



International Centre for Capacity
Development, Sustainability and
Societal Change
under the auspices of UNESCO

Theory of Change

2022-2027

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GRÓ Strategy

1 Introduction

The GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Societal Change (GRÓ) is a UNESCO Category 2 Centre located in Iceland. The Centre was established in 2020 and includes four capacity development training programmes funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, all with a long and successful history.

GRÓ's objective is to strengthen individual and institutional capacities in low and middle income countries (LMICs) to deliver development results in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This work is carried out through the following four capacity development training programmes that focus on specific thematic areas:

- The Fisheries Training Programme (FTP), which promotes sustainable use and management of living aquatic resources.
- The Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme (GEST), which promotes gender equality, women's empowerment, and social justice.
- The Geothermal Training Programme (GTP), which promotes the utilisation and sustainable management of reliable, economically viable, and environmentally sound, geothermal energy resources.
- The Land Restoration Training Programme (LRT), which focuses on combatting land degradation, restoring degraded land, and promoting sustainable land management.

GRÓ is Iceland's flagship initiative to help facilitate sustainable development by supporting effective and targeted capacity strengthening in selected partner countries. The four GRÓ Training Programmes provide capacity development in areas where Iceland has specific experience and expertise that can contribute to reducing poverty. GRÓ's support is specifically aimed at achieving progress on the implementation of the following four United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (GEST).
- SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy (GTP).
- SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources (FTP).
- SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems (LRT).

GTP, FTP and LRT emphasise gender equality in all parts of their operations and GEST incorporates environmental and economic aspects in their work.

All the SDGs are interlinked. GRÓ's activities will also affect the progress of other SDGs directly or indirectly and therefore benefit all of society and contribute to improving the living conditions for all in the partner countries and reducing poverty. Among the SDGs with the strongest relevance for GRÓ's work are: No poverty (SDG 1), Zero hunger (SDG 2), Good health and well-being (SDG 3), Quality education (SDG 4), Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), Reduced inequalities (SDG 10), ensure sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12), Climate action (SDG13), Peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16) and Partnership for the goals (SDG17). Together the GRÓ Centre's capacity strengthening activities create a strong synergy between the main pillars of sustainable development for the benefit of low and middle income partner countries.

This document describes the GRÓ Centre's Theory of Change and Strategy for 2022–2027. GRÓ's Theory of Change describes the changes GRÓ is aiming to achieve, and the strategies for accomplishing those changes. In doing so, the Theory of Change aims to articulate

relationships between interventions and intended results and describes the mechanisms and assumptions behind the proposed changes.

GRÓ's Strategy identifies objectives and priorities for GRÓ for the same period. GRÓ will continue to work on strengthening a joint identity and culture for its work, as well as recognition of GRÓ's brand by maintaining and developing the excellent track record of the four Training Programmes and continue to establish itself as an efficient learning organisation operating under the auspices of UNESCO.

GRÓ's Strategy is approved by the GRÓ Governing Board and will be used by the Board to hold the GRÓ Centre accountable to its objectives and priorities.

Additionally, GRÓ's strategy is a dissemination tool for existing and potential partners to create an understanding of what GRÓ wants to achieve and how GRÓ may serve their capacity development needs.

2 GRÓ Theory of Change:

The overarching vision of GRÓ is that the SDGs are achieved. For GRÓ, this entails:

- The sustainable use of the world's natural resources.
- Resilient natural and human systems.
- Equality, human rights, and human well-being are the pillars on which our societies are built.

GRÓ's main approach is to increase institutional capacity in partner countries by assisting strategically positioned individuals for delivering change. These individuals are selected from partner organisations in these countries; GRÓ facilitates the increase of their skills, knowledge, and leadership competence in their respective professional field so that they can apply and disseminate this knowledge through their home organisations.

In recent decades, access to higher education in low and middle income countries has increased significantly. Traditional academic training is necessary but often insufficient on its own to provide the kind of expert and leadership competencies required to meet the modern global challenges of sustainability. Foundational and theoretical understanding of issues related to sustainable use of natural resources and societal development serves well as a first step in the development of expertise, but often falls short when graduates move into the professional arena and are faced with the application of practical solutions to complex, real-life, challenges.

Capacity development is the process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes, and resources that organisations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive in a fast-changing world¹. UNSDG17 focuses on strengthening means of implementation and revitalising global partnership for sustainable development. Several of the targets under SDG17 are a direct focus of GRÓ; in particular, target 17.9 on enhancing SDG capacity in low or middle income countries, which is the core role of GRÓ.

Each GRÓ Programme selects its own partner countries depending on the Programme's focus and in line with GRÓ's Policy framework, including Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, Iceland's Policy for International Development Cooperation and UNESCO's Medium Term Strategy, as is further explained in Chapter 3.1. A partner country should qualify for ODA assistance in accordance with the OECD DAC classification².

GRÓ will particularly aim to work with:

- Countries that are classified as Least Developed Countries.
- Countries in Africa.
- Small Island Developing States.

Other general selection criteria are:

- The country is faced with challenges targeted by a GRÓ Programme but needs further capacity to address them.
- The country has governance and institutional structures in place receptive to capacity strengthening that GRÓ programmes can support.

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/page/capacity-building>

² The list is updated every year and is available at the OECD DAC website.

General assumptions behind the selection of partner organisations are:

- In each partner country, there are key local organisations that have the potential and ambition to contribute to necessary changes in collaboration with the respective GRÓ Programme's fields of expertise. The Programme identifies those institutions and builds partnerships with them.
- The selected organisations have a mandate, or strong position, within their country to work on development issues related to the Programme's focus.
- To maximize impact, each Programme is flexible and adapts over time in selection of partner countries and partner organisations within each country.

While the main approaches and underlying assumptions are similar between the Programmes, it is also important to acknowledge that they work in very different fields and contexts. They, therefore, retain freedom to make their own decisions about partner country and partner organisation selection, as well as other operational issues, within the general GRÓ framework. Some of the Programme specific aspects are described in the individual Programme sections (Annexes 1-4).

2.1 GRÓ's pathway of change: Impact, outcome and outputs

As per the Theory of Change for the GRÓ Centre GRÓ will work to achieve the changes aimed for by applying the strategies described below.

Impact

Through capable individuals and organisations, partner countries progress towards the achievement of the targeted SDGs by promoting sustainable use of natural resources; strengthening resilient natural and human systems; advancing equality and human rights; and improving human wellbeing.

Assumption:

GRÓ's partner institutions and organisations are committed to the implementation of SDGs relevant to the role and mandate of their respective organisations.

Outcome

GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients and their respective organisations promote and implement changes needed to achieve the SDGs relevant to their field of work.

Assumptions:

Partner organisations recognise the new knowledge, skills and competencies acquired by GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients.

Partner organisations will encourage returning staff members to practice and spread what they have learnt in GRÓ supported trainings and activity.

The GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients become change agents in their field of expertise. They use the increased capacity gained through GRÓ to promote sustainable development within their sphere of influence in their organisations and home countries.

Outputs

Output 1: Increased capability of individuals and expertise of GRÓ partner organisations to design and implement programme activities in their respective professional fields.

Assumptions:

Candidates for GRÓ training activities have basic working knowledge, skills, and some experience in their fields but benefit from applied training to further improve their skills, knowledge, and leadership abilities.

Partner organisations recognize the need for strengthening these capacities and competencies and are therefore willing to utilise GRÓ training opportunities for their staff members.

Partner organisations are willing and able to work with the GRÓ Programmes to establish priorities for training.

Output 2: Production and dissemination of new knowledge by GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients.

Assumptions:

GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients develop an understanding of the main issues in their fields. They learn about and develop, innovative solutions applicable to challenges in their home contexts to reduce poverty.

GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients undertake applied research that is relevant to addressing challenges in their home countries.

Knowledge, techniques, policies and strategies can be adapted and applied in a variety of contexts.

Output 3: Professional empowerment of GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients is increased through GRÓ community building and networking.

Assumptions:

Participants in GRÓ training activities, fellows, scholarship recipients, and teachers alike, have valuable knowledge and experience and learn from one another during the training and follow-up activities.

GRÓ alumni interact and collaborate within their home countries, regions and beyond, thereby advancing sustainable development and equality in their organisations and countries. GRÓ alumni networks serve as mechanisms for cooperation between partner countries.

2.2 Intervention strategies

To achieve the outputs and outcome described in section 2.1, the GRÓ Programmes apply the intervention strategies described below in sections 2.2.1 to 2.2.8. All four Programmes use these strategies, but to varying extents. While the basic strategies are the same, there are, however, some variations between the Programmes when it comes to implementation. The strategy descriptions below are therefore general, with the major Programme specific deviations described separately in Annexes 1-4.

2.2.1 Post-graduate training programmes

A core activity of GRÓ is to offer post-graduate level training programmes for young professionals (fellows) from partner institutions and organisations. The training programmes run for five (GEST) or six months (FTP, GTP, LRT). The GEST and LRT training offers a 30 ECTS post-graduate university diploma.

The training takes place in Iceland and thus provides fellows with a period in a new environment and away from their regular responsibilities. This creates space for them to dive deep into learning and research. It also exposes them to a variety of new viewpoints and approaches to work and life in general, e.g. related to gender equality, which enhances their experience and learning.

The GRÓ Centre safeguards the elements of the post-graduate training that have, over the decades long history of the programmes, proven to contribute to quality capacity strengthening and subsequent positive results in partner countries. These elements include access to, and collaboration with, experienced and knowledgeable lecturers and experts, an inspiring study environment in close proximity to Icelandic institutions working in the respective fields, and a responsive and adaptable management approach that involves monitoring, assessment and reflection processes. Each training programme manages independently the content and academic aspects of the training, whereas the GRÓ Centre is responsible for oversight, monitoring and strategic direction for all of the work of GRÓ.

Fellows get full scholarships, covering all expenses during the time they spend in Iceland. All expenses directly connected to the training are paid by GRÓ, and/or by other international partners. Fellows are generally funded by Fellowships granted by the programmes and thereby through the Official Development Assistance of the Icelandic Government. The programmes are open to, and encourage, the admission of additional fellows funded by external mechanisms, provided that such admissions are in line with the objectives of the programmes. Such external funding may come from development cooperation programmes, grant schemes, employers etc. The partner organisations are expected to release the fellows from their day-to-day responsibilities during the training period and to guarantee their positions on their return.

The GRÓ Centre employs a multi-directional learning approach where it is expected that the fellows not only learn from the instructors, but also that instructors learn from the fellows, and that fellows learn from one another. Each training programme comprises participants from numerous countries and regions to increase opportunities for peers to share knowledge, experience, and perspectives. This is expected to increase the fellows' inter-cultural awareness and understanding, and to encourage national and international collaboration among graduated fellows. Such networking opens opportunities for further knowledge sharing and creation, and for other forms of collaboration, which in turn may lead to greater effects of this strategy.

The training programmes combine and balance theoretical and practical content. During the training, fellows work with issues connected to their home countries. GRÓ fellows conduct research projects, take part in professional skills training, and social team-building components. Each programme has its own structure, but they all have a lecture component and an individual project/research component, often bringing data to analyse and work with from home.

The training aims to increase institutional capacity by training individuals to become “change agents” within their countries and organisations by applying their new knowledge and skills. By training professionals from the same organisations and countries over many years, the intention is to build a critical mass within each organisation and country. With their enhanced knowledge, skills, and ability for teamwork and collaborative efforts, it is furthermore assumed

that this mass of people can more easily promote change than if the GRÓ resources were more scattered.

Selection strategy for fellows

GRÓ aims to train key people within partner organisations, who are well-positioned to apply and disseminate their new knowledge and skills after they return home. The selection processes are similar across the four programmes except that GEST accepts nominations for individual experts from organisations (i.e. government, NGOs, academic/research) without pre-established partnership agreements with the exception of partner universities. FTP, GTP and LRT work with selected partner organisations with a formal, and sometimes informal, agreement between the Programme and the partner organisation about training priorities and collaboration. The following steps are followed to secure appropriate candidates for the programmes:

- Each Programme identifies organisations dealing with challenges relevant to the focus of the Programme and selects organisations to work with. The partner organisations are in key positions to contribute to the changes needed to deal with these challenges.
- Partner organisations are invited to nominate training candidates. Candidates must have at least one university degree, at least one year's working experience and hold a position within their organisation that allows them to apply and disseminate the knowledge and skills gained through the training. They should also have adequate oral and writing skills in English.
- Candidates are interviewed by GRÓ Programme staff members or their representatives. Usually, the interviews take place in the partner country, which in itself is a strategy for strengthening the connections between GRÓ and the partners and also offers opportunities for informal progress monitoring. It is also possible to take the interviews online when necessary.
- The Programmes make the final selection and selected candidates are invited to attend the training.

Given the centrality of selecting promising candidates that will serve as change agents, GRÓ places a strong emphasis on undertaking robust recruitment processes, applying the necessary attention, dialogue, time, and resources.

2.2.2 In-country training

Other forms of tailored trainings, with duration from a few days to several months, are held at country or regional level. These trainings have the advantage of training more people than can be achieved with the longer post-graduate training programmes. There are many actors in development cooperation providing courses at the local level. To add value, GRÓ will ensure that the Programme's training activities are demand-driven, individually tailored to expressed local needs, and enjoy strong ownership at country level. This entails working closely with institutions in partner countries on the design and implementation of the courses. These courses will engage the expertise of former fellows of the post-graduate trainings whenever possible. GRÓ Programmes may also collaborate with regional partners or international partners, such as UNESCO or other United Nations partners, the World Bank, the Nordic Development Fund, other international funds, or development partners, in addition to local partners such as academic and knowledge institutions, national or sub-national authorities and civil society in the partner countries. Course provision can be on-site, online or a combination of both.

In the longer term, the aim of these courses is to contribute to building sustainable capacity strengthening structures in the partner countries. The courses are furthermore expected to strengthen the institutional frameworks needed to implement the SDGs in partner countries.

2.2.3 Scholarships

All four programmes will provide scholarships to fellows for post-graduate studies in Iceland to augment capacity development in partner countries and to contribute to enhanced determination in favour of implementation of the SDGs.

The provision of scholarships for Master's and PhD programmes in Iceland is a means to increase academic and research capacity, and research outputs in partner countries. Studies have shown (NIRAS Evaluation 2017) that fellows who have been granted such scholarships have been particularly proficient as change agents by contributing to important results at the home country level, even beyond the academic sphere.

Scholarship candidates must fulfil the entrance criteria and be accepted by GRÓ's partner universities in Iceland. The postgraduates will be expected to relate their research to their home institutions or home countries and, where possible, conduct a part of the research in their home country. This will further strengthen the academic environment and support institutional capacity development at the country level. The assumption is that graduated students will work in their home countries after graduation and that their research will contribute to improved and increased implementation of the SDGs.

2.2.4 Workshops and conferences

GRÓ Programme staff attend and organise national and international conferences, symposiums, and workshops in their fields of expertise. The GRÓ Centre will also support selected former fellows to attend international conferences, symposiums, and workshops relevant to their work as a means of disseminating their research and elevating the engagement of low and middle income countries in the international academic community. The opportunity for former fellows to attend and present their scientific research at international conferences is expected to strengthen their own academic careers and the academic capacity in their home countries.

Transnational dialogue and knowledge exchange will furthermore be achieved using different channels, such as articles and lecture series; taking part in and hosting international fora and expert meetings; the websites of GRÓ and individual programmes; online newsletters, social media, and podcasts. Dialogue and knowledge exchange will take place with universities and other research institutions.

2.2.5 Innovative online content creation

Through the creation of online courses and other digital material disseminated through online platforms, the GRÓ Centre can broaden its impact in its partner countries, and around the world. The GRÓ programmes have experience in the creation of MOOCs (massive open online courses) distributed through a variety of platforms, as well as the creation of supplemental training materials designed to promote digital learning, which have the potential to enhance other intervention strategies.

2.2.6 Research and knowledge creation

The GRÓ Programmes represent a wealth of knowledge and experience in their areas of expertise, and Programme staff take an active role in shaping and guiding the research undertaken by fellows. The research projects of fellows and post-graduate scholarship holders target the specific needs of partner countries and bring to light new knowledge benefitting development in the four respective fields in those countries and elsewhere. These research activities also help to strengthen research capacity in partner countries.

Fellows' research work is disseminated through Programme web sites. In some instances, research conducted by GRÓ fellows can form the basis of publications in peer-reviewed journals or supplement their graduate research.

2.2.7 Networking

The GRÓ training programmes are geared towards building the competencies and skills of future change agents. GRÓ will therefore encourage the formation of alumni networks among its former fellows but allow the initiatives to emerge from the alumni. Apart from exchanging ideas and news, networks can serve to advocate, organise training events, brief and later debrief new fellows, and foster synergies and opportunities for leveraging new initiatives and/or funding. As such, networks will contribute to enhance the sustainability of training results. Networks can also be drawn upon for the following-up of programme results.

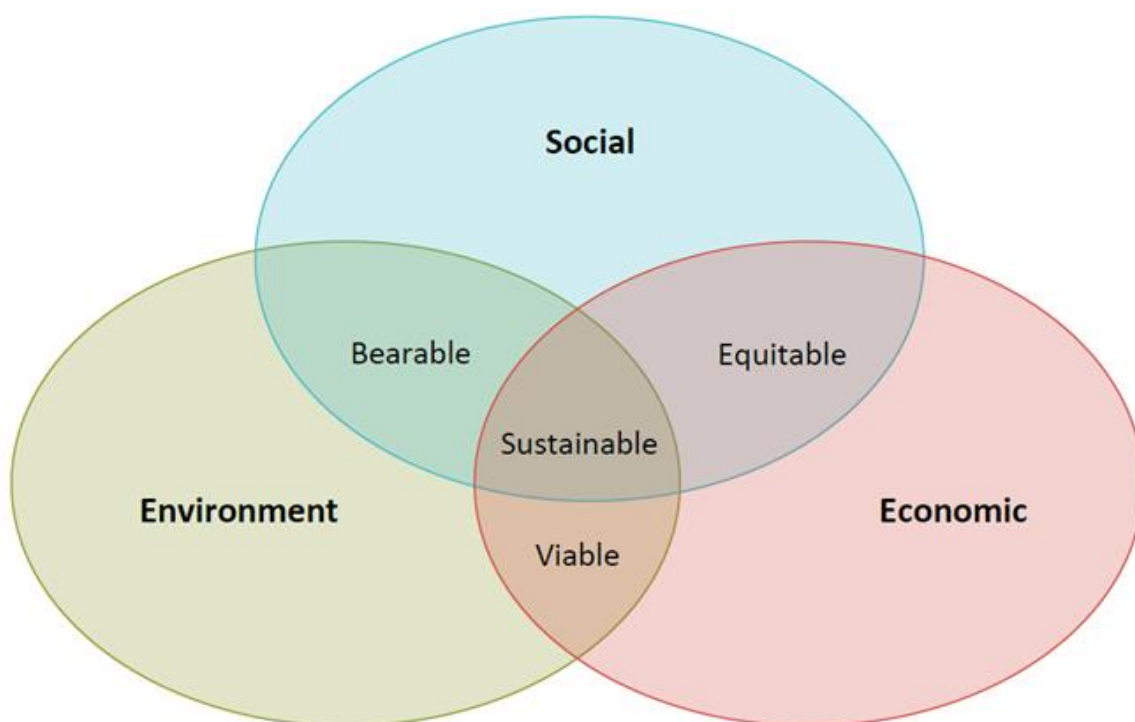
2.2.8 Advisory services and knowledge sharing

GRÓ is an international centre of competence in its focus areas. Expertise exists within the GRÓ Programmes and its partners which is useful to parallel development projects. In addition to the core capacity strengthening activities of GRÓ described in sections 2.2.1-2.2.6, other activities and projects are undertaken on a case-by-case basis and in line with GRÓ's vision and goals. These projects include advisory, consultancy, and research services performed by GRÓ Programme staff, partners, and former fellows. Some examples are training needs assessments for partner organisations, evaluation of development projects, support to partner organisations' project implementation, research related to one of GRÓ's core areas, consultancy on the design of capacity development and university curricula, serving on expert panels for, e.g. UNESCO entities, etcetera.

2.3 GRÓ's comparative advantages

The 2030 Agenda integrates in a balanced manner the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. The 2030 Agenda is also indivisible, in a sense that it must be implemented as a whole, in an integrated rather than a fragmented manner, recognizing that the different goals and targets are closely interlinked (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Agenda 2030 is indivisible



GRÓ has a comparative advantage in its multi-disciplinary approach, integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development through the four capacity development Programmes. The establishment of each Programme builds on the notion that Iceland has, or has access to, an extensive body of knowledge and experience in this specific field. In addition, they have a deep knowledge of the challenges at hand in the partner countries that has been accumulated over years or even decades of cooperation, as well as a vast network of international partners and colleagues in their respective fields. Through the diversity of its intervention strategies, GRÓ capacity strengthening provides more than just training. Even though the GRÓ Centre is new, all four Programmes have long experience in applying and continuously enhancing their intervention strategies. Through the years, the Programmes have worked together on a mostly informal basis. With GRÓ, this cooperation was formalised and the GRÓ Centre and its four Programmes have worked on increasing cooperation with the aim of strengthening the Programmes, creating synergies, and avoiding duplication and therefore supporting further progress and effectivity of GRÓ's efforts.

Gender sensitive and equality promoting approaches

The GRÓ centre is committed to actively promote gender equality in all its activities by providing a gender-sensitive learning environment and maintaining gender balance in the admission of fellows and other trainees. It also seeks to increase the role of women in the fisheries, geothermal and land restoration sectors, aiming for gender parity. Moreover, the GRÓ programmes undertake research and projects relating to gender and their areas of expertise when possible.

2.4 GRÓ's Partners

2.4.1 Host agencies

The GRÓ programmes are hosted within Icelandic institutions with expertise in the respective Programme's focus areas. Host institutions are responsible for the general administration of the programmes, and as such, they provide a conducive environment and access to a range of resources. The aim of working with host agencies is to foster close cooperation and mutual benefit for GRÓ fellows, the host agency, and GRÓ itself. GRÓ fellows benefit through the exposure to the institutional organisation and expertise provided by the host institution. The host institutions benefit through the diversity of ideas and global focus of the fellows. The GRÓ Centre benefits through cooperation with the host agencies because of the expertise and experience they provide in the areas core to achieving GRÓ's goals in its stated focus areas.

2.4.2 Partners in Iceland

Even though GRÓ makes hosting agreements with only one host institution for each Programme, the Programmes often make collaboration agreements and work closely with other relevant Icelandic institutions around their trainings in Iceland and abroad, and other activities. Many of the aspects and mutual benefits mentioned above also apply to these collaboration partners.

GRÓ's Icelandic partnerships offer a broad-based learning and training environment for the fellows, other trainees, and scholarship recipients by providing access to experts in diverse specialist fields. GRÓ's partners in Iceland are drawn from universities, governmental and non-governmental research agencies, public companies, and the private sector.

Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs will require all hands on deck. Actors across the globe are expected to work together pooling resources, knowledge and expertise. Mutual exchanges of experience and lessons learnt are critical. If Iceland is to contribute effectively, it needs a resource base with experience of, and competence from, international development cooperation and international organisations. By working with GRÓ

fellows and scholarship recipients, who bring with them experience from home, as well as through opportunities to travel; the Icelandic development community – in geothermal energy, fisheries, land restoration and gender equality – benefits by becoming better connected and better informed about the context in partner countries.

2.4.3 Organisations in partner countries

The GRÓ Programmes have established partnerships, both formal and informal, with a wide range of institutions in partner countries and will continue to establish new partnerships or discontinue old partnerships when relevant. These partners include ministries, research organisations, universities, governmental and civil society organisations, private sector, regional organisations, and other agencies working in the four areas of GRÓ's expertise.

2.4.4 UNESCO

The GRÓ Centre works with UNESCO in several ways. UNESCO field offices, regional offices and/or national commissions (Natcoms) can contribute to GRÓ's capacity strengthening activities. UNESCO can play a specific role in the nomination of fellows and also in networking with alumni in their area; promotion, dissemination and uptake of fellows' projects; and links with ongoing development partner initiatives.

Likewise, the GRÓ Centre can contribute to UNESCO's ongoing work. This can include collaboration on expert panels, technical support, capacity strengthening projects, and initiatives for the Man and the Biosphere Programme, World Network of Biosphere Reserves, the IOC, the UNESCO Decade for Ocean Science, the Ocean Teacher platform, and MOST schools, among others.

2.4.5 Other UN and international partners

In addition to its work with UNESCO, the GRÓ Centre partners with other UN agencies on specific projects and initiatives related to its areas of expertise. This includes contributions to the UNDP, UNEP, UN FAO, the UNCCD, the UNFCCC, UN WOMEN, and other United Nations agencies when synergies are possible.

GRÓ also works with other partners in international development cooperation and can, in line with chapter 2.2.8. on Advisory services and knowledge sharing, provide services to projects in cooperation with other international partners that contribute to fulfilling the core aims of GRÓ.

GRÓ Theory of Change diagram

Impact	Through capable individuals and organisations, partner countries progress towards the achievement of the targeted SDGs by promoting sustainable use of natural resources; strengthening resilient natural and human systems; advancing equality and human rights; and improving human wellbeing.		
Assumptions	<i>GRÓ's partner institutions and organisations are committed to the implementation of SDGs relevant to the role and mandate of their respective organisations.</i>		
Outcome	GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients and their respective organisations promote and implement changes needed to achieve the SDGs relevant to their field of work.		
Assumptions	<i>Partner organisations recognise the new knowledge, skills and competencies acquired by GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients.</i>		
	<i>Partner organisations will encourage returning staff members to practice and spread what they have learnt in GRÓ supported trainings and activity.</i>		
	<i>The GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients become change agents in their field of expertise. They use the increased capacity gained through the GRÓ training to promote sustainable development within their sphere of influence in their organisations and home countries.</i>		
Outputs	1. Increased capability of individuals and expertise of GRÓ partner organisations to design and implement programme activities in their respective professional fields.	2. Production and dissemination of new knowledge by GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients.	3. Professional empowerment of GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients is increased through GRÓ community building and networking.
Assumptions	<i>Candidates for GRÓ training activities have basic working knowledge, skills, and some experience in their fields but benefit from applied training to further improve their skills, knowledge, and leadership abilities.</i>	<i>GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients develop an understanding of the main issues in their fields. They learn about and develop innovative solutions applicable to challenges in their home contexts to reduce poverty.</i>	<i>Participants in GRÓ training activities, fellows, scholarship recipients and teachers alike, have valuable knowledge and experience and learn from one another during the training and follow-up activities.</i>
	<i>Partner organisations recognize the need for strengthening these capacities and competencies and are therefore willing to utilise GRÓ training opportunities for their staff members.</i>	<i>GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients undertake applied research that is relevant to addressing challenges in their home countries.</i>	<i>GRÓ alumni interact and collaborate within their home countries, regions and beyond, thereby advancing sustainable development and equality in their organisations and countries. GRÓ alumni networks serve as mechanisms for cooperation between partner countries.</i>
	<i>Partner organisations are willing and able to work with the GRÓ Programmes to establish priorities for training.</i>	<i>Knowledge, techniques, policies and strategies can be adapted and applied in a variety of contexts.</i>	
Activities	GRÓ programmes run 5–6-month training courses annually in Iceland.	Applied final projects are part of the training curriculum in the GRÓ 5–6-month training programmes.	A GRÓ community is created across countries, regions and the thematic fields of GRÓ.
	GRÓ programmes provide financial and technical support to develop and deliver short courses in partner countries.	GRÓ offers scholarships for postgraduate programmes in GRÓ's areas of work.	GRÓ alumni are involved in teaching and organisation of short courses in partner countries.
	GRÓ programmes develop and deliver online content and courses.	GRÓ alumni are supported to participate in regional and international conferences.	GRÓ alumni and partner institutions and organisations collaborate to address development challenges.
	GRÓ programmes offer scholarships to alumni to pursue graduate studies at Icelandic universities in their respective fields of study.		



3 Relevance of GRÓ programmes

3.1 Policy framework

GRÓ's overarching policy framework consists of three overlapping and interrelated policies. First, the framework set out by Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development,³ adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015. Second, Iceland's Policy for International Development Cooperation 2019-2023⁴, whose main principles are human rights, gender equality, and sustainable development. Third, UNESCO's multi-year Medium Term Strategy (C4)⁵, which sets out UNESCO's strategic vision and programmatic framework, including overarching and strategic programme objectives. UNESCO's global priorities on Africa and Gender Equality and the priority groups of youth and Small Island Developing States, are particularly relevant for the work of GRÓ.

GRÓ intends to ensure that the Centre's objectives, approaches, efforts, and results are relevant to these policies and as such contribute to their overall goals. Poverty, human rights principles, gender equality and women's empowerment, environmental sustainability, climate change and conflict are concerns that will be taken into account within GRÓ's efforts.

Furthermore, the SDGs provide a frame of reference for the work of the Centre, in particular gender equality (goal 5), affordable and clean energy (goal 7), life below water (goal 14), life on land (goal 15) and capacity strengthening (goal 17).

3.2 Governance

The GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainable use of Natural Resources, and Social Change operates under the auspices of UNESCO as a Category 2 Centre. The GRÓ Centre operates under its own legal identity. The GRÓ Centre is guided and overseen by a Governing Board, appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland. The Minister also appoints the Centre's Director General who manages cooperative agreements and daily operations.

The governing board is composed of five representatives. The Chairman is appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, one member is appointed by the Ministry of Culture and Business Affairs, 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, low and middle income countries, if they wish to participate in the Centre's programmes.

The main function of the Governing Board is to form policy as well as to oversee the activities of the Centre. Among the main tasks of the board are to deliberate and approve the annual result-based work plans of the Centre and deliberate reports submitted by the Director General 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. The board also deliberates regular audit reports on the financial statements of the Centre and oversees the submission of necessary accounting records for the preparation of financial statements. In addition, the board

³ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

⁴ <https://www.government.is/library/01-Ministries/Ministry-for-Foreign-Affairs/Iceida/Publications/Parliamentary%20Resolution%20on%20Iceland%E2%80%99s%20policy%20for%20international%20development%20cooperation.pdf>

⁵ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000378083>

approves rules and determines the financial and personnel management procedures of the Centre in accordance with laws. Furthermore, the board assumes responsibility for the operations being in accordance with the laws and regulatory acts, as well as requirements that may derive from international obligations.

The GRÓ Centre was established for the purpose of strengthening human resource capacities in low and middle income countries. The Centre employs a multidisciplinary and integrated approach to strengthen organisational, institutional, and individual capacities in LMLCs in the fields of fisheries, gender equality, geothermal energy, and land restoration. The Centre makes cooperative agreements with relevant institutions and agencies regarding the hosting of its four Training Programmes.

- The Fisheries Training Programme is hosted at the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute.
- The Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme is hosted at the University of Iceland.
- The Geothermal Training Programme is hosted at Iceland GeoSurvey.
- The Land Restoration Training Programme is hosted at the Agricultural University of Iceland.

The GRÓ Centre's Director General and the four Programme Directors meet regularly to monitor progress against the strategic plan. Each Programme has a Studies' committee that is headed by the respective Programme Director and comprised of leading experts in the respective fields. The Studies' committee serves as a sounding and advisory board on academic issues relating to the Programme's content, course structure, and capacity development strategies;

The GRÓ Centre is primarily funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs as a part of Iceland's International Development Cooperation. The Centre strives to serve as an efficient and tight-knit learning and training centre for capacity development.

The core roles of the GRÓ Centre are to:

- Apply and regularly update a Theory of Change and Strategy for the GRÓ Centre.
- Apply and regularly update a monitoring and evaluation system for the GRÓ Centre.
- Make and oversee cooperative agreements with institutions hosting the individual Programmes.
- Channel funds to the Programmes based on approved annual work plans and budgets.
- Maximise operational efficiencies and synergies between the Programmes.
- Ensure smooth administration and operations of the Programmes.
- Garner interest in GRÓ activities and attract new funding sources.
- Promote the GRÓ Centre and its work nationally in Iceland and internationally.

3.3 Funding

The GRÓ Centre's core funding is provided by the Government of Iceland as part of Iceland's official international development cooperation budget, managed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Based on cooperative agreements with host institutions, the GRÓ Centre funds the four Training Programmes.

In addition to the core funding, external funding shall be obtained by GRÓ and the GRÓ programmes when relevant and feasible, mainly through grants, counterpart contributions from partner institutions or other partners in international development cooperation and by participation in international projects. Efforts shall be made to identify and attract relevant funding opportunities from the international development cooperation platform.

The GRÓ Centre commits to utilising Icelandic development cooperation funds in the best possible way and maximising cumulative effects and efficiency between the program areas in conformity with UNESCO policies and focus. The GRÓ Centre will look for synergies in the work of the four Programmes in order to maximise efficiencies and undertake efforts to avoid duplications in operations.

Annual result-based work plans and budgets are prepared by the individual programmes and adopted by the Governing Board. GRÓ will ensure inclusive, efficient, and timely approval of annual work plans, budgets, and settlements of annual accounts.

3.4 Approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL)

All development interventions⁶ by the GRÓ Centre shall be relevant to the context, coherent with other interventions and strive to achieve their objectives, deliver results in an efficient way and generate positive and sustainable impact. GRÓ will ensure a responsive and adaptable management approach that involves monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL).

Monitoring

Measuring and reporting results of development interventions is critical to ensuring effectiveness. Tracking progress, learning lessons, and making timely corrections to ensure the intended outcome and thereby support progress on development goals shall be an integral part of the capacity strengthening activities of the GRÓ Centre.

The Programmes will carry out monitoring activities on the basis of an evidence-based approach in order to demonstrate results and effectiveness of their intervention strategies. GRÓ will endeavour to enhance joint and coordinated efforts for the monitoring of programme activities and monitor progress in line with the GRÓ Theory of Change and Strategic Plan.

Furthermore, GRÓ, in collaboration with each programme, will take measures to enhance country level monitoring of results, taking into account country level needs, processes, and opportunities. In its efforts to strengthen country-level monitoring, GRÓ will seek collaboration with UNESCO.

GRÓ will undertake an internal review every three years that will be used to enhance its learning processes and improve effects on the ground. The review can focus on different

⁶ As per DAC's definition, development intervention encompasses all the different types of development and humanitarian efforts that may be evaluated using these criteria, such as a project, programme, policy, strategy, thematic area, technical assistance, policy advice, an institution, financing mechanism, instrument, or other activity. It includes development interventions, humanitarian aid, peacebuilding, climate mitigation and adaptation, normative work, and non-sovereign operations.

aspects, such as mapping fellows' achievements, impact study for a particular programme or a particular partner institution. These reviews will serve as a basis for improving the programmes and developing them further.

Evaluations

Iceland's policy for development cooperation is results-based and evaluations are an essential part of keeping track of and demonstrating results, which shall also be communicated to the public for accountability. Evaluations of the GRÓ Centre shall be carried out by independent external auditors on a regular basis. Evaluation efforts are overseen and commissioned by the Directorate of Internal Affairs, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland on the basis of its work plan. Overarching evaluations of the GRÓ Centre shall be conducted at least every six years. Evaluations shall be based on the OECD DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact, and be carried out in accordance with quality standards for development evaluations.

Further, GRÓ and each programme can also commission external evaluations of their development interventions, or carry out internal reviews, to enhance learning and foster accountability.

Learning

As per professional evaluation standards, efforts shall be made to generate learning from evaluations. This is achieved by different means, such as by disseminating learning generated from evaluations, conducting proper management response processes, and taking corrective actions based on evaluation findings, as needed.

GRÓ and the programmes will strive to foster a learning culture. They will work together to generate learning from their work and to draw from each other's experiences when developing their programme. This can be done for instance by reviewing each other's programmes, commissioning joint studies on particular aspects of the programmes, and by working together and drawing from each other's experiences. The programmes have, over the years, gathered important knowledge of how to achieve the best results. By committing to sharing and learning from each other, as well as from the GRÓ fellows themselves and other stakeholders, the programmes will all benefit and become stronger and maximise their impact and contribution towards advancing the SDGs.

Annex 1: The Fisheries Training Programme – FTP

Fisheries context

All over our planet, people rely on fisheries and aquatic resources for food and income. It is estimated that roughly 10% of the global population depends to a large extent on fisheries and aquaculture for its livelihood. Sustainable fisheries development is a path to improve the livelihoods and incomes of poor communities.

The benefits people and societies derive from resources depend on how we manage them. Aquatic resources are renewable, but undermanaged and overexploited in many countries. Since the late-1980s global catches of fish have stagnated at around 90 million tons annually. At the same time, demand for seafood has increased rapidly due to human population growth. The UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) estimates that the proportion of global fish stocks harvested within biologically sustainable levels has decreased from 90% in 1974 to 66% in 2017. As human population increases, sustainable management of aquatic resources will become increasingly important to meet demand for secure and safe food. Excessive fishing pressure has both biological and economic consequences. Lack of appropriate policies and capacity to evaluate the status of stocks make it challenging to formulate and implement adequate management measures. This not only influences the resilience of fish stocks, but also the ability of people to derive potential economic benefits through increasing the value of fish with good handling, processing and marketing.

FAO estimates that fish constitutes roughly 20% of the animal protein consumed in low and middle income countries. The proportion is even higher in low income food deficit countries, where an estimated 25% of animal protein comes from fish. Beyond protein, fish provides vital micronutrients such as iron, Omega 3 fatty acids, and vitamin A. Micronutrient deficiencies and malnutrition are particularly devastating for pregnant women and young children. The so-called “1000-day window,” refers to the period from conception until two years of age, during which micronutrients are particularly critical for healthy development to occur. The societal costs of illnesses associated with micronutrient deficiency are high, and in recent years, international agencies like the FAO have emphasised food-based solutions, including fish.

Low and middle income countries have contributed a greater share to the world fisheries in recent years. In the mid-1980s, these countries accounted for less than 50 percent of world catches, but today they account for more than 75percent, although the total world catch has stayed the same. In a sense, the problem of overfishing has been exported, from high income to low and middle income countries. Almost half the global catch comes from 25 to 30 million small scale fishermen in LMICs, each fisherman contributing on average less than 1.5 tons per year. Particularly in small scale fisheries, women play an important role in processing and marketing of fish, thus forming a crucial component of the value chain to create economic benefits from limited catches.

While capture fisheries have stagnated over the past three decades, increasing demand for fish has been met through the development of aquaculture. At present, roughly half of all fish consumed by humans comes from aquaculture, and more than 90 percent of all fish produced in aquaculture comes from LMICs. Aquaculture is the fastest growing food sector in the world, and most countries have aquaculture growth high on their development agenda.

Brief introduction to FTP

The Fisheries Training Programme was established in 1998 as a programme within the United Nations University (UNU) and operated as such through 2019. The FTP is hosted within the Icelandic Marine and Freshwater Research Institute. FTP contributes to GRÓ's objectives in the thematic area of promoting sustainable use of living aquatic resources. The goal of the Fisheries Training Programme is to strengthen institutional capacity to support the sustainable use of living aquatic resources in LMICs through international educational and research cooperation.

Ultimately, FTP's aim is to assist partner countries in achieving their own development goals related to fisheries. To achieve this, partnerships are formed with institutions, agencies, and organizations in partner countries which are playing an important role in developing, supporting, and implementing fisheries policies. Based on the capacity gaps identified in close consultation with our partners, FTP creates content and training programmes to address the different needs of each country and organisation.

While considering the importance of cultural diversity and gender equality, the activities of the programme have a special focus on Africa and Small Island Development States (SIDS), where fisheries play an important role in local economies and culture. FTP partners with countries that qualify for ODA assistance in accordance with the OECD DAC classification.

FTP Intervention strategies

FTP applies the intervention strategies described in Section 2.2. The core activity of the FTP is an annual postgraduate level six-month training programme in Iceland which aims to strengthen the professional capacity and competency of FTP fellows to actively contribute to work done in their organisations and to recognise development potential in their home countries. The six-month programme is composed of three modules: an introductory part, a specialisation part, and an individual research project. FTP offers training in four areas of specialisation:

- Fisheries Policy and Management.
- Stock Assessment and Gear Technology.
- Quality Management of Fish Handling and Processing.
- Sustainable Aquaculture.

FTP offers scholarships to former fellows to pursue Master's and PhD studies in fisheries and related subjects at Icelandic universities. To further support institutional capacity development, the post-graduates must relate their research to their institutions and, where possible, conduct part of the research in their home country.

FTP provides financial and technical support to develop and deliver custom-made short courses in partner countries. These courses are designed and run as a cooperation between specialists from FTP and the partner institutions in partner countries, often engaging the expertise of former fellows. Emphasis is laid on cooperating with educational institutions in partner countries with regard to the design and implementation of the courses with a view to strengthening local ownership and dissemination of course content. Through all its activities, FTP promotes gender equality.

FTP arranges conference funding for alumni to attend biannual conferences, such as IIFET and the World Seafood Congress, based on the conference organiser's acceptance of their research for presentation. Such opportunities are invaluable opportunities for FTP alumni to network and share research on a special platform.

FTP is involved in knowledge sharing and advisory work for development actors, such as the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and NORAD, alongside participation in European projects such as Farfish.

FTP works closely with Icelandic institutions related to fisheries and research. FTP is hosted within the Icelandic Marine and Freshwater Research Institute. Other partner institutes within Iceland include the University of Iceland, Matís Ltd. - Icelandic Food and Biotech R&D, the University of Akureyri, and Hólar University College. FTP also enjoys a strong connection with the Icelandic fishing industry. These partnerships offer a broad-based learning and training environment for our fellows by providing access to experts in diverse specialist fields. One of the reasons Iceland decided to establish the FTP was easy accessibility to knowledge in so many areas of expertise within a highly developed fishing industry due to the unusually close connections between industry, academia, and governmental and research institutions within the country.

Within the UN system, FTP relates to the 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 FTP also relates closely to the UN FAO Code of Conduct for Sustainable Fisheries, and FAO's Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries.

Annex 2: The Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme – GEST

Gender equality and human rights contexts

Globally, gender disparities remain among the most persistent forms of inequality, as well as one of the greatest barriers to human development. While the progress in reducing gender inequality over the last century has been notable with respect to basic achievements in health, education and participation in market and politics, women still face discrimination at home, have fewer opportunities for economic participation than men, less access to basic and higher education, greater health and safety risks, and less political representation. In addition, engaging men and boys in the promotion of gender justice and prevention of violence remains one of the key challenges in the transformation of patriarchal masculinities and the harmful attitudes involved in the socialization of boys. Globally, there is an urgent need to promote more transformative and healthy masculinities. Men benefit from gender equality because they also face gender-specific issues such as lower life expectancy, poor health, lower education levels, fewer expectations for caregiving and parenting roles, as well as rigid gender norms. It is essential that all people, regardless of their gender, are aware of the benefits that gender equality brings to them, both as individuals and as members of communities and societies.

Looking at the main obstacles for gender equality, more advances need to be made in ensuring economic opportunities, food security, literacy, maternal health, and violence against women and gender minorities. More women than men live in poverty, but gender gaps are widest among those aged 25 to 34, when women are the most likely to have young children (UN Women, 2022). Based on current trends, it will take 136 years to close the gap in economic opportunity (Global Gender Gap Report, 2022).

Food insecurity affects more women than men - unequal power relations at the household level render women more vulnerable than men to food insecurity. In situations when crises hit or food prices rise, women and girls often become 'shock absorbers', consuming less nutritious food themselves to support their families. Women and girls also tend to spend more time and energy than men and boys in securing and processing food for domestic consumption (Bryan, Ringler & Lefore, 2022).

Illiteracy rates are highest among women in the poorest households. Even though more girls are enrolling in primary education, millions of girls of primary-school age will likely never learn to read or write. Poverty plays a key role in exclusion from education. As such, in rural areas, women are even further behind than in urban areas. For example, in some regions of Africa, more than one in four young women are illiterate (UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, 2022).

Gender-based violence remains one of the greatest obstacles for full enjoyment of human rights. Magnifying inequality, the violence happens throughout the lifecycle, in different spaces — households, institutions, public spaces, politics, and online — in all societies, among all socioeconomic groups and at all levels of education; and it reflects the same social norms that legitimize harassment and discrimination. Recent data shows that close to 25% of all girls have faced gender-based violence by the age of 19, with prevalence being highest in least developed countries (World Economic Forum, 2022).

Lastly, the gains of development have not been shared equally. Global wealth inequalities are even more pronounced than income inequalities. The poorest half of the global population barely owns any wealth, possessing just 2% of total wealth resources. In contrast, the richest 10% of the global population own 76% of all wealth (World Inequality Report, 2022). While wealth and power are concentrated in the hands of the few, economic insecurity prevails for the many. Fiscal austerity measures have led to cuts in essential public services, with particularly harsh impacts for women in low-income countries who rely on them the most. The

new wave of public spending cuts, which were implemented in 126 countries in 2021, hit health care, education, and social protection the most, which are precisely the areas in which advancements for women have been made in the past few decades.

The Human Development Report's Gender Inequality Index — a measure of women's empowerment in health, education, and economic status — shows that overall progress in gender equality has been slowing down in recent years. Structural issues that are at the root of gender inequality nevertheless continue to undermine the ability to achieve SDG 5. Such root causes include legal discrimination, discriminatory social norms and attitudes, low levels of decision-making power on the part of women and girls in sexual and reproductive health issues, and inadequate political participation. The escalating environmental crisis will destroy many of the developmental gains achieved to date. The poorest and most marginalized women and girls, who have contributed least to causing the problem, are already the most affected by irreversible environmental degradation and natural disasters (UN Women, 2022). Along with the economic costs of the climate crisis, a rise in displacement, and forced migration, poverty and insecurity will have a disproportionate impact on women and girls and gender minorities, including through greater exposure to abuse and violence.

Creating opportunities for women and girls and non-binary people to reach their full potential, and engaging men and boys as allies in the transformation of masculinity and traditional notions of manhood is critical not only to advancing gender equality, but also for meeting a wide range of development goals. GEST's strategic plan builds on the understanding reflected in the UN Sustainable Development Goals as well as on international treaties recognising gender equality as a key human right, essential for sustainable livelihood and economic development.

Brief introduction to GEST

The Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme (GEST) was established in 2009 and was a part of the United Nations University from 2013 until end of 2019. GEST is hosted by the University of Iceland. Iceland is well suited to host a centre of excellence on gender equality, as it is globally considered to be a front-runner on the issue, having consistently occupied number one position of the World's Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report since 2009. Iceland has the world's highest proportion of women in the labour market, significant childcare allocations for working parents, and parental leave for both women and men. Iceland was the first country to democratically elect a woman head of state, Mrs. Vigdís Finnbogadóttir (elected in 1980), who has been a patron of the GEST Programme since its inauguration.

The objective of GEST is to advance gender equality in low/middle income and conflict/post-conflict countries and promote gender transformative approaches to achieve social change. GEST strategies encompass: 1) high-quality, collaborative, and policy-relevant research; 2) capacity development of professionals and organizations; and 3) the creation of a transnational dialogue and knowledge exchange platform.

The Programme strongly relates to key UN instruments relevant to gender equality and the protection of women's rights and fundamental freedoms, most notably the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) and the Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000). The development focus of GEST is both directly and indirectly tied to several SDGs and targets. The work feeds directly into:

- SDG 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; pertains to all targets.
- SDG 10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries, targets 10.2; 10.3; 10.4; 10.6 and 10B in particular.

- SDG 16 – Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies, targets 16.2; 16.3; 16.7; 16.8; 16A and 16B in particular.

The work of the GEST programme is founded on the principles of integrity, ethical and respectful engagement, accountability, dialogue, mutual learning, and innovation in the field of social change.

GEST intervention strategies

GEST applies similar strategies as the other Programmes, as described in Section 2.2. GEST's strategies are founded on:

1. Increasing the capacity and accountability of key institutions (government agencies, CSOs, higher education institutions, youth networks) to fulfil national commitments to gender equality and women's human rights.
2. Increasing the expertise of junior professionals to enhance and accelerate gender mainstreaming in programmes and operations in their respective organizations.
3. Integrating gender equality into the systems and curricula of partner educational institutions and boosting internationalization strategies of partner universities to forge and strengthen global partnerships, provide an impetus to applied research and professional training, and encourage the development of equality and diversity dimensions in teaching and learning.
4. Contributing to increased knowledge and confidence of gender equality advocates to campaign for the integration of gender equality priorities within relevant national processes.

Annex 3: The Geothermal Training Programme - GTP

Geothermal context

Energy resources exist in various forms in the natural environment with different degrees of accessibility. Some are relatively easy to harness and have been used since antiquity, while others require large-scale undertakings based on a scientific approach as well as coordinated efforts of well-trained experts.

Energy is an absolute necessity for the functioning of modern societies. While electricity is needed for electrical appliances and electronics, lighting, heating, cooling and more, fossil fuels are used as a primary energy source in the transport sector and to supply mechanical energy into various industrial processes. Heat, where available, is also used directly for space heating, industrial activity, food production and processing as well as other purposes. The link between energy use and economic growth on national scales has long been recognized.

Humanity's demand for energy continues to increase due to population growth and increased per capita consumption. The needs of low and middle income countries are particularly notable due to rapidly expanding populations and large rural communities that lack access to electricity. In many cases, these countries also lack resources – financial, technical, human and otherwise – to scale up their energy generation at a pace that is fast enough to significantly increase per capita economic growth and the associated quality of life.

Environmental impacts of energy use vary by energy source and the mode of utilization. Fossil fuels lead to pollution in the local and regional environments and contribute to global warming. Many people are also concerned about the possible disastrous consequences of breakdowns in nuclear power plants.

Due to increasing awareness of the threat posed by global warming, advances in technology, and expanding global need for energy, an ever-greater focus has been placed on the use of environmentally benign energy sources in recent years. The adoption of such solutions by low and middle income countries is particularly important to avoid meeting their increasing energy demand by fossil fuel power plants, which may have lifetimes of several decades. For many countries, geothermal energy can play an important role in the energy mix.

Geothermal resources are found in many parts of the world, albeit unevenly distributed. The best resources are those that have a high temperature, can be readily accessed, and have a low content of dissolved gases and chemicals. Most high temperature geothermal fluids are found along tectonic plate boundaries and at local hot spots where there is significant volcanic and seismic activity. Examples include the Pacific Ring of Fire, the East African Rift Valley, the North Atlantic Ridge, and the Lesser Antilles Island chain in the Caribbean. Medium to low temperature resources can also be found in other settings, such as in deep sedimentary basins. Some low and middle income countries have significant, often unharnessed, geothermal potential.

The utilization of geothermal energy requires a concerted effort of experts with varied backgrounds and skills. Geoscientists explore, identify and target likely resources, drilling engineers design and drill wells to bring the fluid to the surface, reservoir engineers assess and later manage the resource, engineers design and build power plants, heating networks and other infrastructure, while environmental scientists assess the environmental impacts of utilization. All this work is coordinated by specialized project managers.

Icelanders have lived in close proximity to geothermal manifestations since the times of settlement. For the last century, Icelanders have increasingly applied geothermal resources to various purposes, including space heating, electricity generation, horticulture, swimming

pools, aquaculture, industrial processes, snow melting, and more. In 2020, 90% of houses in Iceland were heated with geothermal and the installed capacity of geothermal power plants amounted to 755 MWe, contributing to over 30% of generated electricity. This widespread utilization has resulted in a large workforce dedicated to the geothermal sector and the associated accumulation of expertise. Iceland is thus well positioned to contribute to geothermal development worldwide.

Brief introduction to GTP

GTP was established in late 1978 as a programme within the United Nations University (UNU) and operated as such through 2019. The programme is hosted at Iceland GeoSurvey (ISOR) but was hosted at Orkustofnun – the National Energy Authority of Iceland – up to early 2021.

The mission of GTP is to facilitate access to, and promote utilization and sustainable management of, reliable, economically viable, and environmentally sound geothermal energy resources for the improvement of human quality of life in low and middle income countries, through training and research in different aspects of geothermal development.

GTP works with selected LMICs with proven and likely geothermal potential. To maximize impact, GTP collaborates with public institutions and companies in these countries that have been identified as playing a significant role in geothermal development.

GTP draws on the expertise of the Icelandic geothermal sector (governmental bodies, universities, energy utilities, consulting firms, independent experts etc.), as well as the global geothermal community, including former GTP fellows, to deliver high quality training. GTP has worked with different UN bodies, multi-lateral institutions and development banks, such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), Nordic Development Fund (NDF), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations University (UNU), and World Bank Group Energy Sector Management Assistance Program (ESMAP).

GTP operations directly feed into SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy) and also support SDG 13 (climate action), touching on aspects of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). GTP takes special heed of SDG 5 (gender equality) in all its operations and various other SDGs are supported indirectly.

GTP intervention strategies

The general outline of GTP's strategies is described in Section 2.2.

From the beginning, the core component of the programme has been the six-month postgraduate training, which covers most aspects of geothermal development in eight different lines of specialization: 1) Geothermal Geology; 2) Geothermal Geophysics; 3) Chemistry of Thermal Fluids; 4) Drilling Technology; 5) Reservoir Engineering and Borehole Geophysics; 6) Environmental Science; 7) Geothermal Utilization; and 8) Project Management and Finances. GTP fellows arrive in Iceland in June and leave for home in November. The study period is divided into three main phases: 1) Introductory Lecture Course and Group Project Work, where the whole group of fellows attends common lectures intended to provide an overview of geothermal development; 2) Specialized Training, where the fellows carry on within their specific disciplines; and 3) Individual Project Work and Report Writing, undertaken under close supervision of 1-2 geothermal experts, preferably working with data from home. Interspersed through the programme are excursions to geothermal fields and power plants and other places of geothermal interest in Iceland.

GTP grants scholarships to former six-month fellows to pursue MS or PhD studies in Iceland. The studies are undertaken at either of GTP's partner universities, Reykjavík University or the University of Iceland, with the six-month studies accounting for up to 25% of credit

requirements at the Master's level (30 ECTS units). GTP has run several online courses for different target groups. GTP will continue the development of online training with the aim of demarking the potential and boundaries of such training, identifying complementarity with traditional training, and maximizing impact based on available input.

GTP has run annual short courses on geothermal exploration and development for African countries in Kenya and semi-annual short courses for Latin American and Caribbean countries in El Salvador, in cooperation with local partners. More recently, GTP has run several online courses for different target groups.

GTP offers tailored training on demand that is financed by outside parties. The benefactors are development actors, multi-lateral bodies, geothermal companies and others. These trainings vary from general day-long workshops to in-depth trainings on specialized topics lasting several weeks or even months on site.

GTP collaborates with its partners on long term training programmes implemented on a regional level in low and middle income countries. The five-month Geothermal Diploma Course for Latin America has been held annually (except during the Covid-19 pandemic), in El Salvador for participants from Latin American countries, in cooperation with LaGeo and the University of El Salvador. GTP has also contributed to the establishment of the Africa Geothermal Centre of Excellence (AGCE) – a hub for local geothermal training in Africa supported by the African Union, UNEP, the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs and others. GTP was also involved in the operation of the Sino-Icelandic Geothermal Training Program, conducted for the first time in late 2019. That program has not been run again, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

GTP has offered partial grants to alumni to attend the World Geothermal Congress, provided that they submit a paper for publication in the congress proceedings. Close to 20% of published papers were authored or co-authored by alumni in 2015 and 2021, attesting to their leading roles as geothermal experts at home and continuing contributions the global geothermal community.

GTP strives to maintain good contact with alumni through annual newsletters, social media platforms, e-mail and meetings in-person. GTP also encourages communication among fellows.

Annex 4: The Land Restoration Training Programme - LRT

Land restoration context

The world's population depends on natural resources for survival and well-being. Terrestrial ecosystems provide many ecosystem services essential for people's livelihoods, such as food, energy, building materials, medicines, clean water and air. In many parts of the world, economic, demographic and socio-political drivers have increased pressure on land resulting in unsustainable management of croplands, grazing lands and forests, expansion of crop and grazing lands, deforestation, introduction of invasive species, as well as mining and urban sprawl. This has intensified land degradation, which takes many forms, such as vegetation deterioration, biodiversity loss, decreased soil fertility, soil erosion, siltation and pollution of water sources, and eventually more persistent forms such as reduced production potential of the land and desertification. This, in turn, has led to decreasing and unpredictable yields, food insecurity, hunger, poverty, competition for land resources, conflicts and urban migration. Climate change further aggravates these problems.

Land degradation and unsustainable land use are major global challenges with severe impacts on the environment, the economy and human society. Low and middle income countries are, however, the ones most affected, as large parts of their populations live in rural communities and rely on self-subsistence farming, pastoralism and other forms of direct use of local natural resources for their livelihoods. Even family members living in urban areas often depend on food produced in their communities of origin. These communities are frequently the poorest, and most vulnerable and marginalised and women and girls are often the most impacted.

Combating land degradation, restoring degraded land and enhancing sustainable land management are therefore critical tasks in order to return natural, economic and societal benefits. Most low and middle income countries, however, have limited social, institutional and economic capacity to deal with such challenges, with global environmental change further complicating the task.

For centuries, Iceland has experienced severe land degradation and desertification caused by unsustainable land use, e.g. overgrazing and extensive deforestation, coupled with harsh weather conditions and volcanic eruptions. To deal with these problems, a unique legislation was passed in 1907, which aimed at halting soil erosion; restoring lost and degraded woodlands; and a governmental organization, now known as the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland (SCSI), was established. To begin with, the SCSI focused mainly on halting sand encroachment and soil erosion that threatened farmland, but nowadays the agency also focuses on land restoration, vegetation cover protection and promoting sustainable land use.

Although Iceland has not yet totally overcome its own land degradation challenges, immense results have been achieved and the country has gained wide experience and knowledge of land restoration and how to combat land degradation and soil erosion.

Brief introduction to LRT

Understanding and combating land degradation and promoting sustainable land management is a complex and demanding multi-stakeholder and multi-level challenge, where scientific, technical and practical solutions need to be interlinked with socio-economic, ecological, institutional and political aspects. Land restoration and sustainable land management efforts are often hampered by existing land use practices, ownership rights, and social norms, as well as lack of knowledge, capacity and beneficial policies in the affected areas. LRT therefore cooperates with people and organisations from low and middle income countries to break down these barriers, emphasising gender equality and women's empowerment in all steps of that advancement.

The Land Restoration Training Programme was established in 2007 and run by the Agricultural University of Iceland and the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland in collaboration. The Programme was part of the United Nations University from 2010 through 2019. LRT is hosted by the Agricultural University of Iceland.

LRT works with selected low and middle income countries in Africa and Central Asia that face severe land degradation but lack resources to deal with these challenges. To maximize impact, LRT collaborates with local institutions and organisations that have been identified as playing a significant role in land restoration and sustainable land management within each country. Depending on country, LRT's partner organisations can be governmental agencies (central and local) that have the mandate, responsibility and staff to deal with land management and restoration issues; relevant ministries responsible for policies and regulations on land use and sustainability; universities, and research institutions. In certain countries, LRT also works with well-established NGOs that work closely with local government institutions on land issues and can therefore link LRT with those institutions.

LRT works with its partner organisations to identify training and research needs and to design and run custom made short courses. As described in Section 2.2, the partner organizations also nominate candidates for the six-month post graduate training programme, who are then selected by LRT through a thorough selection process.

By training specialists from low and middle income countries in how to combat land degradation, restore degraded land, and manage terrestrial ecosystems in a sustainable way, and also supporting post-graduate research in the same fields, LRT contributes to GRÓ's mission in this thematic area. LRT works directly towards SDG 15: protecting, restoring, and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems. Simultaneously LRT works towards many other SDGs, as achieving SDG 15 will help mitigate and adapt to climate change (SDG 13), alleviate poverty (SDG 1), increase food security and end hunger (SDG 2) and foster sustainable production (SDG 12), as well as increasing the resilience of ecosystems and societies to future challenges. LRT also helps strengthen institutional capacity (SDG 17) and gender equality (SDG 5) in land restoration and sustainable land management in partner countries. This will in turn help achieve GRÓ's objectives.

The stakeholders intended to be ultimately affected by LRT's capacity strengthening efforts are general citizens in partner countries, especially those directly affected by land degradation and climate change, and the indirect effects of these, e.g. poor people, small scale farmers and herders, rural communities, and particularly women and girls in these communities.

Some important Icelandic partners are: the Agricultural University of Iceland, the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland; University of Iceland; Ministry of the Environment, Energy and Climate; Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries; the Iceland Forestry Service; the Icelandic Meteorological Office; and GRÓ and its partners as discussed in Section. 2.

LRT intervention strategies

LRT applies the general strategies described in Section 2.2. The core activity is the annual six-month postgraduate training in Iceland, which is held in the period March to September. The training covers knowledge, methods and practical skills in sustainable land management, ecological restoration, process management and academic research, and strengthens the fellows' capacities to advance and apply the knowledge and skills gained in Iceland in their home countries, from the local community to national policies. As from 2022, the LRT six-month training is eligible for ECTS credits, meaning that fellows completing the training successfully will, in addition to GRÓ LRT Certificate of Completion, also receive a Postgraduate Diploma in Ecosystem Restoration and Sustainable Land Management (30 ECTS) from the Agricultural University of Iceland.

LRT offers scholarships for post-graduate studies in Icelandic universities to former fellows and provides financial and technical support to develop and deliver custom-made short courses in partner countries in cooperation between specialists from LRT and the partner institutions. Furthermore, LRT attends and takes part in planning, conferences, symposiums and workshops in the fields of land restoration and sustainable land management and supports former fellows to present their research work at such events. On a case-to-case basis, LRT also pursues other activities relevant to its mission, e.g. the creation of online courses and other education material, usually in collaboration with other institutions. Through all its activities, LRT promotes gender equality.

LRT strongly relates to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and other international conventions dealing with environmental preservation and alleviation of poverty, such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). LRT's UNESCO partner is the Man and the Biosphere Programme, World Network of Biosphere Reserves. LRT is an official Supporting Partner of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030).