sustainable institutional capacity and viability.
8. The extent to which the Centre enjoys within the national territory the autonomy necessary for the execution of its activities and legal capacity to contract, institute legal proceedings, and to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property.

In addition to analysing the above-mentioned topics, the review will propose recommendations on the following aspects:

- The decision to renew the Centre's status as a Category 2 Centre.
- The relevance and effectiveness of the Centre's activities.
- The collaboration of *GRÓ-International Centre for Capacity Development – Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change* with other UNESCO entities.
- If required, options for aligning *GRÓ-International Centre for Capacity Development – Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change* with the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy.
- If required, proposals for amendments to the Agreement.

6. Roles and responsibilities

Category 2 sector focal points are responsible for managing and coordinating the review process. As such, they should draft the TOR for a review and select independent experts who will conduct the review and prepare the report. The selected expert(s) shall be responsible for conducting the review and preparing the report, based on this TOR. The sectoral focal point will consult with the Internal Oversight Service (IOS) throughout the process and IOS will provide backstopping support as necessary.

The report will be finalized in consultation with the sector focal point, the Bureau of Strategic Planning (BSP) and Internal Oversight Services (IOS) of UNESCO. The results of the review will then be considered by a sector Review Committee who will recommend to the Director- General whether an existing agreement should be renewed or denounced. The Director- General will then provide the results of the review, including the endorsement or rejection to renew a specific agreement, in her report to the Executive Board on the execution of the programme (as well as reports to any subsidiary bodies as may be envisaged in sector strategies).

The approval of the Executive Board will be required before the Director-General can proceed with the renewal of an agreement. Should the Executive Board decide the termination or non-renewal of the agreement, the host Member State(s) shall then be duly informed of such decision.

The BSP will coordinate with the relevant Category 2 sector focal point to include the result of a review undertaken in the Director-General's report to the Executive Board on the execution of the programme.

7. Evaluation team

The evaluation shall be conducted by a team of gender-balanced independent experts to be selected by UNESCO. The independent experts shall have had no prior affiliation with the Centre, nor contractual involvements in current or past activities of the Centre under the Centre's current Agreement. One international expert will be selected by UNESCO to lead the evaluation team. He/she shall have had no prior affiliation with the Centre and shall draft the renewal evaluation report in English, in collaboration with the second (junior/local) expert.

In line with UNESCO's Evaluation Policy (2022-2029), the evaluation will comply with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation, UNEG Guidelines for Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations and UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation

8. Review Methodology

The review methods to be employed are to be clarified in the review framework to be proposed by the independent evaluators, showing how each of the review dimensions mentioned in the review scope section will be addressed with regards to data sources and data collection methods. Among others, the following methods should be considered:

- Document review (desk study).
- Interviews with stakeholders (face to face, hybrid modality, virtual).
- Direct observations through field visit(s).
- Questionnaires/surveys with stakeholders, such as UNESCO staff and/or partners.

UNESCO as well as the Centre will provide the experts with relevant documentation to be reviewed in the desk study. Interviews are to be conducted with relevant UNESCO staff, staff of the Centre and other key stakeholders (e.g., academics and professionals who have been involved in activities conducted by the Centre).

The Centre will make all relevant documents and information available to the evaluator(s), including:

- A copy of the current Agreement between UNESCO and the respective MS.
- A copy of any agreement or memorandum of understanding between UNESCO and the GRÓ Centre.
- Annual progress reports on the contribution to UNESCO's programme objectives.
- Financial reports of the GRÓ Centre.
- List of staff of the GRÓ Centre.
- List of key publications by the GRÓ Centre.
- List of GRÓ Centre donors and project partners.
- Minutes of GRÓ Centre Governing Board meetings.

- Available audit and evaluation reports of the GRÓ Centre.
- List of beneficiaries, people trained, and countries assisted by the GRÓ Centre.
- Periodic independent audit reports of the financial statements of the GRÓ Centre.
- Support provided to Member States.
- Account of networking achievements of the GRÓ Centre linked with other thematically related Category 2 Institutes/Centres and UNESCO's programmes.
- Report of the 2018 GRÓ Centre feasibility study and recommendations.

9. Deliverables

The evaluation will result in three deliverables, as follows:

1. *An inception report* consisting of:
 - i. Background, objectives and refined key questions.
 - ii. Methodology (customized framework of how the exercise intends to cover the entire scope of the evaluation).
 - iii. Work plan.
2. *Draft evaluation report*. The process for preparing the draft evaluation report shall allow adequate time for a discussion of the findings and the recommendations included in the draft report with UNESCO (SC/EES) and pertinent stakeholders, including the Government of Iceland and the Centre.
3. *Final evaluation report*. The final report (12-20 pages excluding annexes) should be structured as follows:
 - Executive summary (up to 3 pages).
 - Purpose of the review.
 - Scope of the review.
 - Methodology.
 - Findings.
 - Recommendations (including a formal recommendation on continuation or discontinuation of the Category 2 status).
 - Annexes (including terms of reference, key documents consulted, list of interviews).

The language of all reports shall be English.