

Final Evaluation Report

External Evaluation of GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change, 2018-2023.

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ABBREVIATIONS

C2C	Category 2 Centre
CBD	Convention on Biodiversity
CRFM	Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism
DG	Director General
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
FTP	Fisheries Training Programme
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GEST	Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme
GOI	Government of Iceland
GRÓ	International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change
GTP	Geothermal Training Programme
HIC	High Income Countries
ÍSOR	Iceland GeoSurvey
KII	Key Informant Interview
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LDC	Least Developed Country
LLDC	Landlocked Developing Countries
LMIC	Lower Middle-Income Country
LRT	Land Restoration Training Programme
MAB	Man and Biosphere
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs Iceland
MOOCs	Massive Open Online Courses
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UMIC	Upper Middle-Income Country
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNU	United Nations University
VNR	Voluntary National Review

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Subject Description

The evaluation analyses the **GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change**, and the four capacity development training programmes that operate under the GRÓ. These are 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). The evaluation covers the period from January 2018 to December 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). The Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Iceland is the primary source of funding for the programmes as part of its international development cooperation policy and efforts. In addition to the core funding of the MFA, the individual programmes obtain external funding through counterpart contributions.

Evaluation Objectives and Methodology

The overall objective is to provide an **independent evaluation of the performance of the GRÓ Centre and of each of the four GRÓ programmes**. The goal is to provide the MFA, GRÓ Board of Directors, GRÓ Director, and the GRÓ programmes with an objective assessment of each programmes' past successes in meeting their respective objectives, assessing their strengths and weaknesses, and identifying any areas where change or reinforcement may be beneficial. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the results of the GRÓ efforts, and the suitability of the organizational changes from 2020 when the training programmes moved from the United Nations University (UNU) to operating under the GRÓ Centre, functioning under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a Category 2 Centre (C2C). The core questions answered in this evaluation are: How has the GRÓ Centre and four GRÓ programmes performed, jointly and individually, with regards to their results criteria and what results can be attributed to the programmes? What lessons can be drawn from previous interventions by the GRÓ programmes, which can be used as a framework of reference in future endeavours? Have the institutional changes in 2020 and associated shift from the auspices of UNU to UNESCO been suitable and generated expected results? The intent of the evaluation is to offer evidence-based findings on how well the programmes achieved their stated objectives, to generate learning, to offer forward-looking perspectives for future GRÓ engagements, and their management, and to set forth applied recommendations based on the evidence and findings.

The overall framework for conducting the evaluation is the **six Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) criteria for evaluation**, as well as the cross-cutting policy priorities of Icelandic international development cooperation policy. The evaluation combines a desk review (remote research, analysis, and reporting, including data-collection via 'remote' means) and intensive field-mission visits to meet programme partners and stakeholders in Iceland, El Salvador, Jamaica, and Uganda. The evaluation draws on a range of data sources and data collection methods, both quantitative and qualitative. Data sources include the MFA and GRÓ staff, programme and host institution representatives, GRÓ alumni and fellows, and GRÓ partner institutions worldwide. The main approaches utilized for data collection were documentation review and critical analysis, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), an online survey of GRÓ alumni, and in field observations. The evaluation utilized the following rating system to assess performance for the OECD-DAC criteria: (HS) Highly Satisfactory, (S) Satisfactory, (A) Adequate, (U) Unsatisfactory, and (HU) Highly Unsatisfactory (see rating system in Annex 2).

Major findings and conclusions

The evaluator judges that the overall performance of the GRÓ programmes is satisfactory (good). During 2018-2023, the GRÓ programmes have effectively delivered their intended capacity development

results, supporting young to mid-career professionals and partner organizations in 76 countries, capacitating them to promote local development outcomes pursuant to the SDGs. The direct results of the programmes establish a strong basis to promote behavioural change of the individuals trained and via them change at their home organizations to utilize and apply the new learning, skills, and tools obtained. This has resulted in a diverse range of initiatives by the alumni aimed at advancing local development change. Linked to the six OECD DAC criteria for evaluation, and the cross-cutting priorities of Icelandic policy, the evaluator judges the performance of the GRÓ programmes is satisfactory (good), as detailed below.

Relevance

The GRÓ programmes are **highly relevant to and fully aligned with Iceland's international development cooperation policies and strategic goals**, as well as fully aligned with Iceland's national development vision and strategies. The programmes provide capacity development training in fields of recognized Icelandic expertise, with a strong focus of programme support on lower- and middle-income countries. The principal region targeted by the programme support is Sub-Saharan Africa, a priority focus region for Icelandic policy. The GRÓ programmes are a flagship product of Icelandic international development cooperation support. In 2023, MFA's total contribution to the GRÓ Centre and programmes represented approximately 6.7% of Iceland's total international development cooperation budget. The programmes closely align with international development policy frameworks and strategies. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its associated SDGs are the key frame of reference for the programmes.

The **GRÓ programmes are closely aligned with partner countries', regions' and target groups' needs**. For each programme, the primary target group of beneficiaries is young to mid-career postgraduate professionals from partner institutions and organisations in low- and middle-income countries. The programmes interact with the target group via different interventions, such as the fellowship training in Iceland, scholarships for alumni for postgraduate study, short courses in partner countries, or online learning content. The programmes receive requests for support from different organizations, many of long-term partnership, across different regions and targeted countries. Each programme remains fully demand driven. Each programme has established partnerships with core organizations in key partner countries for the development and delivery of short courses in the countries and for other capacity building supports. The partner organizations co-fund the short courses, further ensuring they are relevant to local needs.

The evaluator recognizes the **significant progress achieved since 2022 in the development of a standard framework to define the collective GRÓ programme intervention theory of change (ToC)** including the definition of the intended results of the programmes (outputs, outcomes, and impact). The programmes offer a coherent mix of interventions, with good potential for realization of synergies across the different outputs. However, the GRÓ Results Framework is still a work in progress in terms of definition of baseline data, or targets for and the specific means to measure the GRÓ programme longer-term impact.

Coherence

The **GRÓ programmes complement the wider development efforts of Iceland undertaken at the international level and in partner countries**. In Iceland's partner countries for bilateral development cooperation support (Malawi, Sierra Leone, and Uganda), the work of the GRÓ programmes is strongly complementary to Iceland's other development efforts. The programmes also complement Iceland's effort at regional and country specific level in East and West Africa, and in the Latin America and Caribbean region. However, there is only partial direct evidence of coordination of effort or of synergy created between the different efforts supported by the MFA with those of the GRÓ programmes. Iceland's international development cooperation policy notes that the cumulative effect of the programmes is to be increased, and the effort better integrated into other fields of Icelandic development cooperation. The GRÓ programmes complement the wider development efforts of the programmes' key partner organizations in the partner countries. The majority of these are public sector

and public service oriented institutions that freely enter into their collaboration with the GRÓ programmes. The GRÓ programmes also complement the wider development efforts of other donors in partner countries to promote capacity building, skills development, and socio-economic development. There is no evidence of duplication or overlap of the GRÓ programmes with other development efforts.

Effectiveness

The GRÓ programmes have **effectively delivered the intended capacity development results**, supporting young to mid-career professionals and partner organizations in 76 countries. During 2018-2023, the programmes supported 534 individuals via in-depth training and research (fellowship and scholars), 1699 individuals via short training courses, and reached 39,161 learners via online learning content. The fellows and scholars produced 537 new knowledge (research) products. In the context of GRÓ programme efforts to empower the alumni via community building and networking actions, the programmes supported 239 GRÓ alumni to attend leading international conferences in their field of expertise. 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.

During 2018-2023, the **direct beneficiaries of the GRÓ programmes support predominantly originated from least developed countries (LDCs) or lower middle-income countries (LMICs)**. Other beneficiaries were from upper-middle income countries (UMICs) as classified on the OECD DAC list of ODA recipient countries. Of the 471 individuals enrolled on the fellowship programmes in Iceland, 37% were from LDCs, 46% from LMICs and 16% from UMICs. Of the 64 individuals supported on scholarships for masters or doctoral studies, 44% were from LDCs, 47% from LMICs, and 9% from UMICs. Via 48 short courses delivered in or for partner countries, the programmes trained 1699 individuals. Thirty-eight courses were in partner countries, six were online courses tailored to specific countries or regional audiences, and four were study visits for partner country experts to Iceland. Of the 38 courses delivered in the partner countries, 22 were in LDC partner countries (58%), and 14 were in LMICs (37%). Overall, the programmes exceeded GRÓ Centre's target that minimally 80% of the direct beneficiaries are from LDCs or LMICs. The gender distribution of the direct beneficiaries was 55% females on the fellowship programmes and 50% females on the postgraduate scholarship programmes. However, linked to the short courses in partner countries significant further effort is required across all programmes to promote the inclusion of female participants. During 2018-2023, only 36% of participants on short courses were female.

Feedback of the direct beneficiaries and core partner organizations **attests to the relevance and quality of the training provided**. Feedback from the fellows to the programmes on the training in Iceland indicates 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. Survey feedback from the beneficiaries of the short courses also indicates a high level of satisfaction with the courses and the relevance and usefulness of the training course to their job and/or profession.

Linked to the **GRÓ programme outcome indicators**, among the 2018-2023 GRÓ alumni cohort responding to the evaluator's online survey, **73% report that they have substantially or extremely advanced in their professional career** while 17% report moderate career advancements thanks to the programme participation. Alumni feedback indicates that **90% of the 2018-2023 fellows have used the training to advance their contribution in their field/area of work**, 79% have shared their knowledge with colleagues, supervisors, and other experts in their field, and that 83% think that their organizations' management assesses the training benefits to be valuable. Overall, the evaluation finds that the GRÓ programmes effectively delivered the intended results, contributing to the capacity of the alumni, trainees, and partner organizations to promote and implement changes needed to progress the SDGs.

While the programmes have effectively delivered the capacity development results, the extent of **outputs delivery achieved 2018-2023 is not yet in line with targets set as GRÓ's strategic priorities, 2022-2027**. The programmes will require additional financial resources if the targets are to be fulfilled, notably linked to the expansion of short courses in partner countries, and grants for scholarships.

Efficiency

The operational efficiency at the level of the GRÓ programmes is good. Delivery of the intended programme results, in terms of quantity and quality, is in a timely manner. The majority of the different programme intervention's function based on clearly defined processes and timelines. Programme monitoring, reporting, and steering mechanisms are generally good, although with room for improvement linked to collecting and reporting standard statistical data on beneficiaries' feedback on the training provided. Adoption of the GRÓ Results Framework significantly strengthens programme monitoring, oversight and steering systems, via its inclusion of common key performance indicators against which each programme should collect and report data. Linked to the institutional changes in 2020, with the formal operation of the GRÓ Centre as umbrella agency of the programmes, functioning under the auspices of UNESCO as a C2C, the evaluator judges that operational efficiency of the set-up is adequate. The GRÓ Centre lacks detailed internal rules of procedure as to how it works in partnership with the programmes and their host institutions. This is a significant constraint to promoting an efficient (and effective) operational partnership of the GRÓ Centre and the GRÓ programmes. Linked to GRÓ Centre's development of collaboration with UNESCO, GRÓ LRT has established an effective partnership with UNESCO headquarters and UNESCO's Man and Biosphere (MAB) programme. GRÓ Centre has also promoted effective collaboration working with UNESCO regional and country offices, and national commissions for UNESCO in partner countries, most notably with UNESCO partners in Africa. While still a work in progress, longer-term collaboration with UNESCO partners has potential to empower GRÓ alumni as local change agents.

The **GRÓ programme financial and human resources are efficiently deployed and cost effective in terms of the interventions and the results delivered**. The unit costs per intervention are plausible and commensurate with the respective outputs and outcomes and provide value for money. Linked to the fellowship programme in Iceland, the average cost per fellow across the four programmes has marginally fallen in real terms, post-inflation, compared to the average costs reported for the 2012-2016 period.

Sustainability

The prospects for sustainability of the GRÓ programme results and benefits are good. The direct beneficiaries of the training obtained the immediate benefits of the programmes via enhanced knowledge and skills, and exchanges on knowledge understanding in their field of expertise and professional work. The fellows and short course participants return to their home organization/institution prepared to share and apply their new knowledge and skills. The vast majority of GRÓ alumni have successfully utilized their new knowledge, understanding, and skills to advance their contribution in their technical field of work in their country. **Partner organizations for the GRÓ demonstrate a good level of ownership of the benefits they obtain from the partnership with the programmes**. 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 of the benefits.

The **key factors hindering the sustainability** of the programme results relate to the challenges that the alumni report linked to directly utilizing and applying their knowledge, due to **insufficient resources or medium-term financial framework of their institution to promote significant reform initiatives**. The lack of a medium-term financial framework for GRÓ hinders the programmes' capacity to plan capacity development initiatives with core partner organizations over the time needed to build sustainability.

Impact

The prospects for longer-term development effects (impact) of the GRÓ programmes are good. The evidence strongly suggests that the GRÓ programmes, chiefly via the GRÓ alumni, but also in partnership with long-term institutions/organizations in the partner countries, have delivered concrete changes within the countries to achieve development change and real impact. Alumni respondents to the survey report many important micro-, meso-, and macro-level results they have contributed to post-fellowship,

with **73% of the 2018-2023 alumni reporting their contribution to advancing the SDGs** in terms of projects and initiatives. The percentage of alumni reporting contributing to advancing the SDGs is highest among those who live in African countries (83%). GRÓ alumni also hold high-level positions in their country, as well as senior roles in international or regional organizations, allowing them to make impactful contributions at that level. Almost half of the alumni respondents indicated that they offered advice 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, the alumni indicate their actions 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%).

Linked to the GRÓ programme performance indicators for impact, which are not yet clearly defined by the GRÓ, the evaluator judges that the highest level at which the programme impact can plausibly be measured is at the level of the SDGs, not the SDG targets or indicators. As outlined above, the achievements of the 2018-2023 cohort are impressive as to progress delivered in terms of project and initiatives linked to the SDGs.

Cross-cutting priorities of Icelandic international development cooperation policy

The **GRÓ programmes have positively contributed to advancing the cross-cutting priorities of Icelandic policy** (i.e. gender equality, human rights, and climate change and the environment). The contribution of the programmes is most strongly evident in regard to their consideration of issues, within their field of expertise, linked to promoting gender equality, and the challenges of climate change. Programmes addressed the issues within the design and implementation of their actions. Alumni have contributed, in advancing the sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems and gender equality.

Lessons learned

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

1. The branding value of the GRÓ programmes rests on the Iceland name, and the high reputation built by the capacity development programmes in their areas of expertise over the long-term.
2. The high quality of the fellowship programme in Iceland is the foundation for the programme's success, but it is logically limited in terms of quantitative outputs deliverable in Iceland itself.
3. The careful targeting of the GRÓ programme support for short courses in specific countries or regions, delivered over several years, is a viable way to concentrate the focus of effort, and ensure that a critical mass of capacitated individuals is trained, as complement to the fellowship alumni.
4. GRÓ programme long-term partnerships with key partner organizations in focus countries has resulted in the development of local training offer (of short, medium, or longer-term duration), and of partners' organizational capacity to deliver training programmes. The medium-term goal is that the partner organizations take over the full operation and ultimately funding of courses.
5. The success of the programmes in building local partnerships for the development and delivery of short courses is replicable in other focus countries or regions, for which it is crucial that programmes identify reliable local partners and have a medium-term planning perspective.
6. As a flagship product of Icelandic international development cooperation support, the long-term funding commitment of the Government of Iceland, provided via the MFA, is fundamental to the continuation of the programmes and successful expansion of training offered in partner countries.
7. An evidence-base of success stories and longer-term contribution of the alumni is required to ensure that key stakeholders in Iceland (including the MFA) are aware of the programme successes, and that GRÓ Centre can better fulfil its basic advocacy role for the GRÓ programmes.
8. The adoption of the GRÓ Results Framework significantly strengthens programme monitoring via its inclusion of common indicators against which each programme should collect and report data.

9. GRÓ should collect data on impacts at the micro-, meso- and macro-level via systematic formal tracer surveys of GRÓ alumni over the medium- and the longer-term period of their career.
10. Good opportunities exist to establish formal GRÓ alumni country chapters in leading countries for the programmes and in the promotion of links between the alumni and development partners.

Recommendations

The evaluation presents **15 recommendations at GRÓ programme level**, summarized below. Two are addressed to the MFA as lead actor, ten to the GRÓ Centre as lead actor, and three to the programmes as lead actor. In addition, specific recommendations are presented, addressed to each GRÓ programme. These are based on the specific evaluation of each programme, but may have certain, wider applicability.

Recommendation 1: GRÓ Centre operational processes and rules for overall governance of GRÓ in cooperation with the GRÓ programmes and host institutions formalized via internal rules of procedure.

Principal actor(s): GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes (direct partners)

Recommendation 2: The detailed job description of the GRÓ Centre Director General formally specified.

Principal actor(s): MFA (lead actor), GRÓ Centre, and GRÓ programmes (partners to support MFA)

Recommendation 3: Reflecting that the GRÓ programmes are capacity development and training programmes, delivered in the context of Icelandic international development cooperation, the appointment of the next Director General of the GRÓ Centre should be based on a clear definition of the post applied for, and should be an open advertisement rather than just from MFA staff. The Director General should have a solid understanding of how capacity development interventions function and contribute to results achievement, as well as a solid understanding of Icelandic and international development cooperation policy and contexts.

Principal actor(s): MFA (lead actor)

Recommendation 4: A framework for periodic structured dialogue between the GRÓ Centre and the MFA Directorate for International Development Cooperation, and the Directorate for International Affairs and Policy, established, aimed at identifying areas for closer coordination and integration of efforts.

Principal actor(s): GRÓ Centre (lead actor), MFA (direct partner)

Recommendation 5: A framework established for structured dialogue between the GRÓ Centre and the programmes and the Embassy of Iceland in partner countries for Iceland's bilateral cooperation support, aimed at identifying potential areas for collaboration or expansion of GRÓ programme efforts.

Principal actor(s): GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes, MFA Embassies of Iceland (direct partners)

Recommendation 6: GRÓ Centre service agreements, for the period starting year 2026, to be negotiated and finalized within year 2025, for which a duration period of up to six-years should be considered (or as determined by the intended duration period for the renewal of GRÓ Centre as a C2C).

Principal actor(s): GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes and host institutions (direct partners)

Recommendation 7: GRÓ programmes to prepare medium-term plans as to the extent of their anticipated delivery of programme outputs for the period up to 2030 (or as determined by the duration of the next service agreement). This should include annual minimum and maximum targets for delivery by the programmes of all key intervention outputs defined in the GRÓ programme Results Framework. There is a specific need to increase the collective delivery of the key interventions (such as short courses).

Principal actor(s): GRÓ programmes (lead actor), host institution (direct partner)

Recommendation 8: GRÓ Centre, in cooperation with GRÓ programmes, to provide the MFA 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. MFA is encouraged to provide the GRÓ Centre with an indicative broad financial framework up to 2030 within which it can anticipate to operate.

Principal actor(s): GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes (direct partners), MFA (decision-maker)

Recommendation 9: GRÓ programmes to ensure the collection and reporting of standard statistical data on the direct beneficiaries' feedback on the training provided (it is notably weaker for short courses).

Principal actor(s): GRÓ programmes (lead actor), short course training partner(s) (direct partner)

Recommendation 10: GRÓ Centre, in cooperation with GRÓ programmes, to introduce systematic formal tracer surveys of GRÓ alumni over the medium- and the longer-term period of their career (e.g. information on their position, publications, application of their skills via reforms or project initiatives, key achievements in delivering change). The survey three-years after graduation only captures outcome level results. Longer-term tracer surveys are required to capture long-term development effects and impact.

Principal actor(s): GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes (direct partners)

Recommendation 11: In addition to formal tracer surveys of GRÓ alumni, GRÓ Centre and programmes should also work together to undertake specific impact assessments of the programmes in a sample of leading partner countries or regions for the GRÓ, such as Malawi, Uganda, Kenya, Mongolia, Tanzania, or LAC. These would be valuable case studies to capture longer-term development effects and impact.

Principal actor(s): GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes (direct partners)

Recommendation 12: GRÓ Centre, in cooperation with GRÓ programmes, to prepare a formal GRÓ communication strategy for Development Education Awareness Raising efforts in Iceland.

Principal actor(s): GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes (direct partners), Icelandic National Commission for UNESCO (partner)

Recommendation 13: GRÓ Centre to finalize the draft GRÓ alumni strategy, and identify key countries or regions in which to roll out effort supporting the formal establishment of local GRÓ alumni chapters over the medium-term. Beyond Uganda, where alumni are in process of formally establishing a country chapter, other countries for potential establishment of GRÓ chapters include Kenya, Malawi, or Ethiopia.

Principal actor(s): GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes (direct partners)

Recommendation 14: GRÓ Centre to prepare a medium-term strategy and key priorities for the GRÓ Centre and GRÓ programmes linked to the development of GRÓ's partnership with UNESCO partners.

Principal actor(s): GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes (direct partners), Icelandic National Commission for UNESCO, and UNESCO headquarter (partners)

Recommendation 15: GRÓ programmes should actively encourage partner organizations to nominate female candidates for all training activities. There is a notable under-representation on short courses.

Principal actor(s): GRÓ programmes (lead actor), GRÓ Centre (partner)

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING GRÓ FTP

1. FTP demonstrates relevance, coherence, and effectiveness in achieving its objectives. While the design of the programme is presented throughout the various webpages of FTP's website, it is recommended to prepare a design **document of the programme presenting the problem(s) it solves, the objectives it pursues, the mix of its interventions, the implementation strategy, and the monitoring and evaluation of results** in a single document. Additionally, **developing a ToC** would help in documenting the programme's impact pathway. This would allow for clarity to stakeholders and enhanced public acceptance of the programme.
2. Given the overarching goal of GRÓ and the cross-cutting areas of human rights, gender equality, and the environment approach of Iceland's International Development Cooperation, it is recommended to **explicitly mainstream the SDGs, in particular SDG 14**, as the programme's targeted sustainable goal as well as the cross-cutting areas in the research by fellows and scholars. This approach would improve the relevance and effectiveness of the programme.
3. Some qualifying fellows have received support for a graduate degree. Given the potential for far-reaching impact of these graduates in their home countries and institutions, it is recommended to **expand the scholarship programme at the Ph.D. level** to enhance FTP's effectiveness. Expanding

the number of scholars would also increase the prospects of long-term impacts and sustainability of the programme as scholars would most likely be employed by academic and research institutions whose mandate is the creation and dissemination of knowledge.

4. **In-country/regional short courses and workshops** have proven useful to address pressing issues in partner countries related to the fisheries sector. It is recommended to **replicate those courses at the country level**, according to needs, to continue enhancing local capacities at a decreasing cost, since those courses have already been prepared.
5. As research and knowledge creation is an important element of FTP, the dissemination of knowledge adds sustainability to the programme benefits. It is therefore recommended to **publish all research papers by fellows** and all theses by scholars on the website of FTP.
6. Given the potential the GEST Programme has to offer, it is suggested to **strengthen synergies with the GEST Programme**, as gender equality is an important issue in the fisheries sector, especially in partner countries where both programmes direct their efforts. There has been research done by four GEST fellows from Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Ghana on gender in fisheries that seems promising for the fisheries sectors in those countries. In that regard, the FTP and GEST Programmes could enhance their synergies by encouraging research on gender issues related to the fisheries sector where important gender gaps are observed in terms of women's participation.
7. It is recommended to set up a **communication strategy with Icelandic stakeholders** on the accomplishments of FTP, which would enhance public acceptance of the programme and reduce risks or threats to the existence of the programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING GRÓ GEST

1. Further effort is needed by the GEST programme in order for it to consistently **meet the GRÓ Centre target of 25 fellows annually enrolled on the programme** in Iceland. The demand for the fellowship programme is very strong, and the programme has the capacity to train minimally 25 per year. While recognizing that 25 fellows annually is considered an ideal number in terms of programme manageability, learning outcomes, and pastoral care, this is an indicative number. The evaluator assesses that the GEST programme has the capacity to train slightly more than 25 fellows annually.
2. GEST programme fellows have produced a sizeable body of diverse new knowledge products via their final assignment production of a research or project paper. The vast majority of these are available on the GEST programme website. They represent a valuable source for the purpose of knowledge sharing and learning. Currently these are accessible via the GEST programme website on the basis of the country of focus of the research or project paper. It is not possible to **search the collection of papers on the basis of their theme(s)**, which limits the potential for researchers to utilize the knowledge products for comparative research across a range of countries. It is recommended that GEST programme consider the introduction also of a thematic search function.
3. To date, the GEST programme has **not provided meaningful support to its alumni to attend international conferences**. This is primarily due to limited financing for such actions. In this, the GEST programme stands out in comparison to the other GRÓ programmes (237 of their alumni attended leading international conferences in their field during the period 2018-2023). The most significant international conference for the GEST programme is the annual meeting of global partners, including civil society, at the UN CSW. It is recommended that the GEST programme provide support to its alumni to attend the event. This would significantly complement the valuable support to alumni empowerment provided via the GEST Alumni Fund. As practical, a fixed number of alumni that are supported annually should be agreed with GRÓ Centre, rather than constantly fluctuating.
4. The GEST programme also has a significant under-representation compared to other programmes in terms of the number of grants for postgraduate scholarships. This is not due to a lack of demand, but the lack of available funding. Expanding the number of scholars should be a priority.

5. GEST programme systems for gathering feedback from the direct beneficiaries of the fellowship are commendably strong. The system for gathering **standard statistical data from direct beneficiaries** of short courses in partner countries is not yet as commendably strong. While the reports prepared linked to the delivery of the short courses provide feedback from the beneficiaries on the course, this is sometimes in narrative format as to lessons learned, rather than standard statistical data also.
6. The short courses delivered in partner countries have proven very successful. It is recommended that **GEST programme seek to scale-up its two core short courses in the key partner countries** for its short course offer, namely Malawi and Uganda. Both are partner countries for Icelandic bilateral development cooperation support. The country strategy papers of the MFA for both countries have medium-term indicative financial frameworks. Thereby, it may be possible to develop a medium-term plan for roll out of courses delivered across a different range of districts within the countries. The ultimate goal is for the partner organizations to take over full leadership for course delivery.
7. Beyond delivering short courses in Malawi and Uganda, it is recommended that the GEST programme **replicate the courses in other key focus partner countries**. This is dependent on the demand of partner organizations, and the development of a solid partnership for collaboration. The programme has started the process to identify potential partners, and is encouraged to continue.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING GRÓ GTP

1. The focus of the programme's activities and the distribution of fellows is on countries with significant geothermal development potential, rather than those with bilateral cooperation agreements with Iceland. As a result, the coherence of the GTP with other development efforts by Iceland in partner countries or regions is limited. In future initiatives, **GTP should establish synergies with other development interventions funded by the GOI** to enhance the coherence and impact of Iceland's development efforts. However, attention should be paid to avoid that offering geothermal training in countries that have no viable resources or plans to develop geothermal resources.
2. The GTP's offering for online training has been limited. This is a missed opportunity to expand the pool of experts in the geothermal field at a relatively low cost. **GTP should consider investing greater efforts to improve the online offer**. This additional activity would probably require additional financial resources.
3. The evaluative case study on the 5-month diploma in El Salvador has shown that this specific training **intervention is very cost-effective for enlarging the pool of geothermal experts** in the region. However, the recent graduation of El Salvador from LMIC to an UMIC poses a challenge for aligning future GRÓ-funded activities with the objective of focusing on LMICs. GTP and LaGeo should pay special attention to ensure that a larger portion of trainees are from LMICs. In addition, the general nature of the offered curriculum in the 5-month diploma limits specialisations needed for work in the geothermal sector. If offering many different specialisation fields (as done for the 6-month training in Iceland) is not an option due to costs and logistical considerations, a possible alternative for GTP and LaGeo could be to offer two broad specialisation areas: one for the earth sciences (including geothermal geology, geochemistry, and geophysics) and another for plant development and drilling.
4. The GTP has tracked part of the alumni in an informal way, but it has **not used a formal tracing method to keep track of the career advancement** of alumni. This is a missed opportunity to properly assess the impact of the training programme once fellow return to their countries. However, with the limited number of available staff it will be hard for GTP to properly implement a regular survey. GRÓ should consider the implementation of a tracer survey for all supported training programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING GRÓ LRT

1. In order to achieve the desired programme outcomes at the level of individual partner institutions within reasonable time, it is recommended to **consider reducing the number of partners supported in parallel**. An attempt to define the desired 'critical mass' of trained individuals for each partner might allow for a more staggered approach, i.e. accomplishing capacity-building targets with

one partner and then focusing on the next one. Such approach should not go against the successfully applied principle of each annual cohort ideally constituting a heterogeneous mix of individuals from different countries and institutions.

2. In order to achieve the desired programme outcomes at the level of individual partner institutions within reasonable time, it is recommended to **increase quantitative output through alternative activities such as in-country short courses or in-country postgraduate courses** in collaboration with partner universities. While these cannot be expected to have the same quality as the 6-month LRT Programme, they can contribute towards optimizing the programme's overall trade-off between quality and quantity.
3. Maintaining the programme's institutional memory is critical for both programme quality partnerships. Given the strong reliance on long-serving staff members, lecturers and programme partners in this regard, it is recommended to i) **introduce measures to conserve institutional memory** independently from individuals; and ii) enhance measures which ensure **handover of knowledge and institutional memory** between outgoing and incoming programme staff (e.g. through extended learning and handover periods).
4. To be able to better quantify programme impacts at all levels, it is recommended to **introduce/strengthen measures to systematically** document relevant outputs and achievements **at the individual alumni level and/or the partner institution level**. This would be labour-intensive and might require additional human resources at GRÓ LRT level.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE, SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION

The **overall objective** of the assignment is to conduct an **external evaluation of the GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change**. Four training programmes operate under the GRÓ: 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). The **Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland (MFA) finances the GRÓ programmes** as part of its international development cooperation policy and effort.

Given the scope of the GRÓ in Iceland's portfolio for international development cooperation, evaluations are conducted in a project cycle frame of no less than every 5-6 years. The last comprehensive evaluation of the four programmes was in 2017 when the programmes operated under the United Nations University (UNU). In 2023, an evaluation of the GRÓ postgraduate scholarship programme was finalized.

The **goal of this external evaluation**, of each of the four training programmes and of the GRÓ Centre and programmes collectively, is to provide the MFA, GRÓ Board of Directors, GRÓ Director General, and the respective GRÓ programmes with an objective assessment of each programme's past successes in meeting their respective objectives, assessing their strengths and weaknesses, and identifying any areas where change or reinforcement may be beneficial. The **implementation period under evaluation** is from January 2018 to December 2023 (6 years).

The evaluation examines the extent to which the programme objectives, outcomes, and outputs were achieved, taking into account the implementation period, management structures of the programmes, and additional external challenges, such as those inflicted by the double burden of COVID pandemic and external shocks. The evaluation also assesses if the cross-cutting policy issues of Icelandic international development cooperation policy were sufficiently addressed across the four programmes.

The **purpose (objectives) of this external evaluation of the GRÓ** is to:

- Assess the results of the GRÓ efforts.
- Assess the suitability of the organizational changes from 2020 when the training programmes moved from the UNU to the GRÓ under the auspices of UNESCO as a C2C.

As defined in the Terms of Reference (ToR), the **core questions** answered in this evaluation are:

- How has GRÓ and the four GRÓ programmes in Iceland performed, jointly and individually, with regards to their results criteria and what results can be attributed to the programmes?
- What lessons can be drawn from previous interventions by the GRÓ programmes, which can be used as a framework of reference in future endeavours?
- Have the institutional changes in 2020 and associated shift from the auspices of UNU to UNESCO been suitable and generated expected results?

The intent is for the evaluation to offer evidence-based findings on how well the programmes achieved their stated objectives, generate learning, offer forward-looking perspectives for future engagements, and their management, and set forth applied recommendations based on evidence and findings.

The **Evaluation Report presents successively the following sections**.

- 2. Programme description** – goals, scope, organization, and context of the GRÓ programmes.
- 3. Evaluation findings** – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, impact, and the cross-cutting policy issues of gender equality, human rights, climate change, and environment.
- 4. Conclusions.**
- 5. Lessons learned.**

6. Recommendations.

The Annexes cover the following areas.

Annexes 1 to 4 provide detail on the analytical framework and the evaluation research process.

Annexes 5 to 10 provide detail on the GRÓ programmes jointly.

Annexes 11 to 12 provide detail on the individual programmes (evaluation and case study reports).

Annex 13 provides detail on the evaluator's survey of the GRÓ alumni across all four programmes.

Annex 14 provides photographic evidence of the GRÓ training programmes and beneficiary partners.

1.2 EVALUATION ORGANIZATION, APPROACH AND METHODS

The ToR for the assignment establishes the overall framework for the evaluation organization, its participatory approach and methods, the evaluation criteria, and the core and specific evaluation sub-questions that form the framework for the research and analysis undertaken and presented in the report. The evaluation approach is in accordance with the specifications of **Iceland's Evaluation Policy** for international development cooperation policy, and **OECD DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluations** and **OECD DAC criteria for evaluation** (2019). The period for implementation and completion of the evaluation assignment is from December 2023 to September 2024. The evaluation team consists of four experienced international evaluation experts, supported by a team of two evaluation experts to conduct the Questionnaire Survey of the GRÓ alumni across all four programmes.

The overall framework for conducting the evaluation is the six **OECD DAC criteria for evaluation**, as well as the **cross-cutting policy issues** of Icelandic international development cooperation policy. A set of specific evaluation sub-questions is addressed concerning each OECD DAC criterion and the cross-cutting issues. See Annex 1, the **Evaluation Matrix**, for an overview of the specific evaluation sub-questions and their judgement criteria (indicators), data sources, and data-collection methods.

A summary of the specific evaluation framework for the assignment is below.

- The extent of the GRÓ and the four programmes' relevance and appropriateness for the strategic and development context of Iceland (e.g. Iceland's development policies, national development visions, and strategies), partner countries national development policies, and the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (**relevance**),
- The extent to which the programme fits with other development efforts by Iceland and the degree of duplications of programme activities or overlaps with other efforts by Iceland or other partners and donors, as well as the extent of synergies being used (**internal and external coherence**),
- The extent to which GRÓ and the four programmes achieved their objectives (are outputs and outcomes on track or were achieved for selected intervention strategies?) and which intervention strategies are effective and have a continuation or scale-up/transfer potential (**effectiveness**),
- The extent to which resources (both financial and human) have been efficiently used by the donor and implementing partners, as well as the extent to which the programme management and oversight procedures have been effective and the unit costs are within acceptable levels in comparison with comparable development efforts, also assessing the appropriateness of the organisational changes (**efficiency**),
- The extent to which the benefits of the programmes are likely to continue and be sustainable after donor funding ceases (**sustainability**),
- The extent to which the programmes generated and/or are expected to generate significant positive, negative, intended, or unintended effects at the micro, meso and macro levels (**impact**),
- The extent to which the **cross-cutting policy issues (gender equality, human rights, and climate change and environment)** have been sufficiently integrated and addressed, or could be addressed in the future, across the programmes in the delivery of the programme results.

Other **issues and hindering factors** considered include:

Implications of the cumulative burden of the COVID pandemic and other external shocks (like rising inflation or migration) on the GRÓ programme activities, implementation, and delivery of results.

Specifically, the evaluation team applied the following evaluation approaches and methods.

- **The evaluation presents evidence-based analysis** to support future decision-making, steering, and focus of the GRÓ and the four GRÓ programmes going forward (**learning**), while also ensuring the independent analysis of the GRÓ, the programmes, and its effects (**accountability**). The evaluation documents learning and positive examples, and highlights areas where the programmes performed less effectively than anticipated and reasons for that underperformance. The evaluation **findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations** provide information and guidance for the donor, the GRÓ, the programmes, and host institutions (implementing partners) taking a forward looking perspective. The conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations, appropriately tailored to specific actors, and clearly articulated and should support the programme partners in current and future endeavours to strengthen overall GRÓ programme management and the future design and implementation of the individual GRÓ programmes.
- The **main recipients** (final users) of the evaluation findings are the MFA, GRÓ Board of Directors, GRÓ Director General, and the respective GRÓ programmes (FTP, GEST, GTP, and LRT).
- **The team recognizes the importance of a participatory and consultative process** in terms of its engagement with the diverse range of programme partners and direct beneficiaries. This is essential to develop the evaluator's understanding and analysis of the programme's goals, management, results, environment, and partner countries' context.
- Given the broad scope of the evaluation encompassing the GRÓ, the four programmes, and distinct intervention strategies, **the evaluation covers three levels of analysis or evaluation:**
 - ♦ **The evaluation of the overall GRÓ Centre:** The evaluation should analyse the progress made in regards results of the four programmes and the eight intervention strategies on the aggregated level. It takes into account the GRÓ ToC (2022-2027) and performance in regard to the GRÓ Results Framework (2023-2027) for the period under evaluation. The evaluation also assesses the organizational changes since 2020 when the training programmes moved from the UNU to being a C2C under the auspices of UNESCO.
 - ♦ **The evaluation of each of the four training programmes (FTP, GEST, GTP, LRT):** Each of the four training programmes will be assessed according to the six OECD DAC criteria and cross-cutting issues. The respective intervention strategies, outputs, outcomes, and impacts will be analysed to evaluate their respective effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and efficiency. In addition, the relevance and coherence of each of the four training programmes will be assessed taking into account the development cooperation framework and potential synergies or overlaps.
 - ♦ **Four in depth case studies (special cases) of selected intervention strategies or elements:** The ToR specifies one special case study linked to specific intervention strategies for each of the four programmes as an opportunity to generate learning and study best practices or the feasibility of future scenarios. The learnings should provide insights for the further development of the offer across the programmes as well as for the future developments of the entire GRÓ Centre.
- **The evaluation combines a desk review** (remote research, analysis, and reporting, including data-collection via 'remote' means) **and intensive field-mission visits** to meet programme partners and stakeholders in Iceland, Uganda, El Salvador, and Jamaica.
- The evaluation draws on a range of **data sources** and **data collection methods**, both quantitative and qualitative. Data sources include the MFA and GRÓ staff, programme and host institution representatives, alumni, and GRÓ partner institutions worldwide. The most relevant approaches that form the basis for **data collection** are (i) a comprehensive desk documentary review and critical analysis, (ii) secondary data collection, (iii) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), (iv) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), (v) observational techniques / observation in-field settings, (vi) an online survey of the collective GRÓ alumni, and (vii) collecting visual (pictorial) evidence.
- **The evaluation team has reviewed and analysed a comprehensive range of documents** including (i) GRÓ Centre and GRÓ programme documentation, (ii) Icelandic policy documentation on development cooperation, (iii) UNESCO documentation on its strategic goals, C2Cs, and the

GRÓ, (iv) GRÓ partner institution documentation where available and/or information obtained from their websites. A list of the documentation consulted by the evaluator is in Annex 3.

- Through the KIIs and FGDs, **the evaluation team directly consulted with 167 individuals** in Iceland and partner countries, 82 female and 85 male. A list of the people consulted by the evaluator is in Annex 4. The evaluator's online survey of the GRÓ alumni received responses from **936 individuals (alumni)** by its close in June 2024. The evaluator received 431 responses from the 2018-2023 cohort of 470 GRÓ alumni graduating.
- **The evaluator has utilized the following system for the rating of the assessed performance of the programme** (as further detailed in Annex 2) - (HS) Highly Satisfactory, (S) Satisfactory, (A) Adequate, (U) Unsatisfactory, and (HU) Highly Unsatisfactory.

1.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

Key limitations linked to the evaluation methodology, research and analysis processes are as follows.

- The GRÓ ToC (2022) and GRÓ Results Framework (2023) provide a standard framework via which the objectives, the interventions, and the results of the four programmes, each working in its own specific field of Icelandic expertise, is commonly understood. The MFA considers that, while only formally adopted in 2022 and 2023, these strategic documents present a valid outline of the goals, activities, and results of the programmes in the period prior, also when the programmes affiliated to the UNU. The GRÓ programme activities and many output performance indicators identified in the GRÓ Results Framework reflect those of the programmes across many years. Accordingly, while applied retrospectively, the evaluator utilizes the GRÓ ToC and Results Framework to assess programmes across the period 2018-2023.
- The GRÓ Strategic Priorities (2022-2027) define clear target indicators of achievement, but not for all the GRÓ programme interventions and results. The targets are forward looking and applied by the evaluator to assess the credibility of the programmes reaching the targets.
- There is no output data on programme targets of achievement (annual or medium-term), other than the GRÓ Strategic Priorities, against which to assess the programme results delivery.
- GRÓ Centre has not yet finalized the baseline data for the GRÓ Results Framework.
- While partially available, a consistent set of standard statistical data linked to direct beneficiaries' feedback on the quality and usefulness of the training is not available across the GRÓ programmes.
- While the evaluator's GRÓ alumni survey sample appears balanced in terms of technical programmes and graduation years, and the response rate is notably high for the evaluation reference period and relatively high for fellows who graduated before 2018, it is important to acknowledge the potential for survey participation bias. Specifically, fellows with a very positive perception of the programme and/or those actively engaged in networking activities may be more inclined to respond to the survey compared to those with less favourable views. This bias is likely less severe for the 2018-2023 cohorts due to the high response rate, but it may be more pertinent for older cohorts. Furthermore, the survey results reflect only the individual perceptions of the fellows regarding the 6-months programme quality, their personal achievements, and their contributions to sustainable development, and do not capture the perspectives of partner institutions. Since alumni completed the survey independently, all questions were subject to their individual understanding and interpretation.

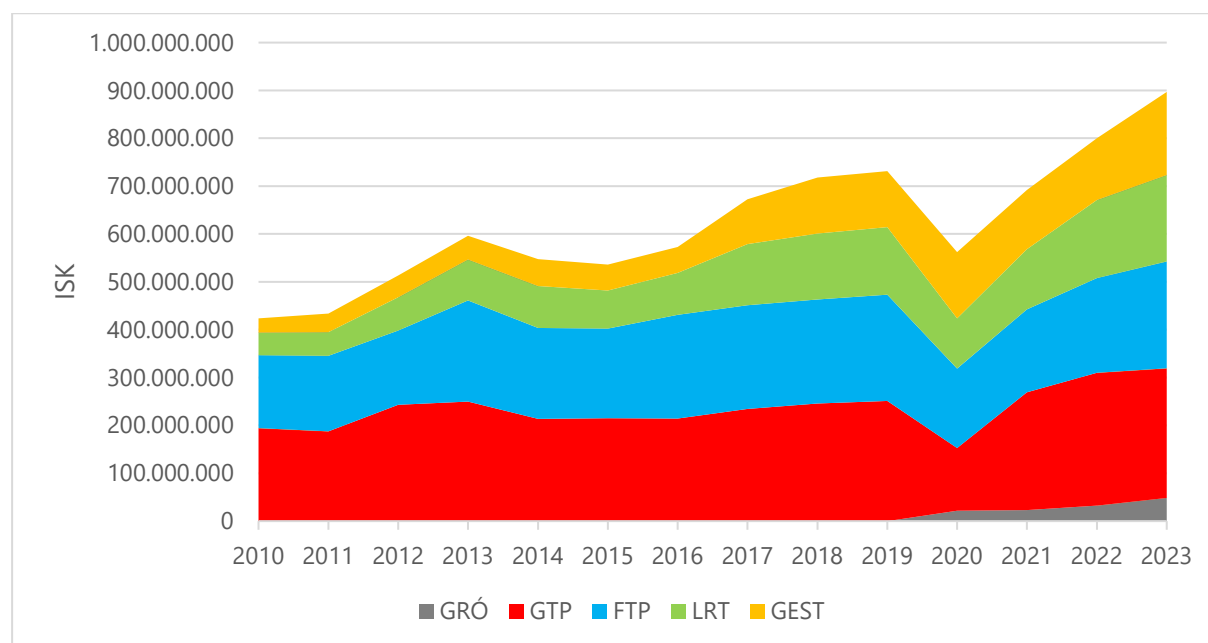
2 PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND CONTEXT

2.1 OVERVIEW OF ICELAND'S INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION POLICY AND PROVISION OF THE GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Iceland's provision of **specialized capacity development training**, specifically in areas of Icelandic expertise where it can offer added value, has formed part of Iceland's international development cooperation efforts since 1979 when the **GTP** was established. Subsequently, in 1997 the **FTP** was established, the **LRT** in 2007, and the **GEST** in 2009. Four Icelandic institutions host, direct, and support the delivery of each of the individual programmes — see further information in section 2.4. Prior to 2020, the programmes operated in affiliation with the UNU. Since 2020, the programmes function under the GRÓ Centre, an independent agency of the MFA, operating under its own legal identity, and functioning under the auspices of UNESCO as a C2C.¹

The **Government of Iceland (GOI), via the MFA, is the primary source of funding for the programmes** as part of its international development cooperation policy and efforts. In addition to the core funding of the MFA, the individual programmes obtain external funding through counterpart contributions from partner institutions, grants for specific actions, and their participation in international projects. The **MFA's core contribution** to the programmes from 2010 to 2023 equalled approximately 8,600 million ISK (equivalent to approx. 62.3 million USD, or 57.5 million EUR in current exchange rates).²

Figure 1: MFA contribution to the GRÓ/UNU capacity development training programmes (ISK), 2010-2022



¹ Category 2 institutes and centres (C2Cs) under the auspices of UNESCO are a global network of institutions of excellence in the Organization's domains of competence. C2Cs are institutions proposed by Member States to contribute in a meaningful way to the implementation and achievement of UNESCO's global strategies, priorities, programmes, and global development agendas.

² MFA administration, GRÓ running costs, evaluation costs, and individual project-based contributions of the MFA excluded.

In **2023**, Iceland's total official development assistance (ODA) was USD 115.5 million, representing 0.36% of gross national income (GNI).³ In the same year, MFA's total contribution to the GRÓ and its programmes was 897 million ISK, representing approximately 6.7% of Iceland's total international development cooperation budget.

The **overall goal of Iceland's international development cooperation** is to eradicate poverty, promote respect for human rights, and improve living standards. Human rights, gender equality, and environmental and climate affairs shall be both specific and cross-cutting objectives that serve as pillars for all development cooperation efforts.⁴ Furthermore, support to the most fragile and least developed or lower-income states and the promotion of peace at the international level shall be emphasised. Icelandic policy emphasises supporting the least developed countries (LDC), especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

In the context of Iceland's development cooperation policy and the international development policy framework (UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development), **the programmes primarily reference and aim to contribute to** the following SDGs: **SDG 5 Gender Equality, SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 14 Life below Water**, and **SDG 15 Life on Land**.

2.2 PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES, INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND APPROACH

The **development objective (goal) of the GRÓ Centre and the four 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 SDGs. This work is **carried out through capacity development training programmes** with a focus on four thematic areas of Icelandic expertise and added value benefit offer. **GRÓ's main approach is to increase institutional capacity in partner countries by assisting strategically positioned individuals to cause change.** Through the provision of the training programmes, GRÓ facilitates the increase of their skills, knowledge, and leadership competence in an individual's respective professional field **so that they can apply and disseminate their new knowledge and skills through their home organisations.**⁵ 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 world. An essential component in capacity development is transformation generated and sustained over time within partner countries.

The main purpose of the programmes is to foster new knowledge, capabilities, and solutions in low- and middle-income countries that enhance progress needed to promote changes to achieve SDGs relevant to their field of work, with emphasis on the system of governance of the countries and their institutions.

To achieve the intended GRÓ programme outputs and outcome, the development goal and impact described in the ToC, the GRÓ programmes apply **eight basic intervention strategies**. All four programmes use these strategies to varying extents. While the basic strategies are the same, there are, however, some variations between the programmes when it comes to implementation.

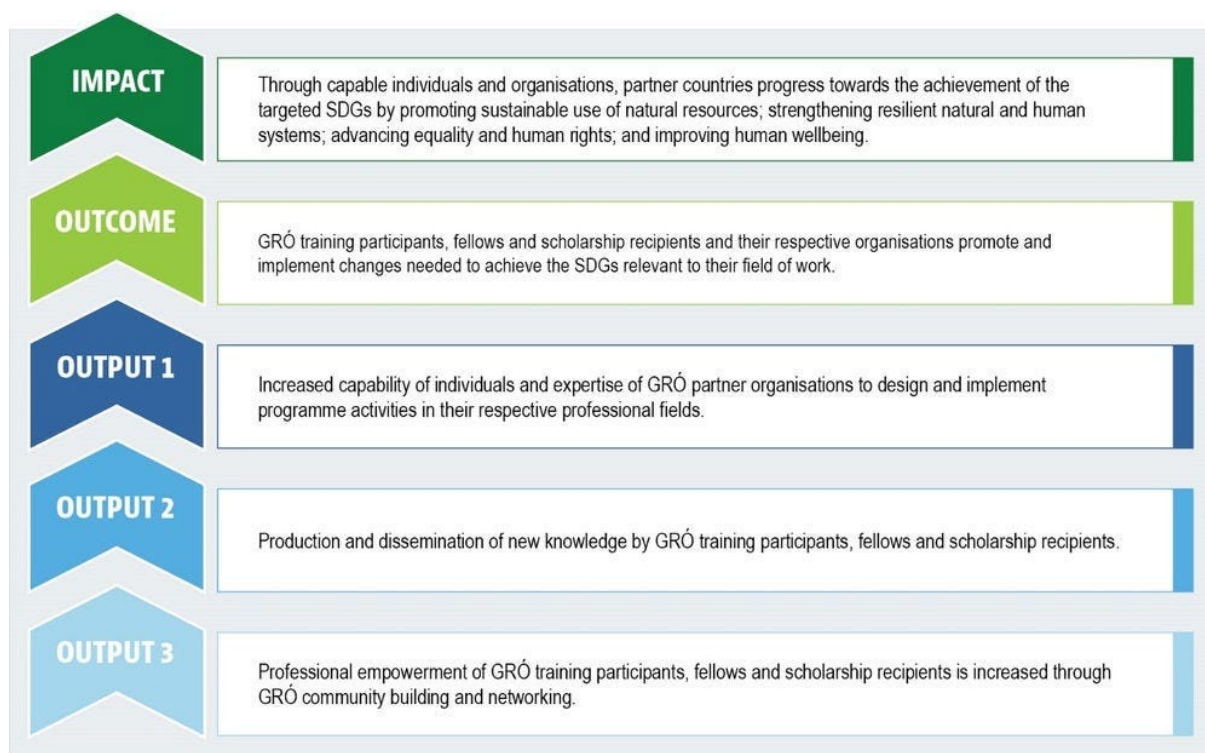
³ [Development Co-operation Profiles – Iceland \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](https://oecd-ilibrary.org/)

⁴ Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland's policy for international development cooperation 2024–2028.

⁵ GRÓ Theory of Change 2022-2027.

The **GRÓ programme intervention logic and development path** from the outputs, to impact, is below.

Figure 2: GRÓ programme intervention logic



GRÓ intervention strategies⁶

Postgraduate training programmes: A core activity of GRÓ is to offer postgraduate level training programmes for young to mid-career professionals (fellows) from partner institutions and organisations. The training programmes run for five (GEST) or six months (FTP, GTP, and LRT). The GEST and LRT training programmes offer a 30 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) postgraduate 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. 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.

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 postgraduate training programmes. GRÓ ensures that the training activities are demand-driven, are 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. In the longer term, the aim 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.

Scholarships: The provision of scholarships to GRÓ alumni for Master’s and PhD programmes in Iceland is a means to increase academic and research capacity, and research outputs in partner countries. The postgraduate scholars are 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.

⁶ Extracts from the GRÓ Theory of Change 2022-2027.

Innovative online content creation: Through the creation of online courses and other digital material disseminated through online platforms, the GRÓ can broaden its impact in its partner countries, and around the world. The GRÓ programmes have experience in the creation of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC), as well as the creation of supplemental training materials designed to promote digital learning, which have the potential to enhance other programme intervention strategies.

Research and knowledge creation: The research projects of fellows and postgraduate scholars 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. In some instances, research conducted by GRÓ fellows can form the basis of publications in peer-reviewed journals or supplement their graduate research.

Workshops and conferences: GRÓ programme staff attend and organise national and international conferences, symposiums, and workshops in their fields of expertise. The programmes 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 individuals from low and middle-income countries in the international academic community.

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. Networks will contribute to enhance the sustainability of training results, and for following-up of programme results.

Advisory services and knowledge sharing: In addition to the core capacity strengthening activities described above, other activities and projects, utilizing the expertise that exists within the programmes, are undertaken on a case-by-case basis and in line with GRÓ's vision and goals. These include advisory, consultancy, and research services performed by GRÓ programme staff, partners, and former fellows.

2.3 MAIN STAKEHOLDERS AND TARGET GROUPS OF BENEFICIARIES

While the main intervention approaches and underlying assumptions are similar between the GRÓ programmes, it is important to acknowledge that they work in very different fields and contexts. **FTP** promotes sustainable use and management of living aquatic resources. **GEST** promotes gender equality, women's empowerment, and social justice. **GTP** promotes utilisation and sustainable management of reliable, economically viable, and environmentally sound geothermal energy resources. **LRT** focuses on combatting land degradation, restoring degraded land, and promoting sustainable land management. Programmes, 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 policy framework.⁷ **A partner country should qualify for ODA assistance in accordance with the OECD DAC classification** to partner with GRÓ. GRÓ will particularly aim to work with (i) countries classified as LDCs or lower-middle income countries (LMICs), (ii) countries in Africa, and (iii) Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

For each GRÓ programme, **the primary target group of beneficiaries is young to mid-career postgraduate professionals** from the partner institutions and organisations in the countries targeted.

The partner institutions and organisations are beneficiaries of the new knowledge, skills, and capabilities that the young professionals obtain from the training and individual research component undertaken. Each programme has its own structure, but they all have a lecture component and an individual project/research component. Fellows often bring data to analyse and work with from home during the research component. Partner institutions and organisations are also beneficiaries of GRÓ programme's

⁷ Including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Iceland's Policy for International Development Cooperation and UNESCO's Medium Term Strategy, as well as the GRÓ Theory of Change 2022-2027, Results Framework, and Strategic Priorities.

support to assist in developing local training offers, local training capabilities, and institutional capacity at the request of the partner institution.

A summary of the **key partner countries and the main groups of partners per programme** is below.

Table 1: GRÓ programme key partner countries supported and stakeholder partners, 2018-2023

GRÓ	ALUMNI	KEY PARTNER/FOCUS COUNTRIES	KEY PARTNERS/STAKEHOLDERS
FTP	121 from 36 countries (464 since 1998, from 68 countries)	Cape Verde, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda; China, Indonesia, Sri Lanka; El Salvador, Jamaica, Papua New Guinea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government and public services (agencies) Research institutes Universities and academic institutions Regional governance structures and mechanisms (e.g. Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism)
GEST	133 from 34 countries (218 since 2009, from 38 countries)	Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Uganda; India, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Sri Lanka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universities (e.g. Makerere University, Uganda) Civil society and community-based groups Training organizations and research institutes Government and public services International organizations in partner countries
GTP	120 from 28 countries (790 since 1979, from 67 countries)	Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda; China, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, Philippines; Bolivia, Colombia, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geothermal companies: LaGeo (El Salvador), KenGen (Kenya), GDC (Kenya), Sinopec Management Institute (China), Maibarara Geothermal Inc. (Philippines) Government ministries International organizations: UNEP, OSCE, World Bank
LRT	97 from 11 countries (198 since 2007, from 14 countries)	Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda; Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universities (e.g. Makerere University, Uganda) Government and public services Training organizations and research institutes Civil society and community-based groups UNESCO MAB Programme

Data source: statistics provided by the four GRÓ training programmes

2.4 INSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

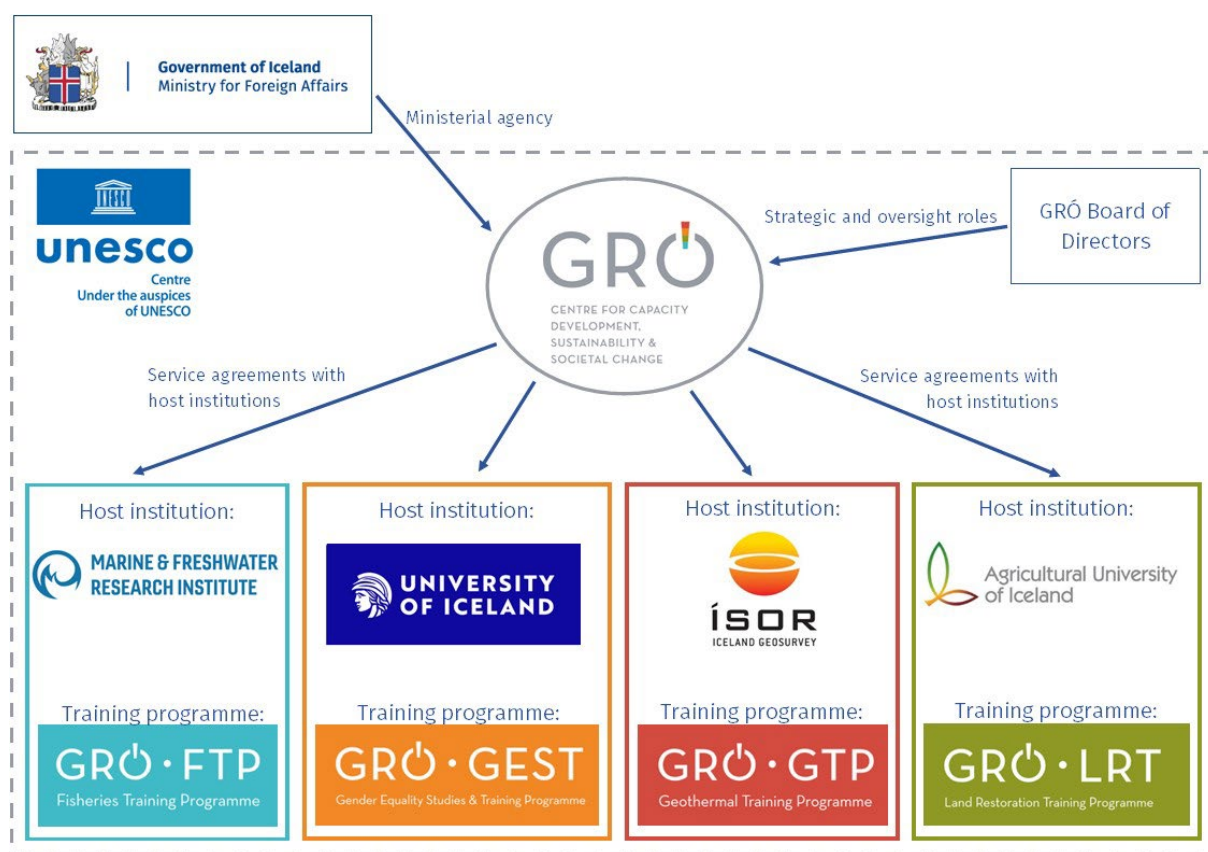
The GOI, via the MFA, is the primary source of funding for the programmes as part of its international development cooperation effort. Prior to 2020, the four programmes independently functioned, each based on a multi-party agreement between the GOI, the host institution, and the **UNU** as a UN entity partner for institutional affiliation. The MFA signed multi-year service agreements with the host institution for each programme, as the basis for their operations.⁸ The **GRÓ Centre** was established in January 2020, bringing together the four Icelandic international development cooperation capacity development training programmes under a single entity. The GRÓ Centre operates as a multidisciplinary C2C based in Iceland under the auspices of **UNESCO** as UN entity partner. Following its establishment, the MFA now supervises and handles its financial contributions to the GRÓ Centre, rather than to four programme host institutions. The **GRÓ Centre operates under its own legal identity as an agency of the MFA of Iceland. UNESCO requires that a C2C institute be an independent organization.**

⁸ Each programme was overseen by a programme board (composed of representatives of the MFA, host institution, UNU, programme director, and for FTP and LRT also representatives from partner organizations in Iceland) to assist programme steering, including content, course structure, and capacity development strategies, and overseeing and approving programme finances.

It was a **decision of the MFA at the end of 2018 to change the institutional arrangement for the operation of the training programmes and to seek a new collaborative UN agency partner.** It was decided that Iceland and the programmes would best be served by being undertaken in partnership with another UN entity to promote international linkages that could strengthen their work and increase results on the ground, promote visibility, and enhance networks.⁹ The decision was taken by the MFA informed by the findings of the 2017 OECD DAC Peer Review of Iceland, and the 2017 independent evaluation of the four programmes. These indicated the need to strengthen the focus of the programmes on development impact and on improving results-based management, and on exploring whether increased efficiency could be achieved in the administration of the programmes. The MFA held discussions regarding potential collaboration with different UN organisations in 2018 and 2019, with an emphasis on identifying suitable collaboration mechanisms that would mutually enhance efforts to achieve results at country level. After detailed assessment and negotiation between the MFA and UNESCO, an agreement between Iceland and UNESCO on the GRÓ as a C2C was formalized in December 2019.¹⁰ In addition, the GOI adopted the regulatory arrangement for establishment of the GRÓ Centre.¹¹

GRÓ's organizational structure and its direct partners linked to operation of the programmes are below.

Figure 3: GRÓ organizational layout



GRÓ Centre is led by a Director General (DG), whose offices are within the MFA and reports directly to the MFA Permanent Secretary of State. The Minister for Foreign Affairs appoints the GRÓ DG. The DG manages daily operations of the Centre, including the conclusion of service agreements with the four host institution partners and the follow-up on those agreements. The DG is a non-voting member of the

⁹ 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).

¹⁰ Agreement between UNESCO and the GOI regarding the establishment in Iceland of an international centre for capacity development under the auspices of UNESCO (as a Category 2 Centre).

¹¹ GOI Regulation No. 1260/2019 on GRÓ Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change.

GRÓ Governing Board and leads the consultation forum of the Training Programme Directors. In 2023, the GRÓ Centre had a staffing level of 1.5 persons Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff of the MFA.

The **GRÓ Governing Board** oversees and guides the operations of the GRÓ Centre. The GRÓ Governing Board is **composed of six representatives**, including the DG. The MFA 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 representative is designated independently by the Icelandic Development Cooperation Committee. The **main function of the Governing Board** is to form policy as well as supervise the activities of the Centre.

GRÓ Centre makes service agreements with the four host institutions that work in the relevant fields of fisheries, gender equality, geothermal energy, and land restoration **to operate their individual programme**. These are independent educational and research institutions, with significant expertise in higher learning and capacity development in their area. Prior to 2020, each programme operated on a multi-party agreement between the GOI, UNU, and the host institution, usually lasting three to five years. The initial GRÓ Centre service agreements with the host institutions covered the period 2020-2023. The subsequent GRÓ Centre service agreements with the host institutions cover the period 2024-2025.

The **host institutions** are independently responsible for the operational delivery of the programmes, and as such, they provide a conducive environment for learning and access to a range of resources. In addition to its employment of the staff that manages and implements the respective programme, the host institution also provides from its staff access to other lecturers and supervisors that contribute to programme implementation. The host institutions also provide their programme with full access to facilities for its activities and operations. Individual programmes often make collaboration agreements and **work closely with other relevant Icelandic institutions** for trainings in Iceland and abroad.

Table 2: GRÓ training programme key partner institutions for the programmes in Iceland

GRÓ	KEY PARTNER INSTITUTIONS IN ICELAND
FTP	Icelandic Marine and Fresh Water Research Institute (Host Institution), Matís Ltd. (Icelandic Food and Biotech R&D), University of Iceland, University of Akureyri, Hólar University College
GEST	University of Iceland (Host Institution), including specific centres within the University, RIKK (Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference), and EDDA Center of Excellence
GTP	Iceland GeoSurvey (ÍSOR) (Host Institution), University of Iceland, Reykjavík University, Reykjavík Energy, Landsvirkjun, Norðurorka, Verkís
LRT	Agricultural University of Iceland (Host Institution), Soil Conservation Service of Iceland

GRÓ fellows benefit from the exposure to the organisation and expertise provided by the host institution and partners. The host institutions benefit through the diversity of ideas and global connections of the fellows. GRÓ Centre benefits through cooperation with the host agencies because of the expertise and experience they provide in areas relevant to achieving GRÓ's goals in its focus areas.

Each programme has a **medium-term strategic plan and annual action plan** to guide its operations, both developed by the programme staff in collaboration with programme partners and stakeholders. GRÓ Centre confirms the extent of financial contribution that it allocates to the programmes following negotiations on the annual action plan between the programme/host and the GRÓ Centre and Board. Beyond the annual contribution of the GRÓ Centre, each programme secures limited external funding to support its operations. Specific actions of the programmes, such as short courses in partner countries, are undertaken based on specific project agreements and co-funding with the partner organizations.

Each programme has a **core staff**. In addition to the Programme Director, core staff commonly includes project managers or operations managers as well as research specialists. In 2023, the GTP and the LRT programmes each had a staffing level of three FTE for FTP a staffing level of 4.3 FTE, and for GEST a staffing level of 4.25 FTE.

The GRÓ Centre led cooperation with the four programmes on the development of a single **GRÓ ToC** as the single entity under which the four Icelandic training programmes combined as a collective training programme offer. The GRÓ Centre adopted this in 2022, along with the **GRÓ Strategic Priorities** for the period up to 2027. In 2023, the GRÓ Centre adopted a specific **GRÓ programme Results Framework**, also valid up to 2027.

3 EVALUATION FINDINGS

3.1 PROGRAMME GOALS, STRATEGY AND APPROACH (RELEVANCE)

3.1.1 ALIGNMENT OF THE GRÓ PROGRAMMES WITH ICELAND'S DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION POLICIES AND WITH ICELAND'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT VISION AND STRATEGIES

The evaluator judges that **the GRÓ programmes are highly relevant to and fully aligned with Iceland's international development cooperation policies and strategic goals, as well as fully aligned with Iceland's national development vision and strategies.** The programmes provide capacity development training in fields of recognized Icelandic expertise, with a strong focus on support to the world's poorer countries (mainly lower- and middle-income countries). The principal region targeted by the programme support is Sub-Saharan Africa, a priority focus region for Iceland. The programmes are a flagship product of Icelandic international development cooperation support.

The **main objectives of Iceland's international development cooperation** are to support the efforts made by governments in partner countries **to eradicate poverty and hunger and to promote economic and social development, including human rights, education, improved health, gender equality, sustainable development, and the sustainable use of resources.** These objectives extend to ensuring security at the international level, for example by promoting and preserving peace, peacebuilding and peacekeeping, and providing humanitarian aid and emergency relief where needed.¹²

The four training programmes have been an important part and one of the main pillars of Iceland's international development cooperation portfolio for decades. The GOI, primarily via the MFA' contributions to international development cooperation, is the principal financier of the programmes. The **MFA's core contribution** to the programmes from 2010 to 2023 equalled approximately 8,600 million ISK. In addition to its core contributions, the MFA periodically commissions the individual training programmes to undertake ad hoc events/support within the context of the work agenda of the Ministry. **In 2023**, total contributions to the GRÓ Centre and the GRÓ programmes represented **approximately 6.7% of Iceland's total international development cooperation budget.**

The programmes were all **established with the purpose of building human resource capacities in partner countries in fields where Icelandic expert knowledge is available and can therefore offer added value.** The main purpose of the programmes is to foster new knowledge, capabilities, and solutions in partner countries that enhance progress toward sustainable development and on the vision of the UN's SDGs, with emphasis on the system of governance of the countries and their institutions.

GRÓ's mission is to strengthen individual, organisational, and institutional, capacities in low- and middle-income and conflict/post-conflict countries to deliver development results in line with the SDGs. Each GRÓ programme works towards the SDGs within their own thematic area and in the partner countries where their Icelandic expert knowledge offer is relevant to the local needs of partner organizations, development challenges, and development goals.

The GEST programme directly aligns with the Icelandic policy goal to advance **gender equality** and women's empowerment pursuant to **SDG 5**. The other three programmes directly align with the Icelandic policy goal to advance **sustainable development and sustainable use of natural resources.** For the GTP, the increased use of geothermal resources and other renewable energy sources pursuant to **SDG 7**, for the FTP the preservation and sustainable use of marine and aquatic resources pursuant to

¹² Act on Iceland's International Development Cooperation No. 121/2008.

SDG 14, and for the LRT limiting land degradation and protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems pursuant to **SDG 15**.

Iceland's international development cooperation policy (i.e. policy adopted by Parliamentary Resolutions in 2013, 2019, and 2024) **explicitly identifies the four training programmes as one of the many core modalities utilized for the implementation of the policy.**¹³

Iceland's policy also identifies **human rights, gender equality, and environmental and climate affairs** as both **specific and cross-cutting policy objectives** that serve as pillars of all development cooperation efforts. Icelandic policy also states the **focus of Iceland's support be directed towards the LDCs and Lower Middle Income Countries (LMICs)** in the world, especially those in **Sub-Saharan Africa** and in the **Middle East**. The GRÓ Centre particularly aims to work with (i) countries classified as LDCs or LMICs, (ii) countries in Africa, and (iii) SIDS. **A partner country should qualify for ODA assistance in accordance with the OECD DAC classification.**

Beside the formal international development cooperation policy adopted by the Icelandic Parliament, the **MFA's strategic documents for international development cooperation policy also explicitly reference the training programmes** both in the MFA's definition of Iceland's strategy for bilateral development cooperation¹⁴ and the strategy for communications and knowledge management.¹⁵ The strategy for **bilateral cooperation defines Iceland's core partner countries** for bilateral cooperation support as **Malawi, Uganda** (both long-term bilateral cooperation partners), and **Sierra Leone**. Beside these, Icelandic international development cooperation policy has defined Mozambique, Palestine, and Afghanistan as priority countries.

In addition, in the context of **Iceland's national development vision and strategy** and its commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, globally and domestically, Iceland's most recent Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the SDGs (2023) explicitly identified the four GRÓ training programmes.¹⁶ The VNR recognizes the expertise that Iceland can, and has, offered through the programmes in the context of Iceland's international development cooperation efforts. The VNR also recognizes the importance of the themes addressed by the programmes — sustainable fisheries, gender equality, geothermal energy resources, and land restoration/management — to its national development. The VNR explicitly identifies the GRÓ programmes and/or their host institutions across a range of SDGs, for instance SDGs 4, 5, 7, 9, 12, 14, 15, and 17.

Overview of GRÓ training programmes alignment/compliance with policy priorities, 2018-2023

Figure 4 provides an overview of GRÓ fellows on postgraduate training in Iceland by home country ODA status. During the period **2018-2023, 37% of GRÓ's fellows** on the postgraduate training programmes in Iceland (of five- or six-months duration) **were from LDCs, 46% were from LMICs, and 16% were from Upper Middle-Income Countries (UMICs)**. OECD DAC classifies all of those countries as eligible recipients of ODA. **Only 1% of the GRÓ fellows (six of the 471 GRÓ fellows in total) were from countries not listed by the OECD DAC as eligible for the purposes of ODA aid flows.**¹⁷ The costs linked to these fellows were from non-development cooperation sources of funding.

¹³ The 2024 Parliamentary Resolution states: Importance shall be placed on Icelandic knowledge and experience benefitting individuals and institutions in low- and middle-income countries through increasing capacity within fields where Iceland's expertise is strong. To that end, GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, which operates under the auspices of UNESCO, and manages the GEST, GTP, LRT and the FTP, plays an important role. Efforts shall be made to examine how to strengthen GRÓ's operations in order to maximise results and ensure the effectiveness of Icelandic development cooperation contributions in accordance with the results of Iceland's OECD DAC peer review.

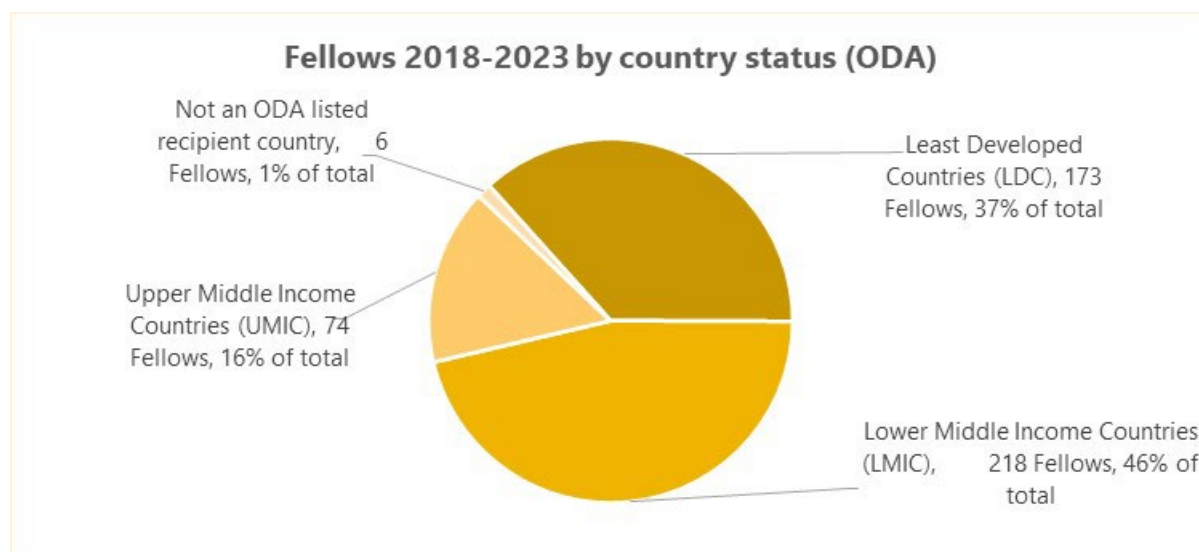
¹⁴ [EN - Bilateral strategy.pdf \(government.is\)](#)

¹⁵ [EN - Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy.pdf \(government.is\)](#)

¹⁶ [VNR 2023, Iceland | High-Level Political Forum](#)

¹⁷ Three of the fellows were from SIDS (Seychelles, Saint Kitts and Nevis), a category of countries identified by the MFA for increased focus and support of Icelandic cooperation expertise offer, two of the fellows were from Russia (indigenous Yakuts from Arctic polar regions in Northern Siberia, funded by specific project allocation of MFA), and one fellow was from New Zealand.

Figure 4: Overview of fellows on postgraduate training in Iceland by home country status (ODA)



Data source: statistics provided by the four GRÓ training programmes

Most of the fellows on the LRT were from LDCs - 54% of its 2018-2023 fellows, while the other 46% were from LMICs. The fellows on the GTP were mostly from LMICs - 61% of its 2018-2023 fellows, while 21% were from UMICs and 17% from LDCs. For the FTP, 76% of its fellows were from LDCs or LMICs and for the GEST it was 81%. Both programmes had a broadly equal share of fellows from LDCs and LMICs.

As shown in Table 3, the **GRÓ fellows were from 76 different countries**, 26 countries in Africa (23 in Sub-Saharan Africa), 21 in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), 19 in Asia, six in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, and four in the South Pacific. **Most fellows (56%) were from Sub-Saharan Africa**, 26% from Asia, 12% from LAC, 3% from the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe,¹⁸ and 2% from the South Pacific. During 2018-2023, there were 33% of fellows from Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and 7% from SIDS. Fellows from Africa and from Asia attended each of the training programmes. Fellows from LAC attended the FTP, the GEST, and the GTP. Fellows from the South Pacific attended the FTP and the GTP only. Fellows from the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe attended the GEST programme only.

Table 3: GRÓ postgraduate training fellows by geographical region of origin, 2018-2023

REGION	FTP	GEST	GTP	LRT	GRÓ 2018-2023
Africa	75	75	50	67	267
Asia	17	38	36	30	121
LAC	20	3	33	0	56
South Pacific	9	0	1	0	10
Europe	0	17	0	0	17
TOTAL	121	133	120	97	471

Data source: statistics provided by the four GRÓ training programmes

The **three leading countries** were **Kenya, Malawi, and Uganda** who collectively sent 25% of the 2018-2023 fellows. Other focus partner countries in Sub-Saharan Africa include Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Lesotho, and Tanzania. The principal partner countries in Asia include Indonesia, Mongolia,

¹⁸ Primarily co-financed via the Erasmus+ programme (EU global programme for educational, academic, and training cooperation).

India, and Sri Lanka. The principal partner countries in LAC include El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Jamaica. The principal focus partner country in the South Pacific is Papua New Guinea.

During the period 2018-2023, **55% of the fellows were females and 45% males**. The share of fellows on the GEST programme was predominantly female - 77% of its fellows. The share of fellows on the GTP was majority male at 58% of its fellows. The FTP and the LRT programmes had a broadly equal gender share.

Beyond the postgraduate fellowship training, the four programmes have provided fellowship alumni with **scholarships for Master's or Doctoral study and research degrees**. This is a means to increase academic and research capacity and outputs in partner countries. The scholarships are relevant to supporting early career experts from the Global South to undertake research and contribute to the production of local knowledge while advancing their own career. It enables scholars to gain international mobility, allowing them to call attention to issues in their home countries within scholarly communities worldwide while directly contributing to the production of local knowledge. It forms an integral part of institutional capacity building in partner countries, and it supports the sustainability of learning by contributing to the education of future instructors and researchers. Of the **64 individuals supported** with scholarships during the period **2018-2023**, **47% were from LMICs, 44% from LDCs, and 9% from UMICs**. 50% were females and 50% males. Most supported scholars come from the GTP and the FTP while only 15% come from the GEST or the LRT. The GRÓ Centre is currently working on the development of a common basic framework for the offer and provision of scholarships across the four programmes. The 2023 external evaluation of the GRÓ scholarship programme noted that the approach applied by the programmes to capacity building plays a significant role in realising development cooperation goals, supporting students for advanced research-based studies, and the application of knowledge and skills post-studies in partner countries.¹⁹

On the provision of **short training courses in partner countries**, the four programmes supported delivery of **approximately 50 training events** benefiting partner countries and organisations during the period **2018-2023**. These varied in duration from traditionally one week to a few weeks, up to a particular 5-month regionally targeted diploma course supported by the GTP with its partners in El Salvador. With exception of a limited number of study visits organised for partners undertaken in Iceland and online courses, most courses in partner countries were **in LDCs or in LMICs**. The courses have the advantage of training more people than can be achieved with the postgraduate training programmes, and the individual courses tailored to specific challenges and expressed local needs, with a focus on the practical utilization of new knowledge and skills intended be obtained. For the FTP and the GTP, the training courses commonly support beneficiaries in a regional framework.

The evaluator judges that **the GRÓ training programmes are highly relevant to and fully align with Iceland's international development cooperation policy, goals and focus areas**. The programmes provide capacity development training in fields of recognized Icelandic expertise, with a strong focus and record of accomplishment of offering support to partner countries in the Global South. The programmes are a flagship product of Icelandic international development cooperation support. During 2018-2023, the programmes predominantly supported individuals (young professionals) and partner organizations from countries classified by OECD DAC as LDCs or LMICs for the purposes of ODA flows. The majority of supported individuals and partner organizations are from Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition to Africa, all programmes provide support to individuals and organizations from partner countries in Asia. The FTP and the GTP also provide a strong regional focus supporting partners in LAC. The training programmes are a relevant modality to complement other MFA efforts around international development cooperation and to extend the reach of Iceland's support to a broader range of partner countries. In addition to aligning with and complementing the MFA efforts in the bilateral development cooperation partner countries of Malawi, Uganda, and Sierra Leone, the programmes align with the MFA efforts at the regional level in Eastern and Western Africa and the LAC region in particular.

¹⁹ [An Evaluation of GRÓ's Master's and Doctoral Scholarship Programme](#) (2023).

In terms of **partner country focus of the individual training programmes**, each programme is familiar with the OECD DAC list of ODA recipients and its periodic update.²⁰ Only 1% of the fellows enrolled between 2018 and 2023 were from non-ODA eligible countries. In certain cases, the MFA requested and financed the selection of fellows from the countries in the context of its broader international cooperation agenda and efforts. All recipients of scholarships for postgraduate degree studies were from ODA eligible countries. The delivery of short courses in partner countries equally predominantly targets beneficiaries from ODA eligible countries. In total, 83% of the GRÓ fellows and 91% of GRÓ scholars during 2018-2023 were from LDCs or LMICs, with 16% of the GRÓ fellows and 9% of GRÓ scholars from UMICs.

The **LRT** programme country selection has had a strong focus on income, including some of the lowest income in the world primarily located in Sub-Saharan Africa, and in Central Asia also. The **FTP** and the **GEST** programmes also had a strong focus on the lowest income countries in the world, primarily in Sub-Saharan Africa, partially in Asia, and other regions. Both programmes have partially provided support to UMICs or non-ODA countries. In the case of **FTP**, this support has primarily been to countries classified as SIDS. For the **GEST** programme, the primary support to UMICs has been through active Erasmus+ institutional agreements with universities in the Western Balkans and South Africa, with fellows traditionally receiving Erasmus+ co-funding grant, thereby only necessitating a partial grant from the GEST programme via the MFA/GRÓ Centre. The **GTP** has had a much greater focus than the other programmes on LMICs and UMICs. The programme mainly supports individuals and organisations located in Sub-Saharan Africa, but it also has a strong focus of support on Asia and in LAC. Compared to the other programmes, the GTP provides a more balanced offer across its three priority regions. This is primarily a reflection of the countries with geography that can realistically pursue the use or increased use of geothermal resources. The process requires existence of and viable access to geothermal resources, clear commitment of the partner countries and organizations in the exploration, development, and utilization of geothermal resources, which necessitates that countries have access to long-term investment financing, longer-term vision, and certain stability of the country context.

3.1.2 ALIGNMENT OF THE GRÓ PROGRAMMES WITH THE PARTNER COUNTRIES' AND TARGET GROUPS' NEEDS AND PRIORITIES, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

The evaluator judges that **the GRÓ programmes are closely aligned with partner countries', regions', and target groups' needs**. The programmes receive requests for support from different organizations, many through long-term partnerships, across different regions and targeted countries. The programmes promote the careful targeting of their support to ensure that the interventions are relevant to the local needs and programmes provide support where it has relevant expertise to offer. The partner organizations co-fund the short courses. Each programme remains fully demand-driven.

A summary of the alignment of each GRÓ programme with partner regions', countries' and target groups' needs and priorities follows below, after an overview at overall GRÓ programme level.

For each GRÓ programme, **the primary target group of beneficiaries is young postgraduate professionals from partner institutions and organisations in low- and middle-income countries**. The programmes interact with the target group via different interventions, such as the fellowship training in Iceland, scholarships for alumni for postgraduate study, short courses in partner countries, or online training content. The individual programmes make their own decisions about partner country and partner organisation selection, as well as other operational issues, within the general GRÓ policy framework.²¹ This is logical and appropriate as the technical and operational expertise provided via the GRÓ happens within the programmes and their host institutions, not at the GRÓ Centre.

²⁰ The programmes are also familiar with the World Bank's classification system of countries in terms of income status.

²¹ Including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Iceland's Policy for International Development Cooperation and UNESCO's Medium Term Strategy, as well as the GRÓ Theory of Change 2022-2027, Results Framework, and Strategic Priorities.

Each programme has a unique set of **partner institutions and organisations in the countries** corresponding with their different fields of expertise and the country development contexts. Collectively, they form **five main categories of institutions** (i) national and district level governments, regional governmental structures, (ii) universities and training organizations, (iii) scientific and social research institutes, (iv) civil society and community-based organizations, and (v) public service enterprise utilities and operators.

While the programmes make their own decisions about partner countries and organisations based on their vision and strategy for development of the programme offer, **each programme remains fully demand-driven**. The programmes respond to the requests and needs of the partner organizations and the needs of the young professionals directly targeted by capacity building and training interventions. The partner organizations nominate the candidates for the fellowship training in Iceland and request the organisation of short courses. The programmes assess requests and further discuss these with partner organizations prior to decision by the programme on potential follow up. This ensures that the programme interventions are relevant to the partner organizations' needs, policies, and priorities, and that the programme provides its support where it has relevant expertise to offer. The programmes promote the careful targeting of their support. Notably, the selection of fellows for training in Iceland follows a rigorous and detailed application and interview process. Demand for the fellowship training is strongly evident, demonstrating it is relevant to local needs and goals.²² The programmes have established partnerships with organizations for the development and delivery of short courses in partner countries and other capacity building supports. The partner organizations are encouraged to co-fund the short courses, further ensuring they are relevant to local needs.

Alignment of GRÓ FTP with partner regions/countries' and target groups' needs

Since 1974, the percentage of marine fish stocks fished within biologically sustainable levels has exhibited a decreasing trend from 90.0% in 1974 to 66.9% in 2015 and to 62.3% in 2021.²³ This situation has prompted countries to address the sustainability of fisheries resources. In that regard, partner countries like Liberia, for example, have enacted a fisheries policy with an overall goal of sustainably managed and economically viable fisheries that generate prosperity for the present and future generations. Malawi, another partner country, has the goal of promoting sustainable fisheries in order to contribute to food and nutrition security and economic growth, for which it needs the enhancement of capacities to sustainably manage and develop fisheries and aquaculture. In another example, Namibia's Marine Resource Policy ensures marine fisheries are used sustainably to ensure the sector's contribution to national development objectives. Papua New Guinea, another partner country, aims at maintaining long-term sustainable fisheries by strengthening fisheries management. Likewise, Sierra Leone envisions a sustainable fisheries sector that contributes to the country's socio-economic development. For Sri Lanka and Tanzania, the objectives of fisheries policy also focus on the sustainable management of fisheries resources and the improvement of the socio-economic conditions. In the Caribbean, through their Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy, countries have the goals of the conservation, management, and sustainable utilisation and development of fisheries resources and related ecosystems.

In line with those needs, the fellowship programme, the scholarship programme, and the in-country or regional short courses/workshops have the effect of contributing to the **enhancement of individual and institutional capacities that are in line with the policy objectives and strategies of the partner countries** in terms of sustainably managing fisheries resources for the benefit of their economies. In alignment with those needs, FTP partners primarily with the Ministries or Government Agencies responsible for implementing fisheries policies, strategies and projects, and with academic and research institutions.

²² For instance, the GEST programme commonly receives minimally 170 applications per year, via its open call for nominations.

²³ FAO (2024). The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2024. Blue Transformation in action. Rome.

Alignment of GRÓ GEST with partner regions/countries' and target groups' needs

The key region of focus for the GEST programme is Sub-Saharan Africa, followed by South Asia, the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. The **UNDP²⁴ Gender Development Index (GDI)** indicates that South Asia is the least progressive region in the world in terms of the parity of female to male human development outcomes, performing less favourably than the LDCs. The **Gender Inequality Index** indicates that Sub-Saharan Africa is the least progressed region in terms of women's achievement compared to men's in reproductive health, empowerment, and the labour market. On each index, the Middle East (Arab States) ranks as the second least progressed region in the world. Focus countries for GEST are primarily ranked as achieving medium equality, or lower, on the GDI.

The programme responds to the needs and priorities of partners and individuals seeking to expand their knowledge, practical skills, or organizational capacity in advancing gender equality in their home countries. The **GEST programme fellows work at a diverse range of institutions** that sponsor their application. Approximately 35-40% of the GEST fellows work in civil society organizations (local and/or international), 25-30% work in their government or public services, 15-20% work in academia, 10% work in international organizations in their country, and 5% work in the private sector or are self-employed. As noted above, demand for the fellowship programme is strongly evident. The individuals and their organizations clearly consider the GEST programme offer relevant to their needs and priorities. The **beneficiaries of the GEST programme's support for short courses** delivered in partner countries, such as Malawi or Uganda, have commonly been local professionals and experts working in the sphere of the local **district-level of government and/or from local civil society** organizations. These include trainee beneficiaries such as health, social welfare, education, and environmental experts and workers. National and district-level authorities were involved in the planning and organization of training events. The programme, through the University of Iceland, also operates cooperation **agreements with a range of universities in partner countries**. Partners voluntarily enter the individual agreements.

Alignment of GRÓ GTP with partner regions/countries' and target groups' needs

The reduction of greenhouse gases through an increased generation of electricity from renewable energy – including geothermal energy – is an explicit objective of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) for the energy sectors of key partner countries, from where numerous staff has been intentionally trained. These include Kenya, El Salvador, Bolivia, Dominica, Tanzania, Djibouti, Indonesia, and Philippines. In addition, a greater exploitation of geothermal resources is mentioned as a key strategy to achieve objectives included in planning documents of countries, which, again, have provided a high number of trainees for the GTP. These documents include, for instance, the Kenya Vision 2030 and Ethiopia's Low Emissions and Climate Resilience Development Strategy (2020-2025). In this way, the **GTP is well aligned with the policies and strategies of partner countries**.

The GTP focuses on early and mid-career professionals who have the potential to contribute to geothermal resource exploitation in their respective countries. These fellows and participants of short trainings are young professionals who have already received at least one degree on a university level and are seeking to enhance their knowledge of geothermal energy. An analysis of survey results indicates that most fellows currently work in public institutions or public sector enterprises. Overall, the GTP addresses the needs and priorities of individuals who want to expand their knowledge and practical skills in geothermal resource exploitation in their home countries.

In this context, three key partner organizations of the GTP are LaGeo in El Salvador, the Kenya Electricity Generating Company (KenGen), and the Geothermal Development Company (GDC). These state-owned companies have expertise in the exploitation and utilization of geothermal resources and regularly contribute to the organization of short trainings. LaGeo also organizes an intensive 5-month diploma in cooperation with the University of El Salvador and GTP. These partner organizations not only

24 UNDP, 2021/2022 Human Development Report.

demonstrate a clear commitment to expanding the pool of geothermal experts in their region but also benefit directly from their involvement in the GTP by training their own personnel and establishing their organizations as reputable companies with geothermal energy expertise.

Alignment of GRÓ LRT with partner regions/countries' and target groups' needs

Between 2018 and 2023, a total of eleven partner countries were involved in LRT, with all LRT scholarship recipients and short course participants coming from these countries. Seven of the countries are in Sub-Saharan Africa and four are landlocked countries in central Asia. **All these countries are UN member states and have thus agreed to the SDGs. All these countries further either ratified or acceded to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) including the 2015 Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD).** These international treaties thus set clear priorities for these countries, which are relevant to and aligned with the objectives of GRÓ LRT. While the exact drivers of land degradation and context of land restoration may be different between those countries, the interviews conducted in line with this evaluation suggest that land restoration is considered of high relevance to these countries.

For example, Ugandan 6-month LRT Programme alumni and lecturers alike indicated that Uganda's needs with regards to land restoration are enormous, as the country faces huge land degradation challenges primarily driven by high population growth and the corresponding expansion of extractive activities. 6-month LRT Programme alumni from Uzbekistan, on the other hand, referred to the country's extensive rangelands and the need to restore and sustainably manage those, in addition to pollution-related challenges. In both cases, **the need for well-trained experts in the respective country to address these challenges was emphasized.** GRÓ LRT's objectives are perfectly aligned with this need.

With regards to alignment of programme content with the respective national context of the training participants, alumni confirmed that the content is highly relevant and that the **principles and methods taught are universally applicable in land restoration activities.** The exposure of 6-month LRT Programme participants to Iceland's land degradation challenges and land restoration solutions was generally described as both **relatable and inspiring.**

3.1.3 ALIGNMENT OF THE GRÓ PROGRAMMES WITH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY FRAMEWORKS, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The evaluator judges that **the GRÓ programmes closely align with international development policy frameworks, goals, and strategies.** The UN 2030 Agenda and associated SDGs are the key frame of reference for the programmes and for assessing GRÓ programme performance in terms of longer-term development impact. The efforts of the GRÓ Centre and its programs align with all four of UNESCO's strategic objectives and have the potential to contribute to them. Specifically, the work of the GRÓ Centre and GRÓ programmes aligns with four of UNESCO's nine intended strategic outcomes. Beside the SDGs, the individual programmes reference specific UN and international norms, policy frameworks, instruments, and entities of relevance to their field of expertise.

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 ToC and Results Framework identify the impact of the programmes in terms of the contribution towards progress achieved towards 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 GEST, SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy for GTP, SDG 14 Life below Water for FTP,** and **SDG 15 Life on Land for LRT.** Recognizing that the SDGs are interrelated, GRÓ's ToC 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. Several of

the targets under SDG 17 are a direct focus of the GRÓ Centre and programmes, in particular target 17.9 on enhancing SDG capacity in low or middle-income countries correspond with the core role of GRÓ.

Reflecting that the **GRÓ Centre operates as a C2C** located in Iceland **under the auspices of UNESCO**, UNESCO's multi-year Medium Term Strategy 2022-2029 is an additional frame of reference for the work of the GRÓ Centre and the four GRÓ training programmes. UNESCO's global priorities on **Africa and Gender Equality** and the priority groups of **youth and SIDS**, are particularly relevant for the work of GRÓ. In addition, initiatives such as the MAB Programme, the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the UNESCO Decade for Ocean Science, the Ocean Teacher platform, and MOST, among others also align with GRÓ's objectives. Reflecting that the GRÓ Centre operates as a multidisciplinary C2C, the programmes are consistent with and have potential to contribute to all four of UNESCO's strategic objectives. Specifically, the work of the GRÓ Centre and GRÓ programmes aligns with four of UNESCO's nine intended strategic outcomes.²⁵

In addition to its work with UNESCO, the GRÓ Centre and programmes partner with **other UN agencies** on specific projects and initiatives related to their areas of expertise. This includes collaboration with UNDP, UNEP, FAO, UN Women, UNCCD, UNFCCC, and other UN agencies when synergies are possible. Beside the SDGs, the individual programmes reference specific UN and international norms, policy frameworks, instruments and organizations or entities of relevance to their field of expertise. A summary of the alignment of each GRÓ programme with international frameworks, policies, and partners is below.

Table 4: Alignment of the GRÓ programmes with international development policy frameworks

GRÓ	INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY FRAMEWORKS, GOALS, STRATEGIES AND PARTNERS
FTP	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 UNFCCC and the 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 . Within the UNCLOS framework, FTP relates to the UN Fish Stock Agreement (UNFSA) to enhance the cooperative management of fisheries resources that span more than one exclusive economic zone. Also, FTP relates to the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) to prevent and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. FTP relates to the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Policies to address SDG 12 and prohibit harmful fisheries subsidies that have the effect of depleting fish stocks.
GEST	A core objective of the programme is to advance knowledge exchange of the international normative and policy frameworks, instruments, agreements, and institutions dealing with gender equality and women's rights. The GEST programme strongly relates to key UN instruments relevant to gender equality and the protection of women's rights and fundamental freedoms, most notably the UN 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) and related resolutions. The GEST programme also closely relates to the work of key UN organizations and commissions linked to advancing gender equality, most notably the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) , and UN Women . The programme has also collaborated with UNDP and UNEP in partner countries. On the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the programme directly addresses SDG 5 Gender Equality, as well as aspects of SDG 4 Quality Education, SDG 8 Decent Work, SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities, SDG 13 Climate Action, SDG 16 Peace, Justice,

²⁵ Outcome 3: Enhance knowledge for climate action, biodiversity, water and ocean management, and disaster risk reduction. Outcome 4: Advance international cooperation in science, technology, and innovation. Outcome 7: Promote inclusion and combat discrimination, hate speech, and stereotypes. Outcome 8: Foster knowledge sharing and skills development in the digital age.

GRÓ	INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY FRAMEWORKS, GOALS, STRATEGIES AND PARTNERS
	Strong Institutions, and SDG 17 Partnership. With its focus on equality for marginalized or vulnerable groups, it also supports the UN's Leave No One Behind movement.
GTP	GTP operations directly address SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy) and support SDG 13 (climate action), touching on aspects of the UNFCCC. By focusing on capacity strengthening in geothermal exploration and development in lower- and middle-income countries, the GTP contributes to Iceland's commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change , which emphasises climate-related capacity building for partner countries and calls on developed countries to enhance support for capacity-building actions in partner countries. Through its selection of candidates and teachers, GTP also strengthens SDG 5 (gender equality) in the energy sector, which is predominantly male dominated. GTP has worked with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Nordic Development Fund (NDF), the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), and the World Bank Group (WB).
LRT	LRT strongly relates to the three Rio Conventions , primarily to the UNCCD, but also to the UNFCCC and the 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). 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.

3.1.4 QUALITY OF THE GRÓ PROGRAMME DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

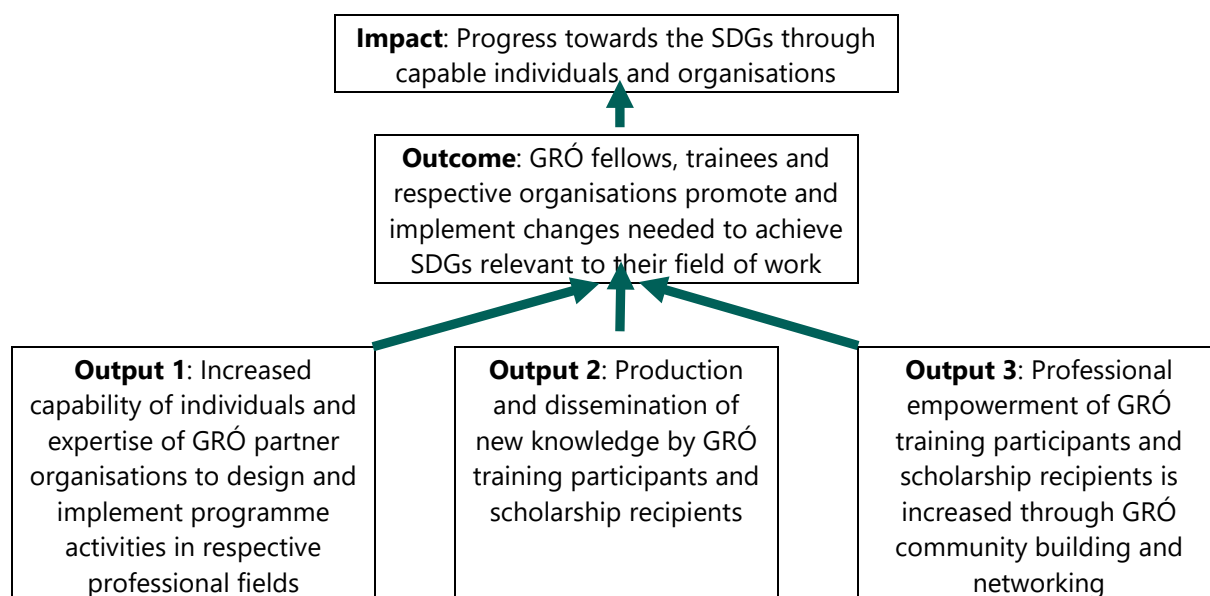
The evaluator judges that **the quality of the GRÓ programme design is adequate**. The evaluator recognizes the **significant progress achieved in the development of a standard framework to define the programme intervention theory and goals and to measure the intended results** of the programmes. The evaluator also recognizes that **the programmes offer a coherent mix of interventions, with high potential for realization of synergies between the different outputs**. However, the **GRÓ programme Results Framework is still a work in progress** in terms of definition of baseline data, or targets for and the specific means to measure the longer-term impact. These are on-going actions for the GRÓ Centre. The **programme management approach** for collective decision-making between the GRÓ Centre and programmes is **also in early development stages**.

In 2022, the GRÓ Centre formally adopted its **ToC** and its **Strategic Priorities** for the period up to 2027. The GRÓ Centre developed the ToC in collaboration with the four training programmes. In 2023, the GRÓ Centre formally adopted its **Results Framework**, also for the period up to 2027. These provide a standard framework for which the objectives, the interventions and the results of the four programmes, each working in its own specific field of Icelandic expertise, is commonly understood. The **eight basic intervention strategies for the GRÓ programmes identified in the ToC** reflect the intervention approaches utilized by the programmes across many years to deliver capacity building and development training, including those prior to the formal transition of the programmes into the GRÓ Centre in 2020. The GRÓ **programme activities and output performance indicators identified in the GRÓ Results Framework** also reflect those of the programmes across many years.²⁶ The definition of three common

²⁶ The MFA considers that the GRÓ Theory of Change and Results Framework, while only formally adopted in 2022 and 2023, present a valid outline of the goals, activities, and results of the programmes in the period prior also when programmes affiliated to the UNU. The evaluator agrees. Accordingly, the evaluator utilizes these to assess programmes across the period 2018-2023.

GRÓ programme outputs, one outcome, and one impact, provided in **the ToC and subsequent Results Framework is a significant step forward**. Alongside the Strategic Priorities, they form a clear framework through which all partners understand the intended results of the GRÓ Centre and programmes and the actual performance of the GRÓ programme is measurable. Specifically, the Results Framework defines four performance indicators to measure the outcome of the programme. Prior, there was limited rigorous follow-up at outcome level.

Figure 5: 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

The **GRÓ ToC narrative** presents a credible causal pathway of results to deliver the intended capacity development outcomes to empower individuals (direct beneficiaries of the training) and their home organisations to advance progress in delivering socio-economic and environmental development change and positive effect in line with the SDGs. The **programmes offer a coherent mix of training interventions** targeting young professionals with tailored training offer of different levels of intensity. The core postgraduate level training programme (fellowship) in Iceland and the graduate studies scholarships provide the beneficiaries in-depth knowledge and skills transmission in their field of expertise. They also support the beneficiaries to perform **research and produce new knowledge**. The short training courses delivered in partner countries with local organizations provide tailored training to benefit young professionals and experts. The offer of innovative online training content allows the programmes to reach a larger audience of learners than would be possible through other interventions. The programmes also promote **alumni community building and networking** actions to empower the alumni as change agents. Beside the organization of alumni meetings, programmes have also supported alumni to attend leading international conferences in their field, albeit to varying degrees. Each programme has actively sought to engage alumni in the context of the organization and/or delivery of short courses in country. Beyond the **collaboration with specific partner organizations** to develop local training offers, each programme works with its partners to facilitate relevant knowledge sharing and exchange. The internal coherence between the interventions of the GRÓ programme has strong potential to realise synergies between the different outputs. The **GRÓ Results Framework** defines 16 performance indicators linked to the outputs, four indicators linked to outcome, and four indicators linked to impact (at impact level, one SDG per training programme). The output and outcome

performance indicators and targets are well defined, but the identified means of verification (what is measured) is not always practical.²⁷ The form of the baseline data is well defined,²⁸ but actual data is not yet specified by the GRÓ Centre.²⁹ There is also, to date, no definition as to what/how to measure the GRÓ programme impacts. The key risks/assumptions linked to the achievement of the intended results are valid. The principal risk identified is that to deliver the expected outputs GRÓ needs to receive adequate funding for its activities.

Management of the individual programmes is performed by the Programme Director and core programme staff with close collaboration with their host institution and associated implementing partners. Management is guided by a series of strategies or action plans and working papers on the evolution of the core training and capacity development interventions. The management of specific programme interventions with key partner organizations in partner countries is derived from established institutional and/or specific project arrangements for collaboration. Overall **GRÓ programme management** arrangements, between GRÓ Centre and the host institutions, are defined in the Service Agreements between GRÓ and the partners. Operational management of the GRÓ programme collective is undertaken between the GRÓ Centre and individual GRÓ programmes through a consultation forum of the GRÓ DG and GRÓ Programme Directors. While overall programme management and reporting arrangements are clear, operational management of the collective GRÓ programme is affected by the lack of clear internal rules of cooperation between the GRÓ Centre and the GRÓ programmes.

3.2 PROMOTION OF SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE GRÓ PROGRAMMES AND OTHER LOCAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS (COHERENCE)

3.2.1 COHERENCE AND SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE WORK OF THE GRÓ PROGRAMMES AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS BY ICELAND IN PARTNER COUNTRIES OR REGIONS

The evaluator judges that **the GRÓ programmes complement the wider development efforts of Iceland at the international level and in partner countries**. The work of the GRÓ programmes strongly complements Iceland's other development efforts in its three partner countries for bilateral development cooperation. The programmes also complement Iceland's effort at regional and country specific level in East and West Africa and in the LAC region. However, there is **only partial direct evidence of coordination of effort or of synergy** created between the different efforts supported by the MFA with those of the GRÓ programmes. Iceland's international development cooperation policy notes that the cumulative effect of the programmes is to be increased and the GRÓ effort better integrated into other fields of Icelandic development cooperation.

The work of the GRÓ Centre and GRÓ programmes is consistent with and complements the wider international development efforts of Iceland in partner countries, regions, and internationally.

In the **partner countries for Icelandic bilateral development cooperation — Malawi, Uganda, and more recently Sierra Leone — the work of the programmes closely complements the development efforts and thematic focus areas defined for Iceland's in-country bilateral support**. The overall goal of Iceland's development cooperation is to reduce poverty and promote improved livelihoods with attention to human rights, gender equality, climate and environment, and the SDGs. The focus of Iceland's bilateral support is to assist the partner countries and local districts to fulfil their duties to provide access to basic services, including perinatal services, education, water, and sanitation. Supporting youth employment and women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship training and support to small and medium sized enterprises, especially in the green and blue economies,

²⁷ For instance, the quality of online training is measured by the comparison of learners' self-assessment surveys on their knowledge at the start and end of training. It is not practical to conduct such a survey at the start of an online training. It is also not an assured means to obtain feedback from learners completing the full online course of training. Response rates are very low.

²⁸ Traditionally to be based on the programmes' outputs data for the period from 2017 to 2022.

²⁹ GRÓ Centre is presently working to develop the baseline data reference.

is also a priority. Bolstering the blue economy and fisheries is an important priority in Iceland's development support. This involves using a holistic and integrated approach to sustainably manage marine resources, protect marine, coastal, and lake ecosystems, sustain livelihoods, and create jobs and value for economic growth. During the period 2018-2023, the **GRÓ programmes provided postgraduate training for 91 fellows from the three partner countries. Malawi** (37 fellows) and **Uganda** (39 fellows) are long-term focus partner countries for the **GEST** and the **LRT** programmes, and partners for the **FTP** programme. Both countries are also focus countries for the **GEST** programme local short course offerings. During the period 2018-2023, **GEST** supported ten training events in the two countries in districts supported by Iceland in its bilateral cooperation programme, including Malawi's districts of Mangochi and Nkhotakota. The **LRT** programme also delivered three short courses in three districts in Uganda from 2017-2019, but those have not continued after COVID. **Sierra Leone** (15 fellows) is a key focus partner country for the **FTP** programme and more recently the **GEST** programme. In Sierra Leone and Uganda, Iceland's development cooperation efforts provide a strong focus on the blue economy and fisheries. In **Uganda**, Iceland is working at the district level to improve access to and use of better fish handling and marketing infrastructure to ensure the quality of marketed fish. Additionally, Iceland provides technical assistance for the **Lake Victoria Fisheries Management Improvement Project**, which aims to develop and implement a sustainable fisheries management system for Lake Victoria. The goal is to achieve economic benefits from the fisheries, strengthen fishing communities, and protect the lake's ecosystem. For **Sierra Leone**, the MFA requested the **FTP** to provide insights to support the sustainable development of fisheries in that country in accordance with Iceland's country strategy. During the period 2018-2023, the **GTP** programme's engagement in the bilateral development partner countries was limited, supporting two fellows from Uganda and one Master's scholar.

Besides the three partner countries for bilateral development cooperation, Iceland's policy provides strong focus of support to **Sub-Saharan Africa**, for which the MFA has primarily followed a regional approach (**East Africa** and **West Africa**) complemented by country specific initiatives. The majority of **GRÓ** fellows (56%) during 2018-2023 were from 23 countries across Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition to **Malawi** and **Uganda**, **Kenya** was a key partner country for fellows. Other countries included Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania. The work of the **FTP** complements Iceland's country specific efforts in Liberia in promoting sustainable fisheries and livelihoods. Liberia is a key focus partner country for the **FTP** programme. The work of the **GEST** programme has complemented Iceland's country specific efforts in Malawi and in Mozambique to create and implement National Action Plans on Women, Peace, and Security (in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution no. 1235). Until 2018, Iceland's development cooperation effort in East Africa provided a strong focus on geothermal exploration. The work of the **GTP** strongly complemented those Icelandic regional and country specific development projects. **GTP** continues to support partner organizations in the region by providing opportunities to fellows and via regular short courses delivered for partners in the region (such as those delivered with partners in Kenya), or those on demand of partners in specific countries.

Beyond Africa, Iceland's development cooperation effort has focused on the **Caribbean region**, most evidently in the area of the blue economy and fisheries. The region is a key partner for the work of the **FTP**, which collaborates with the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM). The work strongly complements other Icelandic efforts, such as the implementation of fisheries information systems in Dominica, Jamaica, and Saint Lucia. The region has also benefited from the work of **GTP** linked to geothermal resources development. This work of **GTP** also included support in the **Latin America** region. **GTP's** support to deliver training in the **LAC region** began in 2007. Different development partners, including the MFA of Iceland and local partner organizations, financed the specific work of **GTP**.

On the **international level**, the programmes complement Iceland's efforts linked to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and Iceland's contribution to global funds such as the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund. **GEST** programme closely complements Iceland's efforts, such as at the UN Commission on the Status of Women, to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

However, there is **only partial evidence of direct coordination of effort or of actual synergy** created between the different efforts supported by the MFA with those of the **GRÓ** programmes. Iceland's

development cooperation policy (2019) notes that the cumulative effect of the programmes is to be increased, and the GRÓ effort should be better integrated into other fields of Icelandic development cooperation. This is principally the responsibility of the MFA to identify linkages and pathways for synergies between the capacity development offer of the GRÓ programmes and the MFA's programme/project specific actions. GRÓ programmes are responsive to Iceland's development policy priorities and MFA proposals.

3.2.2 COHERENCE AND SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE WORK OF THE GRÓ PROGRAMMES AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS BY THE KEY GRÓ PARTNERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS OR BY OTHER DONORS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES OR REGIONS

The evaluator judges that **the GRÓ programmes complement the development efforts of the programmes' key partner organizations in the partner countries**. The majority of these are public sector and public service-oriented institutions that willingly enter into their collaboration with the GRÓ programmes. **The GRÓ programmes also complement the wider development efforts of other donors** to promote capacity building, skills development, and socio-economic development.

The **key partnership organizations for the GRÓ programmes are those in the partner countries**. The majority of key partner organizations are **public institutions, such as universities, government, research institutes, and public service utilities**. There are a number of long-standing partners, such as the CRFM and the University of West Indies for FTP. The key partner organizations for the GTP in partner countries are geothermal companies. More precisely, these are LaGeo in El Salvador, the Kenya Electricity Generating Companies (KenGen), and the Geothermal Development Company (GDC) in Kenya. These are all state-owned companies with expertise in the exploitation and utilization of geothermal resources. They regularly contribute to the organization of short trainings. LaGeo in El Salvador also organizes an intensive 5-month diploma. For the GEST and the LRT programmes, key partner organizations are Makerere University in Uganda and LUNAR University in Malawi. During the period 2018-2023, the GEST and the LRT programmes each operated fourteen active university partnerships. For the LRT, also Samarkand State University in Uzbekistan, and Mongolian University of Live Sciences and other partners in Mongolia. For the GEST programme also partners such as the University of West Indies. The partners enter into their collaboration with the GRÓ programmes on their own accord through established institutional or specific project arrangements. Based on their needs, partner organizations identify areas and opportunities for collaboration and submit requests/proposals to the programmes. Beyond national or regional partner organizations in targeted countries, some programmes also collaborate with **international organizations in the partner countries**, for instance by fielding their request to select a candidate for the postgraduate training programme in Iceland from amongst their local staff and technical experts. For the GEST programme, and partially for the LRT programme, other partners in the targeted countries include **civil society or community-based organizations**, who usually interact through their nomination of fellows for the postgraduate training programme in Iceland from their staff. **GRÓ programmes are demand-driven, based on the annual or multi-annual needs of the partner organizations. GRÓ programme support is complementary** to their wider efforts to promote capacity development, knowledge, and skills transmission to promote local development change.

Beyond the organizations in partner countries, the other key partnership organization for the GRÓ Centre and programmes is **UNESCO**. The work of UNESCO strongly correlates with the focus of the GRÓ programmes on Sub-Saharan Africa and SIDS as well as the policy areas of gender equality and sustainable environmental development. There is some evidence of the coordination of the development efforts, most clearly the cooperation of the LRT programme and UNESCO's MAB programme to identify fellows for training.

The GRÓ programme effort is primarily complementary to **the capacity development efforts of other donors in the partner countries or regions**. The efforts of other donors broadly fall into two categories: **specific programmes/projects**, with clear geographical focus and time duration, and the capacity development effort, commonly focused on local communities as one component of a wider package of support. For instance, USAID funds a project in Malawi to support local communities and stakeholders to safeguard Lake Malawi's fish biodiversity and enhance fisheries management in lakeshore districts.

Beyond specific programme/project actions, **many actors also offer explicit capacity development mechanisms**, commonly targeting governments, public institutions, staffs, and young professionals. For instance, the German Academic Exchange Service, Denmark's DANIDA Fellowship Centre, Sweden's Sida International Training Programme, Norway's Norec International Exchange Cooperation, or US Fulbright Programme. Overall, these provide various trainings from short courses to academic scholarship and research programmes. The GRÓ programme offer complements these wider development efforts. The capacity development training offered by these donors and those of the GRÓ are of different levels of intensity and of organization, and the partner or strategic countries for these donors' capacity development efforts only partially match with those of the GRÓ programmes.

The **development of potential synergies** between all such external development assistance efforts is predominantly the responsibility of the supported institutions. For instance, LaGeo in El Salvador receives complementary technical assistance and capacity building support from Germany, and from Italy, while the CRFM member states benefit from complementary support from the European Union (EU) and from Japan. One specific project financed by the World Bank supporting 17 training centres in East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda) does provide good potential for direct synergy with the work of the GTP. The KenGen training centre was selected as the regional TVET reference training-centre for energy aspects. Approximately 70% of the World Bank grant investment is for infrastructure upgrade. A large part of the remaining funding is for the pedagogical and training skills of KenGen experts. In this way, the GTP short training at KenGen and its offer of fellowships for regional partners will benefit from the investments.

3.2.3 DUPLICATION OR OVERLAP OF THE GRÓ PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES WITH OTHER EFFORTS BY ICELAND OR OTHER DONORS

The evaluator judges that **there is no evidence of duplication or overlap of the GRÓ programme activities with other development efforts of Iceland or of other donors**. There is limited clear risk.

There is **no evidence of duplication or overlap** of the GRÓ programme activities with other development efforts undertaken by Iceland or by other donors.

The programmes provide training and capacity development support for young professionals from a diversity of low- and middle-income countries. The bulk of **Iceland's** bilateral development cooperation targets district-level programmes and community initiatives to enhance local social infrastructure and the sustainable use of natural resources to promote socio-economic development. The bulk of Iceland's multilateral development cooperation support seeks to assist Iceland's multilateral partners in responding to local development and humanitarian needs. There is no clear risk of duplication.

The capacity development offer of **other donors** and that of the GRÓ programmes are complementary to one another, but the training offers substantially vary in terms of their design and intensity, as well as principal priority partner countries. The avoidance of duplication or overlap between all such external development assistance efforts, as well as the development of potential synergies, is predominantly the responsibility of the supported institutions. There is no clear risk of duplication or overlap of efforts. The demand for capacity development support in the GRÓ partner countries certainly exceeds the supply.

3.3 PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS (EFFECTIVENESS)

3.3.1 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GRÓ PROGRAMMES OVERALL IN REGARD TO THE DELIVERY AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE INTENDED RESULTS

The evaluator judges that **the GRÓ programmes have effectively delivered the intended capacity development results, supporting young professionals and partner organizations in the countries targeted**, to capacitate them to promote local development outcomes pursuant to the SDGs. During 2018-2023, programmes supported 534 individuals via in-depth training and research (fellowship and scholars), 1699 individuals via short training courses, and reached 31,161 learners via online training content. The fellows and scholars produced 537 new knowledge (research) products.

Feedback from the 2018-2023 GRÓ fellows indicates that 89.5% have used the training to advance their contribution in their field/sector of work, with 73.5% indicating they have achieved individual professional advancement. Linked to the **GRÓ programme Strategic Priorities and targets set in 2022 as to the extent of outputs delivery up to 2027**, while these are achievable by the GRÓ programmes, the programmes will require additional financial resources if the targets are to be fulfilled, notably linked to the expansion of short courses in partner countries, and also scholarships.

During the period 2018-2023, **the GRÓ programmes delivered an output mix that conforms to the purpose of the strengthening of individual, organizational, and institutional capacities** in low- and middle-income countries for partners to promote development objectives pursuant to the SDGs.

During the period 2018-2023, the **programmes collectively delivered the following key outputs**.

Table 5: GRÓ programme summary of key training outputs delivered, 2018-2023

INTERVENTION	FTP	GEST	GTP	LRT	GRÓ TOTAL
Postgraduate training programme in Iceland	121 fellows 49% Female 39% LDC 37% LMIC 22% UMIC	133 fellows 77% Female 40% LDC 41% LMIC 17% UMIC	120 fellows 42% Female 17% LDC 61% LMIC 21% UMIC	97 fellows 49% Female 54% LDC 46% LMIC	471 fellows 55% Female 37% LDC 46% LMIC 16% UMIC
Scholarships for Master's and PhD	11 Master's and 9 PhD scholars 65% Female	3 PhD scholars 67% Female	27 Master's and 7 PhD scholars 41% Female	6 Master's and 1 PhD scholar 43% Female	44 Master's and 20 PhD scholars 50% Female
Short courses in partner countries ³⁰	10 events 165 participants 35% Female	11 events 386 participants 37% Female	15 events 508 participants 34% Female	7 events 160 participants 41% Female	42 events * 1,203 participants 36% Female
Short courses online	1 event 50 participants	1 event 50 participants	4 events 396 participants	(No online short courses)	6 events 496 participants
Online learning content	SDG 14 Videos 2,897 learners	3 MOOCs 16,238 learners	(No online training offer)	3 MOOCs 20,026 learners	7 products 39,161 learners

* One short course conducted jointly by GRÓ LRT and GRÓ GEST, delivered with local partners in Kyrgyzstan.

³⁰ While the majority of courses are of one up to three weeks duration, for accurate inclusion of GTP's support to training provided in partner countries, the evaluator also includes the five-month diploma training offered to regional partners in the LAC region.

Table 6: GRÓ programme summary of new knowledge (research) outputs delivered, 2018-2023

INTERVENTION	FTP	GEST	GTP	LRT	GRÓ TOTAL
Postgraduate training in Iceland	121 research/project papers of the fellows	132 research/project papers of the fellows	120 research/project papers of the fellows	97 research/project papers of the fellows	470 research/project papers of the fellows
Master's theses	9 published	(No Master's)	29 published	2 published	40 published
PhD papers	16 published	3 published	7 published	1 published	27 published

Table 7: GRÓ programme summary of key alumni empowerment outputs delivered, 2018-2023

INTERVENTION	FTP	GEST	GTP	LRT	GRÓ TOTAL
Alumni attend conferences	66 alumni	2 alumni	117 alumni (+108 remotely)	54 alumni	239 alumni (+108 remotely)
Alumni involved in short courses	45% (5 of 11 events)	58% (7 of 12 events)	95% (18 of 19 events)	71% (5 of 7 events)	73% (35 of 48 events)
Alumni meetings conducted	2 in-country 1 Online 1 at conference	11 in-country 2 Online 1 anniversary event (Kenya)	2 as side event at conference 1 anniversary event	2 in-country 2 as side event at conferences	18 in-country (2 by GRÓ Centre) 3 Online 5 at conferences

Data source: statistics provided by the four GRÓ training programmes

A narrative summary of the key outputs delivered by the programmes during 2018-2023 is below.

- Postgraduate (five- or six-months duration) training programmes in Iceland:** Of the 471 fellows, 470 successfully completed the programmes, including the completion of their individual research/project paper. This represents a successful completion/graduation rate of 99.8%. Except for six fellows, all other fellows originated from low- and middle-income countries. As defined on the OECD DAC list of ODA recipients, 37% of fellows were from countries listed as LDCs, 46% from LMICs, and 16% from UMICs. Of the six fellows from countries not listed as eligible for the purposes of ODA, three were from SIDS — a category of country identified by Iceland for its support — and two were indigenous people from the Arctic polar region, an Icelandic policy priority, paid by financial sources outside of the international development cooperation portfolio. Feedback from the fellows provided to the individual programmes about the quality of the training offer indicates a high level of satisfaction as to the relevance and usefulness of the training. Feedback from fellows responding to the evaluator's questionnaire survey of the GRÓ alumni confirms the high level of satisfaction with the benefits obtained as reported by the alumni.³¹

³¹ The 2018-2023 cohort of fellows responding to the evaluator's survey indicated an average rating of programmes, on a scale from one (low) to five (high), of 4.72 for programme quality, and 4.74 for programme coherence. Of the cohort, 91.5% responded.

- **Scholarships to alumni for Master's and PhD programmes:** 64 alumni supported, with 44 on Master's degree programmes, and 20 on PhD programmes. Of those on Master's programmes, 48% were female. Of those on PhD programmes, 58% were female. During the period, 40 Master's theses were completed and published and 17 PhD scholars' papers published in research journals. All of the alumni scholars supported are from countries defined on the OECD DAC list of ODA recipients, with 47% of supported scholars from LMICs, 44% from LDCs, and 9% from UMICs.
- **Short courses in/for partner countries:** 1,699 individuals were trained in 48 short training course events. Of the 48 events, 38 were in partner countries, six were online, and four were study visits for experts from partner countries in Iceland. Of the 38 events delivered in partner countries, 22 were in LDCs, 14 in LMICs, and two in high-income countries (SIDS). Courses offered by FTP and GTP combine a mix of regionally offered courses, and country-specific, GEST and LRT only country-specific. Partner countries targeted with courses are on the DAC list of ODA recipients (or are SIDS in cases of non-ODA eligibility).³² While standard statistical data on the trainees' assessed quality of courses is not available from each of the short course events, almost all of those with data show the direct beneficiaries were either satisfied or highly satisfied with the relevance and usefulness of the training course to their job and/or profession.
- **Innovative online training content:** 39,161 learners enrolled/accessed the online content offer. Enrolled learners originated from at least 170 countries. While the collection of users' data or feedback on the MOOCs, the main form of online content offered by the programmes, is inherently challenging, the programmes utilizing MOOCs estimate that at minimum approximately 60% of learners were from low- and middle-income countries. Learners in high-income countries can benefit from the MOOCs through being exposed to specific issues and perspectives linked to progressing international development in ODA developing countries.
- **Alumni empowerment:** 239 alumni were supported to attend leading international/regional conferences in their field of expertise as a means to disseminate their research and to elevate their engagement within international networks. In addition, programme alumni were involved in the organization and/or delivery of 35 of the 48 short training course events (73%) during the period. The programmes also conducted alumni community building and networking on assorted social media platforms and groups accessible only to the alumni. In addition, the programmes held a total of 25 alumni networking meetings at individual programme level, three as online meetings open to all alumni of the programme, 15 specific in-country meetings with programme alumni, five as a side event at international conferences, and two programme anniversary events. GRÓ Centre has also advanced promotion of the collective GRÓ programme alumni network. Notably, in Uganda, GRÓ alumni from all programmes seek to establish a registered GRÓ country chapter. The GEST programme has also offered a small-scale seed fund grant to its alumni to propose and lead on a project in their home country to promote gender equality and social justice locally. In addition to their personal empowerment as change agents, the supported projects have directly promoted gender equality, socio-economic development and the empowerment of women.³³
- **Partner organizations in targeted countries supported:** The postgraduate fellowship programme in Iceland the programmes successfully trained individuals from a diversity of organizations in the 76 countries from which the fellows originated. During the period, the programmes directly partnered with a core group of 15 organizations in specific knowledge exchange initiatives and the development of the partners' organizational and institutional capacity to design and implement local training and capacity development support.

The programmes have **very successfully engaged with a diverse range of learners from low- and middle-income countries as direct beneficiaries** through a mix of training interventions of different levels of intensity and duration. Feedback of the direct beneficiaries and partner stakeholders attests to

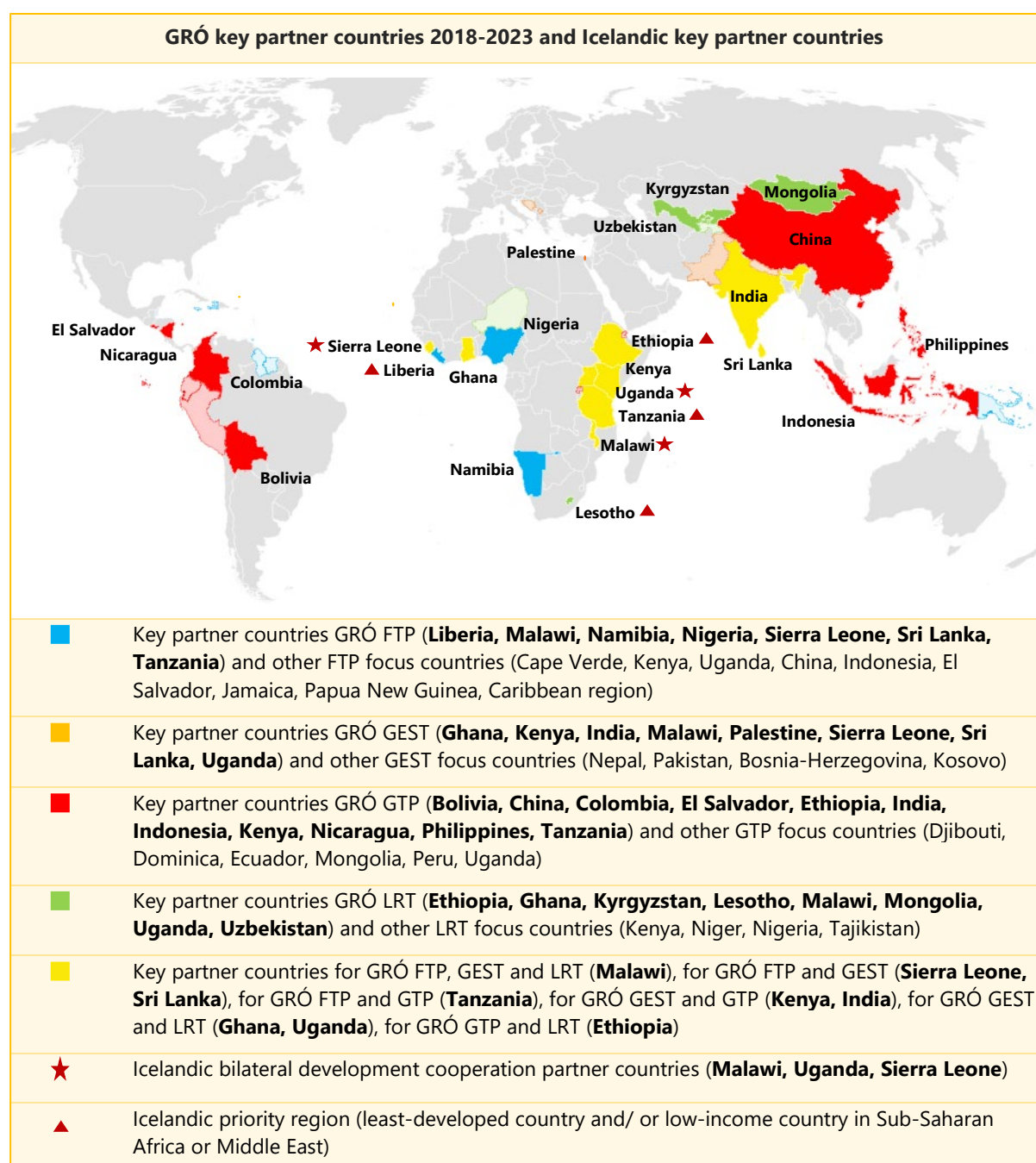
³² A limited number of study visits to Iceland not targeted at low- and middle-income countries (or SIDS) were supported by the programmes. These were at the request of the MFA or of other partners. These are not included in the evaluator's analysis.

³³ Financing for the GEST Alumni Fund, initially piloted in 2020, now an integral part of the programme offer, has been provided, to date, solely from the contribution of the University of Iceland (Host Institution) to the operations of the GEST programme.

the relevance and quality of the training provided. The interventions have improved individual competences, knowledge, and skills in their areas of expertise. The training programs are well-targeted to meet the needs of their audiences. Young professionals from low- and middle-income countries benefit from fellowship and scholarship programs, while regional, national, and local professionals and experts — mainly from public service institutions, including government, academia, and public utilities — benefit from a suite of short courses in partner countries. Additionally, the online training content, particularly the MOOCs, provides an open learning resource without time constraints, allowing learners to explore specific issues related to global challenges and the advancement of sustainable development and progress on the SDGs.

A **visual overview of the main partner countries** supported by the GRÓ programmes during the period 2018-2023 is below.

Figure 6: Geographical map with GRÓ and Icelandic key partner countries



The **fellows and scholars return to their home country and organization** upon programme completion **empowered** to share and apply their learning and skills obtained.³⁴ The programmes' alumni community building and networking efforts ensure periodic connection between the alumni and empowers them with opportunities to present their latest research or be involved in the organization and/or delivery of short training courses in their home country. The **beneficiaries of the short courses are empowered** to utilize the new skills and practical tools provided to promote change at the local level. Most of the short courses targeted at government and district-level professionals and experts resulted in the development of a series of local action plans to address specific aspects of local development planning and public service implementation and delivery.

The evaluator judges that **the direct results of the programmes establish a strong basis to promote behavioural change of the individuals** (direct beneficiaries) **and their home organizations** to utilize and apply the learning, skills, and tools obtained from the training. This will result in a diverse range of initiatives aimed at **advancing local development change** in their field of expertise and work.

A summary of the direct **outcomes** compared to intended outcome³⁵ reported is below.

Table 8: GRÓ programme summary of the intended outcome results delivered, average rating of 2018-2023 fellows

GRÓ performance indicator	FTP	GEST	GTP	LRT	GRÓ Total
P1. Management in partner organisations assess the training to be valuable for the organisation ³⁶	79.8% (3 rd rated)	75.0% (4 th rated)	85.7% (2 nd rated)	91.4% (1 st rated)	82.5%
P2. Graduates have used the training to advance their contribution in their field/sector of work	87.2% (4 th rated)	87.5% (3 rd rated)	88.6% (2 nd rated)	97.1% (1 st rated)	89.5%
P3. Graduates have used their training to share with colleagues and other experts in their field of expertise	77.9% (3 rd rated)	72.7% (4 th rated)	79.7% (2 nd rated)	87.2% (1 st rated)	78.9%
P4. Graduates advanced professionally (e.g. promotion or received scholarship for further studies)	71.6% (3 rd rated)	73.9% (2 nd rated)	67.9% (4 th rated)	84.3% (1 st rated)	73.5%
<i>Average rating across indicators</i>	79.1%	77.3%	80.5%	90.0%	81.1%

Data source: Evaluation team's online questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, responses from the 2018-2023 cohort (N=372), percentage of responses reporting strong or very strong progress (at least level 4 on the 5-point Likert scale) achieved in follow-up to the fellowship training.

The reported direct outcomes for the **2018-2023 fellows** in the period after completion of the GRÓ training programmes is their **self-reported assessment of the outcomes achieved**, provided in response to the evaluator's survey of the GRÓ alumni. While recognizing that there is potential risk of self-reporting subjective bias, the feedback obtained, shows a broad level of consistency and representation across the responses to questions within the individual programmes, due to a high-level of responses (91.5% of the 2018-2023 cohort). The evaluator also notes that these are the self-reported

³⁴ A limited number of fellows did not return to their home country, and a number have fled their country. Most notably this was the case linked to fellows originating from Afghanistan.

³⁵ GRÓ fellows, trainees, and respective organisations promote and implement changes needed to achieve SDGs relevant to their field of work.

³⁶ Reported from the fellows' perspective. The survey respondents were asked to which extent they agree to the statement that "their management appreciates and values the skills gained from the 6-months training programme."

outcomes as of mid-2024 (the survey closed June 2024). Based on the GRÓ programme Results Framework, the four programme indicators of outcome are assessed three-years after fellows' graduation. Therefore, for the earlier cohorts during the period 2018-2023, the data represents the current longer-term outcome, and for latter cohorts, the data represents their earlier phase of contribution and advancement.

As an average across the four programmes and four GRÓ programme outcome indicators, **81% of respondents reported they achieved good or very good progress (level 4 or 5 of the 5-point Likert scale with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest rating) in their field of profession and utilization of their expertise as a result** in follow-up to the fellowship training.

Feedback from the LRT alumni is notably very positive as to the outcomes and progress they have achieved post-fellowship, with 97% of LRT fellows reporting they have used the training to advance their contribution in their field/sector of work, and an average of 90% reporting positive progress across the outcome indicators. Feedback from the FTP, the GEST, and the GTP alumni indicates that **on average 88% report having used the training to advance their contribution in their field/sector of work**. A key objective of the fellowship programme is to train young professionals to be empowered as change agents to promote and implement changes needed to achieve SDGs relevant to their field and country. In total, 44.02% of the fellows indicate substantial career advancement and 34.9% indicate extreme career advancement. When asked about their most important **individual career advancement due to the postgraduate programme**, the vast majority of the 2018-2023 alumni cohort indicate **taking on greater responsibilities within their organisations (74%)**, while **33% indicate career promotions**, moving into higher roles or leading departments, **30% indicate a salary increase**, and **25% were awarded a scholarship** by an organization for further study.

The enhancement of specific professional skills, including research, technical expertise, project management, and analytical skills improved fellows' qualifications for higher positions. Notably, many alumni have **transitioned into leadership roles, influencing policy and leading significant projects**. For example, two LRT 2022 alumni from Lesotho promoted within their national ministry post-fellowship to coordinate and facilitate an IFAD funded project Regeneration of Landscapes and Livelihoods. An FTP 2022 graduate from El Salvador promoted within their ministry to Head of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Management Department. A GTP 2022 graduate became a specialist adviser at the World Bank on geothermal development in the Latin America region. Two GEST 2022 alumni, one from India, one from Malawi, returned to their universities to lead on efforts to design and develop gender studies courses and modules for new degree programmes at the universities. Furthermore, programmes have expanded fellows' **professional networks internationally**, enabling them to engage with global experts and peers, thus enhancing their career opportunities and fostering valuable collaborations.

Figures 7 and 8 compare the types of career advancements of alumni before and during the evaluation period of 2018-2023 by programme and on average across all programmes. While the percentage of fellows resuming more responsibilities is equal in both groups (around 75%), the **percentage of fellows who received a promotion or a salary increase after programme completion is significantly higher among fellows who graduated before 2018** (around 25 percentage points more for promotions and 15 percentage points more for salary increases). It seems that while fellows immediately take on more responsibilities after programme completion, it takes more time for fellows to receive promotions and/or salary increases after programme completion.

Figure 7 Career advancement of alumni, 1979-2017

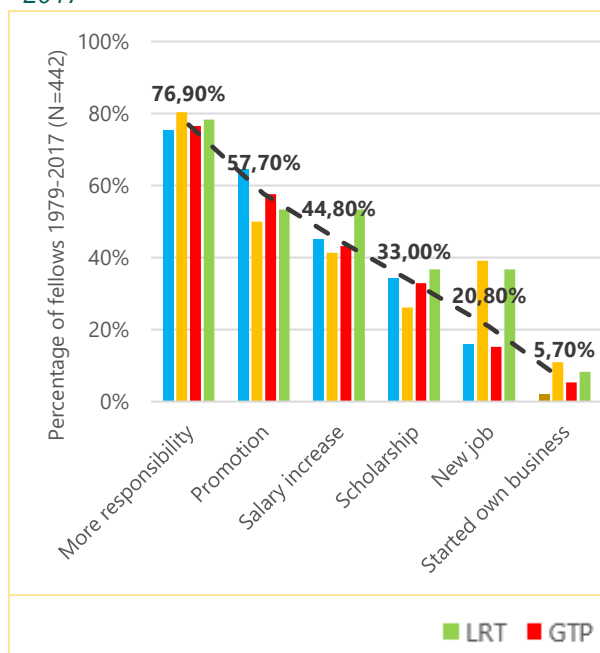
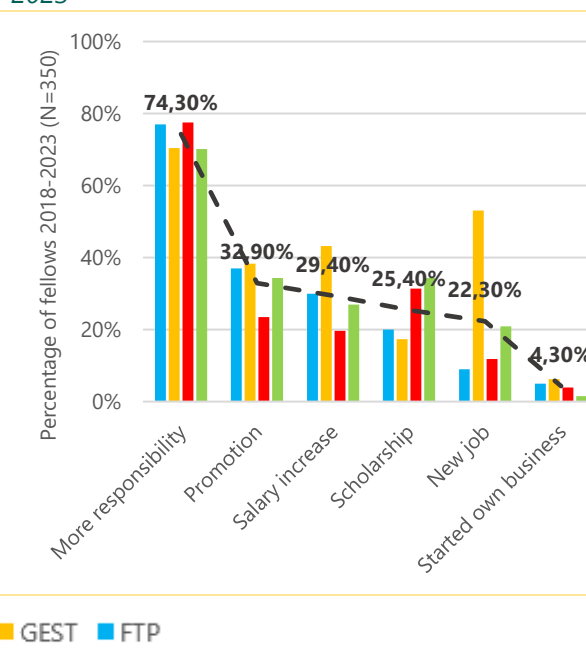


Figure 8: Career advancement of alumni, 2018-2023



Data source: Evaluation team's online questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, multiple-choice responses from survey respondents

Comparison of programme results delivered with the targets set by GRÓ as performance goals

While the programmes have effectively delivered capacity development results, **the extent of outputs delivered is not yet in line with the targets set for the GRÓ Centre and programmes** in the context of the GRÓ's Strategic Priorities for the period 2022-2027. The programmes will require additional financial resources if the targets are to be fulfilled. A comparison of the average extent of annual outputs delivered across the four programmes with the strategic targets set for the GRÓ up to 2027 is below.³⁷

Table 9: GRÓ programme summary of the outputs delivered, 2018-2023, versus GRÓ targets

GRÓ STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	OUTPUTS DELIVERED BY THE PROGRAMMES AND COLLECTIVELY, 2018-2023				
	FTP	GEST	GTP	LRT	GRÓ
Selected GRÓ programme targets					
Train at least 100 fellows in Iceland per year (25 per GRÓ Programme)	24.2 per year	22.2 per year	24.0 per year	19.4 per year	89.8 per year
Grant 20 new postgraduate scholarships to GRÓ fellows per year in Icelandic or partner universities	3.33 per year	0.5 per year	5.67 per year	1.16 per year	10.67 per year
Host at least 25 short courses annually in partner countries/online	2.75 per year	3.0 per year	4.75 per year	1.75 per year	12.0 per year *

³⁷ The evaluator recognizes that implementation of the programmes in year 2020 was significantly constrained due to the COVID pandemic, and it also affected delivery of short courses in partner countries during 2021 and early 2022. In 2020, only the GEST programme was able to deliver the fellowship programme, which started in January 2020, and was adapted from March to online delivery of training and supports in line with Icelandic pandemic health requirements. The evaluator reflects this reality in its calculation of the annual extent of outputs delivered across the programmes linked to the selected GRÓ targets.

GRÓ STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	OUTPUTS DELIVERED BY THE PROGRAMMES AND COLLECTIVELY, 2018-2023				
Produce 4 online teaching tools per year <i>The evaluator judges the target unrealistic. It should be a target for the overall number of online teaching tools offered by 2027.</i>	1 in total	4 in total (3 MOOCs 2020-2023, and 1 in final development)	0	3 in total	7 online teaching / learning tools in total
Host yearly seminars where GRÓ fellows and scholarship recipients introduce their findings	Annual seminars for fellows to present their research/ project paper	Annual seminars for fellows to present their research/ project paper	Annual seminars for fellows to present their research/ project paper	Annual seminars for fellows to present their research/ project paper	All programmes hold annual seminars for fellows
Support fellows to participate in international conferences	13.2 per year	0.4 per year	23.4 per year	10.8 per year	47.8 per year
Engage former fellows in short courses training in partner countries	45% (5 of 11 events)	58% (7 of 12 events)	95% (18 of 19 events)	71% (5 of 7 events)	73% (35 of 48 events) *

* One short course conducted jointly by GRÓ LRT and GRÓ GEST, delivered with local partners in Kyrgyzstan.

During the period 2018-2023, the GRÓ programmes delivered at 90% of the 2022 target in terms of individuals trained on the fellowship programme in Iceland, 53% compared to target in terms of scholarships granted, 48% compared to target in terms of short courses in partner countries/online. These figures take into account the impact of the COVID pandemic in the calculation of the averages.

The evaluator judges that **the principal constraint for the GRÓ programmes to meet the ambition of the GRÓ targets is mainly financial**, only in part operational, and is not due in any way to the limited technical capacity or ambition of the programmes. The availability of funding for short courses in partner countries has commonly fluctuated reflecting that courses are co-funded between the programmes and the partner organization(s). The GRÓ programmes are constrained in terms of longer-term planning and commitment to collaboration with partner organizations due to the annual nature of their budget allocation from the GRÓ Centre and lack of a medium-term perspective.

The **target outcome indicators for the GRÓ Centre** and its programmes are defined in the GRÓ Results Framework. The goal is to achieve a 70% positive response rate from survey respondents based on four performance indicators. As shown in Table 9 above, this benchmark for outcome achieved is exceeded across all four programmes and across all four indicators.

The following sub-sections highlight the key results and achievements achieved during the period 2018-2023 per GRÓ capacity development programme and at the level of the GRÓ Centre itself. Detailed evaluative analysis, findings, conclusions, and lessons learned per GRÓ programme is in Annex 11. Section 3.3.2 presents additional analysis as to the effectiveness of the eight GRÓ intervention strategies and, in Annex 12, specific case study reports on individual intervention approaches of the four programmes.

3.3.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GRÓ FTP IN REGARD TO THE DELIVERY AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE INTENDED RESULTS

The evaluator judges that the **FTP programme is effective in achieving its intended results** through the delivery of outputs in terms of 121 fellows graduated, 20 scholars supported (eleven on master's programme, nine on doctoral research studies), and 215 local officials trained via short courses on fisheries issues, and alumni empowered to bring change in fisheries development matters in partner countries. The effectiveness stems from the way the **selection process** is conducted, the **nature of the partner institutions** selected, the training and research conducted **based on institutional and country needs**, the strategic focus of short courses, and the **programme's flexibility**.

During the 2018-2023 period, **the outputs** the Programme has delivered **conform to the purpose of contributing to the enhancement of individual and institutional capacities pursuant to the objective of sustainable use of fisheries resources in partner countries**. The programme's effectiveness is also shown through the groups the programme targets, who mostly come from partner countries, largely LDCs and LMICs.

From those 2018-2023 FTP fellows who saw their skills substantially or largely improved, **89% were in technical skills, 89% in research skills, and 85% in analytical skills**. Also, at the personal (micro) level, GRÓ alumni who answered the evaluation team's questionnaire survey indicated that the enhanced capital made it possible for them to advance their career thanks to the postgraduate programme. Many FTP fellows were promoted (37%) or given more responsibilities (77%) as a result of the programme, among other effects.

During the period 2018-2023, fellows were trained primarily in Fisheries Policy and Management (38%); which corroborates the **proper targeting of the programme** as most partner countries face policy gap challenges in the fisheries sector. Second to fisheries policy and management, 24% of fellows specialized in Aquatic Resources Assessment and Monitoring, which is also evidence of proper targeting, as only 48% of the total global catch has sufficient data to determine its status.

As for the programme's results, **87% of 2018-2023 FTP fellows** answering the evaluation team's questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni **acknowledge having contributed to their technical field** in several ways, mostly **through training and mentoring others (84%), conducting further research (70%), and the implementation of projects and initiatives (53%)**. 72% of the 2018-2023 FTP fellows indicated that, through their work, they have contributed to SDG progress, of which 69% of the fellows reported contributing to the achievement of SDG 14, the programme's targeted sustainable goal.

The same alignment with goal and purpose is seen for the **scholarship programme**, which has supported alumni to pursue graduate studies in areas of environmental and natural resources, food science, fisheries biology, and economics, which are all **relevant for the advancement of the array of SDGs** whose implementation the Programme aims to contribute to.

The programme also shows **effectiveness through the short courses/workshops**, by which local and regional officials received training in pressing issues related to the fisheries sector, such as vessel monitoring systems, fish value chain and food fish quality to prevent postharvest losses, and fisheries assessment and data modelling, which is vital to generate sound data for informed decision making and regulation in fisheries.

One enabler of the programme's effectiveness is the **selection process**, through which the programme makes sure the country, the partner institutions, and the training candidates meet the criteria for developmental change. The **programme's flexibility** is also another element that enables its effectiveness, by adjusting to the changing needs in countries and partner institutions to better accommodate for those changes.

3.3.3 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GRÓ GEST IN REGARD TO THE DELIVERY AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE INTENDED RESULTS

The evaluator judges that the **GEST programme is highly effective in achieving training provision outreach, with approximately 16,800 individuals (learners) directly reached via its training offer during the period 2018-2023.** In total 132 fellows have graduated with a diploma degree confirming their completion of the fellowship training programme in Iceland, three alumni have been supported to undertake their doctoral research studies, 436 people were trained via short courses in partner countries, and 16,238 learners reached via the GEST programme MOOCs offer. **The beneficiaries positively rate the quality and relevance of the training and the knowledge transmission.**

Via the **fellowship programme** in Iceland, 132 fellows graduated with a 30 credits ECTS diploma degree. The 132 completed final assignment **research or project papers** of the fellows address issues such as:

- 39% relate to issues of community cultural understanding and awareness on issues of gender equality and local challenges,
- 27% relate to issues of GBV and security,
- 16% relate to issues of health rights, including sexual and reproductive health,
- 11% relate to issues of empowerment, business, entrepreneurship, and migration, and
- 8% relate to issues of environment and climate change, agriculture, and fisheries.

Overall, the quality of the training programme is highly rated by the fellows, in terms of knowledge obtained and its value, with **90% satisfied or highly satisfied,** as shown below for years **2018-2023.**

Table 10: GEST fellowship training, fellows' feedback on the overall learning outcomes obtained

Year	1/5 (low)	2/5	3/5 (neutral)	4/5	5/5 (high)
2018	2.7%	2.7%	9.8%	18.6%	66.3%
2019	2.2%	8.3%	8.2%	22.1%	59.1%
2020	0%	1.0%	5.5%	51.4%	42.1%
2021	0%	1.7%	1.7%	35.0%	61.6%
2022	0%	0%	1.4%	49.6%	49.0%
2023	2.2%	3.5%	10.7%	36.8%	46.8%
Average	1.19%	2.85%	6.20%	35.60%	54.16%

Data source: Data on fellows' feedback on learning outcomes and its relevance provided by the GEST programme

GEST's cohort of 2018-2023 fellows responding to the evaluation team's questionnaire survey indicated that **88% judged they were able to advance their contribution in their technical field of work** thanks to the postgraduate training programme. Of these respondents, 84% indicated contribution by way of training or mentoring of others, while 69% were directly involved in the implementation of projects or reform initiatives (in 90% of cases, respondents led the project or initiative), 58% were involved in further research. 49% had advised local communities in the field of gender equality. 40% were involved in advising national or local policy makers. 24% were involved in advising private sector partners.

The two key focus countries for the GEST **short courses** are Malawi and Uganda, with ten of the twelve short courses during 2018-2023 in these countries. These courses reached 370 people, from district-level government and local community public services. The quality of the training courses, in terms of being relevant and helpful for the trainees and in their job, is overall highly rated by trainees with 97% satisfied or highly satisfied. Via the short courses, approximately twenty districts in the two countries adopted and now implement local action plans to advance gender equality within their local development, this has resulted, for instance, in a number of gender equality initiatives taken within supported schools.

Over 16,000 people enrolled on one of GEST's three **MOOCs** up to the end of 2023. The first MOOC launched in 2020. GEST launched a fourth MOOC in early 2024, and now works to develop a fifth MOOC. Approximately 75% of enrolled learners were female, 21% male, and 4% of other gender identity. In 2023, when GEST offered three MOOCs, more than 3,000 learners enrolled on its MOOCs. The majority

of learners are from partner countries, on the DAC list of ODA recipients. The percentage of learners on the verification track (7% of 2020-2023 learners) successfully passing the final exam (63%) is good.

Via the **GEST Alumni Fund**, three alumni received grants for their implementation of local development initiatives to promote gender equality and change in their home countries. The Alumni Fund has proven to be a valuable mechanism linked to both the professional empowerment of alumni as leaders of change and the results of the individual supported projects to advance gender equality and social justice. The direct effect of two of the projects is the economic empowerment of 160 women (the direct beneficiaries), which most closely aligns with SDG 5.5.³⁸ One of these projects also aligns with SDG 5.b,³⁹ while one of these also aligns with SDG 7.1.⁴⁰ The direct effect of the third project, a community-based response to address issues of GBV, most closely aligns with SDG 5.2 and SDG 16.1.⁴¹

3.3.4 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GRÓ GTP IN REGARD TO THE DELIVERY AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE INTENDED RESULTS

The evaluator judges that the **GTP is highly effective in delivering outputs and training provision outreach, with approximately 1,060 individuals directly reached via its training offer during the period 2018-2023.** In that period, 120 fellows have graduated with a certificate of completion confirming their completion of the fellowship programme in Iceland, 86 persons have graduated from the regional 5-month diploma in El Salvador, seven scholars have been supported to undertake their doctoral research studies and 24 students to take an MSc programme. Additionally, via short courses in partner countries, 422 people were trained, and 396 learners reached via online short courses. **The beneficiaries positively rate the quality and relevance of the training and the knowledge transmission.**

While the **GTP questionnaires filled by the 6-month training participants in Iceland** do not include an overall summary rating to assess the overall satisfaction for the training,⁴² an analysis of the average responses of individual questions clearly points to satisfaction among training participants with the overall quality of training provided and its usefulness.

The analysis of the results of the **evaluation team's online survey confirms** results from the GTP's survey. It is evident that **the quality and relevance of the training provided by the GTP** have played a significant role in enhancing individual competences, knowledge, and skills related to the utilization of geothermal resources. The fact that the training is delivered by industry experts and seasoned professionals was highlighted in the qualitative answers to the online survey as a key factor in maintaining the relevance and up-to-date nature of the curriculum, making it aligned with current industry practices. Completing the 6-month training was considered very beneficial for advancing the careers of former fellows. The most common forms of professional career advancement were taking on more responsibilities or receiving a job promotion. The results of the online survey also suggest that the 6-month training in Iceland was highly appreciated by the organizations for which former fellows work.

Additionally, results of the survey suggest that former fellows **contributed to their subject area thanks to the knowledge acquired.** Among the 2018-2023 cohort of the GTP fellows, the average percentage of respondents (strongly) agreeing that they contributed to their technical field is 89%. Among all GTP

³⁸ SDG target 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life (including women's economic empowerment / business management).

³⁹ SDG target 5.b: Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

⁴⁰ SDG target 7.1: Ensure universal access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy services.

⁴¹ SDG target 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking, and sexual and other types of exploitation.

SDG target 16.1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

⁴² The survey administered by GTP well serves the purposes of training programme since it provides useful information to improve the following editions of the trainings. However, given that different criteria are used for different phases of the training, it is not possible to provide an overall score for the whole training. So, a detailed analysis of how the overall satisfaction of the training.

fellows, 77% indicated contribution by way of training and mentoring others, while 75% of them were involved in further research, 63% were involved in implementing projects, and 58% in leading projects.

The two key countries for GTP are El Salvador and Kenya. During the 2018-2023 period, **El Salvador** contributed to organizing and funding three editions of a 5-month diploma named "Geothermal Diploma Course for Latin America." In that period, the GTP and its partners (LaGeo and San Salvador University) trained 86 persons through the diploma. Unlike the 6-month training in Iceland, where students specialize in a certain area after an initial 5-week period, in El Salvador all students of the diploma attend all modules. This approach allowed experts with different backgrounds to gain insights into their colleagues' fields, leading to easier understanding of each other's expectations and needs when working together on the same geothermal development project. The Diploma helped participants to understand the entire process of geothermal development. The training focusses on the Latin America region, which gives the participants more insight into their own resources and the region-specific challenges and opportunities. On one hand, this holistic training method of the diploma has proven beneficial, especially for those with limited experience in the sector. On the other hand, such a general coverage approach does not allow for much specialization. In El Salvador, GTP has also organized two one-week short courses during the evaluated period. The topic of the short courses in El Salvador is different for every edition, and it is chosen after consulting the main home institutions expected to send trainees.

The other key country is **Kenya**, where GTP has organized annual editions of the three-week short course along with its local partners (the only exception was 2020 when no training activities were organized due to the COVID-19 pandemic). In East Africa, where no regional intensive diploma takes place, all the main geothermal development aspects are considered relevant. Indeed, except for Kenya and partially Ethiopia, geothermal development is quite limited in East Africa. Therefore, it makes sense to develop courses that cover all the relevant aspects of geothermal development in order to encourage greater utilization of geothermal resources in the region. In this way, the GTP ensures that the short courses are relevant to the needs of the country contexts and partner organizations. The evaluation team had access to the short course surveys of four courses funded by GRÓ.⁴³ An analysis of the results reveals that in all courses, the percentage of respondents reporting that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the training's usefulness and relevance for their work was above 90%. GTP also organized other short training programmes that are not funded by GRÓ and that are internally called customer designed training. While in the past these customer-designed trainings were funded by different clients, including beneficiary countries, during the period of 2018-2023, they were all funded by the MFA, outside the GRÓ budget. In total (including non-GRÓ funded training), 476 individuals participated in short trainings held in person (167 female and 309 male). One of the main perceived benefits of short trainings was the continuous exchanges with peers and lecturers on technical aspects faced in countries and contexts very similar to those of the trainees. This is particularly relevant for short courses since the participants come from the same geographical region (e.g., Latin America or East Africa), where the underground geothermal resources share common characteristics.

The GTP has offered the highest number of **scholarship grants** over the longest period of time among all GRÓ-funded training programmes. During 2018-2023, the GTP enrolled 27 MSc students (11 females and 16 males) supported to take an MSc programme at the University of Iceland and Reykjavik University, and enrolled seven PhD students (3 females and 4 males). In terms of research and knowledge creation, the GTP publication database has grown to become one of the largest open-access databases on geothermal research in the world.⁴⁴

⁴³ For 2018 and 2023 in Kenya and for 2022 and 2024 in El Salvador.

⁴⁴ Axelsson, G., Haraldsson, I., Ómarsdóttir, M. and Hardardóttir, V. (2023). GRÓ Geothermal Training Programme in Iceland: Geothermal Capacity Building in Developing Countries for 45 years. *Proceedings World Geothermal Congress 2023*, Beijing, China.

3.3.5 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GRÓ LRT IN REGARD TO THE DELIVERY AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE INTENDED RESULTS

The evaluator judges that **GRÓ LRT is effective in both the quantitative and qualitative delivery of desired outputs.** The 6-month LRT programme is found highly effective and of high quality. This is supported by systematic feedback from GRÓ alumni, with LRT consistently receiving the highest quality-related ratings in terms of outcome indicators among all four GRÓ training programmes. In line with the findings of a specific evaluation of the GRÓ scholarship component conducted in 2023, LRT postgraduate scholarships are found to be effective. The in-country short courses are effective in locally raising awareness and creating relevant capacity in land restoration and sustainable land management. LRT MOOCs are effective in terms of the large-scale enrolment, and completion rates are within the normal range of MOOCs in general. However, it needs to be determined whether alignment between MOOC participants and LRT target groups are sufficient to justify the effort invested into their development.

Between 2018 and 2023, a total of 97 fellows were trained through the **6-month LRT programme**, with 54% of LRT fellows originating from LDCs and 46% from LMICs. In terms of gender distribution, in total 49% of LRT fellows were female and 51% male. GRÓ LRT, therefore, is fully compliant with the set priorities. The average annual number of fellows has been below the target of 25, however noting that this target was formulated only in 2022 at GRÓ level and that the year 2021 was still affected by COVID-related travel restrictions. Altogether, the evaluation consistently finds that the 6-month LRT Programme constitutes a well-designed high-quality capacity building offer with a great success rate in terms of course completion.

In total, seven new **postgraduate scholarships** have been awarded by GRÓ LRT in Icelandic or partner universities, six of those during the evaluation reference period 2018-2023, thus corresponding to an annual average of 1.2 new scholarships (the year 2020 is not considered due to the Covid-19 pandemic). This is a low figure compared to the other training programmes and thus far limited by corresponding core budget allocations.

Eight **short courses** have been offered by GRÓ LRT in partner countries, seven of those during the evaluation reference period 2018-2023, thus corresponding to an annual average of 1.4 in-country short courses (the year 2020 disrupted the delivery of short courses in Uganda due to the Covid-19 pandemic). In total, these short courses targeted 160 participants from LDCs and LMICs. Interview partners consulted in line with this evaluation indicated that the short courses are of high value and effective in locally raising awareness and creating capacity in land restoration. The delivery of in-country short courses has not yet fully recovered since the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic, also related to budgetary limitations and the cost in terms of preparatory efforts required for these courses as compared to other activities. Yet, programme partners consulted in line with this evaluation clearly expressed the high value and continued demand for these courses.

To date, a total of three online teaching tools in the form of **MOOCs** have been co-produced by GRÓ LRT, two of those during the evaluation reference period 2018-2023. An impressive total of more than 20,000 participants have enrolled in the three MOOCs as of the end of 2023. According to statistics derived from users' IP addresses for the two business-related MOOCs, 5-10% of course participants were from Africa and 35-45% from Asia. However, none of the LRT target countries is represented in the top 10 list of countries from which course participants originate. Therefore, while the MOOCs may be able to target a relatively large number of people, only a small fraction of those are potentially from the LRT target countries. The confirmed completion rates range between 10% and 13% and lie within the normal range for MOOCs in general. Positive online user feedback for all three MOOCs (4.6/5, 4.7/5 and 4.9/5, respectively) indicates that the three MOOCs co-produced by GRÓ LRT are of high quality.

The most immediate and attributable **programme outcomes** clearly materialize at the individual level, since the programme directly trains individuals. Many alumni expressed that the 6-month LRT training constituted the point of departure or an important stepping stone in their professional careers in technical fields related to land restoration. The outcomes generated by individuals within their local/immediate sphere of influence are also found to be significant.

3.3.6 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GRÓ CENTRE IN REGARD TO THE DELIVERY AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE INTENDED RESULTS

The evaluator judges that the **GRÓ Centre has effectively contributed** via the definition of the common framework by which the development goals and performance of the GRÓ programmes is measured, as well as in setting strategic priorities for the GRÓ Centre and programmes for the period up to 2027. Prior to this, there was limited rigorous follow-up at outcome or at impact level. The GRÓ Centre is also promoting collective GRÓ alumni community building and networking synergies. Joint GRÓ alumni networks in leading partner countries are a means to empower alumni as change agents.

The **main role of the GRÓ Centre** itself in the delivery and achievement of the intended results is via its channelling of the grant of the MFA for the purposes of the GRÓ capacity development programmes. Beside this, the GRÓ Centre led efforts to establish a common framework for the programmes, to promote synergies across the programmes, and in the development of the partnership with UNESCO.

As noted in section 3.1.4 (Quality of GRÓ programme design), the **GRÓ ToC, Results Framework, and Strategic Priorities** are significant steps forward in the definition of a standard framework by which the development goals and causal pathway of results of the collective GRÓ programmes are understood, communicated, and the results performance of the GRÓ programmes measured. While the Results Framework is a work in progress, including to define baseline data and what/how to measure GRÓ impacts, the GRÓ Centre is currently working to address these gaps. Further work is also required linked to the development of multi-year action plan linked to the realization of the Strategic Priority targets.

Beside this, the GRÓ Centre has led on efforts to promote **collective GRÓ alumni community building and networking** synergies. At the end of 2023, the collective alumni of the four programmes, in terms of fellows, were 1,670 individuals. The efforts of the GRÓ Centre are to complement those of the individual programmes, notably its focus on the promotion of joint GRÓ alumni networks in leading partner countries for the programmes, and its focus on building connections between such networks with UNESCO Regional and/or Country Offices. Country and potentially regional alumni networks are a means to promote bottom-up demand of the GRÓ alumni to promote their local community building and networking activities. In 2023, the GRÓ Centre worked on the development of a common GRÓ Alumni Strategy, and the promotion of joint GRÓ alumni networks (country chapters). The focus has been on connecting GRÓ alumni in Eastern Africa, where about 30% of alumni have come from. The initial focus in 2023 was on GRÓ alumni in Kenya and Uganda. These efforts are ongoing in 2024. The GRÓ alumni in Uganda are currently working toward the formal registration of a GRÓ country chapter.

GRÓ Centre has led on efforts, in collaboration with the programmes, to develop an effective **partnership of the GRÓ Centre and programmes with UNESCO**, under the auspices of which GRÓ Centre operates as a C2C. The GRÓ LRT programme and UNESCO's MAB programme have collaborated closely to promote focus of their efforts on ecosystem and land restoration and management in Africa. GRÓ Centre has established close links with the UNESCO Nairobi Regional Office for Eastern Africa, as part of its effort to promote regional/local collective GRÓ alumni community building and networking.

3.3.7 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GRÓ PROGRAMME INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND OF LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS IN REGARD TO THE DELIVERY AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

The evaluator judges that **the GRÓ programmes offer a coherent mix of training, research supports, and alumni community building and networking interventions**, that contribute to the strengthening of individual, organizational, and institutional capacities in the partner countries. The interventions provide targeted support to specific groups of beneficiaries, of different levels of intensity, with the goal to advance beneficiaries' knowledge, understanding, and capacity to progress local change. There is a good level of synergy across the different capacity development interventions. The fellowship programme is the core training intervention that builds linkages to other interventions.

Linked to the effectiveness of the different programme intervention strategies in the delivery and achievement of the results, the following specific issues are noted.

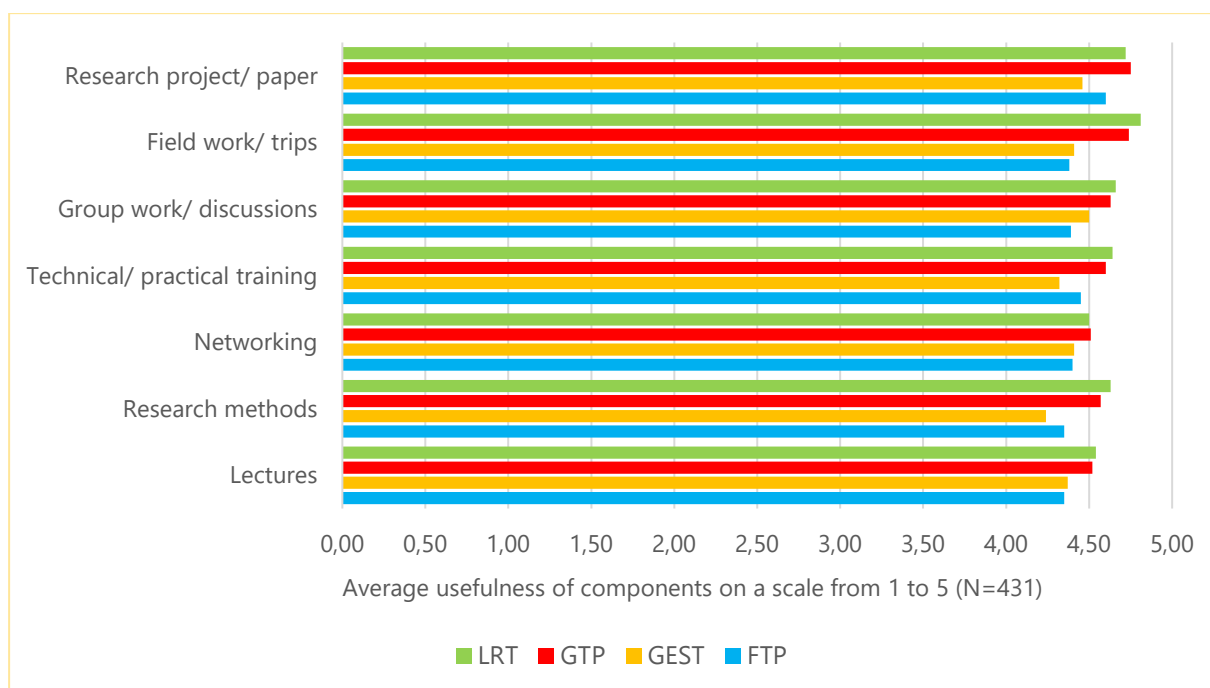
Output No1: Increased capability of individuals and expertise of GRÓ partner organisations to design and implement programme activities in respective professional fields

POSTGRADUATE LEVEL TRAINING AND RESEARCH PROGRAMME (FELLOWSHIP) IN ICELAND

The postgraduate level training and research programme in Iceland is the **main capacity development intervention of the programmes**. Feedback from the GRÓ alumni, and current fellows in year 2024,⁴⁵ indicates that the training programmes are **very effective in increasing the capability of individuals in their technical field**. Overall, the alumni and current fellows perceive the individual programme components, the programme quality, and overall programme coherence very positively.⁴⁶ GRÓ alumni respondents to the evaluator's questionnaire survey report large improvements in relevant (technical) skills due to the training participation. Fellows appreciate the high level of expertise of the lecturers, the integration of theoretical and practical training and the relevance of the curriculum to their field.

Survey respondents rated the usefulness of seven different components of the training on a scale from 1 (not useful) to 5 (extremely useful). Figure 9 presents the average rating of the usefulness of each component per programme for fellows from the evaluation reference period. Overall, more than **90% of fellows rated the components as very (4 out of 5 on the scale) or extremely useful (5 out of 5 on the scale)**, indicating that the training content meets fellows' needs. Fellows consider the **research project/paper as the most useful component** across all technical programmes, followed by fieldwork/trips and group work/discussions. The lectures are rated least useful, although the rating is still high (very useful).

Figure 9: Average usefulness of programme components per programme for fellows, 2018-2023



Data source: Evaluation team's online questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, 5-point Likert scale rating of components' usefulness by 2018-2023 cohort (N=431)

Survey respondents also had the opportunity to list **issues they felt not fully addressed** in their training. Across all training programmes, the 2018-2023 alumni were interested in more **advanced technical training**, such as statistical analysis and specialized software related to their technical field. Fellows also

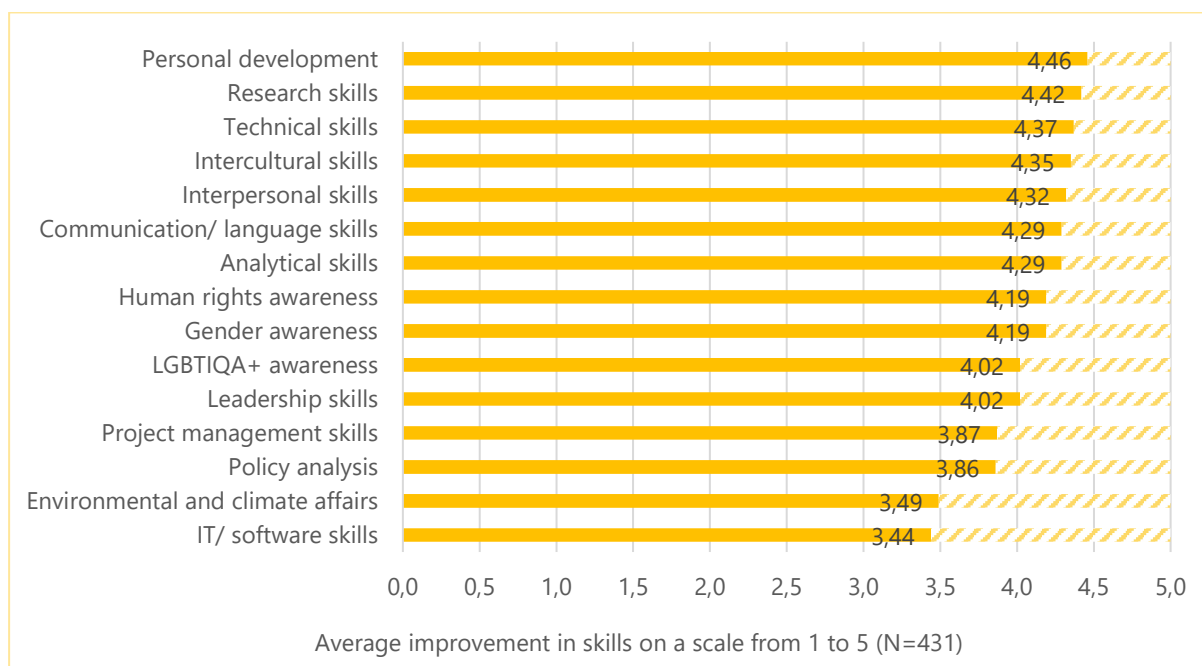
⁴⁵ During field-missions to Iceland, the evaluators met with current fellows from FTP, GEST, and LRT, current scholars from GTP.

⁴⁶ The 2018-2023 cohort of fellows responding to the evaluator's survey indicated an average rating of programmes, on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high), of 4.72 for programme quality, and 4.74 for programme coherence. Of the cohort, 91.5% responded.

expressed an interest in covering issues such as climate change and sustainability more concretely (a detailed list of missing topics per programme is in Annex 13).

One of the goals of the postgraduate training programme is to improve individuals' skills to implement programmes and projects within their technical field. The survey participants rated to what extent the postgraduate programme has improved their skills in 15 different relevant areas. Around **75% of the 2018-2023 respondents experienced substantial (4 out of 5 on the scale) or large (5 out of 5 on the scale) improvements across all skill areas**, which indicates that programmes are successful in improving individuals' skills. Figure 10 depicts the average skills improvement for the 15 skill areas for fellows who graduated within the evaluation period. Fellows report that their **personal development skills have improved most** as result of their training participation, followed by research skills, technical skills and intercultural skills. In contrast, IT/software, environment, and climate affairs and policy analysis skills improved the least.

Figure 10: Average skills improvement per skill area for fellows, 2018-2023



Data source: Evaluation team's online questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, 5-point Likert scale rating of skills improvement by 2018-2023 cohort (N=431)

Figure 11 lists the three skills in which the fellows from 2018-2023 reported the largest average improvement per technical programme. It shows that personal development is among the top three skills that improved most, while research skills have also highly improved for all programmes except GEST, where topic related skills such as gender and LGBTIQA+ awareness have improved more. In addition, survey respondents had the opportunity to name additional skills which improved as a result of the programme. Many fellows mentioned that their ability to **apply research findings to practical scenarios** improved and that they improved their **financial and resource management** skills as well as **presentation and public speaking** skills. Fellows also mentioned improvements in specific technical skills.

Figure 11: Top three improved skills per technical programme for 2018-2023 fellows

FTP	GEST	GTP	LRT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research skills • Personal development • Technical skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender awareness • Personal development • LGBTIQA+ awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research skills • Personal development • Technical skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research skills • Human rights • Personal development

At the outcome level, the GRÓ aims to empower the fellows in their individual career advancements, which ultimately enables them to disseminate and to apply their gained knowledge and drive sustainable change. The survey findings suggest that the **postgraduate training is successful in fostering individual professional development**. Many fellows reported substantial career promotions, moving into higher roles, leading departments, and taking on greater responsibilities within their organizations. See Figures 7 and 8 (in section 3.3.1 above) for an overview of the types of career advancements for fellows.

As the main capacity development intervention of the programmes, **the postgraduate level programme in Iceland also builds direct linkages to the other GRÓ programme interventions**.

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDIES (MASTER'S AND/OR DOCTORAL)

In 2023, an external evaluation of the GRÓ postgraduate scholarship programme was completed and published. The current external evaluation of the GRÓ Centre and programmes, in accordance with the ToR for this assignment, does not therefore address the scholarships intervention in significant detail.

The provision of grant for scholarships for postgraduate university degree studies is only available to the GRÓ programme alumni. Grant award is to GRÓ alumni seeking to undertake further academic study, research, and advancement, with grant award 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.

The 2023 evaluation of the postgraduate scholarship component of the GRÓ attested the scholarship programme overwhelmingly positive as regards to its effectiveness.⁴⁷ The evaluation presented ten recommendations, aimed at the GRÓ Centre, the GRÓ programmes, and one of the ten directly the MFA. In follow-up to the evaluation, the GRÓ Centre is currently working to develop a common framework for the GRÓ scholarship programme offer.

⁴⁷ Gollifer, Harðardóttir, Bottomley, An evaluation of GRÓ's master's and doctoral scholarship programme (2023).

A major benefit cited by the current and former students of the GRÓ is that postgraduate study in Iceland provides them with access to individuals and institutions with significant expertise in their subject area. This was a benefit mentioned by 93% of former students and 88% of current students in response to the survey (conducted by the evaluator in 2023). Survey respondents noted that course supervisors in Iceland demonstrated a high-level of interest in supporting them and progressing their studies. The expertise of the supervisors, both academically and in terms of subject matter was noted by the students, with supervisors drawn from academia and industry where applicable. The topics and research undertaken during postgraduate study in Iceland were reported by 94% of graduated students and 85% of current students, to be extremely relevant to the development challenges within their home countries. The scholarship programme provides a pioneering example of how a small-scale approach to individual, institutional and organisational capacity building at a relatively low cost can yield high impact results. The preparedness of the scholarship recipient for postgraduate university studies is to a great extent the result of the intensity of the education approach of the fellowship programme and the nature of the pastoral and academic support provided by the four programmes.

SHORT TRAINING COURSES DELIVERED IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

While not a pre-condition for the programmes in supporting the delivery of short courses in partner countries, the programmes, to varying degree, do actively seek to involve their alumni in the organization and/or delivery of the courses, achieved at 35 of the 48 (73%) short course events delivered during the period 2018-2023. The **involvement of the alumni** further builds their experience and empowers them as change agents.

The GRÓ programme short courses in/for partner countries are **developed and delivered in cooperation with respective programme partner institutions** in the targeted partner countries. The programmes and the partner organization(s) co-fund the delivery of the short courses. In this way, the programmes and partners ensure that short courses are relevant to the needs of the country contexts and partner organizations. The **short courses are evidently oriented towards the practical application of new understanding and skills**. For the **GEST** and the **LRT** programmes, the direct beneficiaries of short courses are commonly local professionals and experts working in regional/district governments and local communities, as well as civil society or community-based groups. Commonly the courses provide the beneficiaries with practical tools to support their development and implementation of tailored action plans to address specific local development challenges and promote development change at the local level. For the **FTP** and the **GTP** programmes, short courses commonly target regional partners/staffs as the direct beneficiaries, alongside targeted specific country short courses supported. One of the main perceived benefits of regionally targeted short trainings was the continuous exchanges with peers and lecturers on technical aspects faced in countries and contexts very similar to those of the trainees. This is particularly relevant for short courses since the participants at GTP short courses come from the same geographic region (e.g. Latin America or East Africa), where the underground geothermal resources share common characteristics, and for FTP (e.g. Caribbean), where the CFRM seeks to promote sustainable fisheries and aquaculture resources in and among its sixteen member states in the region.

Unfortunately, standard statistical data on the trainees' assessed quality of the short courses is not available from each of the short course events delivered. However, **where data is available almost all of the direct beneficiaries were either satisfied or highly satisfied** with the general course content provided, as well as with the relevance and usefulness of the training course to their job and/or profession. Data that does exist consistently indicates **minimum 90% are satisfied or highly satisfied**.

The **short courses are of high value and effective** in raising awareness on specific topics and issues, and in creating local capacity to utilize the understanding, skills, and tools provided to promote change. While all of the courses are tailored to the 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/confirmation by programmes of additional strong local partners.

CREATIVE ONLINE TRAINING CONTENT

During the period 2018-2023, **GRÓ programmes collectively offered seven online training/learning products**. In 2020, the **FTP** programme developed and currently offers a series of four online videos linked to SDG 14 targets. Since 2020, the **GEST** programme has developed four MOOCs, three of which were open online during 2023, with its fourth MOOC launched in early 2024. **LRT** launched its first MOOC in 2017, followed by two further MOOCs in 2019. The **GTP** programme has not yet developed a specific digital learning product permanently accessible online on demand. The programme has however, very successfully engaged in the delivery of short courses online on geothermal energy tailored to the demands of regional partners and participants in Africa, in Asia, and in the LAC region. GTP delivered four such online courses during 2018-2023, reaching 396 online participants in total via the courses.

The **approach of the three programmes with online training/learning content is unique to their needs and the extent of their strategic ambitions** as to how such online training content contributes to their overall training offer package, the coherence it creates and potential synergies that can be developed between the online content across the suite of programme interventions.

The **FTP** considers its series of videos as targeted, development policy informative online content linked to the four SDG 14 targets that it most closely references. The content mainly targets individuals already professionally working in the field. In addition to offering the product online, FTP has also effectively incorporated the videos as a learning tool within the wider context, and agenda, of regional conferences.

The **GEST** and **LRT** programmes offer of online MOOCs is **a means for the programmes to reach a significantly larger audience of people** interested to engage in expanding their knowledge and understanding of specific issues of global development challenges, and technical/operational solutions to support the advancement of sustainable and equitable socio-economic development. The LRT MOOCs have reached more than 20,000 learners enrolled; the GEST programme MOOCs have reached more than 16,000 learners enrolled by the end of 2023. The overall goal of the MOOCs is to provide young professionals, development workers, business and civil society actors, policymakers and other interested individuals with a knowledge base, relevant to the subject matter of the individual MOOC, that they can use for the promotion of change. The MOOCs developed/offered by the two programmes are **substantive learning tools**, indicatively requiring 30-40 hours online engagement to complete, at the self-pace of learners, across a period of six to eight weeks.⁴⁸ Each MOOC provides a coherent presentation of core theories and topics, real-world case studies, and an understanding of the international normative and policy framework relevant to the MOOC subject area. The **MOOCs build on the existing framework of the programmes' expertise and training offer** provided via the fellowship or short courses. While the **individual MOOCs exist as full standalone courses** to promote open access to and unlimited participation in knowledge transmission and exchange, both programmes **designed and developed the MOOCs as a holistic package**. The first two **LRT MOOCs** make up the **Bridging the gap between Ecology and Economy** series, which highlights business' interdependency with healthy landscapes and understanding the value of ecosystem services and resources. After completing its fifth standalone MOOC (presently at the early phase of scoping/development), the **GEST** programme intends to offer an integrated package of its five MOOCs as an **Online Programme in International Gender Studies**. This could be eligible for possibly becoming an edX MicroMasters programme - an online graduate level course offered through the edX platform that individuals take across a period of nine-to-twelve months to develop specific skills for career advancement or to earn graduate level credentials. This is a strategic priority for GEST. It intends to launch the online programme in 2026.

In assessing the effectiveness of the MOOCs, the evaluator recognizes that, by their nature, MOOCs are not set up to collect detailed information on the extent of learners' participation on the full MOOC, nor to obtain detailed feedback from learners as to the benefits obtained. MOOCs are not comparable to in-person training with clear time-bounds for learning. The benefit is that the learner proceeds at self-pace or can dip into the online learning resource to focus on particular issues of interest. To the extent that online user feedback on the MOOCs exists,⁴⁹ user feedback positively rates the quality of the free online MOOCs. Information on the number of enrolled learners completing a full MOOC is only available in terms of learners that enrolled on the verification track, which is a minority of learners.⁵⁰ For **LRT** approximately 12% and for **GEST** approximately 7% of the enrolled learners were confirmed as completing a full MOOC. These completion rates are well within the normal range of completion rates for MOOCs in general (a completion rate between 3% and 9% is commonly reported). Linked to the GEST programme MOOCs, a formal certificate was issued by the University of Iceland and edX to 63% of the learners enrolled on the verification track to confirm they are successfully completing the MOOC

⁴⁸ With exception of the LRT MOOC *Sheep in the land of fire and ice*, which is a more traditional short MOOC, completed in a day. The MOOC focuses on grazing management, which is a common challenge in many regions of the world. The course uses Iceland as a case study because traditional approaches to sheep grazing had been associated with extensive environmental degradation.

⁴⁹ GRÓ GEST has a formal mechanism to gather feedback from enrolled learners, but the response rate is a mere 1% or so. GRÓ LRT also gathers feedback from enrolled learners, through survey monkey, but the response rate is also low.

⁵⁰ Reflecting that the MOOCs are available free to the user and that enrolment and participation is optional, a number of users primarily seek to sample the overall course offer rather than undertake dedicated study of the full course as an active learner. In addition, not all active learners specifically seek formal certification for successful completion of the full online course.

and they are also successfully passing the academically graded final online exam linked to the individual MOOC.

Additionally, **GEST has a clear and ambitious plan to ensure the online courses can be actionable going forward to enhance other GEST programme intervention strategies** (fellowship, short courses, cooperation with partner universities). The innovative approach allows GEST to reach a broader audience with its training curricula and further utilization of its MOOCs across a range of training/learning settings.

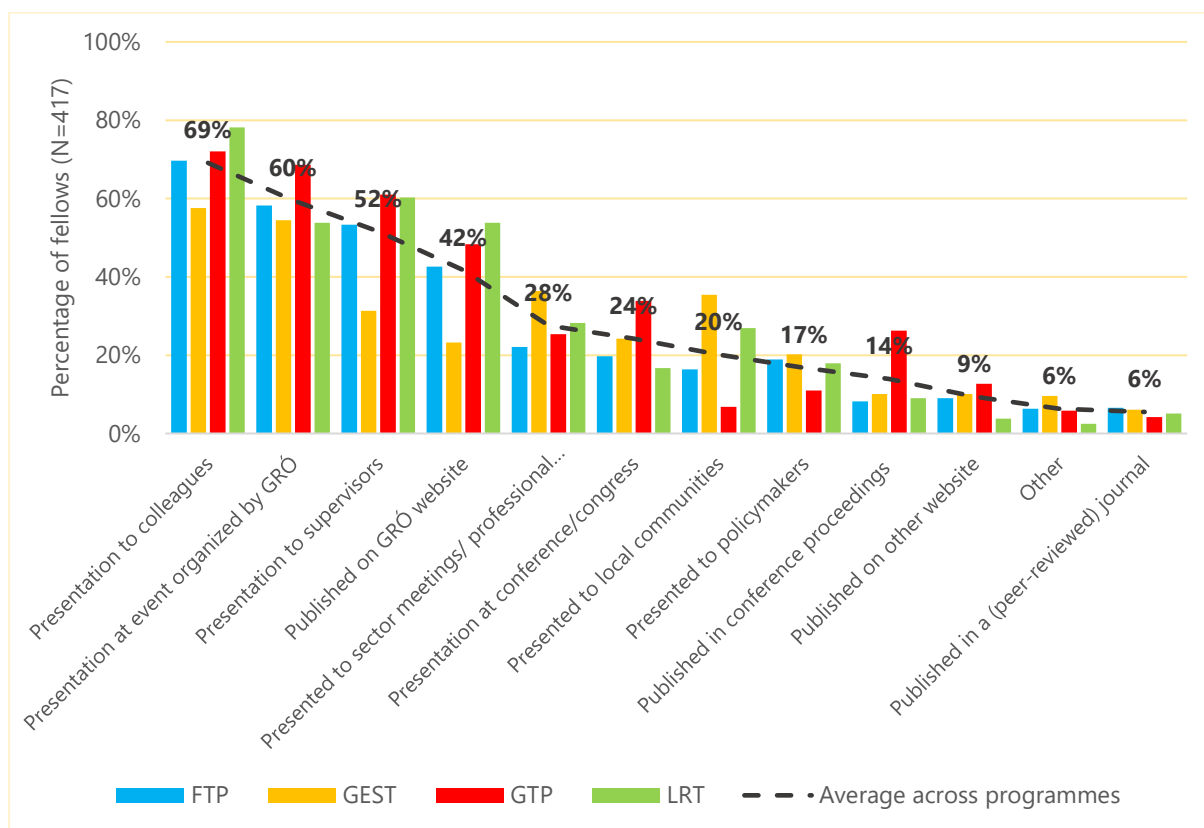
Output No2: Production and dissemination of new knowledge by GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipient

During the period 2018-2023, the four programmes enrolled 471 young professionals on the fellowship programme in Iceland. Of these, **470 successfully completed the training programme including the completion of their individual research/project paper**. This is a successful graduation rate of 99.8%.

Among the 2018-2023 alumni responding to the evaluator’s survey, 59% indicated that they had subsequently produced a **master’s thesis** based on their research during the postgraduate programme. Other common knowledge products reported among the survey respondents are **conference papers and proceedings** (23%), **policy reports** (15%), and **journal articles** (13%). Few fellows from the 2018-2023 cohort produced a PhD thesis based on their research from the programme or during GRÓ-funded studies (4 %). The percentage of **GTP alumni that produce conference papers and proceedings** is higher than the average. **FTP alumni are more active in the production of policy papers and master’s theses**, compared to alumni of other programmes while GEST alumni produce fewer conference papers and proceedings and fewer journal articles but more knowledge outputs in the “other” category compared to other fellows. **GEST alumni seem to produce less conventional outputs** such as podcasts on gender issues, a gender related online blog, and gender responsive training toolkits.

Concerning the types of channels by which the 2018-2023 alumni cohort have disseminated their knowledge and research, Figure 12 shows the different channels utilized by alumni by programme.

Figure 12: Types of knowledge dissemination channels used by the 2018-2023 alumni



Data source: Evaluation team’s online questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, multiple-choice question on dissemination channels by 2018-2023 cohort (N=417)

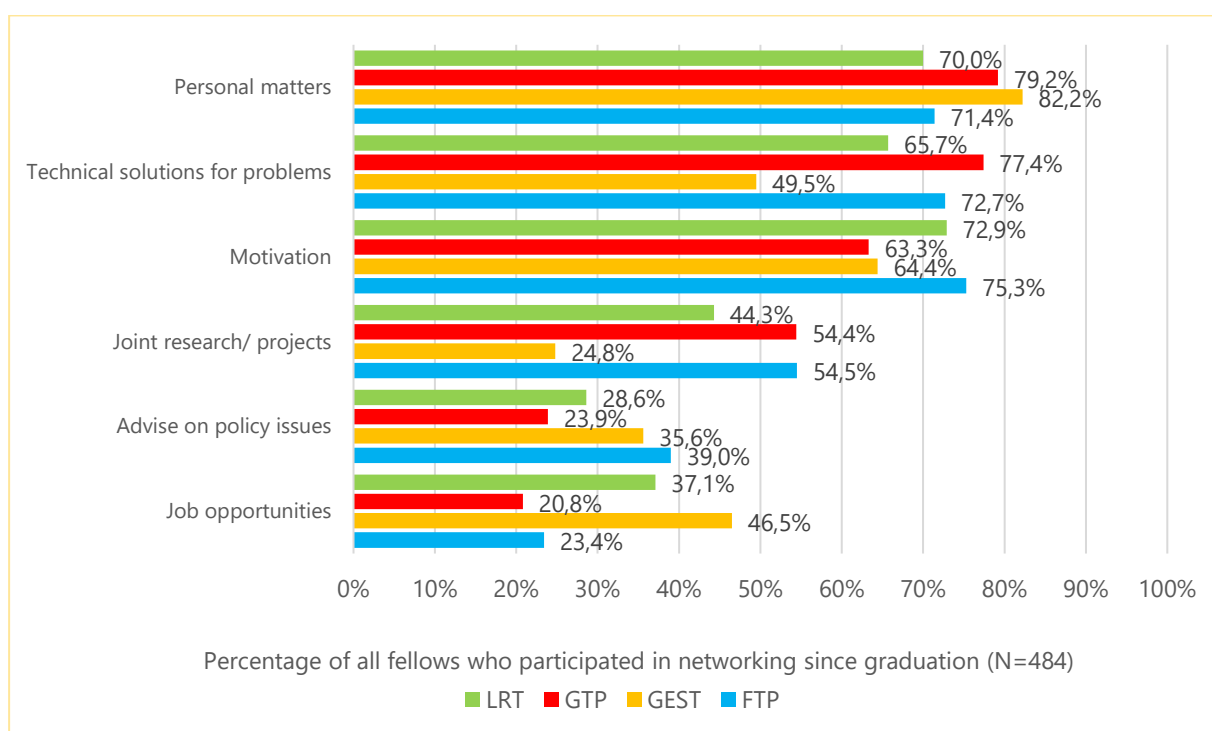
Output No3: Professional empowerment of GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipients is increased through GRÓ community building and networking

GRÓ aims to empower the alumni professionally through networking and community building activities. Each programme manages its direct engagement with its alumni. **The most common alumni forums used by all programmes are email lists (71.6%), WhatsApp (55.6%) and Facebook (43.3%),** while GTP alumni on average make more use of email lists and LinkedIn and GEST alumni make on average more use of WhatsApp and other channels such as Instagram and Zoom. In addition, during 2018-2023, **programmes held 25 formal alumni networking meetings** at individual programme level, three as online meetings open to all its alumni, 15 specific in-country meetings with programme alumni, five as a side event at international conferences, and two programme anniversary events. GRÓ Centre has also advanced promotion of the **collective GRÓ programme alumni network**. Formal country and potentially regional alumni networks are a means to support bottom-up demand of the GRÓ alumni to promote local community building and networking activities among the GRÓ alumni. In Uganda, the GRÓ alumni from all programmes seek to establish a registered GRÓ country chapter. GRÓ Centre has also supported building connections between such networks with UNESCO Regional and/or Country Offices, as a means to promote the expertise and capacity that the GRÓ alumni can offer within their countries to contribute to the wider development efforts of UNESCO and/or of national partners.

During 2018-2023, **programmes supported 239 alumni to attend international/regional conferences** in their field of expertise, to disseminate their research and to promote their engagement within networks. As noted above, during the period 2018-2023, **73% of short course events supported across the programmes involved their alumni** in the organization and/or delivery of the courses. Both modalities are key components of the programmes post-fellowship community building support efforts and contribute to the further professional and personal empowerment of the alumni as change agents. The **GEST** programme has also offered a **small-scale seed fund** grant to its alumni to propose and lead on a project in their home country to promote gender equality and social justice locally. In addition to their personal empowerment as change agents, the supported projects have directly promoted gender equality, socio-economic development, and the empowerment of women (see section 3.3.1.2 above).

The perceived benefits of networking, as reported by the collective GRÓ alumni to the survey, are below.

Figure 13: Perceived benefits of networking for the GRÓ alumni active in networking activities



Data source: Evaluation team’s online questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, multiple-choice question on benefits of networking by all survey respondents (1979-2023) who reported networking engagement (N=484)

51.5% of the 2018-2023 alumni, who responded to the survey, **indicated that they had engaged in formal (e.g. GRÓ alumni event) or informal (e.g. informal exchange between alumni) networking or community building** since their graduation. The percentage of alumni who are involved in these activities is highest for GEST (69%) and lowest for FTP (27%). Figure 13 shows the perceived networking benefit among all alumni who were active. **The perceived benefit of networking among those who have been active is high (98%)**. Survey respondents not engaging in networking and community building indicated the lack of financial resources, internet connectivity, and individual availability as well as the lack of awareness of formal events as key reasons for not engaging. The lack of interest was rarely indicated, suggesting that there is a demand for networking opportunities.

3.3.8 OVERALL FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ACHIEVEMENT OR NON-ACHIEVEMENT OF THE EXPECTED RESULTS

The evaluator highlights the following factors influencing the achievement of the programme results:

- The GRÓ programmes promote the **careful targeting of their interventions**. This starts from their selection of focus partner regions and countries and within these key partner organizations with which to collaborate. Partner organizations are commonly public sector or public service oriented institutions, including public service utilities (GTP) and civil society and community based groups. By collaborating with these types of institutions, the programmes can ensure the capacity development support offered is responsive to regional, national, and local public policy priorities. The involvement of the partner organizations in establishing the demand for the programmes' capacity development supports ensures their sense of programme ownership and of the results.
- The **selection of fellows for the postgraduate training** in Iceland follows a rigorous application, review and interview process. Partner organizations nominate candidates for the postgraduate training, 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.
- Programmes have established processes to obtain **feedback from fellows on the programme modules** (e.g. on learning outcomes, and on organization/delivery of the modules), which feeds into the annual review of the programme and fine-tuning of the modules for the next programme. Feedback from the alumni and current fellows attests to the beneficial value of the training.
- The careful targeting of the **short courses** in partner countries to benefit national or district-level public service staff and groups, including via the provision of practical tools, has ensured that the knowledge and skills, and the action plans developed as a result, is applied at national/local level. Feedback from trainees as to the beneficial value of the training to their job is strongly positive.

The evaluator highlights the following factors influencing non-achievement of the programme results:

- The principal factor influencing non-achievement of the programme results during the evaluation period covered was the **COVID pandemic**. Freedom to travel is key for the programmes, so any development affecting this freedom impedes programme implementation. Year 2020 was significantly constrained due to the pandemic, only the GEST programme was able to deliver the fellowship programme. The pandemic and related international and national health requirements/measures also affected delivery of short courses in partner countries during 2021 and early 2022.
- While the programmes informally try to keep track of **alumni career development, formal periodic use of tracer tools is not standard** across all the programmes. The GEST programme conducted a survey of its alumni in 2019 and in 2023, and the LRT programme conducted a survey of its alumni in 2011, in 2013, and in 2019. Other programmes less periodically, or not at all.
- Overall, it is **not easy for the programmes to follow up at partner organization level** as to the effectiveness of the fellowship training from the home organisation perspective or to assess how it was subsequently utilised internally. The principal feedback mechanism for the programmes on follow up is the recently graduated alumni, when contacted by the programmes post-fellowship.

- **Alumni responding to the external evaluation’s questionnaire survey indicated the principal challenges they face** in utilizing and applying their knowledge are linked to insufficient resources, reluctance to change in their institution or home country, or unfavourable power dynamics.

3.4 PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT (EFFICIENCY)

3.4.1 PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS, PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION, OVERSIGHT, STEERING, AND RISK MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND THE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF RESULTS

The evaluator judges that the **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 the different programme interventions function based on clearly defined processes and timelines. Financial management of the programmes follows Icelandic requirements for public service institutions. When audits show discrepancies in programme accounts provided by the host institution, the host institution is responsible for reimbursing the costs. Programme monitoring, reporting, and steering mechanisms are generally good, **although there is room for improvement** linked to collecting and reporting beneficiaries’ feedback on the training provided. Adopting the GRÓ Results Framework significantly strengthens programme monitoring, oversight and steering systems, including common key performance indicators against which each programme should collect and report data. At the level of the **GRÓ Centre**, the evaluator judges that **operational efficiency is adequate**. The GRÓ Centre lacks detailed internal rules of procedure regarding how it works in partnership with the programmes and host institutions. This is a significant constraint to promoting an efficient (and effective) operational partnership between GRÓ Centre and the GRÓ programmes.

Programme management, planning, and implementation systems

At the level of the individual GRÓ programmes, the **core programme staff are responsible for the operational management, planning, and implementation of programmes**. They are employees of the host institution per GRÓ programme. Each programme determines the extent of its core programme staff in cooperation with its host institution, for some the individual core staff work full-time on the programme, for others the individual core staff also have other responsibilities within the institution, and thereby their FTE work share apportioned to the programme and other activities. This varies per programme, as below. **The extent of core staff and FTE staff for the GTP, and the LRT programmes is low**. In the event of an unforeseen sickness of core staffs, the programmes face challenges. Recognizing that programme management is heavily reliant on institutional memory and partnerships built by long-serving staff, generous learning and handover periods are required in the case of future new hires.

Table 11: GRÓ programme core staffs, per programme in 2023, and GRÓ Centre’s contribution

PROGRAMME CORE STAFFS	FTP	GEST	GTP	LRT
Core programme staff (total number)	6	6	3*	4
GRÓ Centre contribution for staff (FTE)	4.3	4.25	3	3

* GTP previously had a core staff of five. The current GTP core staff receive additional administrative support from its host institution, from staff not counted as core, as their FTE work share apportioned to GTP is less than 50% FTE. In 2023, GTP also received logistical support from GRÓ Centre linked to the arrangement of flight tickets for fellows on the training programme in Iceland

In addition to its employment of the core staff, **host institutions also provide access to lecturers and supervisors** that contribute to programme implementation and delivery. **Other Icelandic partner**

institutions that programmes collaborate with **also provide programme lecturers and supervisors**. Host institutions and direct partners also provide their programmes with full access to technical facilities necessary for programme activities. Organizations in partner countries also provide lecturers and/or supervisors, notably for the delivery of short courses, or as guest lecturers for the fellowship programme, or as co-supervisors linked to the preparation by scholars of research and theses.

At the strategic level, an **academic or studies committee/board**, commonly meeting at least twice annually, provides strategic vision and operational guidance to its programme. The respective studies boards assess the activities of the past year and discuss potential projects and opportunities for the coming year or years. The core programme staff, in collaboration with their studies board, host institution, and stakeholder partners, undertake the preparation of **medium-term programme strategic plans and annual action plans** linked to the operation of the proposed different programme interventions.

On the **operational level, the majority of the different programme intervention's function based on clearly defined processes and timelines. This is conducive to achieving operational efficiency.**

The core programme intervention, the 5- or 6-month **fellowship programmes**, determines the annual programme management cycle.⁵¹ Nominations from partner organizations of prospective candidates for the fellowship programme are commonly submitted six- to nine-months before the start of the annual programme (for the GEST programme, which operates an open call for nominations, applications for the fellowship are submitted up to nine months prior). Programmes assess applications and conduct interviews with candidates, in collaboration with partner organizations in key partner countries, and aim to finalize the formal selection process and communication to partner organizations and candidates minimally five- or six-months before the start of the fellowship programme. This has been more challenging for the GTP programme to achieve in terms of partner organizations confirming selected candidates will be granted six-month leave from their work to attend the training. This is commonly sufficient time for the subsequent processing of visa applications by the selected candidates and for necessary travel arrangements for the individuals completed by GRÓ or programmes. Each fellowship programme is clearly structured. They follow clearly defined schedules and operational processes for the delivery of the different programme modules, and lines of specialization.

The programmes usually offer **short courses** during the other months (for instance GTP's annual three-week short course for regional partners in East Africa delivered with partners in Kenya starts in November) though in limited instances short courses overlap with the fellowship implementation period.

The **scholarship programme** cycle follows the pre-determined deadlines set by the respective universities in Iceland offering Master's and Doctoral degrees. The deadline for GRÓ alumni to apply is the same as it is for all other prospective applicants, commonly the end of November every year for the subsequent year's intake - for Master's degrees, commonly starting in autumn (September/October).

The GEST and the LRT programme **MOOCs** are commonly online for most of the year, with scheduled periods when the offer is not available to allow the programmes to review their MOOCs to fine-tune and update the course content as necessary (for instance inclusion of new audio and visual examples).

At the level of the overall management of the collective GRÓ programme, the GRÓ Centre, in accordance with the policy of the GRÓ Governing Board, is **responsible for setting the common strategic framework, approach, and vision for the operation of the GRÓ Centre and collective programmes**. Development of the GRÓ ToC, Strategic Priorities, and subsequent Results Framework, by the GRÓ Centre in collaboration with the four programmes, is a significant step forward to define specific, but common, development objectives and results that the GRÓ programmes pursue.

At the **operational level, the principal function of the GRÓ Centre is to conclude Service Agreements with the Host Institutions linked to the delivery of the individual programmes and to follow up on those agreements.** The initial GRÓ Centre service agreement with the host institutions

⁵¹ Programmes commonly start the annual fellowship as follows: GEST in January, LRT in March, GTP in May, and FTP in September.

covered the period 2020-2023 (for GTP, 2021-2023). A subsequent, revised GRÓ Centre service agreement with the host institutions covers the period 2024-2025 only. The decision to conclude agreements for such a brief period was that of the GRÓ Governing Board. The justification for this, presented to the evaluator, was that as the service agreement was revised by the GRÓ Centre it would be useful to see how the new modality functions, or could be further fine-tuned, after a period of two-years. The GRÓ programmes and host institutions unanimously presented to the evaluator the need for longer-term agreements (four- or five-years duration), in order for programmes and hosts to make serious medium-term plans. They also strongly presented the case for the conclusion of the next service agreement proposed by the GRÓ Centre within 2025, rather than in the year of intended operation.

The **GRÓ Centre and Directors of the four programmes, via a GRÓ consultation forum, undertake regular follow-up** on the agreements, overall programme implementation, and the development of common frameworks. Periodically, GRÓ Centre includes the host institutions in the consultations. While this process aims to ensure efficient (and effective) consultation, discussion, resolution of issues, and overall programme implementation, the **GRÓ Centre lacks detailed internal rules of procedure as to how it undertakes such consultation and decision-making in collaboration with the programmes.** Other than certain deadlines included in the service agreements, for internal reporting by the programmes/host institutions to the GRÓ Centre, the **overall annual programme management cycle by the GRÓ Centre, in partnership with the programmes and host institutions, is not precisely defined.** This is a significant constraint to promoting an efficient (and effective) operational partnership between GRÓ Centre and the programmes. Programmes have clearly defined internal processes and timelines for their implementation of the programme interventions. This is not yet evident at the GRÓ Centre level. **In the brief time of its existence, since 2020, the GRÓ Centre has had three different Directors.** The first two collectively served in the post for one-and-a-half years or so, before moving to other MFA postings. Without defined internal rules of procedure, each Director adopts a fresh approach. The GRÓ programmes noted that they are not aware of the GRÓ Centre Director's actual job description.

At the operational level, the **GRÓ Centre is also responsible for identifying potential areas for increased synergy** across the GRÓ programmes collective. In terms of its **contribution to overall programme effectiveness**, the focus of the GRÓ Centre principally links to the branding and collective promotion of the GRÓ programmes and offers, as well as the promotion of collective alumni community building. In terms of its **contribution to overall programme efficiency**, the focus of the GRÓ Centre links to the achievement of potential cost-efficiencies across the programmes linked to common procurement. For instance, the GRÓ Centre has highlighted to the evaluator cost-savings achieved linked to its purchase of computers in 2023 for three of the programmes. More fundamentally, in 2022, the GRÓ Centre undertook an agreement for rental of an apartment hotel in Reykjavik to house fellows from three of the four programmes. On average, GRÓ GTP fellows occupy the house for six months and GRÓ LRT and GRÓ FTP fellows for three months respectively. GRÓ cooperates with Icelandic Student Services to help bridge the extra need for rooms for fellows over the summer months, which is when two of the training programmes have fellows staying in the country. For GEST fellows, the University of Iceland's Student Services provides accommodation for the fellows on campus.

The Director of the **GRÓ Centre is also responsible for reporting directly to the MFA** Permanent Secretary of State linked to the work of the Centre and programmes. This includes submission to the MFA of annual results-based work plans of the GRÓ Centre as the basis for financing the programmes, and annual technical and financial reports on the work and results achieved by GRÓ Centre and programmes. Reflecting that the GRÓ Centre operates as an independent legal body, as an agency of the MFA, the GRÓ Centre should also ensure the efficient process for communication of policy priorities and issues between the MFA and the collective and/or individual programmes, and should be the direct voice and advocate for the capacity development programmes collective within the MFA. **GRÓ Centre also leads the development of GRÓ's partnership with UNESCO**, under the auspices of which GRÓ works.

Programme financial management and oversight systems (including audit)

GRÓ Centre is responsible for overall management and oversight of the public funds that the MFA provides to it for the purposes of public international development cooperation policy. In this context, reporting by GRÓ Centre to the MFA on the use of public funds should also be in accordance with **OECD DAC standards** for statistical reporting on development cooperation flows and ODA-eligible flows. Overwhelmingly, the partner countries supported are on the OECD DAC list of ODA recipients. The small number of partner countries not listed by DAC as ODA recipients are primarily SIDS. The GRÓ Centre operates based on the requirements of the **Public Finance Act** No. 123/2015 of Iceland.

GRÓ Centre's contribution to the programmes is on an annual basis. GRÓ Centre requests the programmes to submit their proposal for the subsequent annual action plans by the start of September (effective since 2022, for negotiation of the 2023 budget). These are subject to consultation with GRÓ Centre, and the final decision of the GRÓ Board, as to the extent of GRÓ Centre's financial contribution to the actions. GRÓ Centre traditionally confirms the final decision of the GRÓ Board on the annual contribution very late in the year. At times, confirmation is only in the year for budget implementation.

In addition to the core contribution of the MFA, and contribution of its host institution, each programme receives/raises specific **co-funding revenue** for its activities, for example by obtaining external grants, counterpart contributions from partner institutions and by participation in international projects. The GTP and the GEST programmes have a good record in raising co-funding. While the extent of co-funding raised by the individual programmes fluctuates annually, the **GTP and the GEST programmes often receive between 15-20% external funding** for their programme. GTP commonly receives co-funding from its key partner organizations in El Salvador and Kenya. Since 2017, the GEST programme, via the University of Iceland, has accessed co-funding from the Erasmus+ programme for staff and student (fellow) exchange, and for international cooperation to develop innovative training offers in the form of MOOCs. GEST has also accessed co-funding via the Icelandic Centre for Research (RANNÍS), the Icelandic Red Cross and UN agencies linked to specific initiatives. From 2016-2019, the LRT programme, via the Agricultural University of Iceland, received funds from the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union to fund creation of innovative online learning material (MOOCs, study cases, online learning platform), and since 2019 LRT has accessed Erasmus+ funds for staff mobility. It also accesses RANNÍS funding.

At the level of the individual programmes, the programme **financial management and oversight systems adhere to the requirements of the host institution** of the programme. The host institutions for GEST and the LRT programmes are Icelandic universities, public education institutions, that operate based on the requirements of the Public Finance Act of Iceland, while the host for FTP is a government institute under the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Fisheries, and the host for GTP is a state-owned non-profit company. Each programme is subject to the internal financial management and control procedures of its host, including subject to annual internal audits. Programmes are also subject to periodic external audits, as part of the host institution and/or as part of the GRÓ Centre and programme.

Each host institution is responsible to submit **quarterly financial information to the GRÓ Centre** on the programme, as well as **end-of-year final accounts** linked to the individual programme financing. The MFA commissions **external audits** of the programmes and the GRÓ Centre. The 2022 external audit of GRÓ's administration of the development cooperation funds noted the challenges then existing in the development by GRÓ Centre of harmonized work and budget templates for the programmes, to facilitate review and comparison between institutions, among other operational issues. When audits of the GRÓ programmes show discrepancies in the programme accounts provided by the host institution, the host institution is responsible to reimburse the costs, GRÓ Centre or programmes do not incur them. As necessary, the National Audit Office provides its consent as to the resolution of such discrepancies.

Programme monitoring, reporting, oversight, and steering systems

At **GRÓ Centre and programme level,** the **GRÓ Governing Board** meets frequently in order to review programme progress, strategic planning and the budget, the work of the GRÓ Centre, issues linked to the partnership with UNESCO, as well as to discuss specific topics or issues for potential resolution. GRÓ Centre shares the minutes of the Board meetings with the MFA, but not with the GRÓ programmes. The

Board meeting minutes, which were shared with the evaluator, indicate a strong focus of the Board on overseeing financial management of the programme contribution provided by the MFA. This includes a strong focus on the pursuit of any potential cost-savings that can be achieved as a programme collective. The GRÓ programmes highlighted to the evaluator that while certain cost-savings may potentially be realized via the central provision or procurement of common services, this should not be at the expense to which the individual programmes are independently or efficiently managed. Achieving partial cost-savings should not be at the expense of adding additional administrative layers and management burden on the programmes to implement actions. The GRÓ programmes also highlighted that the dominant focus of the Governing Board and Centre on achieving partial cost-savings was at the expense to which the Board and Centre provided the programmes with longer-term strategic vision or direction. Each programme highlighted weaker strategic guidance and feedback support received from the GRÓ Governing Board as compared to the individual programme boards in the period prior to 2020.

At **GRÓ Centre and programme level**, the adoption of the **GRÓ Results Framework** significantly strengthens the individual programme monitoring, oversight and steering systems, via its inclusion of common key performance indicators against which each programme should collect and report data. Importantly, it establishes **specific indicators against which to measure the quality of the training** as assessed by the direct beneficiaries of the fellowship programme, short courses, and MOOCs. It also establishes four **specific indicators against which to measure the outcomes of the programmes** as assessed by the former fellows (the alumni) and their partner organization three years after graduation. Previously, the programmes had only periodically used a tracer survey of the alumni, or some not at all.

Programmes, via the host institution, provide an annual technical (and financial) report to GRÓ Centre. The programmes noted that the operational efficiency of the formal reporting system to the GRÓ Centre, while broadly good, has been challenging at times due to the variability of the reporting formats. **At the level of the individual programmes**, the programmes also operate their internal monitoring systems to support programme steering and assessment of different programme interventions. At the level of **programme steering**, an academic or studies committee/board, commonly meeting twice annually, efficiently and effectively supports the programmes. At the level of internal systems utilized by the programmes to gather **feedback on the different interventions**, these have progressively evolved. As part of the evaluation research, the evaluator requested data from the programmes linked to assessing the quality of the key training interventions during the period 2018-2023. Obtaining a consistent set of comparable standard statistical data across the evaluated period from the programmes linked to how the fellows assessed the value/learning benefits of the programme was only successful with two programmes (GEST and LRT). Obtaining standard statistical data linked to how the beneficiaries of the short courses in partner countries assessed the relevance/usefulness of the training to their job was also difficult to achieve across the full series of short courses delivered during the period.

Linked to the core intervention, the **fellowship programme in Iceland**, each programme now has systems to request its fellows on the training in Iceland for their feedback on the programme at regular intervals during its implementation/delivery. Systems range from short surveys linked to individual programme components (such as FTP, GEST, and GTP), or weekly feedback reviews (such as LRT), to formal FGDs with the fellows toward the end of the fellowship. Since 2023, all of the programmes also ask fellows to respond to a final programme evaluation survey. This sets the basis for the collection of annual standard statistical data on the assessed value of the training linked to the core programme intervention. This is a positive development, driven by the adoption of the Results Framework.

Linked to the **short courses in partner countries**, the programmes do have standard templates, developed with partner organizations, to gather feedback from the direct beneficiaries on the course. However, based on the training reports reviewed by the evaluator it is evident that utilization of a formal survey was not conducted across all courses (for some a narrative outline of final feedback is provided instead), or the survey response data if a survey was undertaken is not reported. Adoption of the GRÓ Results Framework requires the programmes to ensure a more consistent approach to collecting data.

Assessing the quality of the **MOOCs** as perceived by the enrolled learners is more challenging. This is inherent across almost all MOOCs, which are open access learning resources, commonly free. The GEST and the LRT programmes have systems to obtain formal learner feedback on the MOOCs, but the extent

of feedback received is minor (at 1% or less). The Results Framework indicator as currently specified, which foresees a survey of learners before and after completion of the MOOC, is not credible in terms of collecting data. While a star-rating system approach based on learners' ratings is often used, and is an easy system to operate in the context of a MOOC, the extent of feedback is still commonly limited. An additional basic indicator, that can be collected and reported, is the number of individuals enrolling on the MOOC that are confirmed as completing the course. For the GEST programme, it is also possible to report data on the percentage of individuals enrolled on the verification track that successfully passed the academically graded final exam.

Programme risk management and mitigation systems

The programmes, via their **careful targeting of the programme interventions, seek to minimize risks** to the successful, effective, and efficient, delivery of the intended programme results. The selection process for fellows is rigorous, including the strengthened systems for the definition of the final assignment. Programmes operate direct collaboration with a limited number of trusted partner organizations in partner countries, notably so linked to the short courses. The majority of the programme interventions operate based on clearly defined processes and timelines. There is no evidence, to the knowledge of the evaluator, of operational inefficiency in the system in terms of risk management and mitigation systems.

One of the risks reported by the programmes is potential **delays linked to the processing of visa applications**. Programmes aim, as practical, to inform the selected candidates up to six months in advance of the start of the fellowship programme. As necessary, the GRÓ Centre and thereby other MFA services can assist the programmes, as requested, in order to facilitate the visa application process.

A further potential risk noted by the MFA is that trained **fellows do not always return to their home country** after graduating. An example noted was a small number of GTP fellows changing their flight routes and skipping the return to their country. Feedback provided by the programmes indicates that this is an extremely rare event. The only other significant incidence of fellows returning to Iceland temporarily links to the extraction of three GEST fellows from Afghanistan, following change of the country's regime in 2021.

The main risk to the efficient implementation of the programmes during the period linked to the **COVID-19 pandemic** is external to the immediate programme environment under the control of the programmes. It disrupted the programmes during 2020 and 2021. Nevertheless, the programmes demonstrated adaptive management in response, including adapting the timing to commence the training, allowing for the successful completion of the fellowship programme across all programmes in 2021. Delivery of short courses in partner countries also partially restarted in 2021, if in part via online delivery.

3.4.2 THE USE OF PROGRAMME FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES AND THE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF RESULTS

The evaluator judges that the **programme's financial and human resources are efficiently deployed and cost effective** in terms of the interventions and the results delivered. The **unit costs per intervention are plausible and commensurate with the respective outputs and outcomes** and provide value for money. Linked to the fellowship programme in Iceland, the average cost per fellow across the four programmes in 2023 has marginally fallen in real terms, post-inflation, compared to the average cost per fellow as reported in the 2017 evaluation of the UNU programmes.

During the period 2018-2023, the **core contribution of the MFA to the actual realized costs of GRÓ Centre and programmes was approximately 4,446.44 million ISK** (approximately 29.64 million EUR). Table 12 below shows the MFA's core contribution on an annual basis, as reported by the GRÓ Centre.

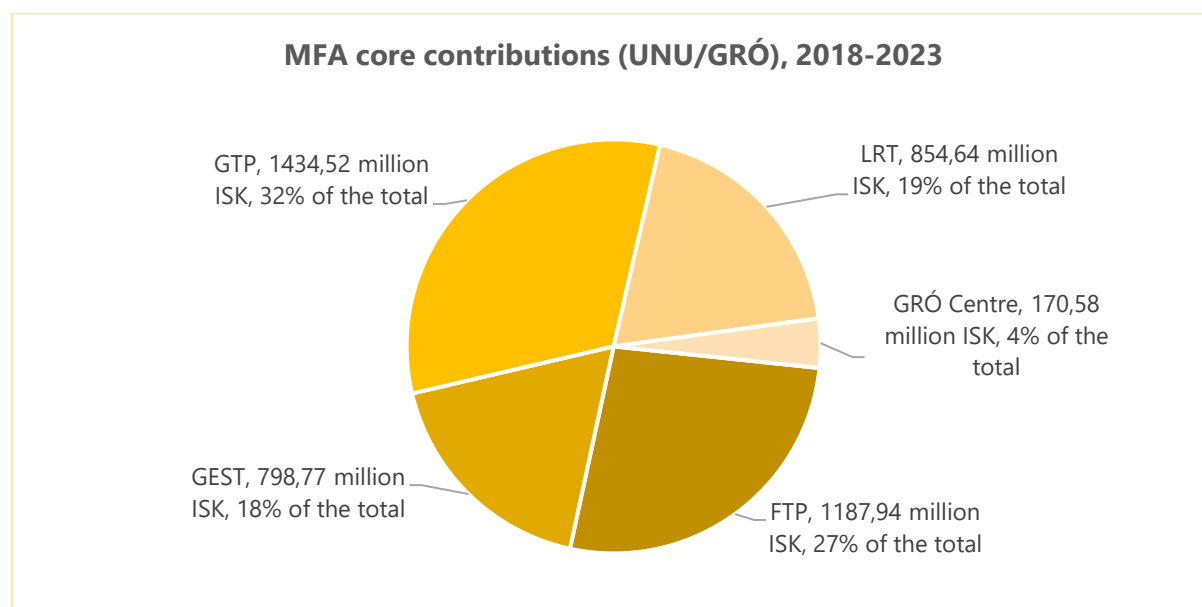
Table 12: MFA core contribution (ISK, final costs) to the GRÓ Centre and programmes, 2018-2023

GRÓ	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TOTAL
GRÓ Centre	---	19,119,839	30,278,631	23,011,764	49,514,025	48,652,873	170,577,132
FTP	217,000,000	222,000,001	166,221,000	173,400,000	186,003,585	223,312,091	1,187,936,677
GEST	117,012,200	117,249,999	137,993,563	123,600,000	129,500,000	173,410,676	798,766,438
GTP	245,900,000	251,000,002	130,615,750	263,816,161	272,535,812	270,655,790	1,434,523,515
LRT	138,300,000	141,449,999	105,000,000	126,000,000	163,000,000	180,885,132	854,635,131
Total	718,212,200	750,819,840	570,108,944	709,827,925	800,553,422	896,916,562	4,446,438,893

Data source: Financial data for 2018 and 2019 provided to the evaluator by the MFA (via the GRÓ Centre), financial data for years 2020 through 2023 as provided in the GRÓ Annual Reports

The nominal value of the MFA's core contribution to the programmes has increased from 2018 to 2023 broadly in line with the rate of Icelandic inflation over the period, although it now also covers the costs of GRÓ Centre.⁵² Figure 14 shows the **division of MFA core contribution (final costs) across the programmes**. The **higher share of the budget allocated to the FTP and the GTP** primarily reflects the extent to which the programmes have awarded grants for scholarships as compared to the GEST and LRT programmes. In addition, both programmes need to provide their fellows with access to specific scientific and technical facilities, and laboratory facilities linked to the lines of specialization and for conducting of research by the fellows. This also applies to the **LRT** programme in terms of the need for special equipment and facilities to support research by the fellows. Access to such facilities is minimally required for delivery of the **GEST** fellowship programme, which also accounts for the lower average daily cost for delivery of its 5-months fellowship compared to that (6-months fellowship) of the other programmes.

Figure 14: MFA core contribution (final costs) between GRÓ Centre and programmes, 2018-2023



Data source: Financial data for 2018 and 2019 provided to the evaluator by the GRÓ Centre, financial data for years 2020 through 2023 as provided in the GRÓ Annual Reports

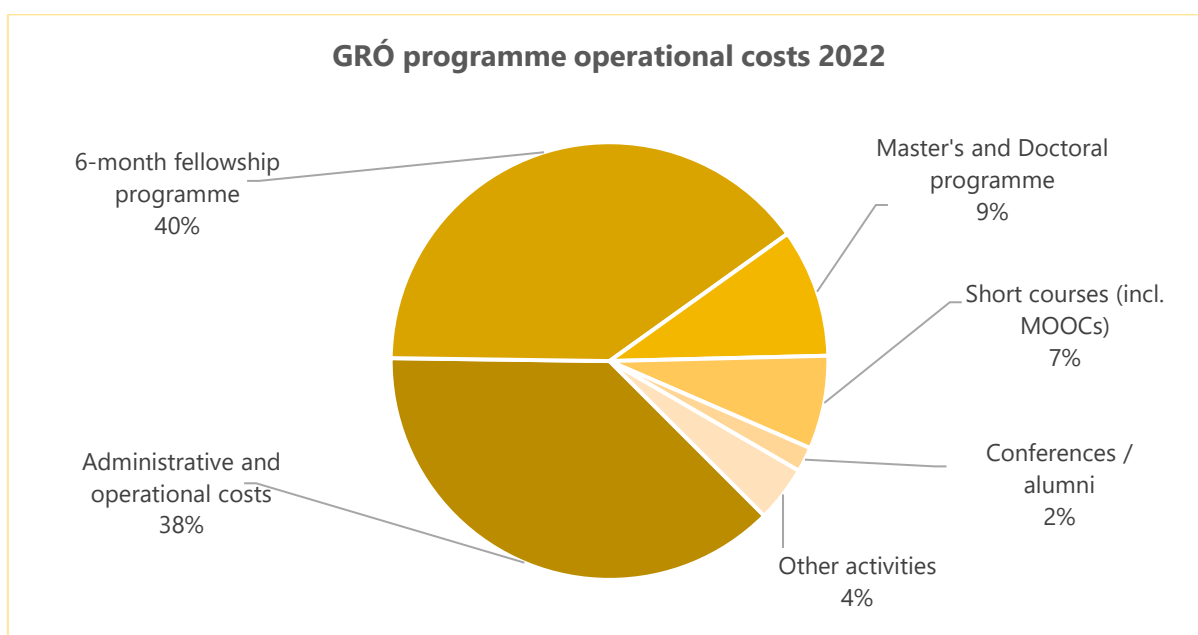
⁵² In financial year 2024, the MFA core contribution to GRÓ programme budget decreased by 5.4% in nominal value versus 2023.

The **principal outputs delivered** via the programmes during the period **2018-2023** included:

- 471 fellows enrolled on the postgraduate training programme in Iceland, of which 470 graduated, including their completion of a research/project paper contributing new knowledge.
- 64 new scholarship recipients enrolled on Master's or PhD programmes. During the period, 46 scholars graduated, with 40 Master's theses and 17 PhD research papers or final theses published.
- 1,728 individuals trained via 48 short training course events, of which 38 were in partner countries, six were via online means, and four were study visits for experts from partner countries in Iceland.
- 39,161 learners enrolled/accessed the online content offer (MOOCs and SDG Videos).
- 239 alumni attended leading international/regional conferences in their field/area of expertise.

Figure 15 below shows the **division of the programme budget (final costs) across the four programmes in 2022 based on the key programme budget lines** as defined by the GRÓ Centre. The fellowship programme in Iceland consumed 40% of the budget across the four programmes, followed by administrative costs (including salaries) at 38%, 9% of the collective budget for scholarships, 7% of the collective budget for short courses (including MOOCs), and 2% aimed at supporting the alumni.

Figure 15: GRÓ programme operational costs, across the four programmes, 2022



Data source: Financial data for 2018 and 2019 provided to the evaluator by the GRÓ Centre, financial data for years 2020 through 2023 as provided in the GRÓ Annual Reports

To compare the **unit costs of the different programme interventions**, the evaluator requested detailed budget data from the four programmes linked to the actual costs incurred per key intervention. At the programme level, the annual administrative and operational costs are subdivided, for accounting purposes and the reporting of development cooperation statistics, to the specific interventions that the costs related to during the year. It is estimated that about 70% of the annual programme administrative and operational costs are linked to the management and delivery of the fellowship programmes.

Table 13 below shows the overall programme costs and the unit costs as estimated by the evaluator.

- Linked to the **fellowship programme** in Iceland, the **average total cost per fellow** across the four programmes was **6,579,000 ISK** (EUR 43,860), and the **average cost per fellow per day** across the four programmes was **37,925 ISK** (EUR 253).
- Linked to the **scholarship programme**, the **average total cost per scholar** across the four programmes (for 365 days, i.e. one year) was **4,732,180 ISK** (EUR 31,550), and the **average cost per scholar per day** across the four programmes was **12,965 ISK** (EUR 86).
- Linked to the delivery of **short courses** in partner countries, the **average total cost per trainee participant** across the four programmes was **434,990 ISK** (EUR 2,900), and the **average cost per trainee per day** across the four programmes was **38,500 ISK** (EUR 257).

Table 13: GRÓ programme costs and unit costs as per the main programme training interventions

INTERVENTION	TOTAL COST (ISK)	OUTPUTS	COST ESTIMATE PER OUTPUT
FTP fellowship (6-months duration)	175,039,794 (2023)	24 fellows	Approx. 7,293,325 ISK per fellow (approx. EUR 48,622) Approx. 39,850 ISK per fellow/day (approx. EUR 266)
GEST fellowship (5-months duration)	111,945,794 (2023)	23 fellows	Approx. 4,867,200 ISK per fellow (approx. EUR 32,448) Approx. 33,800 ISK per fellow/day (approx. EUR 225)
GTP fellowship (6-months duration)	182,255,946 (2023)	24 fellows	Approx. 7,594,000 ISK per fellow (approx. EUR 50,627) Approx. 43,150 ISK per fellow/day (approx. EUR 288)
LRT fellowship (6-months duration)	150,918,605 (2023)	23 fellows	Approx. 6,561,680 ISK per fellow (approx. EUR 43,745) Approx. 34,900 ISK per fellow/day (approx. EUR 233)
FTP scholarship (1-year study cost)	38,148,000 (2022)	8 scholars	Approx. 4,768,500 ISK per scholar (approx. EUR 31,790) Approx. 13,064 ISK per scholar/day (approx. EUR 87)
GEST scholarship (1-year study cost)	13,667,485 (2023)	2 scholars	Approx. 6,833,740 ISK per scholar (approx. EUR 45,558) Approx. 18,723 ISK per scholar/day (approx. EUR 125)
GTP scholarship (1-year study cost)	60,269,480 (2022)	20 scholars	Approx. 3,013,474 ISK per scholar (approx. EUR 20,090) Approx. 8,256 ISK per scholar/day (approx. EUR 55)
LRT scholarship (1-year study cost)	12,939,040 (2022)	3 scholars	Approx. 4,313,013 ISK per scholar (approx. EUR 28,753) Approx. 11,816 ISK per scholar/day (approx. EUR 79)
FTP short courses (10 days duration)	8,050,000 (2024 - in-country partners)	15 trainees	Approx. 536,667 ISK per person (approx. EUR 3,578) Approx. 53,667 ISK per person/day (approx. EUR 358)
FTP short courses (10 days duration)	11,000,000 (2024 - regional partners)	15 trainees	Approx. 733,333 ISK per person (approx. EUR 4,889) Approx. 73,333 ISK per person/day (approx. EUR 489)
GEST short courses (5 days duration)	18,671,272 (2023)	244 trainees (7 courses)	Approx. 76,522 ISK per person (approx. EUR 510) Approx. 15,304 ISK per person/day (approx. EUR 102)
GTP short courses (20 days duration)	31,164,637 (Kenya, 2022)	43 trainees	Approx. 724,759 ISK per person (approx. EUR 4,832) Approx. 36,238 ISK per person/day (approx. EUR 242)
GTP short courses (5.5 days duration)	13,334,830 (El Salvador, 2022)	46 trainees	Approx. 290,105 ISK per person (approx. EUR 1,934) Approx. 52,746 ISK per person/day (approx. EUR 352)
GTP short courses (5-month diploma)	38,764,764 (El Salvador, 2022)	27 trainees	Approx. 1,435,732 ISK per person (approx. EUR 9,572) Approx. 9,572 ISK per person/day (approx. EUR 64)
LRT short courses (5 days duration)	Average per course	20 trainees	Approx. 211,575 ISK per person (approx. EUR 1,410) Approx. 42,315 ISK per person/day (approx. EUR 282)
GEST MOOCs (operational costs)	1,000,000 (2023)	3,074 learners	Approx. 325 ISK per person enrolled (approx. EUR 2)

Evaluator's estimation of unit costs per person and per person/day based on individual programme financial data

The evaluator judges that **the unit costs per intervention represent value for money**. Benchmarked with universities in Europe and Northern America, the programme costs are comparable for delivering the fellowship and scholarship programmes.⁵³

Linked to the **fellowship programme in Iceland**, the 2017 evaluation of the UNU programmes⁵⁴ indicated the 2012-2016 average cost per fellow attending the fellowship in Iceland was 5,074,000 ISK, while this evaluation estimates the average cost in 2023 was 6,579,000 ISK. The 2017 evaluation indicated the 2012-2016 average cost per fellow per day was 29,350 ISK, while this evaluation estimates it was 37,925 ISK in 2023. The **average cost per fellow across the four programmes has marginally fallen in real terms when taking into account the cumulative rate of inflation in Iceland over the period from 2016 to 2023**. Positively, the cost per fellow linked to delivery of the **GEST** and the **LRT** fellowship programmes increased at a lower comparative rate as a result of these programmes enrolling a higher number of fellows per year than that assessed in the 2017 evaluation, i.e. the cost-effectiveness of the programmes has improved as a result of economies of scale. Conversely, the cost per fellow linked to the **GTP** fellowship increased at a higher comparative rate as it has enrolled a lower number of fellows.

While reaching a larger audience, the **short courses in partner countries** are tailored to specific needs and audiences and thereby commonly require a higher intensity of programme support linked to the organization and delivery of the interventions. Nevertheless, the courses can be replicated within partner countries and/or the materials used by local partners, which reduces the unitary cost as the content is reused in other events. The lower average cost of the **GEST** programme short courses is in part a reflection of the benefit of its replicating its two standard short courses with its long-term partners within selected partner countries. Compared to the other programmes, **GTP** supports a diverse offer of tailored short courses in partner countries. When assessed on a per student and per student/day basis, the 5-month diploma course in El Salvador has a very low cost, suggesting high value for money for this intervention. As explained in the GTP case study report, the low cost per person of the 5-month diploma in El Salvador is due to the low number of scholarships provided (ten) in relation to the total number of participants, the fact that travel costs are spread over a relatively high number of days, and the low cost of accommodation.

3.4.3 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PARTNERSHIP WITH UNESCO TO SUPPORT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

The evaluator judges that **the operational partnership of GRÓ Centre under the auspices of UNESCO is still in the early phase of development**. The initial potential for collaboration was constrained due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, only **GRÓ LRT has established an effective partnership with UNESCO headquarters and with a UNESCO programme, the MAB programme**. The partnership is a means for LRT to extend its partner organizations and partner countries. GRÓ Centre's development of collaboration has been more efficient and effectively linked to working with **UNESCO regional and country offices, and national commissions for UNESCO in partner countries**, most notably with UNESCO partners in Africa. While still a work in progress, longer-term collaboration with UNESCO partners has potential to empower GRÓ alumni as local change agents.

In 2019, the preliminary links between the Icelandic training programmes and the work of UNESCO were identified as part of the discussions between the partners before the final decision on the establishment

⁵³ Examples of comparable course costs include the following. In the area of geothermal energy, the University of Auckland offers a postgraduate 6-month course on geothermal energy technology, with fees for international students 31,230 NZ\$ (approximately EUR 19,000). This excludes all other student costs, such as accommodation, food, travel and insurance costs. In the area of the environment, including fisheries and land restoration issues, the London School of Economics offers a 12-month MSc in Environmental Economics and Climate Change, with fees for international students 33,792 GBP (approximately EUR 39,660). This excludes all other student costs, such as accommodation, food, travel and insurance costs. Dalhousie University (Canada) offers an intensive training programme comparable for audience as the FTP fellowship, which runs for a period of five-weeks. Fees for international students are 5,500 EUR. Accommodation is covered as part of the fee, but not food, travel and insurance costs.

⁵⁴ NIRAS, Evaluation of the UNU Programmes in Iceland (2017).

of the GRÓ Centre as a C2C under the auspices of UNESCO. Since the affiliation, GRÓ Centre and GRÓ programmes have sought collaboration with UNESCO headquarters, programmes, regional and country offices, and national commissions for UNESCO in partner countries, as well as the Icelandic National Commission. The **COVID pandemic hindered the initial development of a partnership.**

With **UNESCO headquarters**, the primary partnership that has effectively developed is that between the **GRÓ LRT programme and UNESCO's MAB programme**. Over five years annually, the LRT fellowship will select two young professionals working for institutions and organizations in countries faced with drought and land degradation that are part of MAB's Network of Biosphere Reserves in Africa. The partnership is a means for the LRT programme to extend its partner organizations and partner countries.⁵⁵ **GRÓ GEST programme and UNESCO Division for Gender Equality** held initial meetings to discuss the development by GEST of its series of MOOCs and the experience of UNESCO. **GRÓ FTP and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission at UNESCO** had limited direct contact to discuss potential collaboration. For **GRÓ GTP**, there are no tangible effects of its contacts with UNESCO. Other than with MAB, there is no direct linkage of GRÓ programme activities with UNESCO programmes.

The development of close collaboration is stronger with **UNESCO regional and country offices, and national commissions for UNESCO in partner countries**, most notably with UNESCO partners in Africa. GRÓ Centre has promoted a good level of engagement with UNESCO's Nairobi (Kenya) regional office for Eastern Africa to explore possible cooperation with GRÓ. The regional office covers thirteen countries in Eastern Africa, where all four GRÓ programmes have been active, with around 30% of GRÓ alumni coming from the region. The UNESCO country office and national commission for UNESCO in Uganda have also been supportive in exploring cooperation with GRÓ, including their engagement with the collective GRÓ alumni in Uganda to explore areas for collaboration promoting local development. During their travels to meet their programme partner organizations in focus countries, the Directors of the GRÓ programmes have also met with UNESCO offices and national commissions where they have provided information about the work of the four GRÓ training programmes. For instance, the GEST programme met with UNESCO partners in Ghana, Malawi, Uganda, and in Palestine, and the LRT programme met with UNESCO partners in Lesotho and with the UNESCO's Nairobi regional office. In the longer-term, the promotion of collaboration between UNESCO offices and national commissions with GRÓ alumni is a means to further empower the alumni as change agents, for instance via UNESCO related opportunities advertised to the alumni.

Linked to the establishment of **GRÓ Centre as a C2C under the auspices of UNESCO**, it was **necessary to re-brand the Icelandic capacity development programmes** – previously affiliated with the UNU. GRÓ Centre and the programmes have succeeded in establishing a common branding approach. The GRÓ website, www.grocentre.is, promotes the visibility of the work and projects undertaken by GRÓ and the four programmes. The website provides a holistic overview of the work of all four programmes. The website regularly publishes news items, in English and Icelandic, often shared on GRÓ's social media platforms. In 2023, the total number of visits to the GRÓ website was 195,733, from 126,747 unique visitors from over 190 countries. Nevertheless, the re-branding of the programmes under the auspices of UNESCO, rather than as UNU affiliated, remains a work in progress linked to the reaching former UNU alumni. Feedback from the alumni, and even from partner organizations in countries visited as part of the evaluator's research have difficulty associating the programmes with UNESCO as a key UN agency for partnership in their field of expertise.

In **May 2024, MFA formally requested UNESCO to proceed with its renewal process of GRÓ as a C2C**, with a period of 19 months before expiry of the current partnership agreement. UNESCO's strategy for C2Cs under UNESCO (2019) requests member states submit requests minimally two years in advance.

55 Compared to other GRÓ programmes, LRT falls well short of the target of 25 fellows. The partnership may assist remedy this.

3.5 PROSPECTS FOR THE MAINTENANCE AND CONTINUATION OF THE PROGRAMME BENEFITS (SUSTAINABILITY)

3.5.1 PROSPECTS FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE GRÓ PROGRAMME RESULTS AND BENEFITS

The evaluator judges that the **prospects for sustainability of the GRÓ programme results and benefits are good**. The direct beneficiaries of the training obtained the immediate benefits of the programmes via enhanced knowledge and skills, and exchanges of knowledge and understanding in their field of expertise and professional work. The fellows and short course participants return to their home organization/institution prepared to share and apply their new knowledge and skills. The vast majority of GRÓ alumni have successfully utilized their new knowledge, understanding, and skills to advance their contribution in their technical field of work in their country. Most fellows are still working in the same technical field and country, even several years after graduating from the programme. Partner organizations for the GRÓ demonstrate a good level of ownership of the benefits they obtain from the partnership with the programmes. The long-term partnership approach of the programmes, and the fact the programmes are demand driven are key design factors that promote the prospects for sustainability of the benefits.

Prospects for the maintenance and continuation (sustainability) of the programme results and benefits, after the end of the GRÓ programme direct support, are good. The objective of the GRÓ Centre and programmes is to strengthen **individual, organizational, and institutional, capacities** in low- and middle-income countries, via fostering new knowledge, capabilities, and technical solutions, that support the individuals and organizations to enhance progress needed to promote changes to deliver development results in line with the SDGs. The **primary direct beneficiaries of the programmes are young professionals working in partner organizations** in focus countries for support. GRÓ facilitates the increase of their skills, knowledge, and leadership competence in their respective professional field so that they can apply and disseminate their new knowledge and skills through their home organisations. With specific partner organizations, programmes also support the development of their local training programmes, and of organizational and institutional capacity to deliver programmes.

At GRÓ programme design level, two key factors create the prospects for the sustainability of the benefits. First, the long-term partnership approach of the programmes with key partner organizations that are involved in the identification and nomination of fellows for training, and/or the delivery of programme offerings such as short courses. Second, the fact that the programmes are fully demand driven, responding to the requests and needs of the partner organizations and the needs of their young professionals directly targeted by the GRÓ programme capacity building and training interventions.

GRÓ aims to create results on the outcome level by empowering individual young professionals as change agents. The **direct beneficiaries of the training obtained the immediate benefits of enhanced knowledge and skills, and exchanges of knowledge and understanding** in their field of expertise and professional work, with human capital vested in them through the training programmes.

The **fellows return to their home organization/institution prepared to share and apply their new knowledge and skills**, as well as their research paper/project prepared as the final assignment of the programmes. In addition to their home organization, the fellows also commonly seek to share their knowledge within local networks of experts and practitioners in their field of work. Of the GRÓ alumni 2018-2023 cohort responding to the evaluator's questionnaire survey, 79% indicated they made specific presentations to colleagues, supervisors and/or other expert networks on their return, 17% made presentations to policymakers, 24% presentations at conferences and/or congresses, and 20% made presentations at local community level. The sharing of knowledge obtained by the alumni contributes to the overall sustainability of the results.

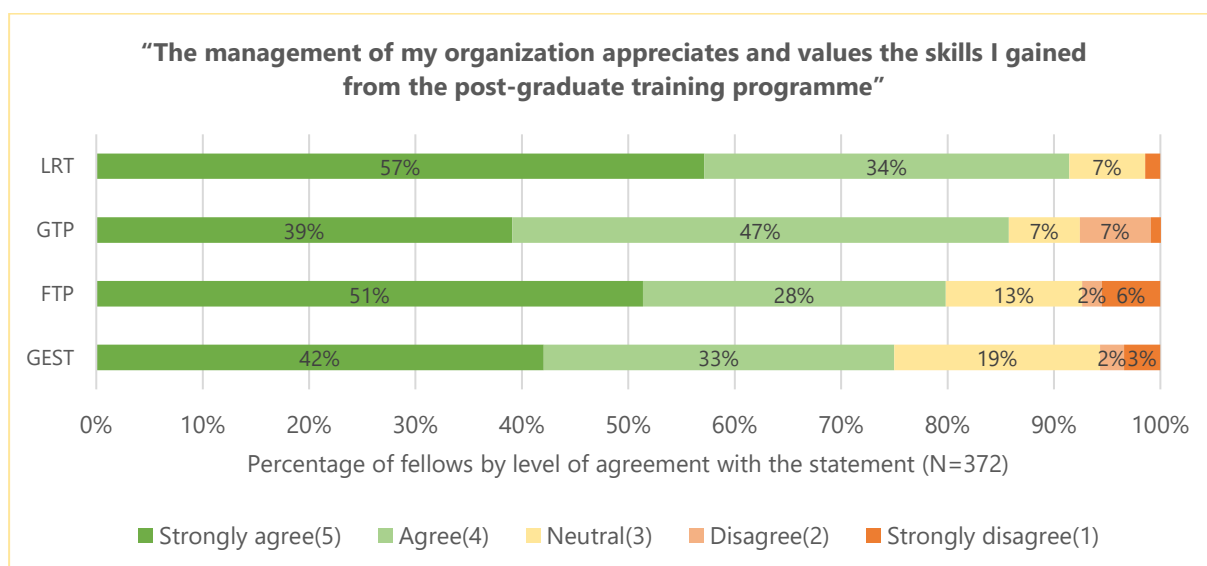
The direct beneficiaries of the **short courses** return to their institution (primarily public institutions and services) prepared to share and utilize their new knowledge and skills, and the practical tools provided via the courses, to promote reform initiatives and change at the local level. The courses targeted at government staff and district-level or local experts often resulted in the development of local action

plans to address specific development issues, key products to ensure sustainability of the results. The high level of satisfaction that trainees’ feedback indicates, as to the relevance and usefulness of the training provided, where standard data exists, adds to the prospects for sustainability of the benefits.

Linked to the programmes’ **partner organizations**, they demonstrate a good level of ownership of the benefits they obtain from the partnership with the programmes. The benefits include their utilizing the programmes to enhance the organization’s own educational and research agenda via the training of their staff on the fellowship, scholarship, or short course offer. With key partners, the cooperation also involved the development of specialized local training content and short courses or in-country postgraduate level university courses, and of local institutional capacity to deliver them. The partners have incorporated the training content and courses into their training offer programme. They can be further utilized (replicated or scaled up) by the organization as funding allows. In the case of various partner institutions, their ownership of the benefits accrued is further demonstrated by their long-term contribution to the costs for short courses, and their provision of staff to lecture and organize trainings.

GRÓ aims to create results on the outcome level leading to changes on the partner institutions’ level. An important **prerequisite for achieving institutional level results is that the management of the institutions recognize and values the benefits of the postgraduate training** and the newly acquired skills obtained by the fellows. Linked to the fellows’ home organization, and their ownership of the benefits obtained, Figure 16 shows that **83% of the GRÓ alumni 2018-2023 cohort** responding to the evaluator’s questionnaire survey **indicated that the management of their organization appreciates and values the knowledge and skills** that the fellow gained from the postgraduate training programme. A further 11% indicated they thought their organization was somewhat neutral. Only 6% indicated that they perceived their organization as disinterested in the benefits. While this is the self-perception as reported by the respondents, the high percentage indicating their organization values the benefits obtained adds to the prospects for sustainability of the benefits at organizational level, not just at individual level of the fellows. The **LRT** alumni responding to the survey reported the highest level (91%) of perceived appreciation of their organization of the training benefits the alumni obtained and returned with, while the **GEST** alumni reported the lowest level (75%) of perceived organizational appreciation of the benefits.

Figure 16: Percentage of 2018-2023 alumni who think that their management appreciates the skills gained from the post-graduate training programme

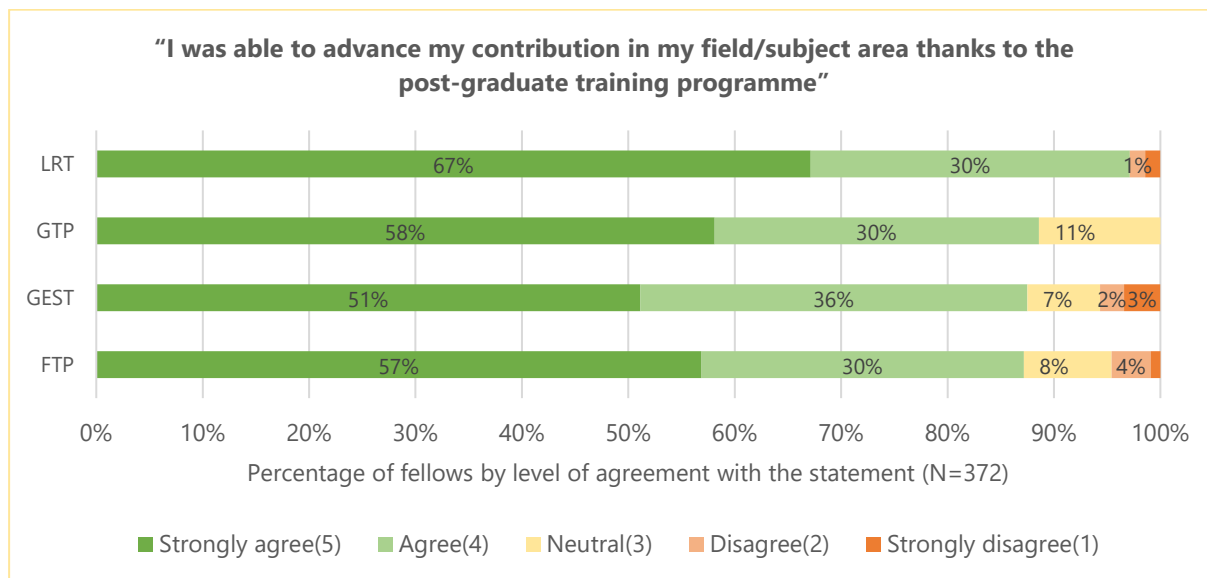


Data source: Evaluation team’s online questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, 5-point Likert scale on level of agreement with the statement by 2018-2023 cohort (N=372)

Figure 17 shows that on their return to their home country, the **GRÓ alumni have utilized their new knowledge, understanding and skills to advance their contribution in their technical field of work** (90% of the 2018-2023 cohort responding to the survey). This is strong evidence that the alumni continue

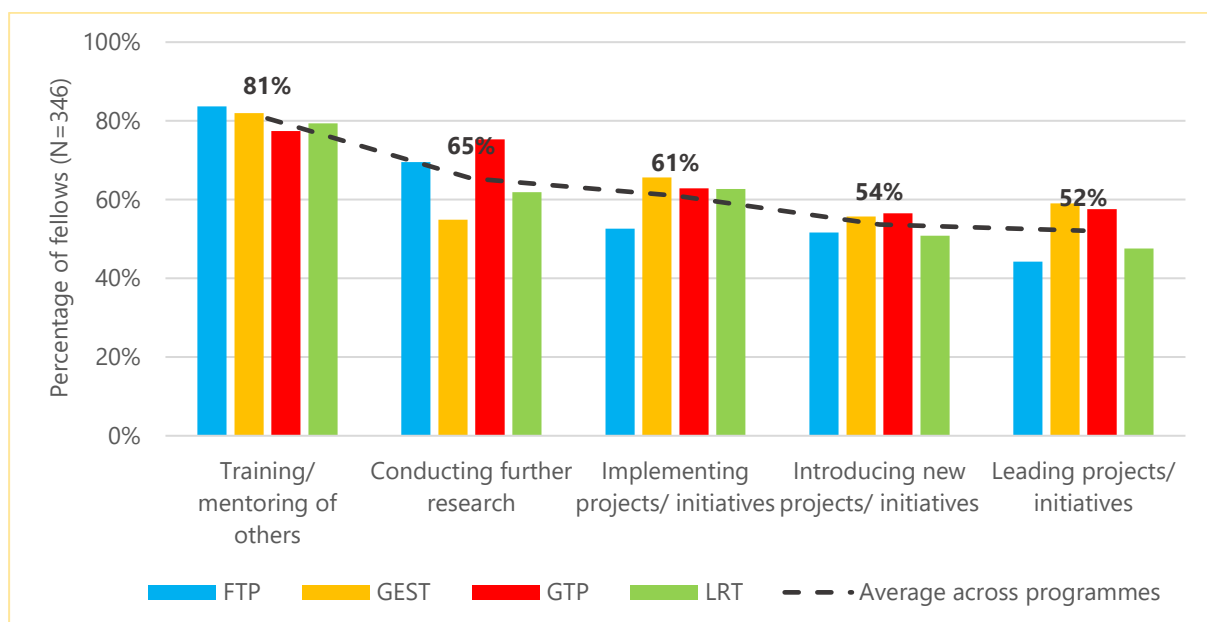
to benefit from the skills obtained via the GRÓ programmes and that the alumni do seek to apply their knowledge, as change agents, to advance their contribution promoting sustainable local development.

Figure 17: Contribution to their field/subject area due to the programme, 2018-2023 alumni



Data source: Evaluation team’s online questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, 5-point Likert scale on level of agreement with the statement by 2018-2023 cohort (N=372)

Figure 18: Types of contributions to the technical field, 2018-2023 alumni



Data source: Evaluation team’s online questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, multiple-choice question on types of contributions by 2018-2023 cohort (N=372)

The 2018-2023 alumni cohort reports a **contribution to their technical field/subject area through** training and mentoring of others (81%), conducting further research (65%) and implementing projects or initiatives in their technical field (61%), including the introduction of new initiatives, projects, programmes, or approaches within their institution (24%). The alumni have contributed to meso level results by advising local communities (42%), advising private entities/institutions (25%), and contributing to regional policy changes (21%). The alumni have contributed at the macro level via contribution to national or international debates (36%) and advising policymakers or high-level decision-makers (33%). Especially GEST and FTP alumni advised policymakers and decision-makers while LRT fellows have been very engaged in advising local communities.

Survey respondents provided notable examples of their contributions, which illustrate the diverse ways in which fellows have applied their training and expertise to make **meaningful contributions to their respective technical fields**. One GTP fellow mentioned the engagement in institutional research and the **publication of three papers in international journals**. An LRT fellow outlined that he/she built up a **research team** in rangeland ecology and management, which contributed to a nationwide **rangeland health monitoring system**. An FTP fellow outlined that he/she learned fishing gear design during the training programme in Iceland, which led him/her to **apply this specialized knowledge in constructing floating cages for fish farming** after programme completion. GEST fellows outlined the drafting of policy papers and advisories on addressing GBV and gender equity mainstreaming.

Around **44% of the 2018-2023 alumni feel supported by their institution in applying their knowledge and skills after programme completion** while 27% think that the lack of institutional support is hindering them in knowledge application and development. The most **common challenge**, as indicated by the alumni, refers to insufficient resources of the institution to apply changes (54%) after programme completion. In addition, reluctance to change in their institution or home country (23%) and unfavourable power dynamics in their institution (23%) were also frequently mentioned, the latter especially by GEST alumni. While such institutional challenges hinder the immediate application of alumni skills and specific initiatives, the alumni demonstrate a strong sense of ownership of the programme results and the benefits they obtained, and they are adaptable to find alternative options available to support utilization of their skills. Alumni achieve this via local networking within their field of expertise, as well as via their engagement as private citizens with local community initiatives and via engagement in public advocacy in their field. Among the 2018-2023 GEST fellows, 41% report that they have ultimately moved to new jobs to utilize their skills.

One key factor that determines the prospects for sustainability of the results is that the **alumni are still working in the same technical field/subject area**. Of the alumni responding to the evaluator's survey, **85% of the 2018-2023 cohort indicate that they remain in the same field/sector**.⁵⁶ The percentage reporting that they remain in their field is broadly similar across the four GRÓ programmes, except for a slightly lower percentage among GEST fellows (78%). The main reasons indicated by the 2018-2023 alumni to change or not to work in their field of training are better professional career advancement options in other technical fields (34%) and job opportunities in other fields (34%) followed by better working conditions in other field/subject area (25%). Furthermore, **87% of the 2018-2023 alumni respondents indicate that they continue to reside in their home country and/or reside in the same region**. The share is relatively high, considering that some alumni might only be temporarily residing abroad for further studies, and it indicates that most of the alumni are contributing to promoting changes within their initial region rather than migrating to other regions. The percentage reporting they remain in their region is broadly slightly higher for GTP and FTP (91%) and slightly lower for GEST (82%).⁵⁷

GRÓ Centre and GRÓ programmes aim to contribute to the sustainability of the programme results and benefits via the programme's continued partnership and collaboration with key organizations in the partner countries, as well as specific actions to support **alumni community building and networking initiatives**. The latter is an important means to empower alumni and sustain their sense of community as policy and technical experts/specialists, and as change agents. During the period 2018-2023, the programmes supported 239 alumni to attend international/regional conferences, as well as involved the alumni in the organization and/or delivery of 69% of the short courses. Programmes also undertook 23 formal alumni networking meetings, 15 with alumni in partner countries. The **GEST and LRT alumni are more involved in networking/alumni events, while the FTP and GTP alumni are specifically involved in international/regional conferences**. Moreover, the percentage of alumni involved in the short courses is highest for GTP, while FTP involved its alumni the least in short

⁵⁶ Looking at the long-term retention in the technical field, 82% of the fellows who graduated before 2014 are still working in the same technical field/subject area in 2024 or have worked in that field until retirement.

⁵⁷ Considering the long-term retention in the geographical region, in 2024, 86% of the fellows who graduate before 2014 are still residing in the same region compared to their residency before training programme participation.

courses. Alumni responding to the survey indicated a key benefit of the networking events is to boost motivation. The focus of GRÓ Centre on supporting the formal development of GRÓ country and/or regional chapters, via which alumni from across all programmes can promote local community building and networking initiatives, as well as in promoting links between the alumni and UNESCO partners, will assist the promotion of sustainability of the programme results, and the empowerment of GRÓ alumni.

Finally, at the level of the **GRÓ programmes as capacity development programmes** supporting low- and middle-income countries, and flagship initiative of Icelandic international development cooperation policy, at individual programme level **sustainability of the programme is promoted by the core staffs**, many of whom are long-term core staff, **as well as continued support of its host institution**. Programmes have medium-term strategies/plans to guide further development of the programmes. They also have internal mechanisms to obtain feedback from fellows/trainees to support future training focus. The **MFA, via GRÓ Centre, is the primary financial resource to ensure sustainability** of and potential future further growth of the capacity development programmes as a long-term offer. The GRÓ programmes are explicitly identified in the context of Icelandic policy and strategic documents as core modalities offering specific Icelandic expertise targeted to support low- and middle-income countries. As such, continued provision of grants via the MFA for the purpose of the GRÓ seems assured, although the extent of the grant, subject to annual decision-making, lacks an indicative medium-term framework.

3.5.2 FACTORS SUPPORTING OR HINDERING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE GRÓ PROGRAMME RESULTS AND BENEFITS

The evaluator highlights the following key factors supporting the sustainability of the programme results:

- **Alumni have a strong sense of ownership of the benefits** they obtained, and actively seek to share their knowledge and skills within their home countries and communities, and actively seek to utilize and apply their knowledge and skills to promote local development change. The vast majority continue to work in their field/sector of expertise, and within their home country/region.
- GRÓ programme **partner organizations** engage with the programmes based on their needs and priorities with the GRÓ programme support fully demand driven by partner organization requests. The GRÓ programmes each has a core set of longer-term partner organizations that engage with GRÓ with the goal to improve the quality of and range of their local training offer. All have demonstrated ownership of the developed offer and commitment to further utilizing the courses.
- GRÓ **short courses** provide knowledge and valuable practical tools and local development plans as key products that the trainees can apply in the short-term with medium- and long-term effects.

The evaluator highlights the following key factors hindering the sustainability of the programme results:

- The **principal challenge that the alumni report linked to directly utilizing and applying their knowledge** is insufficient resources or medium-term financial framework of their institution to promote significant reform initiatives. Unfortunately, this points towards a dilemma that is intrinsic to initiatives focusing on LDCs and LMICs. Another challenge is overcoming unfavourable power dynamics or the reluctance to change either within their organization or within their country.
- The **lack of a clear indicative medium-term financial framework for 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 sustainability.

3.6 PROSPECTS FOR LONGER-TERM DEVELOPMENT EFFECTS (IMPACT)

3.6.1 THE DIRECT EFFECTS AND LONGER-TERM PROSPECTS FOR THE IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME ON THE MICRO, MESO AND MACRO LEVEL

The evaluator judges that the **prospects for longer-term development effects (impact) of the GRÓ programmes are good**. The evidence strongly suggests that the GRÓ programmes, chiefly via the GRÓ alumni, but also in partnership with long-term institutions/organizations in the partner countries, have delivered concrete changes within the countries to achieve development change and real impact. The alumni report many **important micro-, meso-, and macro-level results** they have contributed to post-fellowship, with 73% of the 2018-2023 alumni reporting their contribution to advancing the SDGs. The percentage of alumni reporting contributing to advancing the SDGs is highest among those who live in African countries (83%). GRÓ alumni also hold high-level positions in their country, as well as senior roles in international or regional organizations, allowing them to make impactful contributions at that level. However, the evaluator judges that **it is not credible to measure the GRÓ programme impact via performance indicators based on specific SDG targets**, as currently foreseen in the Results Framework. The highest level at which the programme impact can plausibly be measured is at the level of the SDGs, not the SDG targets or indicators.

As explained in the GRÓ ToC, **the expected impact of the programmes is** the following: “Through capable individuals and organisations, partner countries progress towards the achievement of the targeted SDGs by promoting the sustainable use of natural resources; strengthening resilient natural and human systems; advancing equality and human rights; and improving human wellbeing”.

The evidence indicates that the **prospects for longer-term development effects (impact) of the GRÓ programmes are good**. As detailed above in the context of the sustainability of the programme results, the GRÓ alumni overwhelmingly continue to work in the same technical field/area, in their home country and/or region. The alumni have shared and utilized their new knowledge, understanding, and skills to advance their contribution to their field. In addition to implementing projects and initiatives within their organizational context, alumni have also supported local community projects and initiatives. The alumni judge the knowledge and skills imparted by the programmes as relevant to the needs and development challenges of their home countries (89% of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree to that), and thereby applicable in their promoting solutions.

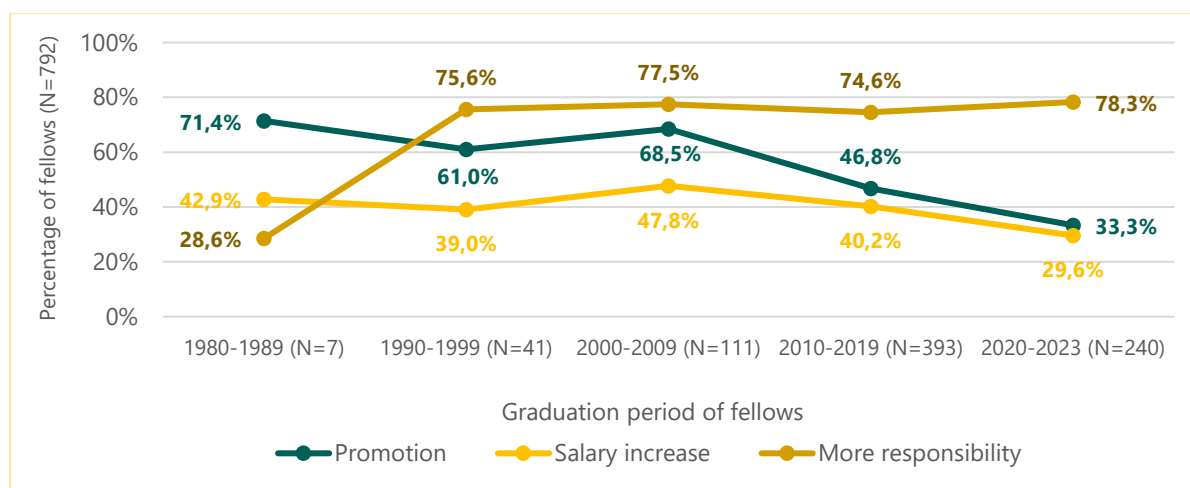
However, the longer-term development **impact of the programmes is hard to measure and attribute, notably at macro level** (i.e. national policy level or regionally/internationally or at the SDG level). There is no clear specification as to how to measure the GRÓ programme impacts, as well as no definition of the GRÓ programme targets linked to the impact indicators. The alumni survey and anecdotal evidence suggest macro level impacts, but a more systematic approach by GRÓ to measure impact is required.

Prospects for long-term career advancement

The **2018-2023 alumni cohort has already achieved significant career advancement** in terms of their increased responsibilities and higher level of posting within their organizations. This provides them with increased opportunities to influence policy and decision-making **to promote reforms and advance progress towards the SDGs in their field of work**. Over the longer term, the prospects for the alumni to achieve further career advancement and thereby greater influence in promoting specific development change in their field are good. Based on responses received to the evaluator’s survey from the overall alumni cohort since the programmes started (936 alumni across the four programmes responded to the survey), alumni report achieving **higher levels of career advancement over the longer-term period**. Figure 19 illustrates the percentage of fellows who advanced through increased responsibility, promotions and/or salary increases due to programme completion across the entire period from 1979 to 2023. While the percentage of alumni taking on more responsibility is equally high across the

graduation periods (around 75%, excluding the 1980-1989 fellows due to small sample size), the **percentage of alumni who received a promotion or a salary increase after and due to programme completion is significantly higher among alumni who graduated before 2018** (around 25 percentage points for promotions and 15 percentage points for salary increases). It seems that while alumni immediately take on more responsibilities after programme completion, it takes more time for the alumni to receive promotions and/or salary increases after programme completion, suggesting further positive long-term career advancements for the 2018-2023 alumni.

Figure 19: Fellows receiving promotions and/or salary increases after programme completion by graduation period



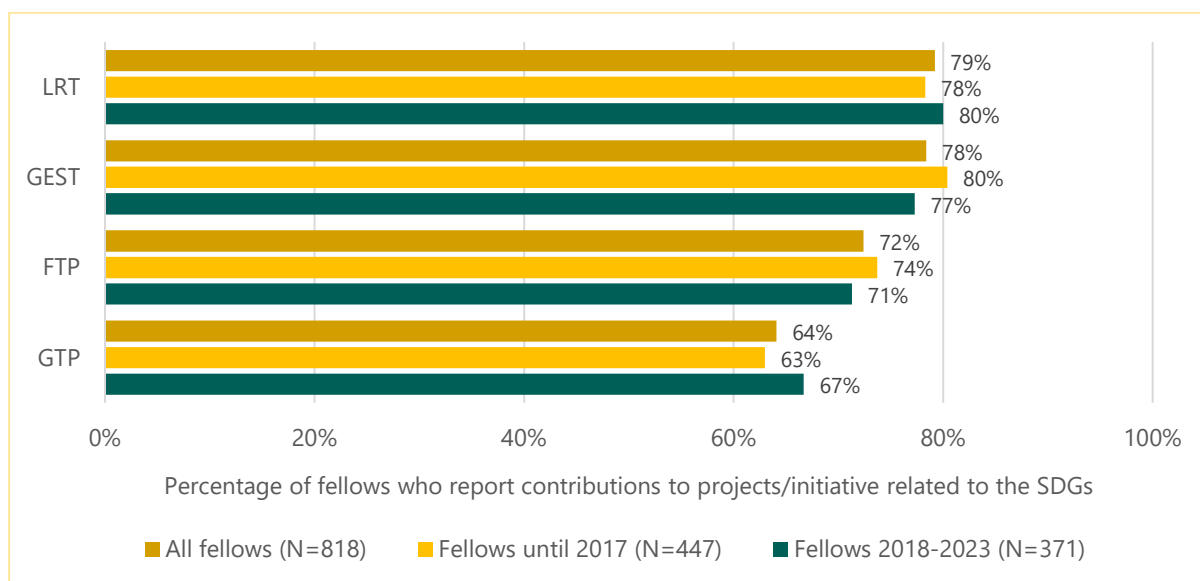
Data source: Evaluation team's online questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, multiple-choice question on types of career advancements by all cohorts since 1979 (N=792)

Projects and initiatives contributing to SDG progress

While it is not possible to robustly measure the impact of GRÓ's activities on national SDG progress, the survey captured the fellows' perspective on their individual SDG contribution through projects or initiatives. Alumni of the postgraduate training programmes play a key role in initiating projects and programmes in their home countries and regions contributing to sustainable development. **The survey findings indicate that the fellows are very active in implementing projects or initiatives that are linked to the SDGs.** Their contributions span policy advice and policy advocacy, community engagement, policy research, and practical interventions promoting specific projects and initiatives, demonstrating their commitment to sustainable development. The survey results find that **73% of the 2018-2023 alumni report to have implemented projects, programmes and/or initiatives that are linked to the SDGs.** Of the full cohort of alumni responding to the survey, 71% indicated a direct contribution to the SDGs through projects and programmes.

Figure 20 shows the **percentage of alumni who have contributed to the SDGs by GRÓ programme and evaluation reference period.** The percentage is **highest among LRT alumni (79%) and GEST alumni (78%)** while it is statistically significantly lower for **GTP (64%)**.

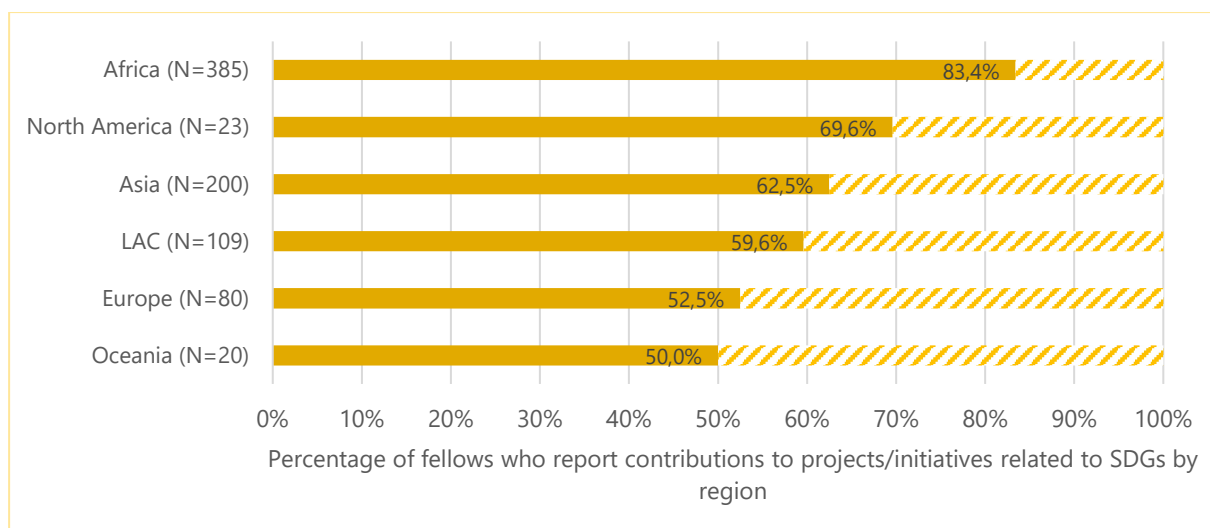
Figure 20: Percentage of alumni contributing to SDG achievement per programme and cohort



Data source: Evaluation team’s online questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, binary question on projects/initiatives linked to the SDGs (N=818)

The comparison of contributions to SDG achievement by the current region of residence of the alumni in Figure 21 indicates that the **percentage of alumni reporting contributing to advance the SDGs is highest among those who currently live in African countries (83.4%)**, followed by alumni currently living in North American countries (69.9%), those living in Asian countries (62.5%), and living in LAC countries (59.6%).

Figure 21: Percentage of alumni contributing to projects/initiatives related to SDGs by current region of residence



Data source: Evaluation team’s online questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, binary question on projects/initiatives linked to the SDGs by current region of residence (after programme completion) for all cohorts since 1979

Survey respondents were able to choose the five most important SDGs, which are linked to their projects and initiatives. Figure 22 visualizes which SDGs the 2018-2023 fellows most frequently indicated contributing to. Among the 271 fellows who reported contributions to SDG progress, 42.4% of fellows implemented activities related to **SDG 5 Gender Equality**, 37.3% implemented activities related to **SDG 13 Climate Action**, 30.3% to **SDG 2 Zero Hunger**, 27.7% **SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy**, and 24.0% **SDG 4 Quality Education**.

Figure 22 Projects and initiatives related to the SDGs based on frequencies of 2018-2023 fellows (N=271)



Data source: Evaluation team's online questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, frequency of SDGs mentioned among the five selected SDGs by 2018-2023 cohort (N=271)

Due to the specific technical topic in each training programme, differences in reported SDG contributions through projects and initiatives are observed between the programmes. These are detailed below based on feedback from the total alumni.

- FTP fellows report contributions to SDGs 14, 2, and 1** through a variety of projects and initiatives. 72.4% of the 2018-2024 FTP survey participants report to have contributed to the SDGs through their initiatives. Their efforts in sustainable fisheries management, marine conservation, and aquaculture development directly support SDG 14 by promoting the sustainable use of marine resources. They promote food security and the corresponding achievement of SDG 2 through enhancing fish production, improving fish processing methods, and supporting community-based aquaculture. Additionally, their work in improving the livelihoods of fish farmers, designing alternative income projects, and building capacity in fishery communities aligns with SDG 1 as it helps to alleviate poverty and create sustainable economic opportunities for rural and coastal populations.
- GEST fellows mention contributions to SDGs 5, 4, and 10.** 78.4% of the 2018-2023 GEST survey participants were involved in projects directly addressing the SDGs. The fellows directly support the achievement of SDG 5 of promoting gender equality and empowerment through designing gender responsive policies, conducting research, and engaging in community-based education. They contribute to SDG 4 by ensuring equitable education through advocating for inclusive education policies, developing educational resources, and implementing community-based education initiatives. Additionally, their work in reducing inequalities, supporting marginalized groups, and enhancing inclusion aligns with SDG 10 to create equitable opportunities and reduce disparities.

- **GTP fellows mention contributions to SDGs 7, 13, and 5** through efforts in geothermal energy development, policy advocacy, and community engagement. 64.1% of the 2018-2023 GTP survey participants were involved in initiatives related to the SDGs. Their efforts chiefly supported SDG 7 by promoting affordable and clean energy solutions. They contribute to SDG 13 and address climate change through implementing climate mitigation and adaptation projects, conducting research, and participating in environmental conservation campaigns. Additionally, their work in inclusive hiring practices, mentoring and empowering women and girls, and forming gender-focused networks aligns with SDG 5 to enhance gender equality.
- **LRT fellows report contributions to SDGs 13, 15, and 2** through a variety of projects and initiatives. 79.2% of all 2018-2023 LRT survey participants engaged in projects/initiatives aimed at achieving the SDGs. Their efforts in climate mitigation and adaptation, research, and community training directly support SDG 13 by addressing the impacts of climate change and promoting resilience. Engagement by fellows in sustainable land management, ecosystem restoration, and conservation projects contribute to SDG 15 by protecting and restoring terrestrial ecosystems. Additionally, their work in promoting climate-smart agriculture, improving food production, and supporting food security initiatives aligns with SDG 2 in ensuring sustainable food systems.

Micro-level, meso-level, and macro-level impacts of the GRÓ programmes

Prospects for impact achieving progress towards the SDGs through capable individuals and organizations **are strongest on the micro level** (i.e. at the individual beneficiary or local community level) **and the meso level** (i.e. within partner organizations or regional/district level), but also **with good potential to achieve impact on the macro level** (i.e. national policy level or regionally/internationally).

The programmes clearly have the **most immediate and attributable impact at the micro-level**, since the programmes directly train individuals through the fellowship programme or short courses. **Both, focus group discussions with alumni and the systematic alumni survey, indicate that impact at the micro level is high.** The enhancement of human capital is not only in the field of expertise, but trainees also gain technical, analytical, and research skills, which in turn enables them to continue searching for new learnings or to create new knowledge through more research. **Many alumni expressed that the fellowship programme in Iceland constituted an important stepping-stone in their professional careers** in their technical fields of expertise. The term 'life-changing experience' (in the positive sense) was used to describe the fellowship programme by various alumni interviewed by the evaluators. Before training participation, most alumni either worked in their country governmental/public administration sector (47%) or the academic/research sector (25%).⁵⁸ The sectors are more diverse after programme completion, suggesting that **the training equips alumni with skills and opportunities that enable them to transition over time into a wider variety of employment sectors.** The percentage of alumni reporting currently working in their country's governmental/public administration sector is 38% (compared to 47% before the 6-month training) and the percentage working for international partners, like international organizations (from 3% to 8%) and international NGOs (from 3% to 8%), increased. The percentage of alumni employed in academia remains unchanged, suggesting a stable interest and involvement in the academic/research sector. The overwhelming majority of the alumni report having increased responsibility within their organization and achieving personal career advancement. Through the continued sharing and utilization of their knowledge and skills, the alumni have demonstrated the capacity to act as local change agents delivering development effects.

The **impact brought about by individuals within their local/immediate sphere of influence is evident.** Almost half of the alumni responding to the survey indicated that they have provided support at the level of local communities (48%). These deliver **development effects and socio-economic benefits at the local community level** in their home countries. For example, **FTP** alumni have trained coastal communities on the sustainable conservation of coastal and marine resources. **GEST** alumni have

⁵⁸ A larger number of GEST alumni are from national civil society organizations (27%) or from international organization/NGOs (20%). A larger number of GTP alumni are from public service enterprises (20%).

advised local community organizations to mainstream gender equality assessments. Through the GEST Alumni Fund, projects have contributed at the local level to advance women's economic empowerment, and contributed to addressing issues of GBV, through community-based responses and support networks. **Alumni working in the academic/research sector** have been involved in the production of additional research and knowledge products, as well as the development of local university programmes in their field of expertise that are now delivered to students. Through the **GEST** and the **LRT** programme **short courses**, direct beneficiaries, commonly from district level and local public services and from local community groups, have utilized the practical tools provided and local action plans formulated as a result of the training to implement local development change.

At the **meso level**, 22.2% of respondents to the evaluator's survey reported contributing to regional or district-level policy changes, and 25.4% of respondents reported having used their new knowledge and skills to introduce new initiatives, projects, programmes, or approaches within their institution. The share is high among **GEST** alumni (32%) with many of them supporting the introduction of institutional policies supporting inclusion and advancement of gender equality considerations. For instance, the Association of Fishers and Lake Users in Uganda adopted a gender strategy. As noted above, **alumni working in the academic sector** (across all four programmes) have been involved within their institution in the development of new training programmes and modules that now form part of the overall educational and training offerings of these institutions. For example, an **FTP** alumna contributed to the development of a course on Sea Food Processing Technology, while several **LRT** alumni in Mongolia are an important part of the management team of the MULS (Mongolian University of Live Sciences). **Alumni working at the district level of government** in their country report their involvement in developing and introducing new approaches and consultative structures within their institution to support policy development and delivery. For example, an **LRT** alumna championed the establishment of a district-level multi-stakeholder platform for integrated planning, harmonization, and coordination of various issues on sustainable land management and land restoration, and **GEST** alumni the introduction of gender responsive budgeting systems into the operations of the district government. Interviews conducted with **GTP** alumni of the fellowship programme, and with beneficiaries of the 5-month diploma in El Salvador and GTP short course participants, showed various instances of changes introduced in organizations by the GTP learners as a result of the knowledge and skills acquired during the trainings. For example, one alumnus reported having changed the self-protection equipment used for certain operations within the company he was working at. Another convinced the Instituto de Electricidad de Guatemala (INDE) to buy new equipment for its laboratory to measure fluid inclusion. GTP alumni are also key members of geothermal exploratory and developmental projects in their country. An **FTP** alumnus is currently in the process of developing a participatory fish disease monitoring and surveillance programme in his organization.

While it is difficult to robustly measure macro level results attributed to GRÓ's activities, the survey results suggest that fellows contribute to this level to some extent. At the **macro level**, 40% of the respondents to the evaluator's survey reported contributing to national or international debates, **37% report advising national policymakers or high-level decision-makers**, while **31% report contributing to changes in policies or processes at the national level**, and 9% report contributing to the development of the application of international policy frameworks. The **GEST** alumni report contributions to important debates, advising policymakers and contributions to policy changes at national level and international level more than the other programmes, followed by the **FTP** alumni. Many alumni hold influential positions within their countries, leveraging their expertise to drive impactful contributions. The **FTP** alumni have contributed through preparation of maritime fishing regulations, the preparation of a master plan for infrastructure to support fishing and aquaculture, the preparation of the national sea policy, the national fisheries, and aquaculture policy, and the preparation of a decree on planning the national marine protected areas. **GEST** alumni were engaged on the development of a gender and equity handbook for the human capital development programme, for the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development, Uganda. An **LRT** fellow is currently engaged in transboundary initiatives, as Lesotho is a water source for southern Africa transferring water to the Republic of South Africa. LRT alumni in Mongolia have contributed to the design of a pasture law for the whole country and are working on establishing a national monitoring and assessment system for land.

Similar work is undertaken by LRT alumni in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Alumni in Mongolia are also working regionally on grazing management issues. **GTP** alumni deliver macro level impact via their involvement in the prospecting, planning, and development of geothermal energy sources, very successfully achieved by partners in Kenya,⁵⁹ and significantly supported by GTP alumni in Bolivia.⁶⁰

In addition, **GRÓ alumni hold high level positions in their country**, allowing them to make impactful contributions at that level. For example, Secretary General of the Aquatic Resources Authority of Panama (**FTP**), Project Coordinator Promoting Gender Equality at the International Labour Organization in Nigeria (**GEST**), Senior Exploration Geologist at the Geological Survey of Papua New Guinea (**GTP**), Development Cooperation Advisor in Ethiopia for Water, Environment and Climate to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (**LRT**). The first PhD scholarship graduate at **GTP** became the Director of Climate Change at the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Kenya, and at the 2023 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 28) she led the climate change negotiation committee on behalf of Kenya. GRÓ alumni also hold **senior positions at international or regional organizations**. For example, Senior Fisheries Official to the African Union (**FTP**), Specialist Adviser at the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank supporting geothermal projects in LAC (**GTP**).

Overall, **the evidence strongly suggests that the GRÓ programmes**, chiefly through the GRÓ alumni, but also in partnership with long-term institutions/organizations in the programme partner countries, **have delivered concrete changes within the countries to achieve development change and real impact**. The alumni report many important micro, meso, and macro level results they contributed to post-fellowship. The long-term partner organizations for the programmes consulted by the evaluators attest to the positive impact of the GRÓ programmes for their institutional capacity development and goals. It is, however, difficult for the evaluator to assess the impact for most partner institutions from which the alumni originate, as the GRÓ programmes lack formal standard tools to follow-up with the wider group of partner institutions to understand how the benefit of the support is subsequently utilized to deliver change. The principal feedback mechanism for the GRÓ programmes from the perspective of the wider group of organizations is the graduated alumni when contacted by the programmes post-fellowship. The GRÓ programmes also lack formal tracer tools to follow up with the alumni in terms of their long-term career advancement and contribution in their field to deliver change and development impact.⁶¹ This will partially be rectified in the future through the introduction by the GRÓ Centre and programmes of a more systematic approach to the frequent use of surveys to follow up with the alumni and partner organizations over the longer term, as foreseen within the context of the GRÓ Results Framework.

While the evaluator judges that the evidence indicates that the **prospects for longer term development effects (impact) of the GRÓ programmes are good, specific measurement in terms of progress towards the SDGs is complex**. It is clear that the development changes brought about involving the alumni in their sphere of influence contribute to advancing sustainable socio-economic development, primarily at the local community and regional/district level, but also at the national level in their sphere. The development impacts are in line with the broad framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its associated SDGs. However, it is not clear that the impacts are measurable in terms of attributable contribution to progress on the SDGs, or that it will largely be minor statistical progress when considered at the national level of country reporting, let alone the international level of the SDGs. Furthermore, the GRÓ alumni originate from a large number of countries (76 countries during the period 2018-2023), further complicating the exercise of measuring impact at the level of the SDGs. Therefore, the evaluator judges that **it is not credible to measure the GRÓ programme impact via performance indicators based on the SDG targets**, as currently foreseen in the Results Framework.

⁵⁹ Since 1982, 152 Kenyans have graduated from the programme, or 19% of the total GTP alumni. At the end of 2021, installed geothermal capacity in Kenya amounted to 944 MW output capacity, accounting for 47% of electricity produced in Kenya.

⁶⁰ Since 2014, seven Bolivians have graduated from GTP. They have been involved in preparatory work linked to the geothermal system in Laguna Colorada, and recent completion of the pilot plant there, and the development of the Sol de Mañana field.

⁶¹ The GTP programme has conducted two alumni surveys, other programmes maximum one survey only during their long history.

Other development partners providing capacity development programmes and training also declare the long-term impact goal of their effort as progress achieved towards the SDGs, but recognize the contribution will be in a limited way. Some partners measure results only at output and outcome level.⁶²

The highest level at which the programme impact can plausibly be measured is at the level of the SDGs, not the SDG targets or indicators. The data would mainly be provided by the alumni, as it was for this evaluation, in terms of periodic surveys requesting them to specify to which SDGs they have plausibly contributed (since the last survey). The SDGs provide a broad framework via which to allocate the focus of the alumni contribution to the promotion of development change and effect, by actions promoting the sustainable use of natural resources, strengthening resilient natural and human systems, advancing equality and human rights, and improving human wellbeing.

3.6.2 FACTORS SUPPORTING OR HINDERING PROGRESS IN THE LONGER-TERM ACHIEVEMENT OF DIRECT EFFECTS AND IMPACT

The evaluator highlights the following **key factors supporting the impact** of the programme results:

- The **high level of relevance and quality of the programme interventions and approaches**.
- The **GRÓ alumni have demonstrated their capacity as change agents** delivering real development effects **to advance sustainable development progress in their sphere of influence**. Evidence suggests that **they continue to be involved in promoting change and development over the long-term period of their future professional careers**. The majority of alumni have achieved significant career advancements post-fellowship, with the extent of their seniority within institutions and policy influence progressively developed over the medium term
- The **core partner organizations** of the GRÓ programmes are fully committed to utilizing the benefits of the programmes. The long-term partnerships that programmes have established with core partner organizations are a key factor to stimulate impacts and their scale of achievement.
- The GRÓ **short courses in partner countries** can be replicated by the programmes and partners. They are also a useful means to promote the expertise of and further empower the alumni.
- While currently at the earlier phase of development, the focus of GRÓ to support bottom-up **community building and networking efforts of the GRÓ alumni** via the establishment of GRÓ country chapters in leading partner countries will be an important driver for impact.

The evaluator highlights the following **key factors hindering the impact** of the programme results:

- The principal challenges to achieving development impact relate to political instability in the countries or **unfavourable political or power dynamics** within countries or institutions to promoting reform initiatives and development projects.
- Another challenge relates to **the extent of funding available in partner countries** to promote reform initiatives and development projects. The GRÓ alumni highlight this as a common obstacle to their possibilities to advance reform initiatives or specific projects. The availability of grants and concessional credits from multilateral partners will be crucial to support countries realize impact.
- While the programmes have long-term partnerships with core organizations, the promotion by GRÓ of medium-term collaboration with partners to enhance their institutional and organizational capacity to deliver quality training locally is hindered by **GRÓ's annual budget perspective**.
- While the programmes are fully demand-driven, which is a strong enabling factor, there is a **potential risk of the dilution of benefits** if thinly spread, rather than building a critical mass of professionals and expertise within countries and key partners over the medium and longer term.

⁶² For example, the Danida Fellowship Centre (DFC). See the DFC Strategy 2021-2025.

3.7 CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITIES OF ICELANDIC INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION POLICY

The evaluator judges that the **GRÓ programmes have positively contributed to advancing the cross-cutting priorities of Icelandic development cooperation policy** (i.e. gender equality, human rights, and climate change and the environment). The contribution of all of the programmes is most strongly evident in regard to their consideration of issues, within their field of expertise, linked to promoting gender equality, and the challenges of climate change. Programmes addressed the issues within the design and implementation of their actions. The alumni have contributed, post-fellowship in advancing the sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems and gender equality. **The GRÓ alumni significantly benefit from their exposure to Icelandic society and approaches.**

3.7.1 CONTRIBUTION TO GENDER EQUALITY

Iceland's **gender equality strategy** for international development cooperation highlights **five focus areas for policy linked to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls:** (i) combatting GBV, (ii) health of women and girls, (iii) empowerment of women, (iv) education with an emphasis on girls, and (v) engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality.

All of the GRÓ programmes have contributed to advancing gender equality and have addressed gender equality issues within the design and implementation of their programmes. The programmes are strongly aware of their gender balance in terms of the direct beneficiaries of the fellowship training. The **GTP** actively encourages partner organizations to nominate female candidates for all training activities, recognizing that in such a male-dominated sector training chances are often given to male colleagues. **GTP offers women in the geothermal sector a rare opportunity to advance their careers** and, during the period 2018-2023, women accounted for approximately 42-43% of the beneficiaries of its substantive training interventions (fellowship, scholarships, and 5-month diploma in El Salvador).⁶³ The **GEST** programme has a more significant gender imbalance in terms of fellows than the other programmes. It encourages male candidates and is clearly aware of the need to engage men in promoting gender equality. The **FTP** and the **LRT** programmes have largely achieved gender parity. For all programmes, there is still a significant proportion of men to women as participants of short courses.

Each of the **programmes addresses gender equality issues and perspectives**, and the role of gender, in the context of its field, **within the implementation of the core fellowship programme**. The **GEST** programme collaborates with the other programmes to provide tailored training on gender equality.

The **GEST** programme training/learning content addresses all of the Icelandic gender equality strategy's focus areas. It promotes understanding and knowledge exchange on the interplay of gender across the spectrum of development policy and on the role of women in the promotion of sustainable and just development. The programme also ensures an understanding of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.

Finally, exposing fellows to a **5- or 6-month training** from countries where gender equality is not as advanced as in Iceland, commonly ranked in the top position as the world's most gender-equal country, is **an eye-opening opportunity and experience**, commonly highlighted by the alumni. In response to the evaluator's survey, 42% of the 2018-2023 alumni contributing to advance the SDGs indicated their contribution to SDG 5 Gender Equality. Of the **GEST** alumni, 93% of such respondents indicated SDG 5.

⁶³ In 2024, GTP anticipated it would enrol 14 females in a total cohort of 26 fellows, i.e. 54% female enrolment.

3.7.2 CONTRIBUTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS

Iceland applies a **human rights-based approach** to its development cooperation as a foundation for wellbeing and prosperity. **Three strategic areas for human rights** are at the core of Iceland's development cooperation: (i) the rights of the most marginalized and vulnerable populations, (ii) the rights of the child, and (iii) democracy building and governance, including a strong civil society.

While human rights are not explicitly addressed within the programme elements, with the clear exception of the **GEST** programme that provides an understanding of and perspectives on gendered inequalities in society, including of minority groups, and marginalized and vulnerable populations, the **GRÓ alumni indicate their increased awareness of human rights issues** as a result of the fellowship programme. Respondents to the evaluator's survey indicated that 78% had substantially or largely improved their human rights awareness. 73% had substantially or largely improved their gender awareness and 71% their LGBTIQ+ awareness. This again suggests that the exposure of fellows to Iceland is an eye-opening experience for their perception.

The **GEST** programme also ensures a strong focus on strengthening civil society with a significant minority of its alumni from civil society or community-based organizations.

3.7.3 CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Iceland is strongly focused on green and blue development efforts, linking **sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems** to improved livelihoods and shared wellbeing. The **strategic focus** of Iceland's development cooperation is: (i) climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience measures, (ii) sustainable use of natural resources, and (iii) land degradation and ecosystem restoration.

All of the GRÓ programmes have contributed to promoting understanding and skills in the area of climate change and the environment. For three of the programmes the sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems is their core objective and intrinsic to the programmes' design.

Linked to the **FTP**, capacities built through the programme have the potential to positively impact the health of fish stocks through the sustainable use of fisheries and the restoration of fish habitats and ecosystems. But not just in water, the programme also has the potential to improve life on land. As aquaculture becomes the leading activity in fisheries, the potential for environmental degradation from the effluents may negatively impact environmental sustainability on land, and eventually in water. FTP addresses aquaculture from a sustainability approach and, as such, adds to environmental sustainability.

Linked to the **GTP**, the environmental risks of geothermal development projects are addressed in GTP trainings. More specifically, environmental science is one of the eight areas of specialization in the fellowship programme. Environmental and social management of geothermal projects is covered in one of the eleven modules of the 5-month diploma delivered in El Salvador. Environmental aspects and risks of geothermal development were also included in the 2017, 2022, and 2024 editions of the short courses in El Salvador. Additionally, environmental, social, and regulatory issues (including environmental impact assessments) were incorporated into all editions of the short courses in Kenya. Utilization of geothermal energy can serve as a substitute for electricity and heat generation based on fossil fuels. Therefore, any development in geothermal energy exploitation has the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Contributions to combatting climate change and protecting the environment are intrinsic to the **LRT** programme, as hindering land degradation, protecting, restoring and sustainably managing terrestrial ecosystems are the overall aims of LRT. Through this, LRT contributes to addressing the current biodiversity and climate crisis in partner countries.

The **GEST** programme provides a strong focus on gender and climate change as a specific module under the fellowship training in Iceland, via one of the core GEST short courses, and a major component of the fifth GEST MOOC. The training programme thereby contributes to the focus of Icelandic policy on climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience measures, and the focus on sustainable use of natural resources.

In response to the evaluator's survey, 37% of the 2018-2023 alumni contributing to advance the SDGs indicated their contribution to SDG 13 Climate Action, 28% contribution to SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy, 20% contribution to SDG 14 Life below Water, and 17% contribution to SDG 15 Life on Land.

3.7.4 MANAGING AND COUNTERING THE EFFECTS OF EXTERNAL SHOCKS AND RISKS TO THE PROGRAMME (NATURAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SHOCKS, INCL. THE UNEXPECTED MIGRATION MOVEMENTS OF FELLOWS DUE TO CRISIS IN HOME COUNTRIES)

The principal cross-cutting challenge to the effectiveness and efficiency of the programmes during the period 2018-2023 was the **COVID pandemic**, a significant global external shock. The year 2020 was significantly constrained due to the pandemic, only the GEST programme was able to deliver the fellowship programme. The pandemic and related international and national health requirements/measures also affected the delivery of short courses in partner countries during 2020, 2021 and early 2022. The programmes adapted their programme offer to accommodate to the necessary health requirements/measures, including via their increased focus on the delivery of online content. The 2021 fellowship programmes were all successfully delivered, although with changed timeframes for delivery.

The other significant external shocks/risks to the effectiveness and impact of the programmes relate to **political and social conflict in some of the partner countries**. In part this is to be expected when the programmes seek to support conflict/post-conflict countries. However, such risks are almost entirely beyond the control of the programmes in terms of their capacity to react to setbacks. Programmes have demonstrated flexibility by phasing partner countries in or out according to whether local developments allow for a reliable and meaningful partnership. The phasing out or temporary pausing of country partnerships has been countered by the programmes forging new partnerships. While certain examples exist of alumni departing their home countries due to crisis, such as a number of the GEST alumni originating from Afghanistan, there is very limited evidence of unexpected migration. If the alumni undertake migration movement to a new country/region, it is commonly professionally oriented.

4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 THE EXTENT THAT GRÓ AND THE GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMME INTERVENTIONS HAVE MET THEIR INTENDED RESULTS

Iceland's provision of **specialized capacity development training**, in areas of Icelandic expertise where it can offer added value, has formed part of Iceland's **international development cooperation efforts** since 1979, when the **GTP** first enrolled fellows on the training programme in Iceland. Subsequently, in 1997, the **FTP** was established, the **LRT** in 2007, and the **GEST** in 2009. Since 2020, the programmes function under the **GRÓ Centre**, an independent agency of the MFA, operating under its own legal identity, which also functions under the auspices of UNESCO as a C2C.

The development objective of GRÓ Centre and programmes is to strengthen individual, institutional, and organizational capacities in low- and middle-income countries to deliver development results in line with the SDGs. **GRÓ's main approach is to increase institutional capacity in partner countries by assisting strategically positioned young professionals for delivering change.** GRÓ facilitates the increase of their skills, knowledge, and leadership competence in their respective professional field **so they can apply and disseminate their new knowledge and skills through their home organisations.** The programmes target the group via different interventions, such as the fellowship training in Iceland, scholarships for postgraduate study, short training courses in partner countries, online learning content.

Each programme works with a unique set of **institutions and organisations in its partner countries**, reflective of their different fields of expertise and of partner country contexts. Collectively, they form **five main categories of institutions** (i) national and district level governments, regional governmental structures, (ii) universities and training organizations, (iii) scientific and social research institutes, (iv) civil society and community-based organizations, and (v) public service enterprise utilities and operators. The partner institutions and organisations are beneficiaries in terms of the new knowledge, skills, and analytical research capabilities that the young professionals obtain via the training undertaken. Partner institutions and organisations are also beneficiaries of GRÓ programme support, at the request of the partner, to assist develop local training offer, local training capabilities, and institutional capacity. **A partner country should qualify for ODA assistance in accordance with the OECD DAC classification.** GRÓ particularly aims to work with (i) countries classified as LDCs or lower-middle income countries (LMICs), (ii) countries in Africa, and (iii) SIDS.

During the period 2018-2023, **the GRÓ programmes have effectively delivered their intended capacity development results, supporting young professionals and partner organizations in 76 countries**, to capacitate them to promote local development outcomes pursuant to the SDGs. The programmes supported **534 individuals via in-depth training and research** (fellowships and scholarships), **1699 individuals via short training courses for partner countries**, and reached **39,161 learners via online learning content.** The GRÓ fellows and scholars collectively produced **537 new knowledge (research) products.** In the context of the programme efforts to empower the alumni via community building and networking actions, programmes supported **239 GRÓ alumni to attend leading international conferences in their field of expertise** (for instance for GTP the World Geothermal Congress). In addition, **GRÓ alumni were involved to support the programmes in the organization and/or delivery of 35 of the 48 (73%) short courses** delivered by the programmes during the period. The individual GRÓ programmes also engaged with their alumni via formal meetings. Overall, 15 meetings with individual programme alumni were held in partner countries, three programme alumni meetings were held online, and five programme alumni meetings were conducted as a side event at international conferences.

During 2018-2023, the **direct beneficiaries of the GRÓ programmes support predominantly originate from LDCs or LMICs.** Other beneficiaries were from UMICs as classified on the OECD DAC list

of ODA recipient countries eligible for the purposes of reporting development cooperation flows. Of the **471 individuals enrolled on the fellowship programmes in Iceland, 37% were from LDCs, 46% from LMICs and 16% from UMICs.**⁶⁴ Of the **64 individuals supported on scholarships for masters or doctoral studies, 44% were from LDCs, 47% from LMICs, and 9% from UMICs. The majority of fellows (56%) were from Sub-Saharan Africa,** 26% from Asia, 12% from Latin America and Caribbean (LAC), 3% from the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe,⁶⁵ and 2% from the South Pacific. The **three leading countries,** sending 25% of the 2018-2023 fellows, were **Kenya, Malawi, and Uganda.**⁶⁶ Other countries with a notable number of fellows during the period include Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Nigeria, Sierra Leone,⁶⁷ Tanzania, Indonesia, Mongolia, India, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea, and El Salvador. The strong focus of the programmes on supporting fellows from Sub-Saharan Africa is entirely consistent with the priorities of Icelandic development cooperation policy and diplomatic efforts, as well as with the objectives of the GRÓ programmes, and with those of UNESCO. Via the **48 short courses delivered in or for partner countries, the programmes trained 1699 individuals.** Thirty-eight courses were in partner countries, six were online courses tailored to specific countries or regional audiences, and four were study visits for partner country experts to Iceland. **Of the courses delivered in partner countries, 22 were in LDC partner countries (58%), 14 were in LMICs (37%),** and two were in high-income countries (both SIDS) in the Caribbean, for regional partners.

The programmes exceeded GRÓ Centre's target that minimally 80% of the direct beneficiaries are from LDCs or LMICs. There is certain variance between the programmes, with **FTP** and **GTP** marginally below the collective target of 80% of fellows from LDCs or LMICs, at 76% and 78% respectively, while the **LRT** programme achieved at 100% of its fellows from LDCs or LMICs, and the **GEST** programme 81% of its fellows. The higher number of **FTP** and **GTP** fellows from UMICs (22% and 21% respectively) is predominantly a result of the partial focus of these programmes also on partners in the LAC region, which is entirely consistent with the fields of work of the two programmes and local development contexts. The majority of countries in the region have as one of their goals sustainable management and development of fisheries resources and related ecosystems. There is also good potential for geothermal energy in many countries, recognized by some countries as an explicit development objective. The partial focus on the region is also consistent with Icelandic policy focus on green and blue development efforts and its diplomatic efforts in the region.

GRÓ Centre aims for overall gender parity, over a medium-term perspective, recognizing that the distribution fluctuates annually in terms of the direct beneficiaries. Gender parity was, broadly achieved overall across the programmes during the period for the core programme interventions. The **gender distribution** of the direct beneficiaries was **55% females on the fellowship programmes and 50% females on the postgraduate scholarship programmes.** There is certain variance between the programmes, with **FTP** and **LRT** generally achieving gender parity, while **GTP** has an imbalance of male fellows (58%) and **GEST** of female fellows (77%). **FTP, GTP** and **LRT** actively encourage partner organizations to nominate female candidates for all training activities, recognizing that in such male-dominated sectors training chances often go to male colleagues.⁶⁸ **GEST** encourages male candidates, and is aware of the immediate and long-term need to engage men in promoting gender equality and female empowerment. Linked to the **short courses in partner countries,** however, significant further effort is required across all programmes to promote the inclusion of female participants. During 2018-2023, 36% of participants on short courses were female. **LRT** achieves greater female inclusion (41%) but is still far short of parity.

⁶⁴ During the period 2018-2023, six fellows originated from countries not listed by OECD DAC as eligible for the purposes of ODA. Three were from SIDS in the Caribbean and two were indigenous persons from Arctic polar-regions enrolled at request of the MFA
⁶⁵ All enrolled at GEST, primarily co-financed via Erasmus+ (EU global programme for academic and training cooperation).

⁶⁶ Malawi and Uganda are both long-term partner countries for Icelandic bilateral development cooperation policy and effort. Iceland has specific bilateral development cooperation strategies for each country. Iceland also has an Embassy in each country.

⁶⁷ Sierra Leone is, more recently, Iceland's third partner country for bilateral development cooperation, with an Embassy now open.

⁶⁸ In 2024, GTP anticipated it would enrol 14 females in a total cohort of 26 fellows, i.e. 54% female enrolment.

The programme **interventions are well targeted to the needs of the audiences reached**, i.e. young professionals from low- and middle-income countries via the fellowship and scholarship programmes, and regional, national, and local professionals and experts, mainly from public service institutions, including government, academia, and public service utilities, via the short courses in partner countries.

Feedback of the direct beneficiaries and core partner organizations attests to the relevance and quality of the training provided. Feedback from the fellows on the 5- or 6-month training in Iceland, while not always collected by individual programmes in a consistent manner for comparative purposes, indicates 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. Survey **feedback from the fellows provided to the individual programmes, indicates 91% of fellows rated programme quality and content** (on a five-point scale) **as satisfactory or highly satisfactory.** Survey feedback from the beneficiaries of the short courses, while also not always obtained using standard tools for collecting statistical data, also indicates a high level of satisfaction with the course content provided, as well as with the relevance and usefulness of the training course to their job and/or profession. Data that does exist consistently indicates **around 95% are satisfied or highly satisfied.**

GRÓ alumni respondents to the evaluator's questionnaire survey report large improvements in relevant technical skills due to the training.⁶⁹ Alumni report that their **personal development skills have improved most** as result of their training participation, followed by **research skills, technical skills** and **intercultural skills.** Alumni appreciate the high level of expertise of the lecturers, the integration of theoretical and practical training and relevance of the curriculum to their field. Across all programmes, fellows consider the individual research project/paper the most useful programme component.

At the **outcome level**, GRÓ aims to empower the alumni in their individual career advancements, which enables them to disseminate and to apply their gained knowledge and drive sustainable change. The **fellows and scholars 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 evaluator's survey findings suggest that the **postgraduate fellowship is successful in fostering individual professional development.** Many alumni reported significant career promotions, moving into higher roles, leading departments, and taking on greater responsibilities within their organizations. For example, two **LRT 2022** alumni from Lesotho promoted by their ministry post-fellowship to coordinate an IFAD funded project Regeneration of Landscapes and Livelihoods. An **FTP 2022** graduate from El Salvador promoted by their ministry to Head of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Management Department. A **GTP 2022** graduate became the CEO of the Tanzanian Geothermal Development Company.

Linked to the **four GRÓ programme indicators of outcome** defined in the GRÓ Results Framework, the **2018-2023 alumni cohort** responding to the evaluator's survey indicated that **90% of the fellows have achieved moderate, substantial, or extreme progress in their professional career** in follow-up to the fellowship training. Feedback indicates that 90% have used the training to advance their contribution in their field/area of work, 79% have shared their knowledge with colleagues, supervisors and other experts in their field, and that 83% think that their organizations' management assesses the training benefits to be valuable.

The evaluator judges that **the direct results of the programmes establish a strong basis to promote behavioural change of the individuals** (direct beneficiaries) **and at their home organizations** to utilize and apply the learning, skills, and tools obtained via the training. This will result in a diverse range of initiatives aimed at **advancing local development change** in their field of expertise and work.

Alumni respondents to the survey report many important micro-, meso-, and macro-level results they have contributed to post-fellowship, **with 73% of the 2018-2023 alumni reporting their contribution to advancing the SDGs** in terms of projects and initiatives. The percentage of alumni reporting

⁶⁹ The survey participants rated to what extent the postgraduate fellowship programme has improved their skills in 15 different relevant areas. Around 75% of all respondents experienced substantial (4 out of 5 on the scale) or large (5 out of 5 on the scale) improvements across all 15 skill areas, which indicates that programmes are successful in improving individuals' skills.

contributing to advancing the SDGs is highest among those who live in African countries (83%). GRÓ alumni also hold high-level positions in their country, as well as senior roles in international or regional organizations, allowing them to make impactful contributions at that level. Almost half of the alumni respondents indicated that they offered advice 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.

Their contributions span policy advice and policy advocacy, community engagement, policy research, and practical interventions promoting specific projects and initiatives within or by their organization. The 2018-2023 alumni report their collective contribution to all seventeen SDGs. Most frequently, the alumni indicate their actions 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%)**.

Overall, the evaluation finds that the **GRÓ programmes have effectively delivered the intended capacity development results, and have contributed to the capacity of the alumni, trainees, and partner organizations to promote and implement changes needed to progress the SDGs.**

4.2 THE PRIMARY SUCCESSES OF THE GRÓ AND THE GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMMES AND THE BENEFITS GENERATED

The GRÓ programmes are a flagship product of Icelandic international development cooperation support. During 2018-2023, programmes predominantly supported individuals (young professionals) and partner organizations from countries classified by OECD DAC as LDCs or LMICs for the purposes of ODA flows. The majority of supported individuals and partner organizations are from Sub-Saharan Africa. 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. In addition to **aligning with and complementing the efforts of the MFA** in bilateral development cooperation partner countries of Malawi, Uganda, and Sierra Leone, the programmes align with MFA efforts at the regional level in Eastern and in Western Africa, and in the LAC region in particular. The programmes are responsive to specific requests of the MFA to support its policy goals and initiatives. For example, the MFA requested the **FTP** to provide insights to support the sustainable development of fisheries in Sierra Leone, thereby supporting the formulation of Iceland's bilateral country strategy paper.

The core GRÓ programme intervention, **the postgraduate fellowship programme in Iceland, is key to the programmes' success.** The relevance and high quality of the programmes in the sharing and successful transmission of new knowledge, policy and technical understanding, and skills is recognized both by the alumni and by the programmes' partner organizations. Demand from partner organizations nominating candidates for the fellowship programmes far exceeds supply capacity of the programmes. **Selection of fellows for the postgraduate training in Iceland follows a rigorous application, review and interview process.** The first step is the nomination of candidates by their home organization. Based on the nomination, preliminary candidates submit a comprehensive application. The application process requires the applicants to develop an outline of their intended final assignment research paper/project, with the support of their nominating organisation. This ensures that fellows arrive in Iceland with a clear focus and outline of their final assignment research objectives, and have started the process to gather supporting data, in cooperation with their nominating organization, for their research and analysis. The rigorous selection process is a key factor contributing to the successful results of the programmes in terms of the empowerment of young professionals in their field of expertise as future change agents. During the period 2018-2023, the four programmes enrolled 471 young professionals on the fellowship programme in Iceland. Of these, **470 successfully completed the training programme including the completion of their individual research/project paper.** This is a successful graduation rate of 99.8%. The programmes' impact at the individual level of direct beneficiaries is significant, with many alumni indicating that the fellowship programme constituted an important stepping-stone in their future career.

Another success of the programmes comes from the **short courses in partner countries**. The careful targeting of the courses to benefit national or district-level public service staff and groups, including via the provision of practical tools, has ensured that the knowledge and skills, and the action plans developed as a result at some courses, is applied at national/local level. **Feedback from trainees as to the beneficial value of the training to their job is strongly positive**. For **FTP** and **GTP**, courses commonly target regional partners/staffs as the direct beneficiaries, alongside specific country short courses. One of the main perceived benefits of regionally targeted short trainings was the continuous exchanges with peers and lecturers on technical aspects faced within and across countries and contexts on a regional scale. All short courses are developed and delivered in cooperation with respective programme partner institutions in the targeted partner countries. The programmes and the partner organization(s) co-fund the delivery of the short courses. In this way, the programmes and partners ensure that short courses are relevant to the needs of the country contexts and partner organizations. The short courses are of high value and effective in raising awareness on specific topics and issues, and in creating local capacity to utilize the understanding, skills, and tools provided to promote change. While each short course is 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/confirmation by programmes of additional strong local partners. The **strong level of involvement of GRÓ alumni in the short courses** is also a key factor of success.

The provision of **online learning content** in the form of **MOOCs** has been a successful means for the **GEST** and **LRT** programmes to enhance their programme offer and outreach. Since their launch up to the end of 2023, more than 36,250 people enrolled on one of the MOOCs. The MOOCs provide a detailed theoretical overview, introduction to analytical skills and tools, and practical case examples linked to the subject area. They are not commonly short, summary overviews of issues completed in one-day's study. **Operational costs linked to running the MOOCs are relatively modest**. They are value-for-money. While the MOOCs provide a larger audience of learners, MOOCs are not comparable to in-person training, with clear time-bounds. The benefit is that the learner proceeds at self-pace, or can dip into the online learning resource to focus on particular issues of interest. However, MOOCs, by their nature, are not set up to obtain detailed feedback from online learners as to the learning outcomes or benefits obtained. **GEST** has specifically sought to develop a comprehensive package of MOOCs, each of which is a substantive learning course. **GEST** will package the final set of five individual MOOCs into a collective Online Programme in International Gender Studies. This could be eligible for possibly becoming an edX MicroMasters programme, an online graduate level course offered by the University of Iceland/**GEST**. **GEST** has also specifically sought to develop synergies from its MOOCs to its other intervention offers. This enhances the overall coherence of the **GEST** programme offer, its outreach, and value-for-money.

A further factor contributing to the success of the programmes is the focus on **alumni networking**. During 2018-2023, the programmes supported **239 GRÓ alumni to attend leading international conferences in their field of expertise**. These events are an ideal outlet for alumni to disseminate their research results and connect with the international experts and practitioners, keeping them updated on policy and research issues and providing them with opportunities to engage in new projects or initiatives. At the level of **alumni community building**, each programme operates assorted communication channels with its alumni via e-mail, social media platforms and alumni groups. Programmes periodically meet with alumni in specific partner countries when programme staffs are visiting partner organizations, such as for short courses. Some programmes have conducted online meetings open to all their alumni. **GRÓ Centre** has also advanced promotion of the **collective GRÓ programme alumni network**. Formal country and potentially regional alumni networks are a means to support bottom-up demand of the **GRÓ alumni** to promote local community building and networking activities among the **GRÓ alumni**. In Uganda, the **GRÓ alumni** from all programmes seek to establish a registered **GRÓ country chapter**. **GRÓ Centre** has also supported building connections between such networks with UNESCO Regional and/or Country Offices, as a means to promote the expertise and capacity that the **GRÓ alumni** can offer within their countries to contribute to the wider development efforts of UNESCO and/or of national partners. The **GEST** programme has also operated a small-scale seed fund for project initiatives proposed by and led by its alumni. Effectiveness of the fund is strongly evident in terms of the results achieved, linked to

the professional empowerment of alumni as leaders of change and the results of individual supported projects to advance gender equality and social justice to achieve real change in their local communities.

A further factor contributing to the success of the programmes is the **long-term partnerships that programmes have with a core set of partner organizations**. The programmes have actively contributed to enabling the organizations to design, develop, and implement local trainings, including short specialized courses through to university programme modules and courses. There is strong interest from partner organizations to continue on this collaborative pathway. All have demonstrated strong ownership of the results of the partnership, including their contribution to the costs of short courses.

An **over-arching success factor of the programmes is that they are fully demand-driven**. While the programmes make their own decisions about partner countries and organisations, based on their vision and strategy for development of the programme offer, programmes respond to the requests and needs of the partner organizations and the needs of the young professionals directly targeted by capacity building and training interventions. The partner organizations nominate the candidates for the fellowship training in Iceland, and all short courses organized at the request of partner organizations. Programmes assess requests and discuss these with partner organizations prior to decision by the programme on potential follow up. This ensures interventions are relevant to partner's needs, policies, and priorities, and that GRÓ programmes provide support where they have relevant expertise to offer.

4.3 THE PRIMARY CONSTRAINTS FOR RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT BY THE GRÓ AND THE GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMMES

The primary constraints for the realisation of the programmes' results relate to **external risks and shocks**, which are beyond the direct or even intermediate control of the programmes.

During year 2020 and through to early 2022, the primary constraint for programme implementation and results delivery was the **COVID pandemic** and the necessary health and other mitigation and control measures required at that time. Freedom to travel is key for the programmes, so any development affecting this freedom impedes programme implementation. Year 2020 was significantly constrained due to the pandemic, only the GEST programme was able to deliver the fellowship programme, while the delivery of short courses in partner countries was affected also during 2021 and early 2022. The programmes demonstrated adaptive management in response, including the timing of the fellowship training in 2021, allowing for successful completion of the fellowship across all programmes in 2021. Delivery of short courses in partner countries also partially restarted in 2021, in part via online delivery.

At **partner country level, policy gaps and inadequate regulatory frameworks are potential constraining factors** for the realisation of the programme results. As evidenced by the results of the evaluation team's questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, a majority of respondents indicated experiencing some challenges in applying their knowledge after graduation as to generate change. Alumni indicated the principal challenges they face linked to insufficient resources of their institution, reluctance to change in their institution or home country, or unfavourable power dynamics in their institution. More broadly, principal challenges to achieving development impact relate to political or civil instability in the countries, or unfavourable political or power dynamics to advance significant reform initiatives. These constraints come even though the programmes are careful in the selection process, both at the country and institutional levels, to ensure the proper use of the outputs delivered by the programmes.

The **GRÓ programmes are a relevant modality to complement other Icelandic efforts** in the area of international development cooperation, and the MFA has periodically made specific requests calling upon the programmes' expertise to support certain actions. However, there is **only partial direct evidence of coordination of effort or of synergy** created between the different efforts supported by the MFA with those of the GRÓ programmes. Iceland's international development cooperation policy notes the need for efforts better integrated into other fields of Icelandic development cooperation. This is a role for the MFA to lead on, in partnership with the GRÓ Centre to identify areas for potential synergy.

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. 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 **programmes lack adequate annual budget to meet the extent of the programme output results targets set for the GRÓ Centre and programmes as Strategic Priorities up to 2027**. During the period 2018-2023, the GRÓ programmes delivered at 90% compared to the 2022 target in terms of individuals trained on the fellowship programme in Iceland, 53% compared to target in terms of scholarships granted, 48% compared to target in terms of short courses in partner countries/online. These figures take into account the impact of the COVID pandemic in the calculation of the averages.

4.4 THE SUITABILITY OF THE MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS TO EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY GENERATE THE PROGRAMME RESULTS

The management structure and overall institutional framework for implementing the individual programmes to achieve the desired outputs and outcomes are generally appropriate. Delivery of the intended programme results, in terms of quantity and quality, is in a timely manner. The majority of the different programme interventions function based on clearly defined processes and timelines, which is conducive to operational efficiency. At the strategic level, an **academic or studies committee/board**, commonly meeting twice annually, provides strategic vision and operational guidance to its programme. The core programme staffs, in collaboration with their studies board, host institution, and stakeholder partners, undertake the preparation of **medium-term programme strategic plans and annual action plans** linked to the operation of the proposed different programme interventions. Each programme determines the extent of its core programme staff in cooperation with its host institution. The extent of core staff and of FTE staff covered by GRÓ Centre for the **GTP** and the **LRT** programmes is rather low. In the event of an unforeseen sickness of core staffs, the programmes face challenges. Recognizing that programme management is heavily reliant on institutional memory and partnerships built by long-serving staff, generous learning and handover periods are required in the case of future new hires.

Individual programme monitoring, reporting, and steering mechanisms are generally good, although with room for improvement linked to collecting and reporting beneficiaries' feedback on the training provided. As part of the evaluation research, the evaluator requested data from each programme linked to assessing the quality of key training interventions during the period 2018-2023. Obtaining a consistent set of comparable standard statistical data across the period linked to how fellows assessed the value and learning benefits of the programmes was only successful with two programmes (**GEST** and **LRT**). Obtaining standard statistical data linked to how the beneficiaries of short courses in partner countries assessed the relevance and usefulness of the training to their job was difficult to achieve across the short courses delivered during the period. Adoption of the **GRÓ Results Framework** significantly strengthens programme monitoring, oversight and steering systems, via its inclusion of common key performance indicators against which each programme should collect and report data. It also establishes **specific indicators against which to measure the outcomes of the programmes** as assessed by the former fellows (the alumni) and their partner organization three-years after graduation. Previously, the programmes had only periodically used a tracer survey of the alumni, or some not at all.

At the level of the **GRÓ Centre**, the evaluator judges that overall **operational efficiency is adequate**. At the **operational level, the principal function of the GRÓ Centre is to conclude Service Agreements with the Host Institutions linked to delivery of the individual programmes, and for follow-up on those agreements**. The initial GRÓ Centre service agreement with the host institutions covered the period 2020-2023 (for GTP, 2021-2023). A subsequent, revised GRÓ Centre service agreement with the host institutions covers the period 2024-2025 only. The decision to conclude agreements for such a brief period was that of the GRÓ Governing Board. The justification for this, presented to the evaluator, was that as the service agreement was revised by the GRÓ Centre it would be useful to see how the new modality functions, or could be further fine-tuned, after a period of two-years. The GRÓ programmes and host institutions unanimously presented to the evaluator the need for longer-term agreements (four- or five-years duration), in order for programmes and hosts to make serious medium-term plans. They also strongly presented the case for conclusion of the next service

agreement proposed by the GRÓ Centre within 2025, rather than in the year of intended operation.

The **GRÓ Centre and Directors of the four programmes undertake regular follow-up** on programme implementation. The GRÓ Centre meets with the individual host institutions twice annually to discuss the cooperation and the running of the services agreements. While this process aims for efficient consultation, discussion, resolution of issues, and overall programme implementation, the **GRÓ Centre lacks detailed internal rules of procedure as to how it undertakes such consultation and decision-making in collaboration with the programmes**. Other than certain deadlines included in the service agreements, for the purposes of internal reporting by the programmes/host institutions to the GRÓ Centre, the overall annual programme management cycle by the GRÓ Centre, in partnership with the programmes and host institutions, is not precisely defined. The GRÓ programmes also noted that they are not aware of the GRÓ Centre Director General's actual job description.

GRÓ Centre is responsible for overall management and oversight of the public funds that the MFA provides to it for the purposes of public international development cooperation policy. In this context, reporting by GRÓ Centre to the MFA on the use of the public funds should also be in accordance with **OECD DAC standards** for statistical reporting on development cooperation flows and ODA. **GRÓ Centre's contribution to the programmes is on an annual basis**. GRÓ Centre requests the programmes to submit their proposal for the subsequent annual action plans by the start of September (effective since 2022, for negotiation of the 2023 budget). These are subject to consultation with GRÓ Centre, and final decision of the GRÓ Board, as to the extent of GRÓ Centre's financial contribution to the actions. GRÓ Centre traditionally confirms the final decision of the GRÓ Board on the annual contribution very late year.

At the operational level, the **GRÓ Centre is also responsible to identify potential areas for increased synergy** across the GRÓ programmes collective. In terms of its **contribution to overall programme effectiveness**, the focus of the GRÓ Centre principally links to the branding and collective promotion of the GRÓ programmes and offer, as well as the promotion of collective alumni community building. In terms of its **contribution to overall programme efficiency**, the focus of the GRÓ Centre links to the achievement of potential cost-efficiencies across the programmes linked to common procurement. For instance, in 2022, the GRÓ Centre undertook an agreement for rental of an apartment hotel in Reykjavik to house fellows from three of the four programmes. On average, GRÓ GTP fellows occupy the house for six months and GRÓ LRT and GRÓ FTP fellows for three months respectively. This is a cost saving.

The Director of the **GRÓ Centre is also responsible to report directly to the MFA** Permanent Secretary of State linked to the work of the Centre and programmes. This includes submission to the MFA of annual results-based work plans of the GRÓ Centre as the basis for financing the programmes, and annual technical and financial reports on the work and results achieved by GRÓ Centre and programmes. Reflecting that the GRÓ Centre operates as an independent legal body, as an agency of the MFA, the GRÓ Centre should also ensure the efficient process for communication of policy priorities and issues between the MFA and the collective and/or individual programmes, and should be the direct voice and advocate for the capacity development programmes collective within the MFA.

GRÓ Centre also leads on the development of GRÓ's partnership with UNESCO, under the auspices of which GRÓ Centre works. With **UNESCO headquarters**, the primary partnership that has developed is that between the **GRÓ LRT programme and UNESCO's MAB programme**. GRÓ Centre's development of collaboration has been effective linked to its working with **UNESCO regional and country offices, and national commissions for UNESCO in partner countries**. GRÓ Centre has promoted a good level of engagement with UNESCO's Nairobi (Kenya) regional office for Eastern Africa to explore possible cooperation with GRÓ. The regional office covers thirteen countries in Eastern Africa, where all four GRÓ programmes have been active, with around 30% of GRÓ alumni coming from the region. The UNESCO country office and national commission for UNESCO in Uganda have also been supportive in exploring potential cooperation with GRÓ. While still a work in progress, longer-term collaboration with UNESCO partners has good potential to empower GRÓ alumni as local change agents.

At **GRÓ Centre and programme level**, the GRÓ Governing Board meets frequently in order to review programme progress, strategic planning and the budget, the work of the GRÓ Centre, issues linked to the partnership with UNESCO, as well as to discuss specific topics or issues for potential resolution. GRÓ

Centre shares the minutes of the Board meetings with the MFA, but not with the GRÓ programmes. While the Board strongly focuses on overseeing financial management of the programme, it has been weaker in defining and guiding the longer-term development of and strategic direction of the GRÓ.

4.5 OVERALL EVALUATION CONCLUSION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE GRÓ AND THE GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMMES

The evaluator judges that **the overall performance of the GRÓ programmes is satisfactory** (good).

Evaluation criterion	Performance rating
Relevance	Satisfactory
Coherence	Satisfactory
Effectiveness	Satisfactory
Efficiency	Satisfactory
Sustainability	Satisfactory
Impact	Satisfactory

5 LESSONS LEARNED

5.1 GRÓ PROGRAMME STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The evaluator highlights the following key lessons learned as to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the programme, its management, implementation, and delivery of results.

Table 14: GRÓ programme SWOT analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Icelandic capacity development programmes are well known, recognized providers of high quality training and support targeted to the needs of low- and middle-income developing countries • The high quality of the programmes is based on vast experience and expertise Iceland can offer in the fields/areas the programmes address • Programmes offer a coherent mix of interventions, targeting young professionals with tailored training of different levels of intensity (fellowship, scholarship, short courses, some also online content) • The fellowship programmes in Iceland offer a unique, high quality, coherent package of training, state of the art knowledge learning, and research outcomes that are relevant to the needs of partner countries • Demand for the fellowship programmes is strong • Alumni are empowered by the fellowship training and research opportunity, many alumni indicate it was a fundamental stepping-stone in their career, and future advancement, and that they have used their skills to deliver local development change in their field • Programmes further empower the alumni through scholarships, opportunities to attend international conferences, and engaging them in the organization and delivery of short courses • Programmes have strong and reliable, long-term partnerships with key partner organizations, many of which co-fund specific actions • Programmes are demand driven by the needs and requests of organizations in the partner countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By design, the annual cohort size for the fellowship programmes in Iceland is limited in size to ensure quality, manageability, and individual experience; demand for the fellowship is not met, and cannot be met purely via the programmes delivery in Iceland • There is a risk of the dilution of effect of the results of the programmes if there is not a critical mass of capacitated change agents at partner country level, for example due to insufficient country targeting • There is limited effort at operational level by the MFA to define how the effort of the programmes can be better integrated into other fields of Icelandic development cooperation, and synergies created • Individual programme mechanisms to obtain feedback from the direct beneficiaries of training actions can be further improved, to provide comparable standard data on the quality of actions • Tracer surveys are not yet systematically utilized to follow-up with alumni over the medium- and the longer-term period of their career • There is a limited number of core programme staff at GTP and LRT, and at the GRÓ Centre, which is a risk in case of staff absence/sickness • GRÓ Centre operational consultation and decision-making in collaboration with programmes lack clear rules of procedure/function • Long-term strategic planning by the programmes is constrained by the lack of a medium-term financial perspective for GRÓ, as well as by late decision-making on the award of final annual budgets by GRÓ • The current GRÓ service agreements are only for two-years duration

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is strong Icelandic branding for its expertise in the specific fields/areas the programmes address • There is a good level of interest and demonstrated strong level of ownership by core programme partner organizations to build local capacity to offer training building on the programmes expertise, these include short courses, diploma, and university programme offer • This provides strong potential to offer GRÓ programme inspired postgraduate training and short or medium-term courses at partner institutions as a means to address the demand for quality training • Quantitative output can also be significantly increased through the replication of short courses within countries or regions, and also within other partner countries or regions where demand exists • Opportunities exist to strengthen country chapters of GRÓ alumni in key partner countries, notably in Eastern Africa, building a collective effort of alumni to promote initiatives in their home countries • Opportunities exist to strengthen collaboration of GRÓ alumni with UNESCO partners in key countries, and to other development partners • Opportunities exist to promote closer coordination of the GRÓ programme capacity development effort within the wider context and country/regional focus of Iceland's development cooperation effort • Icelandic policy foresees an increased financial provision over the medium-term for the purposes of international development cooperation policy/effort, which is essential to expanding GRÓ offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional memory and relationships with partner institutions strongly rely on long-serving programme staff • The budgetary perspective for the programmes is not clear; in 2024 programmes experienced a real terms cut in the budget allocated via GRÓ Centre, which was responding to its budget cut by the MFA • GRÓ Centre strategic priority targets for extent of programme delivery is therefore not yet achieved, due to the insufficient financial envelope • There is a risk the GRÓ programme is deemed to be under-achieving, despite the key successes programmes are effectively and efficiently delivering within their limited, and annual budget constraints • Impacts and their sustainability at the micro-, meso-and macro-level are beyond the programme control and can only be systematically measured by programmes via formal tracer surveys of alumni • An evidence-base of success stories and longer-term contribution of the GRÓ alumni is required to ensure that key stakeholders in Iceland (including the MFA) are aware of the programme successes, and that GRÓ Centre can better fulfil its basic advocacy role for the GRÓ programmes within the MFA and in Iceland (also in terms of its Development Education Awareness Raising and communications) • The partnership of GRÓ Centre functioning under the auspices of UNESCO fails to deliver effective results in terms of collaborative engagement between the partners and contribution of joint efforts to results achievement in key partner countries for the GRÓ

THE EVALUATOR HIGHLIGHTS THE FOLLOWING KEY LESSONS DRAWN FROM THE EVALUATION FINDINGS:

- The branding value of the GRÓ programmes rests on the Iceland name, and the high reputation built by the capacity development programmes in their areas of expertise over the long-term.
- The high quality of the fellowship programme in Iceland is the foundation for the programme's success, but it is logically limited in terms of quantitative outputs deliverable in Iceland itself.
- The careful targeting of the GRÓ programme support for short courses in specific countries or regions, delivered over several years, is a viable way to concentrate the focus of effort, and ensure that a critical mass of capacitated individuals are trained, as complement to the fellowship alumni.
- GRÓ programme long-term partnerships with key partner organizations in focus countries has resulted in the development of local training offer (of short, medium, or longer-term duration),

and of partners' organizational capacity to deliver training programmes. The medium-term goal is that the partner organizations take over the full operation and ultimately funding of courses.

- The success of the programmes in building local partnerships for the development and delivery of short courses is replicable in other focus countries or regions, for which it is crucial that programmes identify reliable local partners, and have a medium-term planning perspective.
- As a flagship product of Icelandic international development cooperation support, the long-term funding commitment of the GOI, provided via the MFA, is fundamental to the continuation of the programmes and successful expansion of training offered in partner countries.
- An evidence-base of success stories and longer-term contribution of the alumni is required to ensure that key stakeholders in Iceland (including the MFA) are aware of the programme successes, and that GRÓ Centre can better fulfil its basic advocacy role for the GRÓ programmes.
- The adoption of the GRÓ Results Framework significantly strengthens programme monitoring via its inclusion of common indicators against which each programme should collect and report data.
- GRÓ should collect data on impacts at the micro-, meso- and macro-level via systematic formal tracer surveys of GRÓ alumni over the medium- and the longer-term period of their career.
- Good opportunities exist to establish formal GRÓ alumni country chapters in leading countries for the programmes and in the promotion of links between the alumni and development partners.

5.2 POTENTIAL OPTIONS OR SCENARIOS TO GUIDE FUTURE ENDEAVOURS OF THE GRÓ AND THE GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMMES

At the strategic level, in terms of the positioning of the GRÓ Centre, the evaluation findings highlight two key issues for further reflection. First, linked to the positioning of the GRÓ Centre under the auspices of UNESCO, and second linked to the positioning of the GRÓ Centre under the MFA.

Linked to the positioning of the **GRÓ Centre under the auspices of UNESCO**,⁷⁰ the evaluation finds that development of close cooperation between the partners, and an effective coordination of efforts is, so far, limited in terms of results. There is prospect to strengthen the partnership, notably with UNESCO offices and national commissions in Eastern Africa, which GRÓ Centre undertakes in tandem with support to the development of GRÓ alumni country chapters. Overall, however, each GRÓ programme has natural links to other UN organizations of stronger reference and relevance to their work. The evaluation also finds that the branding value of the GRÓ programmes rests on the Iceland name, and the high reputation built by the individual capacity development programmes. Stakeholders in Iceland, as a medium-term option, highlighted the potential scenario whereby the GRÓ programmes operate as a stand-alone Icelandic centre of excellence. The evaluator finds it is a credible option for MFA to consider, over the medium-term, should the effectiveness of the collaboration with UNESCO be judged limited.

The GRÓ Centre is an independent agency, in accordance with article 17 of Act No. 115/2011 on the Government Offices of Iceland, operating under its own legal identity and capacity, **positioned under the MFA**. The basic framework for the operation of the GRÓ Centre and of the GRÓ Governing Board is set out in Regulation No. 1260 of 2019 on the GRÓ Centre. To date, the Minister for Foreign Affairs appointed the Director General of the GRÓ Centre (three DGs since 2020) from within the staffs of the MFA. The evaluation highlights that there is room to improve the internal governance system of the GRÓ Centre and of its cooperation with the independently operated GRÓ programmes linked to its efficiency and effectiveness. Clearer operational processes and rules of cooperation are required. Furthermore, the evaluator proposes that the current positioning of the GRÓ Centre under the MFA be further reviewed by the partners, with the goal to enhance the formal understanding of the GRÓ Centre's function, in partnership with the programmes, as an independent centre of excellence focused on building human resource and institutional capacities in partner countries. While the costs of operating the GRÓ Centre and the programmes is principally provided via the MFA, the GRÓ Centre is an operationally independent agency. The Centre and programmes are also responsible to raise special revenue by obtaining

⁷⁰ The MFA formally informed UNESCO in May 2024 that it seeks to renew the status of GRÓ Centre as a C2C under UNESCO.

additional grants and contributions from partner institutions and international projects. As an independent agency the role of the GRÓ Centre is principally as the advocate for the GRÓ programmes, including as the strategic voice of and link for the programmes to the MFA and to UNESCO (for example, promoting potential areas for further growth of the programmes, and links that the GRÓ programme effort can build with other development efforts of the MFA or UNESCO). As currently positioned under the MFA, the GRÓ Centre's systems for operational collaboration with the MFA are largely informal rather than a structured policy dialogue, while the GRÓ Governing Board appears to focus on micro-management of the MFA budget rather than the provision of policy direction for the development of the programmes. Over the medium-term potential options might include transforming the GRÓ Centre into an independent public body located outside the MFA. As noted in the 2019 report by the Expert Advisory Committee appointed by the MFA linked to the institutional arrangements, operations and organisation of the Icelandic Capacity Development Programmes in International Development, one option would be to establish the GRÓ Centre under the auspices of University of Iceland. The University already has several ties to the individual GRÓ programmes and is the host of the Vigdis International Centre of Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding, which is a UNESCO category II centre.⁷¹

At the operational level of the GRÓ Centre and GRÓ programmes, future endeavours need to focus on expanding the programme offer and support in partner countries. Within Iceland, the capacity in terms of annual cohort on the fellowship per programme can be extended, but only partially, so that programmes collectively enrol 100 fellows annually (an indicative average of 25 fellows per programme). In 2024, GTP anticipated it would enrol 26 fellows. The programmes do not consider it practical to go significantly beyond 25 fellows. The extent of capacity in terms of the provision of grants for the scholarship programme can also be extended and is reported by the programmes to be in demand. Yet, these will only go so far in terms of responding to demand for the support of the programmes. To achieve significant scaling-up of the GRÓ programme effort, the provision of training and support has to scale-up in the partner countries. **There is strong potential to do this with key partners**, for example in Uganda (Makerere University), in Uzbekistan (Samarkand State University), in the Caribbean (University of West Indies), in El Salvador (LaGeo), in Kenya (KenGen and GDC), and in Malawi (LUNAR University). Beyond these, the evaluator understands that the programmes are also seeking to build stronger partnerships in Ghana and in Sierra Leone.

Further to deepening cooperation in partner countries to provide high quality training, **a key endeavour for further support is the development of the GRÓ alumni network** both at individual programme level and at GRÓ Centre level, for the latter in terms of country/regional chapters of the alumni. Community building support provided by the programmes is a useful tool to regularly connect with and offer further opportunities for the empowerment of their alumni and in promoting them as change agents (for example via supporting their attendance and contribution at international conferences).

Linked to this, **a further key endeavour is for GRÓ Centre**, in cooperation with the programmes, **to introduce systematic formal tracer surveys** of GRÓ alumni over the medium- and the longer-term period. This is vital if GRÓ seeks to collect credible data as to the GRÓ programme outcomes and impact. Formal use of surveys linked to gathering feedback from key partner organizations as to the benefits of the GRÓ fellowship programme and other supports, and how partners utilized these will also be useful.

⁷¹ 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).

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evaluation findings analysis, the conclusions and lessons learned outlined in this report, the evaluation presents **15 recommendations at GRÓ programme level**: two addressed to the MFA as lead actor, ten to the GRÓ Centre as lead actor, and three to the programmes as lead actor. In addition to GRÓ programme level recommendations, recommendations are provided per training programme. These are based on the specific evaluation of each programme, but may have certain, wider applicability.

6.1 GRÓ PROGRAMME LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation highlights that **there is room to improve the governance system of the GRÓ Centre and of its cooperation with the GRÓ programmes**, linked to its actual efficiency and effectiveness.

The GRÓ Centre and Directors of the four programmes undertake regular follow-up on programme implementation. The GRÓ Centre meets with the individual host institutions twice annually to discuss the cooperation and the running of the services agreements. While this process aims for efficient consultation, discussion, resolution of issues, and overall programme steering and implementation, the **GRÓ Centre lacks detailed internal rules of procedure as to how it undertakes such consultation and how decision-making works in collaboration with the programmes**. Other than certain deadlines included in the service agreements, for the purposes of internal reporting by the programmes/host institutions to the GRÓ Centre, the annual programme management cycle by the GRÓ Centre, in partnership with the programmes and host institutions, is not precisely defined. The annual budget approval process is not timely for financial planning of the programmes. GRÓ programmes are not aware of the GRÓ Centre DGr's actual job description. There is also no structured framework for regular dialogue between the GRÓ programmes and the GRÓ Governing Board, except for the annual GRÓ workshop. GRÓ Centre does not share the minutes of the GRÓ Governing Board with the GRÓ programmes. Clearer operational processes and rules of cooperation are required. Regulation No. 1260 of 2019 provides only a basic framework for the operation of the GRÓ Centre and GRÓ Governing Board.

Recommendation 1: GRÓ Centre operational processes and rules for overall governance of GRÓ in cooperation with the GRÓ programmes and host institutions formalized via internal rules of procedure.

Principal actor(s): GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes (direct partners)

Recommendation 2: The detailed job description of the GRÓ Centre Director General formally specified.

Principal actor(s): MFA (lead actor), GRÓ Centre, and GRÓ programmes (partners to support MFA)

To date, the Minister for Foreign Affairs has appointed the Director General of the GRÓ Centre (three since 2020) from within the staffs of the MFA.

Recommendation 3: Reflecting that the GRÓ programmes are capacity development and training programmes, delivered in the context of Icelandic international development cooperation, the appointment of the next Director General of the GRÓ Centre should be based on a clear definition of the post applied for, and should be an open advertisement rather than just from MFA staff. The Director General should have a solid understanding of how capacity development interventions function and contribute to results achievement, as well as a solid understanding of Icelandic and international development cooperation policy and contexts.

Principal actor(s): MFA (lead actor)

The **GRÓ programmes are a relevant modality to complement other Icelandic efforts** in the area of international development cooperation, and the MFA has periodically made specific requests calling upon the programmes' expertise to support certain actions. **However, there is only partial direct**

evidence of coordination of effort or of synergy between the different efforts supported by the MFA with those of the GRÓ programmes. Iceland's international development cooperation policy notes the need for efforts better integrated into other fields of Icelandic development cooperation. This is a role for the MFA to lead on, in partnership with the GRÓ Centre to identify areas for potential synergy.

Recommendation 4: A framework for periodic structured dialogue between the GRÓ Centre and the MFA Directorate for International Development Cooperation, and the Directorate for International Affairs and Policy, established, aimed at identifying areas for closer coordination and integration of efforts.

Principal actor(s): GRÓ Centre (lead actor), MFA (direct partner)

Recommendation 5: A framework established for structured dialogue between the GRÓ Centre and the programmes and the Embassy of Iceland in partner countries for Iceland's bilateral cooperation support, aimed at identifying potential areas for collaboration or expansion of GRÓ programme efforts.

Principal actor(s): GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes, MFA Embassies of Iceland (direct partners)

The initial **GRÓ Centre service agreement with the host institutions** covered the period 2020-2023. A subsequent, revised GRÓ Centre service agreement with the host institutions covers the period 2024-2025 only. The justification for this, presented to the evaluator, was that as the service agreement was revised by the GRÓ Centre it would be useful to see how the new modality functions, or could be further fine-tuned, after a period of two-years. The GRÓ programmes and host institutions unanimously presented to the evaluator the need for longer-term agreements (four- or five-years duration), in order for programmes and hosts to make serious medium-term plans. They also strongly presented the case for conclusion of the next service agreement proposed by the GRÓ Centre within 2025, not in 2026.

Recommendation 6: GRÓ Centre service agreements, for the period starting year 2026, to be negotiated and finalized within year 2025, for which a duration period of up to six-years should be considered (or as determined by the intended duration period for the renewal of GRÓ Centre as a C2C).

Principal actor(s): GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes and host institutions (direct partners)

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. 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 **programmes lack adequate annual budget to meet the extent of the programme output results targets set for the GRÓ Centre and programmes as Strategic Priorities up to 2027.** During the period 2018-2023, the GRÓ programmes delivered at 90% compared to the 2022 target in terms of individuals trained on the fellowship programme in Iceland, 53% compared to target in terms of scholarships granted, 48% compared to target in terms of short courses in partner countries/online.

Recommendation 7: GRÓ programmes to prepare medium-term plans as to the extent of their anticipated delivery of programme outputs for the period up to 2030 (or as determined by the duration of the next service agreement). This should include annual minimum and maximum targets for delivery by the programmes of all key intervention outputs defined in the GRÓ programme Results Framework. There is a specific need to increase the collective delivery of the three key interventions noted above.

Principal actor(s): GRÓ programmes (lead actor), host institution (direct partner)

Recommendation 8: GRÓ Centre, in cooperation with GRÓ programmes, to provide the MFA 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. MFA is encouraged to provide the GRÓ Centre with an indicative broad financial framework up to 2030 within which it can anticipate to operate.

Principal actor(s): GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes (direct partners), MFA (decision-maker)

Individual programme monitoring, reporting, and steering mechanisms are generally good, although with room for improvement linked to collecting and reporting standard statistical data on

the direct beneficiaries' feedback on the training provided (such as the fellows, or on short courses). Adoption of the **GRÓ Results Framework** significantly strengthens the monitoring systems, via its inclusion of common key performance indicators against which each programme should 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 programmes had only periodically used a tracer survey of the alumni, or some not at all.

Recommendation 9: GRÓ programmes to ensure the collection and reporting of standard statistical data on the direct beneficiaries' feedback on the training provided (it is notably weaker for short courses).

Principal actor(s): *GRÓ programmes (lead actor), short course training partner(s) (direct partner)*

Recommendation 10: GRÓ Centre, in cooperation with GRÓ programmes, to introduce systematic formal tracer surveys of GRÓ alumni over the medium- and the longer-term period of their career (e.g. information on their position, publications, application of their skills via reforms or project initiatives, key achievements in delivering change). The survey three-years after graduation only captures outcome level results. Longer-term tracer surveys are required to capture long-term development effects and impact.

Principal actor(s): *GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes (direct partners)*

An evidence-base of success stories and longer-term contribution of the GRÓ alumni is required to ensure that key stakeholders in Iceland (including the MFA) are aware of the programme successes.

Recommendation 11: In addition to formal tracer surveys of GRÓ alumni, GRÓ Centre and programmes should also work together to undertake specific impact assessments of the programmes in a sample of leading partner countries or regions for the GRÓ, such as Malawi, Uganda, Kenya, Mongolia, Tanzania, or LAC. These would be valuable case studies to capture longer-term development effects and impact.

Principal actor(s): *GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes (direct partners)*

GRÓ Centre should be the direct voice and advocate for the capacity development programmes collective within the MFA, and in terms of Development Education Awareness Raising efforts in Iceland.

Recommendation 12: GRÓ Centre, in cooperation with GRÓ programmes, to prepare a formal GRÓ communication strategy for Development Education Awareness Raising efforts in Iceland.

Principal actor(s): *GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes (direct partners), Icelandic National Commission for UNESCO (partner)*

GRÓ Centre has advanced promotion of the **collective GRÓ programme alumni network**. Formal country and potentially regional alumni networks are a means to support bottom-up demand of the GRÓ alumni to promote local community building and networking activities among the GRÓ alumni. GRÓ Centre also supported building connections between such networks with UNESCO Regional and/or Country Offices, as a means to promote the expertise and capacity that the GRÓ alumni can offer within their countries to contribute to the wider development efforts of UNESCO and/or of national partners.

Recommendation 13: GRÓ Centre to finalize the draft GRÓ alumni strategy, and identify key countries or regions in which to roll out effort supporting the formal establishment of local GRÓ alumni chapters over the medium-term. Beyond Uganda, where alumni are in process of formally establishing a country chapter, other countries for potential establishment of GRÓ chapters include Kenya, Malawi, or Ethiopia.

Principal actor(s): *GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes (direct partners)*

The development of close **cooperation between the GRÓ Centre and UNESCO partners**, and an effective coordination of efforts is, so far, limited in terms of results. There are good prospects to strengthen the partnership with UNESCO offices and national commissions in Eastern Africa, which GRÓ Centre undertakes in tandem with support to the development of GRÓ alumni country chapters.

Recommendation 14: GRÓ Centre to prepare a medium-term strategy and key priorities for the GRÓ Centre and GRÓ programmes linked to the development of GRÓ's partnership with UNESCO partners.

Principal actor(s): GRÓ Centre (lead actor), GRÓ programmes (direct partners), Icelandic National Commission for UNESCO, and UNESCO headquarter (partners)

GRÓ Centre aims for overall gender parity, over a medium-term perspective, recognizing that the distribution fluctuates annually in terms of the direct beneficiaries. Gender parity was, broadly achieved overall across the programmes during the period for the core programme interventions (fellowship programme and scholarship programme). However, linked to the **short courses in partner countries**, significant further effort is required across all programmes to promote the inclusion of female participants. During 2018-2023, only 36% of participants on short courses were female.

Recommendation 15: GRÓ programmes should actively encourage partner organizations to nominate female candidates for all training activities. There is a notable under-representation on short courses.

Principal actor(s): GRÓ programmes (lead actor), GRÓ Centre (partner)

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS PER GRÓ PROGRAMME

6.2.1 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING GRÓ FTP

1. FTP demonstrates relevance, coherence, and effectiveness in achieving its objectives. While the design of the programme is presented throughout the various webpages of FTP's website, it is recommended to prepare a **design document of the programme presenting the problem(s) it solves, the objectives it pursues, the mix of its interventions, the implementation strategy, and the monitoring and evaluation of results** in a single document. Additionally, **developing a ToC** would help in documenting the programme's impact pathway. This would allow for clarity to stakeholders and enhanced public acceptance of the programme.
2. Given the overarching goal of GRÓ and the cross-cutting areas of human rights, gender equality, and the environment approach of Iceland's International Development Cooperation, it is recommended to **explicitly mainstream the SDGs, in particular SDG 14**, as the programme's targeted sustainable goal as well as the cross-cutting areas in the research by fellows and scholars. This approach would improve the relevance and effectiveness of the programme.
3. Some qualifying fellows have received support for a graduate degree. Given the potential for far-reaching impact of these graduates in their home countries and institutions, it is recommended to **expand the scholarship programme at the Ph.D. level** to enhance FTP's effectiveness. Expanding the number of scholars would also increase the prospects of long-term impacts and sustainability of the programme as scholars would most likely be employed by academic and research institutions whose mandate is the creation and dissemination of knowledge.
4. **In-country/regional short courses and workshops** have proven useful to address pressing issues in partner countries related to the fisheries sector. It is recommended to **replicate those courses at the country level**, according to needs, to continue enhancing local capacities at a decreasing cost, since those courses have already been prepared.
5. As research and knowledge creation is an important element of FTP, the dissemination of knowledge adds sustainability to the programme benefits. It is therefore recommended to **publish all research papers by fellows** and all theses by scholars on the website of FTP.
6. Given the potential the GEST Programme has to offer, it is suggested to **strengthen synergies with the GEST Programme**, as gender equality is an important issue in the fisheries sector, especially in partner countries where both programmes direct their efforts. There has been research done by four GEST fellows from Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Ghana on gender in fisheries that seems promising for the fisheries sectors in those countries. In that regard, the FTP and GEST Programmes could enhance their synergies by encouraging research on gender issues related to the fisheries sector where important gender gaps are observed in terms of women's participation.

7. It is recommended to set up a **communication strategy with Icelandic stakeholders** on the accomplishments of FTP, which would enhance public acceptance of the programme and reduce risks or threats to the existence of the programme.

6.2.2 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING GRÓ GEST

1. Further effort is needed by the GEST programme in order for it to consistently **meet the GRÓ Centre target of 25 fellows annually enrolled on the programme** in Iceland. The demand for the fellowship programme is very strong, and the programme has the capacity to train minimally 25 per year. While recognizing that 25 fellows annually is considered an ideal number in terms of programme manageability, learning outcomes, and pastoral care, this is an indicative number. The evaluator assesses that the GEST programme has the capacity to train slightly more than 25 fellows annually.
2. GEST programme fellows have produced a sizeable body of diverse new knowledge products via their final assignment production of a research or project paper. The vast majority of these are available on the GEST programme website. They represent a valuable source for the purpose of knowledge sharing and learning. Currently these are accessible via the GEST programme website on the basis of the country of focus of the research or project paper. It is not possible to **search the collection of papers on the basis of their theme(s)**, which limits the potential for researchers to utilize the knowledge products for comparative research across a range of countries. It is recommended that GEST programme consider the introduction also of a thematic search function.
3. To date, the GEST programme has **not provided meaningful support to its alumni to attend international conferences**. This is primarily due to limited financing for such actions. In this, the GEST programme stands out in comparison to the other GRÓ programmes (237 of their alumni attended leading international conferences in their field during the period 2018-2023). The most significant international conference for the GEST programme is the annual meeting of global partners, including civil society, at the UN CSW. It is recommended that the GEST programme provide support to its alumni to attend the event. This would significantly complement the valuable support to alumni empowerment provided via the GEST Alumni Fund. As practical, a fixed number of alumni that are supported annually should be agreed with GRÓ Centre, rather than constantly fluctuating.
4. The GEST programme also has a significant under-representation compared to other programmes in terms of the number of grants for postgraduate scholarships. This is not due to a lack of demand, but the lack of available funding. Expanding the number of scholars should be a priority.
5. GEST programme systems for gathering feedback from the direct beneficiaries of the fellowship are commendably strong. The system for gathering **standard statistical data from direct beneficiaries** of short courses in partner countries is not yet as commendably strong. While the reports prepared linked to the delivery of the short courses provide feedback from the beneficiaries on the course, this is sometimes in narrative format as to lessons learned, rather than standard statistical data also.
6. The short courses delivered in partner countries have proven very successful. It is recommended that **GEST programme seek to scale-up its two core short courses in the key partner countries** for its short course offer, namely Malawi and Uganda. Both are partner countries for Icelandic bilateral development cooperation support. The country strategy papers of the MFA for both countries have medium-term indicative financial frameworks. Thereby, it may be possible to develop a medium-term plan for roll out of courses delivered across a different range of districts within the countries. The ultimate goal is for the partner organizations to take over full leadership for course delivery.
7. Beyond delivering short courses in Malawi and Uganda, it is recommended that the GEST programme **replicate the courses in other key focus partner countries**. This is dependent on the demand of partner organizations, and the development of a solid partnership for collaboration. The programme has started the process to identify potential partners, and is encouraged to continue.

6.2.3 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING GRÓ GTP

1. The focus of the programme's activities and the distribution of fellows is on countries with significant geothermal development potential, rather than those with bilateral cooperation agreements with Iceland. As a result, the coherence of the GTP with other development efforts by Iceland in partner countries or regions is limited. In future initiatives, **GTP should establish synergies with other development interventions funded by the GOI** to enhance the coherence and impact of Iceland's development efforts. However, attention should be paid to avoid that offering geothermal training in countries that have no viable resources or plans to develop geothermal resources.
2. The GTP's offering for online training has been limited. This is a missed opportunity to expand the pool of experts in the geothermal field at a relatively low cost. **GTP should consider investing greater efforts to improve the online offer.** This additional activity would probably require additional financial resources.
3. The evaluative case study on the 5-month diploma in El Salvador has shown that this specific training **intervention is very cost-effective for enlarging the pool of geothermal experts** in the region. However, the recent graduation of El Salvador from LMIC to an UMIC poses a challenge for aligning future GRÓ-funded activities with the objective of focusing on LMICs. GTP and LaGeo should pay special attention to ensure that a larger portion of trainees are from LMICs. In addition, the general nature of the offered curriculum in the 5-month diploma limits specialisations needed for work in the geothermal sector. If offering many different specialisation fields (as done for the 6-month training in Iceland) is not an option due to costs and logistical considerations, a possible alternative for GTP and LaGeo could be to offer two broad specialisation areas: one for the earth sciences (including geothermal geology, geochemistry, and geophysics) and another for plant development and drilling.
4. GTP has tracked part of the alumni in an informal way, but it has **not used a formal tracing method to keep track of the career advancement** of alumni. This is a missed opportunity to properly assess the impact of the training programme once fellow return to their countries. However, with the limited number of available staff it will be hard for GTP to properly implement a regular survey. GRÓ should consider the implementation of a tracer survey for all supported training programmes.

6.2.4 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING GRÓ LRT

1. In order to achieve the desired programme outcomes at the level of individual partner institutions within reasonable time, it is recommended to **consider reducing the number of partners supported in parallel.** An attempt to define the desired 'critical mass' of trained individuals for each partner might allow for a more staggered approach, i.e. accomplishing capacity-building targets with one partner and then focusing on the next one. Such approach should not go against the successfully applied principle of each annual cohort ideally constituting a heterogeneous mix of individuals from different countries and institutions.
2. In order to achieve the desired programme outcomes at the level of individual partner institutions within reasonable time, it is recommended to **increase quantitative output through alternative activities such as in-country short courses or in-country postgraduate courses** in collaboration with partner universities. While these cannot be expected to have the same quality as the 6-month LRT Programme, they can contribute towards optimizing the programme's overall trade-off between quality and quantity.
3. Maintaining the programme's institutional memory is critical for both programme quality partnerships. Given the strong reliance on long-serving staff members, lecturers and programme partners in this regard, it is recommended to i) **introduce measures to conserve institutional memory** independently from individuals; and ii) enhance measures which ensure **handover of knowledge and institutional memory** between outgoing and incoming programme staff (e.g. through extended learning and handover periods).
4. To be able to better quantify programme impacts at all levels, it is recommended to **introduce/strengthen measures to systematically** document relevant outputs and achievements **at the individual alumni level and/or the partner institution level.** This would be labour-intensive and might require additional human resources at GRÓ LRT level.

7 ANNEXES

Annex 1	Evaluation Matrix
Annex 2	Evaluation Performance Rating System
Annex 3	List of People Consulted (Interview or Focus Group Discussion)
Annex 4	List of Documentation Consulted
Annex 5	GRÓ Programme Intervention Logic
Annex 6	GRÓ Programme Map of Stakeholders
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ANNEX 1 EVALUATION MATRIX

EVALUATION QUESTION	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION
Relevance - To what extent has the programme been relevant? Is the programme appropriate for the strategic and development contexts for Iceland, partner countries and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?			
To what extent are the programmes relevant to Iceland’s development policies, and in line with Iceland’s national development vision and strategies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistency of GRÓ programmes and activities with Iceland’s international development cooperation policy, cooperation strategies and partnerships; Consistency of GRÓ programmes and activities with Iceland’s national development vision and strategies; Consistency of GRÓ programmes and activities with Icelandic expertise and added value offer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRÓ strategic and programme documents; Iceland’s Policy for International Development Cooperation 2019-2023 and related strategies, draft parliamentary resolution for the policy 2024-2028; Voluntary National Review on 2030 Agenda; OECD DAC Peer Reviews; MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; National Commission for 2030 Agenda. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review; KIIs.
To what extent are programmes relevant to national development policies and target groups’ needs in partner countries?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistency of GRÓ programmes and activities with national policies, strategies and programmes in partner countries; Consistency of GRÓ programmes and activities with target groups’ needs in partner countries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRÓ strategic and programme documents; Sample of national and regional policy documents (e.g. of case study countries, and of key partner countries for GRÓ and Iceland), and reports/analysis from international and multilateral organizations; MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; Partner organisations; Alumni, final beneficiaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review; KIIs; Field visit; Survey Case studies.

EVALUATION QUESTION	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION
To what extent are programmes in line with the UN SDGs and with relevant international development policy frameworks and strategies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment of GRÓ programme activities with SDGs and Leave No One Behind; Consistency of GRÓ programme activities with selected/target SDGs specifically envisioned to be addressed; Alignment of GRÓ programme activities with international policy frameworks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRÓ strategic and programme documents; UN SDGs and international policy frameworks; MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; Class observation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review; KIIs; Field visit.
To what extent are programmes suitably designed, to facilitate implementation focus and results-based-management/reporting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of GRÓ programme design (e.g. SMART objectives/results, SMART indicators, risk assessment/mitigation). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRÓ strategic and programme documents; MFA, GRÓ and host organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review; KIIs.
Coherence - How well does the programme fit with other development efforts, is duplication of efforts avoided and synergies maximized?			
<p>Are potential synergies between the GRÓ programmes established and promoted?</p> <p>Are potential synergies between the work of the GRÓ and of the GRÓ programmes maximized across the different development efforts promoted or supported by Iceland?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synergies developed/defined linked to the GRÓ programmes and activities; Alignment and synergies of GRÓ programmes and activities with other Icelandic development efforts/actions; Number of identified synergies (incl. with comparison from UNU to UNESCO). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRÓ strategic and programme documents; Strategies, programme/project documents of other Icelandic development cooperation actions; MFA, GRÓ and host organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review; KIIs.
How well does the programme fit with other development efforts of partner organizations of the GRÓ and the GRÓ programmes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment and synergies of GRÓ programmes and activities with other development efforts/ actions of partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRÓ strategic and programme documents; MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; Partner organisations (incl. UNESCO). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review; KIIs; Field visit; Case studies.

EVALUATION QUESTION	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION
Do programme activities duplicate or overlap with other efforts by Iceland or other donors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of duplication or overlap between the GRÓ programmes and activities and/or with those of other development efforts by Iceland or other donors, or of the partner organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRÓ strategic and programme documents; Strategies, programme/project documents of other Icelandic development cooperation actions; Programme/project documents of other donors; MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; Partner organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review; KIIs; Field visit.
Effectiveness - To what extent has GRÓ and the programmes achieved their objectives?			
<p>To what extent are the stated outcomes and outputs on track, or have been achieved?</p> <p><i>(Detailed analysis at the level of the GRÓ, the individual GRÓ programmes, and per the intervention strategies as defined in the ToR)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual progress of implementation as per output and outcome indicators; Planned versus actual achievement of outputs; Planned versus actual achievement of outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRÓ strategic and programme documents; MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; Partner organisations; Alumni, final beneficiaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review; Secondary data collection; KIIs; Survey; FGDs; Case studies.
<p>What factors have contributed to achieving or have hindered achievement of the intended results, and were appropriate actions taken to adjust the programme design and actions?</p> <p>Are there particular interventions that are effective and should be continued or scaled-up?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparison of results achievement from different interventions; Expected and unexpected success factors; Expected and unexpected hindering factors; Mitigation measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRÓ strategic and programme documents; MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; Partner organisations; Alumni, final beneficiaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review; Secondary data collection; KIIs; Survey; FGDs; Case studies.
Efficiency - How efficiently have resources been used? To what extent has the use of financial and human resources available to the programme been efficient, for donor and implementing partners?			
To what extent has programme management and oversight procedures been effective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full compliance with management, planning, monitoring and evaluation, oversight and steering functions and procedures as defined for all parties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines on management and oversight procedures; GRÓ strategic and programme documents; MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; Partner organisations (incl. UNESCO). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review; Secondary data; KIIs; Case studies.

EVALUATION QUESTION	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION
<p>To what extent have financial and human resources been used in an efficient way, both for Iceland and in the partner countries?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with financial plans; • Allocation of staff and tasks; • Compliance with Public Sector Finance Management Guidelines; • Mechanism/system in place for tracking expenditure; • Effectiveness of internal audit systems in verifying financial management processes and costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines on management and oversight procedures; • Financial monitoring/tracking mechanisms; • Audit reports; • GRÓ strategic and programme documents; • MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; • Partner organisations (incl. UNESCO). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review; • KIIs; • Case studies.
<p>Are unit costs within acceptable levels in comparison with similar/comparable development efforts?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison of costs and outputs (cost-output monitoring and prognosis) • Comparison of financial plans and actual financial data with comparable donor development efforts; • Provide explanations for outliers and deviations from the planned budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines on management and oversight procedures; • Financial monitoring/tracking mechanisms; • Audit reports; • GRÓ strategic and programme documents; • MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; • Partner organisations (incl. UNESCO). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review; • Secondary data collection; • KIIs; • Case studies.
<p>To what extent the institutional change (from UNU to UNESCO Category 2 Centre) influenced the efficiency and effectiveness and the external perception of the GRÓ programmes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal management structure; • Programme strategies and approaches; • Effective communication and engagement to enhance GRÓ profile. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GRÓ strategic and programme documents; • Communication and outreach data; • MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; • Partner organisations (incl. UNESCO); • Alumni, final beneficiaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review; • KIIs; • Survey; • Case studies.

EVALUATION QUESTION	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION
Sustainability - To which extent are benefits of the programme likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn?			
To what extent are the benefits of the programmes likely to be sustained?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacities and follow-up activities of beneficiaries and partner organisations; Inclusion of continuation/follow up activities in investment plans/budgets; Inclusion of continuation/follow up activities in technical planning documents of partner organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRÓ strategic and programme documents; Progress reports, technical planning documents, investment plans of partner organisations; MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; Partner organisations; Alumni, final beneficiaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review; Secondary data collection; KIIs; Survey; Case studies.
What factors have contributed to and what factors have hindered sustainability of the results, and were appropriate actions taken to adjust the programme design and actions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of ownership by different stakeholders, formal or informal; Good practices / lessons learned / ideas for improvement; Main limitations for sustainability; Mitigation measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRÓ strategic and programme documents; MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; Partner organisations; Alumni, final beneficiaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review; KIIs; Survey; Case studies.
Impact – To what extent have the programmes generated significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, effects at micro, meso and macro levels, and/or to what extent are they expected to?			
Have the programmes generated significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, effects at micro, meso and macro levels, and/or to what extent are they expected to?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution to achievement of SDGs; Changes in organizational practices, processes and tools introduced by graduate in organizations where graduate are working; Changes in policies, regulations and standards to which GRÓ graduates have contributed after the training; Impacts on micro level (e.g. social-economic situation of training participants); Impact on meso and macro level; Reported unintended effects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRÓ strategic and programme documents; Official/UN documents (according to GRÓ results framework); MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; Partner organisations; Alumni, final beneficiaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review; Secondary data collection; Survey; KIIs; FGDs; Case studies.

EVALUATION QUESTION	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION
What are the long-term implications of the programme for stakeholders, beneficiaries and their environment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anticipated long-term effects on micro, meso and macro level; Good practices / lessons learned / ideas for improvement; Factors promoting longer-term impact; Factors hindering longer-term impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRÓ strategic and programme documents; MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; Partner organisations; Alumni, final beneficiaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review; Secondary data collection; Survey; KIIs; FGDs; Case studies.
Cross-cutting issues and challenges - How well have the cross-cutting issues been integrated into the programmes and addressed in implementation and delivery of the results?			
Human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working conditions of staff working in programme activities; Consideration of human rights aspects in programme design and implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRÓ strategic and programme documents; MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; Partner organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review; Secondary data collection; KIIs; FGDs.
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share of female beneficiaries; Share of women in key positions (e.g. at partner organisations); Gender-sensitive programme design and implementation; Reported promotion of gender equity policies and practices by graduates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRÓ strategic and programme documents; MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; Partner organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review; Secondary data collection; KIIs; FGDs.
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration of environmental aspects (e.g. when selecting training locations); Coverage of environmental risks, impacts and mitigation aspects in trainings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRÓ strategic and programme documents; MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; Partner organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review; Secondary data collection; KIIs; FGDs.

EVALUATION QUESTION	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION
<p>How have natural, social and economic shocks (e.g. Covid-19 pandemic, cyclones, cholera outbreaks, economic crisis) effected the programme and what measures, if any, can be taken to counter the risks?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and intensity of shocks, that affected programme implementation; • Implementation delays due to COVID-19; • Response mechanism to shocks established; • Unexpected migration movement of fellows due to crises in home country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GRÓ strategic and programme documents; • MFA, GRÓ and host organisations; • Partner organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review; • Secondary data collection; • KIIs; • FGDs.

ANNEX 2 EVALUATION PERFORMANCE RATING SYSTEM

The evaluator uses a **five scale rating system to assess programme performance**, as described below:

- Highly Satisfactory (very good)
- Satisfactory (good)
- Adequate (adequate)
- Unsatisfactory (poor)
- Highly Unsatisfactory (very poor)

The definition of the rating criteria used in assigning 'performance ratings' is shown below.

Highly Satisfactory	The programmes/projects are expected to fully achieve and in part exceed all of the intended objectives (<i>it has succeeded beyond the original scope of expectation</i>)
Satisfactory	The programmes/projects are expected to largely achieve all of the intended objectives (<i>it has generally succeeded in line with the original scope of expectation</i>)
Adequate	The programmes/projects are expected to achieve a good part of the intended objectives but not all of the objectives, as performance has faced some constraints to deliver the intended objectives and scope (<i>it has broadly succeeded but with variance compared to the original scope of expectation</i>)
Unsatisfactory	The programmes/projects are not expected to achieve a large part of the intended objectives (<i>it has to a significant degree failed to deliver the majority of the expected achievements as per the original scope</i>)
Highly Unsatisfactory	The programmes/projects are not expected to achieve any significant progress linked to the vast majority of the intended objectives (<i>it has failed almost entirely to meet the original scope of expectation</i>)

ANNEX 3 LIST OF PEOPLE CONSULTED (INTERVIEW OR FOCUS GROUP)

GRÓ stakeholders and partners (excluding GRÓ training programme specific stakeholders and partners)

NAME	GENDER	ORGANIZATION	POSITION
Nína Björk Jónsdóttir	F	GRÓ International Centre	Director General
Erla Hlín Hjálmarsdóttir	F	MFA	Director of Internal Affairs
Elín Rósa Sigurðardóttir	F	MFA	Director General of International Development Cooperation
Davíð Bjarnason	M	MFA	Director of Bilateral Development Cooperation
Auður Edda Jökulsdóttir	F	MFA	Special Envoy for Gender Equality
Hildigunnur Engilbertsdóttir	F	Embassy of Iceland, Kampala, Uganda	Icelandic Head of Mission in Uganda
Jón Karl Olafsson	M	GRÓ Governing Board	Chairman
Sæunn Stefánsdóttir	F	Icelandic National Commission for UNESCO	Chair (member of the GRÓ Governing Board)
Guðrún Margrét Guðmundsdóttir	F	Icelandic Confederation of Labour	Gender Advisor (member of the GRÓ Governing Board)
Ásta Magnúsdóttir	F	(Private citizen)	Former member of the GRÓ Governing Board (2020-2023)
Hulda Hrafnkelsdóttir	F	Icelandic Centre for Research (RANNÍS)	Manager, Erasmus+ and Nordplus Higher Education

GRÓ FTP

NAME	GENDER	ORGANIZATION	POSITION
Training Programme and Host Institution partners			
Pór Heiðar Ásgeirsson	M	FTP	Director
Julie Ingham	F	FTP	Acting Deputy Director
Mary Frances Davison	F	FTP	Deputy Director
Stefán Úlfarsson	M	FTP	Specialist
Davíð Tómas Davíðsson	M	FTP	Project Manager
Zaw Myo Win	M	FTP	Operations Manager
Thorsteinn Sigurðsson	M	Icelandic Marine and Fresh Water Research Institute	Director

NAME	GENDER	ORGANIZATION	POSITION
Thanh Viet Nguyen	M	Faculty of Natural Resource Sciences, University of Akureyri	Associate Professor, FTP Lecturer
Ólafur Sigurgeirsson	M	Hólar University College	FTP Lecturer and Supervisor
Theodór Kristjánsson	M	Marine and Freshwater Research Institute (MFRI), Freshwater and Aquaculture Division	Supervisor, Lecturer and Researcher, Specialist in Genetics, FTP head of line
Warsha Singh	F	MFRI, Pelagic Division	Ecologist Researcher, FTP head of line
Julian Mariano Burgos	M	MFRI, Demersal Division	Researcher, Marine Ecologist, FTP Lecturer and Supervisor
Einar Hjörleifsson	M	MFRI, Demersal Division	Researcher, Marine Biologist, FTP Lecturer and Supervisor
Daði Már Kristófersson	M	Faculty of Economics, University of Iceland	Faculty member, FTP Lecturer and Supervisor
Margeir Gissurarson	M	MATÍS	Strategic Scientist, FTP head of line, Lecturer and Supervisor
Hreiðar Pór Valtýsson	M	Faculty of Natural Resource Sciences, University of Akureyri	Associate Professor, FTP head of line, Lecturer and Supervisor
Hördur Saevaldsson	M	Faculty of Natural Resource Sciences, University of Akureyri	Head of Fisheries Science Programme, FTP Lecturer and Supervisor
Georges Lamborelle	M	MATÍS	Station Manager of MATÍS Aquaculture Research Station, FTP Lecturer and Supervisor
Hildur Inga	F	MATÍS / University of Iceland	FTP Lecturer and Supervisor
Pamela Woods	F	MFRI	FTP Lecturer and Supervisor
Margeir Gissurarson	M	MATÍS	FTP Lecturer and Supervisor
Daniela F. Sesaj	F	MFRI	FTP Lecturer and Supervisor
Cesilia Mataba	F	MFRI	FTP Lecturer and Supervisor
Amara M. Johnson	F	MFRI	FTP Lecturer and Supervisor
Partner Organizations in partner countries			
Milton Haughton	M	CRFM	Executive Director
June Henrietta Charmaine Masters Gordon	F	CRFM	Statistic and Information Analyst
Mona Webber	F	University of the West Indies, MONA Campus, Jamaica	Director, Centre for Marine Sciences

NAME	GENDER	ORGANIZATION	POSITION
Howard Ride	M	University of the West Indies, MONA Campus, Jamaica	Executive Director, Mona Institute of Applied Sciences
Gavin Bellamy	M	National Fisheries Authority, Jamaica	CEO
Stephen Smikle	M	National Fisheries Authority, Jamaica	Director, Capture Fisheries Division
Azra Blythe-Maullett	F	National Fisheries Authority, Jamaica	Senior Director Research and Development
Sharon Hutchison	F	Faculty of Food & Agriculture, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago	Department Chair, Agricultural Economics and Extension Department
Amanda Vang	F	FIRUM, Biotechnology Department, Faroe Islands	Department Head
FTP Alumni and current fellows			
Leanne Alicia Morris Bennet	F	National Fisheries Authority, Jamaica	Acting Senior Research Officer, Aquaculture Branch (former FTP Fellow and current FTP scholarship recipient for a Master's degree at Hólar University in Iceland)
Brian Murray	M	National Fisheries Authority, Jamaica	Extension Officer, Capture Fisheries Division (current FTP Fellow)
Krystal Facey	F	National Fisheries Authority, Jamaica	Research Officer, Aquaculture Branch (current FTP Fellow)
Clive St. George Williams	M	National Fisheries Authority, Jamaica	Regional Extension Officer, Aquaculture Branch (former FTP Fellow)
Anginette Orinthea Murray Martin	F	National Fisheries Authority, Jamaica	Statistician/Data Manager (former FTP Fellow)
Kimberlee Marcellin Cooke-Panton	F	National Fisheries Authority, Jamaica	Senior Research Officer, Capture Fisheries Division (former FTP Fellow and FTP scholarship recipient for a Master's degree at University of Iceland)
Stacy-Ann Antoinette Gray	F	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Jamaica	Former FTP fellow and currently a PhD student on marine spatial planning in aquaculture development at University College Cork, Ireland
Ricardo Morris	M	Independent consultant on fisheries matters in the Caribbean region	Former FTP fellow and FTP scholarship recipient
Lorena Olivia Noriega Orozco	F	Centro de Investigación en Alimentación y Desarrollo, Hermosillo, Campus, Sonora, Mexico	Research-professor (Former FTP Fellow)

NAME	GENDER	ORGANIZATION	POSITION
Alma Cárdenas Bonilla	F	Formerly at Centro de Investigación en Alimentación y Desarrollo, Hermosillo, Campus, Sonora, Mexico	Retiree (Former FTP Fellow)
Mariela Ramos Milanés	F	HACCP at TECNOSIME, Havana, Cuba	Consultant
Kawooya Godfrey Kubiriza	M	School of Natural Sciences, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda	Department Chair (Former FTP Fellow and FTP scholarship recipient)
Drake Ssempijja	M	Department of Zoology, Entomology and Fisheries Sciences, Makerere University, Uganda	Asst. Lecturer (Former FTP Fellow)
Moksha S. Usgoda	F	Department of Fisheries, Jaffna University, Sri Lanka	Assistant Lecturer, Department of Fisheries (Current FTP Fellow)
Yamikani E. Balaka	M	Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Natural Resources and Climate Change, Malawi	Principal Fisheries Research Officer (Current FTP Fellow)
Jimmy Byaruhanga	M	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Uganda	Fisheries Inspector (Current FTP Fellow)
Maria Joaquina Ibarra Arana	F	Instituto Nicaragüense de Pesca y Acuicultura, Nicaragua	Fisheries and Aquaculture Specialist (Current FTP Fellow)
Christina Eva Martha	F	Directorate of Logistics, Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Indonesia	Data and Information Analyst (Current FTP Fellow)
James Ngwaerobo	M	Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Solomon Islands	Principal Aquaculture Officer (Current FTP Fellow)
Sikudhani Y. Mponda	F	Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, Tanzania	Fisheries Officer (Current FTP Fellow)
Gobiraj Ramejeyam	M	Blue Resources Trust, Sri Lanka	Senior Researcher (Current FTP Fellow)
Rickson Lis	M	National Fisheries Authority, Papua New Guinea	Sedentary Fisheries Team Leader (Current FTP Fellow)
Cesilia D. Mataba	F	Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute, Tanzania	Research Officer II (Current FTP Fellow)
Tiwonge Soko-Nyirenda	F	Department of Fisheries, National Aquaculture Centre, Malawi	Principal Fisheries Research Officer (Current FTP Fellow)

GRÓ GEST

NAME	GENDER	ORGANIZATION	POSITION
Training Programme and Host Institution partners			
Irma Erlingsdóttir	F	GEST	Director
Védís Sigrúnardóttir Ólafsdóttir	F	GEST	Project Manager
Giti Chandra	F	GEST	Research Specialist
Thomas Brorsen Smidt	M	GEST	Project Manager & Academic Coordinator
Anna Guðrún Aradóttir	F	GEST	Project Manager
Guðrún Eysteinsdóttir	F	GEST	Operations Manager
Jón Atli Benediktsson	M	University of Iceland	Rector
Ólöf Garðarsdóttir	F	University of Iceland	Dean, School of Humanities
Nanna Teitsdóttir	F	University of Iceland	Manager, International Division
Jón Geir Pétursson	M	University of Iceland	GEST PhD Supervisor, Lecturer and Supervisor
Margrét Ann Thors	F	University of Iceland	GEST Final Assignment Lecturer and Module Coordinator
Pórður Kristinsson	M	University of Iceland	GEST Lecturer and Supervisor
GEST Alumni and current fellows			
Chinenye Anekwe	F	International Labour Organization, Nigeria office	National Project Coordinator, Promoting Gender Equality (former GEST Fellow and GEST Alumni Fund recipient)
Sonal Dhanani	F	Parindey Training and Counselling and Girl Rising	Founder and CEO Country Program Manager (former GEST Fellow and GEST Alumni Fund recipient)
Hameeda Syed	F	Dignity in Difference	Current GEST Fellow
Elizabeth Achola Mang'eni	F	Kenya Network of Women with Disability	Current GEST Fellow
Tawonga Kwangu Msowoya	F	GEST	Current GEST Fellow
Aklam Amany	M	Makerere University	Current GEST Fellow
Ramatu Issah	F	University of Ghana	Current GEST Fellow
Rajina Shrestha	F	CREA	Current GEST Fellow
Anastase Ndagjimana	M	RWAMREC	Current GEST Fellow
Ibrahim Kadara	M	Pengea Educational Development	Current GEST Fellow

GRÓ GTP

NAME	GENDER	ORGANIZATION	POSITION
Training Programme and Host Institution partners			
Gudni Axelsson	M	GTP	Director
Ingimar G. Haraldsson	M	GTP	Deputy Director
Málfríður Ómarsdóttir	F	GTP	Programme Manager
Árni Magnússon	M	ÍSOR	CEO
Valgerður Gunnarsdóttir	M	ÍSOR	Division Manager - Human Resources and Internal Services
Gunnar Kaldal	M	ÍSOR	Technical expert and GTP Lecturer
Jón E. Jónsson	M	ÍSOR	Technical expert and GTP Lecturer
Jóhann Þór Magnússon	M	ÍSOR / Independent Consultant	GTP Lecturer and Supervisor
Grímur Björnsson	M	ÍSOR / Independent Consultant	GTP Lecturer and Supervisor
Páll Valdimarsson	M	ÍSOR / Independent Consultant	GTP Lecturer and Supervisor
Andri Stefánsson	M	ÍSOR / Independent Consultant	GTP Lecturer and Supervisor
Helga Margrét Helgadóttir	F	ÍSOR	Lecturer and Supervisor from the Teaching Board
Gylfi Páll Hersir	M	ÍSOR	GTP Lecturer and Supervisor from the Teaching Board
María Sigríður Guðjónsdóttir	F	University of Reykjavik	GTP Lecturer and Supervisor from the Teaching Board
Finnbogi Óskarsson	M	ÍSOR	GTP Lecturer and Supervisor from the Teaching Board
Helgi Þór Ingason	M	University of Reykjavik	Professor, GTP Lecturer and Supervisor from the Teaching Board
Partner Organizations in partner countries			
José Luis Henriquez Miranda	M	LaGeo	Project manager
Elisabeth de Henriquez	F	LaGeo	Diploma and short course organizer
Jonathan Mauricio Argueta Martínez	M	University of El Salvador	Researcher and diploma organizer
Peter Dirangu Maina	M	Kenya Electricity Generating Company Geothermal Training Center	Project manager
Sulamith Kastl	F	BGR	Director for Technical assistance project for SICA member countries

NAME	GENDER	ORGANIZATION	POSITION
GTP Alumni and current fellows			
Hector Ribeira	M	LaGeo	(former GTP Fellow)
Oscar Cideos	M	LaGeo	(former GTP Fellow and also MSc alumni)
Guillermo Fuentes	M	LaGeo	Diploma alumni (training delivered in El Salvador)
Eduador Garcia	M	LaGeo	Diploma alumni (training delivered in El Salvador)
Delmar Villatoro	M	LaGeo	Diploma alumni (training delivered in El Salvador)
Claudia Caneses	F	LaGeo	Diploma alumni (training delivered in El Salvador)
Veronica Esmeralda	F	LaGeo	Diploma alumni (training delivered in El Salvador)
Dennis Zamora	M	LaGeo	Diploma alumni (training delivered in El Salvador)
José Luis Villa Costa	M	LaGeo	Diploma alumni (training delivered in El Salvador)
Matilde Urquizo	F	IADB	IADB consultant (former GTP Fellow and diploma training alumni)
Daniel Villarroel	M	GTP	Former GTP Fellow and current GTP scholarship recipient
Tingting Zheng	F	GTP	Former GTP Fellow and current GTP scholarship recipient
Agata Rostran	F	GTP	Former GTP Fellow and current GTP scholarship recipient
Julia Satriani	F	GTP	Former GTP Fellow and current GTP scholarship recipient
GTP Short course participants			
Ronell Pemberton	M	SKELEC (St Kitts and Nevis)	Project engineer for the electricity company
Kerne Antoine-Gabriel	F	Ministry of infrastructure (St Lucia)	energy officer, office of urban development and renewable energy
Shannon France	M	Ministry of Urban Development	Energy officer
Kevin Gutierrez	M	Momotombo power company	Chemical engineer
Luz Yamile Ordonez Suarez	F	HOCOL	Geomechanics engineer
Darwin Mateus Tarazona	M	Ecopetrol	Geologist
Yohanna Katherine Garcia Zabala	F		
Carlos Esteban	M	Neuquén Investnebt Agency	Geothermal area chief
José Felicianos Santos	M	Mexico Federal Commission for Electricity	
Karina Maribel Cerna	F	Istituto Hondureño de Geología y Minas	Head of research

GRÓ LRT

NAME	GENDER	ORGANIZATION	POSITION
Training Programme and Host Institution partners			
Sjöfn Vilhelmsdóttir	F	LRT	Director
Berglind Orradóttir	F	LRT	Acting Director; Assistant Professor (has served as Deputy Director across the evaluation period 2018-2023)
Ragnheiður Inga Þórarinsdóttir	F	Agricultural University of Iceland	Rector
Ása Aradóttir	F	Agricultural University of Iceland	Professor
Olafur Arnalds	M	Agricultural University of Iceland	Lecturer; former professor
Partner Organizations in partner countries			
Gerald Eilu	M	Makerere University, Uganda	Professor, School of Forestry, Environmental and Geographical Sciences
Lawrence Orikiriza	M	Makerere University, Uganda	Head, Department of Forestry, Biodiversity and Tourism
Daniel Waiswa	M	Makerere University, Uganda	Senior Lecturer, School of Forestry, Environmental and Geographical Sciences
Enock Ssekubwe	M	Makerere University, Uganda	Lecturer, School of Forestry, Environmental and Geographical Sciences (former LRT Fellow)
Jerome Lugumira	M	National Environmental Management Authority, Uganda	Natural Resources Manager
Godfrey Kubiriza	M	Makerere University, Uganda	Head, Department of Zoology, Entomology and Fisheries Sciences (former FTP Fellow, co-leading alumni efforts to establish a GRÓ Country Chapter in Uganda)
Teddy Nabwire	F	UNESCO, Uganda Country Office	National Project Officer
Vincent Ogal	M	UNESCO, Uganda Country Office	Communications Officer
LRT Alumni and current fellows			
Uhunwa Precious Igbo-Osagie	F	Forestry Research Institute FRIN	Current LRT Fellow
Eredia Anamsey Anueka Toah	F	E.P.A.	Current LRT Fellow
Bridget Babirye	F	Kanuli DIE	Current LRT Fellow
Caroline Mbabazi	F	Rukungiri DLG	Current LRT Fellow
Mercy Ngure	F	Lona Reclamation	Current LRT Fellow

NAME	GENDER	ORGANIZATION	POSITION
Chifundo Staubi	F	Ministry of Agriculture	Current LRT Fellow
Oyuntugs Tegsheebaatar	F	LM Agency	Current LRT Fellow
Doston Tuvalov	M	University of Samarkand	Current LRT Fellow
Prince Addai	M	CSIR-Soil Research Institute	Current LRT Fellow
Isaac Oluplot	M		Former LRT Fellow
Charles Otim	M		Former LRT Fellow
Maryjude Namulema	F		Former LRT Fellow
Gertrude Akello	F		Former LRT Fellow
William Nsimiire	M		Former LRT Fellow
Andrew Opiolo	M		Former LRT Fellow
Paulina Lokongo	F		Former LRT Fellow
Yulduz Abdullaeva	F		Former LRT Fellow
Abdubakir Kushbokov	M		Former LRT Fellow
Mahmud Muminov	M		Former LRT Fellow

ANNEX 4 LIST OF DOCUMENTATION CONSULTED

ICELANDIC DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION POLICY

\ GOI AND PARLIAMENT OF ICELAND

- Act on Iceland's International Development Cooperation (Act No. 121/2008)
- Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland's International Development Cooperation plan 2013–2016
- Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland's policy for International Development Cooperation 2019–2023
- Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland's policy for International Development Cooperation 2024–2028
- MFA, International Development Cooperation: Bilateral Development Cooperation Strategy (2022), Multilateral Development Cooperation Strategy (2022), Gender Equality Strategy (2022), Communication & Knowledge Management Strategy (2022), Evaluation Policy (2024)
- Government of Iceland (GOI), Voluntary National Review (VNR) Iceland 2023
- Relevant Acts: Government Offices of Iceland (Act No. 115/2011); Public Finance (Act No. 123/2015)

\ OECD, DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION DIRECTORATE

- OECD, [Development Co-operation Profiles – Iceland \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](https://oecd-ilibrary.org/)
- OECD, Special Review of the aid programme of Iceland (2013)
- OECD, Peer Review of Iceland (2017)
- OECD, Iceland Mid-term Review (2020)
- OECD, Peer Review of Iceland (2023)

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION POLICY

- UN, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)
- UN, Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2017)
- OECD, DAC List of ODA Recipients effective for reporting on flows in 2018 and 2019, on flows in 2020, on flows in 2021, on flows in 2022 and 2023, and on flows in 2024 and 2025
- UNDP, 2021/2022 Human Development Report
- UNESCO, Medium-Term Strategy 2022–2029
- UNESCO, Strategy for category 2 institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO (2019)

GRÓ CENTRE

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

- MFA, 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 GOI 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)
- GOI regulation on GRÓ: Regulation No. 1260/2019 (December 2019)

\ OPERATIONS OF THE GRÓ CENTRE

- Rules of Procedure for the Governing Board of GRÓ (rules adopted 2020, and rules adopted 2023)
- GRÓ Governing Board minutes from meetings held April 2020 to February 2024 (24 Board meetings)
- GRÓ Theory of Change (ToC) 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 (draft)
- GRÓ C2C annual activity report 2021, GRÓ C2C annual activity report 2022, GRÓ C2C annual activity report 2023
- GRÓ Service Agreements with the Host Institutions for FTP, GEST, GTP, LRT (GRÓ Service Agreements 2020-2023 and GRÓ Service Agreements 2024-2025)
- GRÓ Guidelines for Launching a national GRÓ Alumni Network (draft version 2024)
- A range of GRÓ financial and other statistical data covering the period 2020 to 2024
- [GRÓ Website](#)
- Ernst & Young, GRÓ Knowledge Centre for development cooperation: Evaluation of GRÓ's school administration with development cooperation funds (2022)
- Past Evaluation Reports on the Training Programmes:
 - ♦ [Evaluation of the UNU Programmes in Iceland](#) (2017)
 - ♦ [An Evaluation of GRÓ's Master's and Doctoral Scholarship Programme](#) (2023)

GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMMES

\ FTP RELATED DOCUMENTATION

- GRÓ Programme Websites: [FTP](#)
- [United Nations University Fisheries Training Programme](#) (2003)
- UN, United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1994)
- UN, United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (1995)
- WTO, Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (2022)
- FAO, Code of conduct for responsible fisheries (1995)
- FAO, Voluntary guidelines for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication (2015)
- FAO, A review of women's access to fish in small-scale fisheries (2015)
- FAO, The state of world fisheries and aquaculture (2018, 2022, and 2024)
- FAO, Strengthening coherence between social protection and fisheries policies, framework for analysis and action (2022)
- IOC-UNESCO, IOC Medium-term strategy 2022–2029 (2022)
- Árnason, H., An evaluation of the United Nations University Fisheries Training Programme (2004)
- Asgeirsson, T., Training needs assessment of the fisheries divisions of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism Member States (2014)
- Caribbean Natural Resources Institute, Lessons learned from fisheries-related livelihoods and socioeconomic initiatives in the Caribbean (2020)
- CRFM, Report on the Development and Implementation of the Leadership Course for Chief Fisheries Officers in the Caribbean (2010)
- CRFM, Project cycle management training workshop, final report (2011)
- CRFM, Report of workshop to develop strategy to strengthen capacity in CRFM States in the area of fisheries statistics and information (2014)
- CRFM, Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy (2020).
- CRFM, Third strategic plan 2022-2030 (2021)
- Jamaican Ministry of Agriculture and Lands Fisheries Division, Draft fisheries policy (2008)
- Letter of agreement between the United Nations University Training Programme and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (2012)

- Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Liberia, Fisheries and aquaculture policy and strategy (2014)
- Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development of Malawi, National Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy (2016)
- Memorandum of understanding between the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism and the United Nations University-Fisheries Training Programme (2008)
- Planning Institute of Jamaica, roadmap for SDG implementation in Jamaica (2017)
- PNG National Fisheries Authority, Papua New Guinea Fisheries Strategic Plan 2021-2030 (2021)
- Úlfarsson, S., Africa coastal communities, UNU-FTP Progress report (2019)

\ GEST RELATED DOCUMENTATION

- GRÓ Programme Websites: [GEST](#)
 - ♦ [GRÓ GEST March 8 Fund](#)
 - ♦ [GRÓ GEST Massive Open Online Courses \(MOOCs\)](#) on the edX platform: [Gender and Intersectionality](#), [Gender and Development: Critical Theories and Approaches](#), [Gender, Violence and Post-Conflict States](#) and [Men, Boys and Masculinities](#)
- [External Evaluation of the 2009-2012 Pilot Project of the Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme](#) (2012)
- [External Evaluation Development of a Short Training Course on Gender and Climate Change Uganda 2011-2013](#) (2013)
- GEST Annual Report 2017, GEST Annual Report 2018, GEST Annual Report 2019, GEST Annual Report 2020, GEST Annual Report 2021, GEST Annual Report 2022
- GEST presentations (Power Point slides) on the programme, on the March 8 Fund, and on the MOOCs
- GRÓ GEST Strategy with an Annual Action Plan 2023-2027
- GRÓ GEST Alumni Strategy 2023-2025 (draft version)
- GRÓ GEST PhD and Master's Scholarship Framework 2024-2027
- GRÓ GEST Reflections on the next steps of the GRÓ GEST's Online Programme (note of 2024)
- Final Reports of GEST Alumni linked to the three projects supported under the March 8 Fund
- Gender and Climate Change short course training reports, two for courses in Uganda in 2019, one for course in Malawi in 2021, two for courses in Malawi in 2023
- Teaching Gender to Youth short course training reports, one for course in Malawi in 2019, one for course for Saint Lucia in 2021, three for courses in Uganda in 2023

\ GTP RELATED DOCUMENTATION

- GRÓ Programme Websites: [GTP](#)
- [Regional Geothermal Training Programme at the University of El Salvador](#) (2014)
- [The UNU Geothermal Training Programme: Training Activities Offered On-Site in Developing Countries](#) (2015)
- [UNU Geothermal Training Programme in Iceland: Capacity Building for Geothermal Energy Development for 36 Years](#) (2015)
- GRÓ Geothermal Training Programme in Iceland: Geothermal Capacity Building in Developing Countries for 45 years (Gudni Axelsson, Ingimar G. Haraldsson, Málfríður Ómarsdóttir and Vigdís Hardardóttir)
- Ouko, E.A., and Ómarsdóttir, M.,: The Geothermal Journey - A Case Example of Iceland and Kenya, Proceedings, fortieth
- Workshop on Geothermal Reservoir Engineering, Stanford University, Stanford, California, January 26-28, (2015), SGP-TR-204
- Successes and challenges of Geothermal Training: Behind the scenes insight into the UNU/GRÓ Geothermal Training Programme by Málfríður Ómarsdóttir, Gudni Axelsson, Ingimar G. Haraldsson, and Vigdís Hardardóttir
- Axelsson, G., Haraldsson, I.G., Ómarsdóttir, M, and Hardardóttir, V.,: GRÓ Geothermal Training Programme in Iceland: Geothermal

- Capacity Building in Developing Countries for 45 years, Proceedings World Geothermal Congress 2023, Beijing, China, April 17 – 21, (2023), 1-16.
- GRÓ Geothermal Training Programme in Iceland – Training Activities Abroad. By Ingimar G. Haraldsson, Gudni Axelsson, Málfrídur Ómarsdóttir, and Vigdís Hardardóttir
- Short courses: Agenda 2006-2024
- Diploma Course: Evaluations 2012-2014, annual reports 2016-2022, Salvadorian-Italian cooperation 2010-2012

\ LRT RELATED DOCUMENTATION

- GRÓ Programme Websites: [LRT](#)
 - ♦ GRÓ LRT MOOCs: [A Business Approach to Sustainable Landscape Restoration](#) and [Business Model Innovation for Sustainable Landscape Restoration](#)
- [Land Restoration Training Programme Pilot Project: Mid-term Review](#) (2008)
- LRT Annual Reports
- LRT six-month training evaluation reports from 2017-2023
- Mongolia Short course training evaluation reports from 2018, 2019 and 2021
- Uganda Short course training evaluation reports from 2017, 2018 and 2019
- Evaluation sheets from the short course in Ethiopia
- Evaluation reports of the two MOOCs on Coursera (produced from data collected at Coursera)

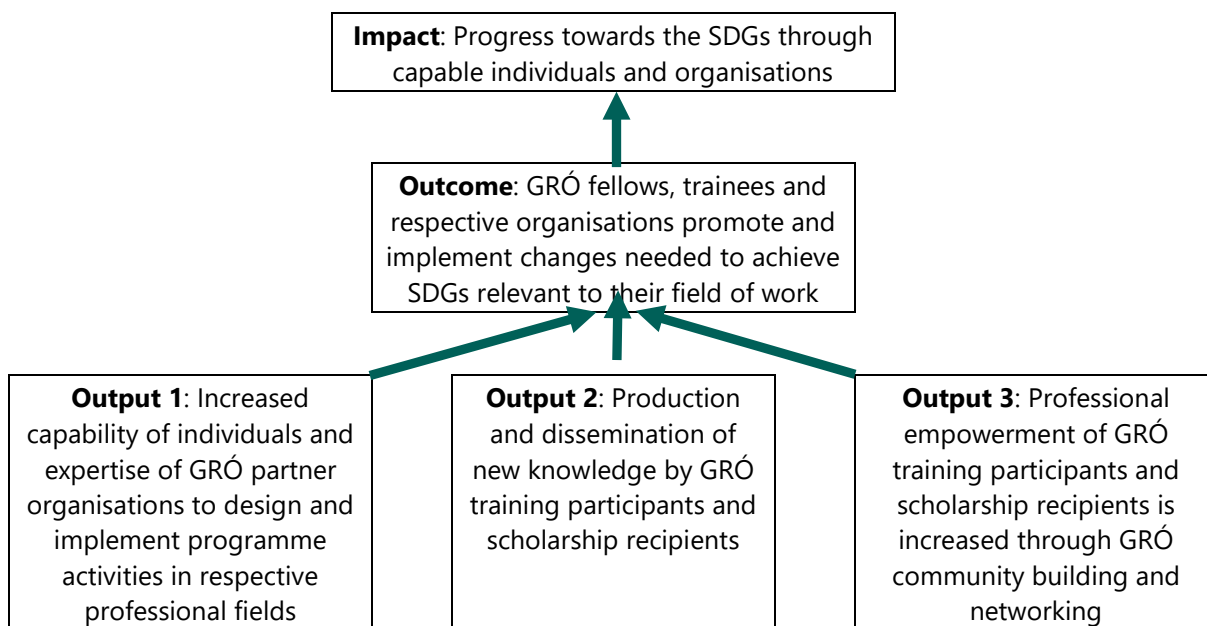
OTHER DOCUMENTATION

- Danida Fellowship Centre, Strategy 2021-2025
- Danida Fellowship Centre, annual report Results 2022, annual report Results 2023
- Danida Fellowship Centre, Danida Fellows Network (2023)

ANNEX 5 GRÓ PROGRAMME INTERVENTION LOGIC

The GRÓ Centre formally adopted its **Theory of Change** (ToC) in 2022. The definition of three common GRÓ programme outputs, one outcome, and one impact, provided in **the ToC and subsequent Results Framework is a significant step forward**. These provide a standard framework via which the objectives, the interventions and the results of the four programmes, each working in its own specific field of Icelandic expertise, is commonly understood. The **eight basic intervention strategies for the GRÓ programmes identified in the ToC** reflect the intervention approaches utilized by the programmes, to varying degree, across many years to deliver capacity building and development training, also prior to the formal transition of the programmes in 2020 to operating under the GRÓ Centre.

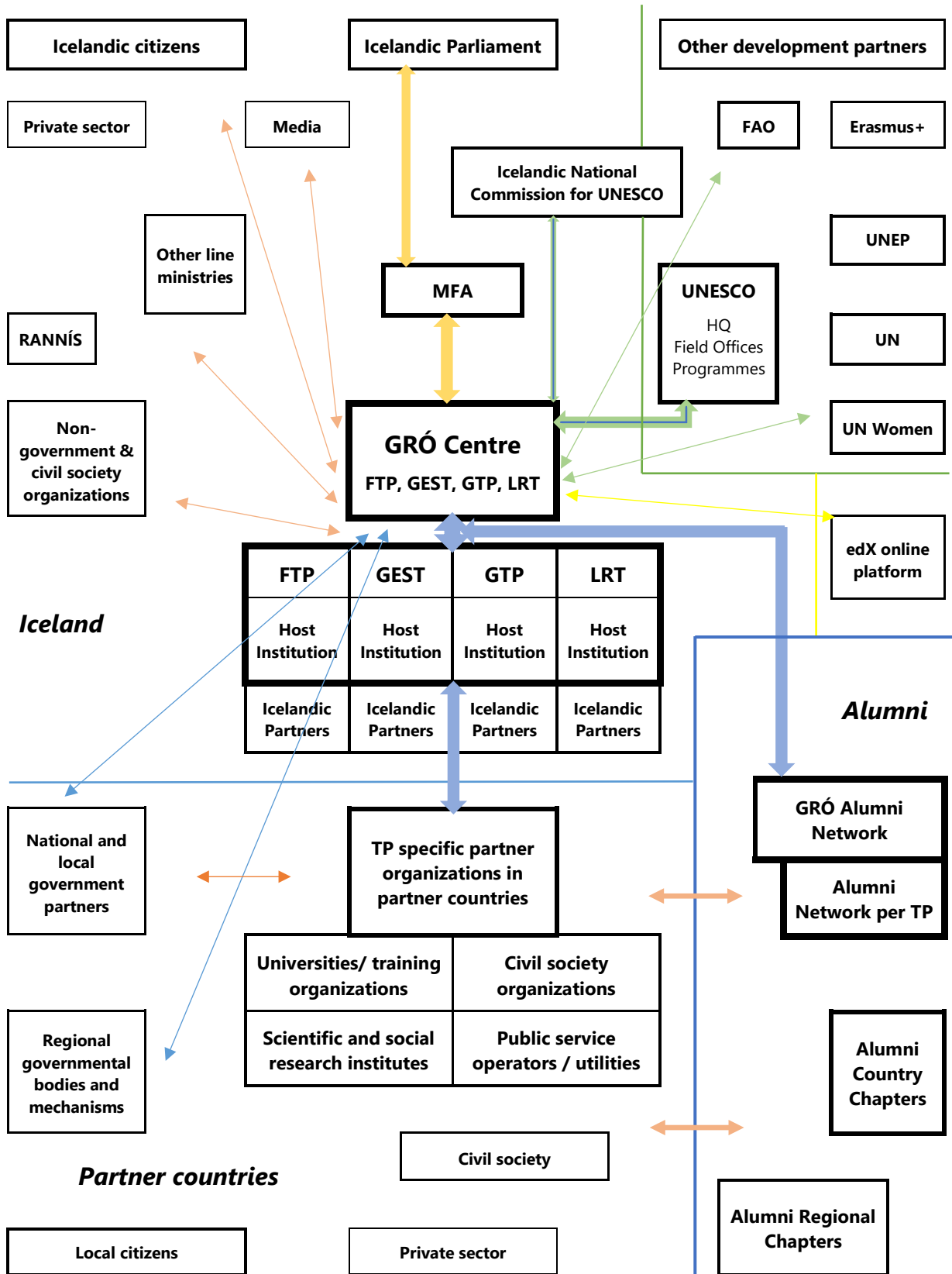
Figure 23: GRÓ programme intervention logic, intervention strategies and development results



Intervention strategies

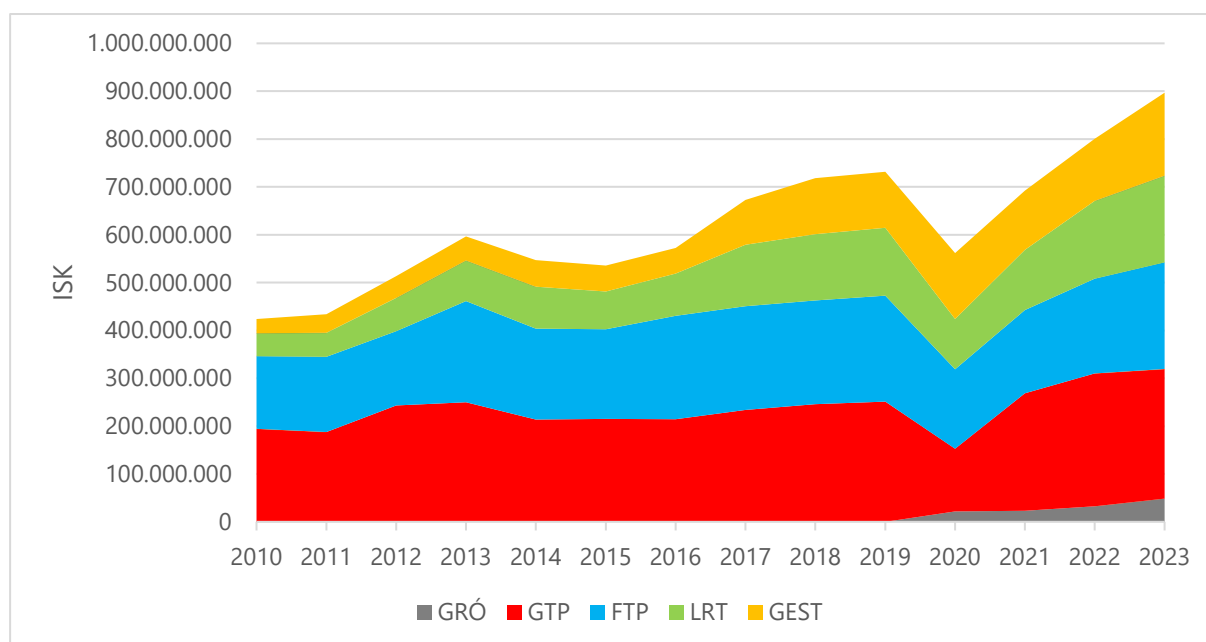
Postgraduate level training programmes	In-country and regional training	Research and knowledge creation	Networking
Scholarships (Master’s and Doctoral degrees)	Innovative online content creation	Workshops and conferences	Advisory Services and Knowledge Sharing

ANNEX 6 GRÓ PROGRAMME MAP OF STAKEHOLDERS



ANNEX 7 GRÓ CENTRE AND GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMME BUDGET

MFA CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE GRÓ/UNU TRAINING PROGRAMMES (2010-2023)



GRÓ CENTRE AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES - ANNUAL BUDGET (ISK)

Budget line	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
GRÓ Centre costs (ISK)	---	19,119,839	30,278,631	23,011,764	49,514,025	48,652,873
-MFA costs actual (ISK)	---	19,119,839	30,278,631	23,011,764	49,514,025	48,652,873
- MFA (% of actual)	---	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
FTP final total costs (ISK)				179,325,444	234,621,220	
-MFA/GRÓ actual (ISK)	217,000,000	222,000,001	166,221,000	173,400,000	186,003,585	223,312,091
- MFA (% of actual)				97%	79%	
GEST final total costs (ISK)	144,009,726	133,428,951	185,357,768	171,969,362	158,774,411	
-MFA/GRÓ actual (ISK)	117,012,200	117,249,999	137,993,563	123,600,000	129,500,000	173,410,676
-MFA (% of actual)	81%	88%	74%	72%	82%	
GTP final total costs (ISK)	309,583,585	316,612,421		316,675,546	306,334,647	
-MFA/GRÓ actual (ISK)	245,900,000	251,000,002	130,615,750	263,816,161	272,535,812	270,655,790
- MFA (% of actual)	79%	79%		83%	89%	
LRT final total costs (ISK)						
-MFA/GRÓ actual (ISK)	138,300,000	141,450,000	105,000,000	126,000,000	163,000,000	180,885,132
- MFA (% of actual)						
TOTAL final cost (ISK)						
-MFA costs actual (ISK)	718,212,200	750,819,840	570,108,944	709,827,925	800,553,422	896,916,873
- MFA (% of actual)						

Final costs/expenditure. Data provided by the GRÓ Centre and by the Training Programmes.

GRÓ CENTRE AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES - SOURCES OF FINANCE

GRÓ C2C Report 2021 (GRÓ Centre report to UNESCO)

SOURCE (NAME OF INSTITUTION)	AMOUNT RECEIVED (USD)
MFA	6,292,729
KenGen (Kenya Electricity Generating Company)	180,000
ERASMUS+	85,005
University of Iceland	68,530
UNEP / UN Women	48,160
EU Horizon 2020	42,500
Various contributions for GEST events (e.g. NIKK, Girls of a Feather, etc.)	18,605
Summer Staff Directorate of Labour Iceland	15,818
Red Cross funding for a fellow from Malawi	10,281
NIRAS-NANSEN	7,900

GRO C2C Report 2022 (GRÓ Centre report to UNESCO)

SOURCE (NAME OF INSTITUTION)	AMOUNT RECEIVED (USD)
MFA	6,320,950
KenGen (Kenya Electricity Generating Company)	90,000
University of Iceland	63,487
ERASMUS+	55,653
GDC (Geothermal Development Company) Kenya	45,000
Maibara Geothermal Inc. Philippines	45,000
Ministry of National Development Planning (Bappenas) Indonesia	30,000
UNESCO Division for Gender Equality	18,033
NIRAS-NANSEN	18,033
NIKK (under the Nordic Council of Ministers)	10,985

GRO C2C Report 2023 (GRÓ Centre report to UNESCO)

SOURCE (NAME OF INSTITUTION)	AMOUNT RECEIVED (USD)
MFA	6,328,969
ERASMUS+	74,230
KenGen (Kenya Electricity Generating Company)	67,500
Sinopec Management Institute, China	59,571
The Icelandic Research Fund	26,257
GDC (Geothermal Development Company) Kenya	22,500
Prime Minister's Office, Iceland	9,545
NIKK (under Nordic Council of Ministers)	1,856

ANNEX 8 GRÓ PROGRAMME RESULTS FRAMEWORK

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
Impact: Progress towards the SDGs through capable individuals and organizations									
P1. SDG 5 targets	SDG 5	GOPA 2024 alumni survey data indicates that 42.4% of the 2018-2023 alumni report contributing to advancing progress on SDG 5							
P2. SDG 7 targets	SDG 7	GOPA 2024 alumni survey data indicates that 27.7% of the 2018-2023 alumni report contributing to advancing progress on SDG 7							
P3. SDG 14 targets	SDG 14	GOPA 2024 alumni survey data indicates that 20.3% of the 2018-2023 alumni report contributing to advancing progress on SDG 14							
P4. SDG 15 targets	SDG 15	GOPA 2024 alumni survey data indicates that 17.3% of the 2018-2023 alumni report contributing to advancing progress on SDG 15							
Outcome: GRÓ fellows, trainees and respective organisations promote and implement changes needed to achieve SDGs relevant to their field of work									
P1. Management in partner organisations assess the training to be valuable for the organisation	% of alumni survey respondents who agree (4 out of 5 on the scale) or strongly agree (5 out of 5 on the scale) that their organisation's management values and appreciates their skills from the postgraduate training (3 years after graduation)	82.9%	75.9%	82.5%	N/A	82.8%	86.1%*	86.6%*	82.5% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)
P2. Graduates have used the training to advance their contribution in their field/sector of work	% of alumni survey respondents (fellows) who agree (4 out of 5 on the scale) or strongly agree (5 out of 5 on the scale) that they advanced their contribution in their field/sector due to the postgraduate programme (3 years after graduation)	87.8%	87.0%	90.5%	N/A	89.7%	93.1%*	86.6%*	89.5% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
P3. Graduates have used their training to share with colleagues and other experts in their respective field of expertise	% of alumni survey respondents (fellows) who report sharing their training knowledge with supervisors, colleagues and/or expert networks (3 years after graduation)	88.6%	81.7%	80.9%	N/A	79.4%	77.5%*	77.5%*	78.9% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)
P4. Graduates have advanced professionally (e.g. promotion or received scholarship for further studies)	% of alumni survey respondents (fellows) who report substantial (4 out of 5 on the scale) or extreme (5 out of 5 on the scale) career advancement due to the training (3 years after graduation)	75.6%	72.2%	76.2%	N/A	72.9%	70.8%*	75.3%*	73.5% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)

**The GRÓ Results Framework suggest measuring outcome level results 3 years after programme graduation. Therefore, the indicator value for the graduation year 2022 and 2023 should be interpreted with caution. Generally, the survey findings suggest that it might take some time for outcome level results to materialise after programme completion. Therefore, the measurement 3 years after programme completion seems reasonable.*

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

P1. Number of experts trained in the GRÓ 5-6-month training programmes	Annual # of fellows Gender ratio M/F (%) Country Income level LDC and LMI (%)	76 37 F (49%) 39 M (51%) 38% LDC 45% LMIC	89 47 F (53%) 42 M (47%) 42% LDC 39% LMIC	91 50 F (55%) 41 M (45%) 41% LDC 44% LMIC	20 14 F (70%) 6 M (30%) 55% LDC 35% LMIC	89 54 F (61%) 35 M (39%) 38% LDC 46% LMIC	88 46 F (52%) 42 M (48%) 24% LDC 53% LMIC	94 48 F (51%) 46 M (49%) 38% LDC 51% LMIC	547 fellows 296 Female (54%) 251 Male (46%) 205 LDC (37%) 252 LMIC (46%)
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PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
P2. Quality of the 5-6 month training	% of alumni survey respondents who report substantial (4 out of 5 on the scale) or large (4 out of 5 on the scale) improvements across 15 different skills areas post-participation ⁷²	48.9%	54.8%	62.0%	N/A	70.0%	64.6%	66.1%	63.5% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)
P3. Number of graduates eligible for 30 ECTS credits / Diploma degree at completion of 5-6 month training (ratio from enrolled fellows). Only applicable GEST & LRT fellows	Annual # of diploma certificates issued Graduation ratio (% of total cohort of fellows eligible)	GEST = 18 100% (LRT only since 2022)	GEST = 23 96% (LRT only since 2022)	GEST = 23 100% (LRT only since 2022)	GEST = 20 100% (LRT only since 2022)	GEST = 20 100% (LRT only since 2022)	GEST = 23 100% LRT = 17 89.5%	GEST = 23 100% LRT = 21 91.5%	GEST = 150 99.5% LRT = 38 90.5%
P4. Number of short courses (5-7 days) in partner countries	Annual # of weeks of on-site training # of participants in short courses Gender ratio M/F (%)	7.6 weeks 201 people 70 F (35%) 131 M (65%)	9.5 weeks 287 people 99 F (34%) 188 M (66%)	11.3 weeks 251 people 89 F (35%) 162 M (65%)	0 (COVID)	4.3 weeks 102 people 36 F (35%) 66 M (65%)	6.9 weeks 149 people 49 F (33%) 100 M (67%)	12 weeks 329 people 134 F (41%) 195 M (59%)	51.6 weeks 1,319 people 477 F (36%) 842 M (64%)
P5. Quality of short course training	% of participants assess the course to be useful for enhancing skills & knowledge (relevant and helpful for my job) (on scale from 1 – 5)	Statistical data from 2 courses only = 4.51/5	Statistical data from 1 course only = 4.46/5	Statistical data from 4 courses 64% = 5/5 34% = 4/5	Not applicable	Statistical data from 1 course only = 91% 4/5 or 5/5	Statistical data from 1 course only = 95% 4/5 or 5/5	Statistical data from 4 courses 78% = 5/5 19% = 4/5	While limited statistical data is available, the trainee

⁷² The indicator values are based on the 2024 alumni survey conducted after programme participation only. It was not possible for the evaluation team to conduct a before/after comparison of skills levels. The individual programmes might be in a better position to systematically implement programme-specific before/after skills assessment to deliver indicator data for the GRÓ Results Framework.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
									feedback is positive
P6. Number of live streaming training courses	Annual # # of participants	0	0	0	1 course 46 people	3 courses 164 people	2 courses 286 people	0	6 courses 496 people
P7. Quality live streaming training courses	% of participants assess course be useful for enhancing skills & knowledge (relevant and helpful for my job) (from 1 – 5)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Feedback indicates 97% as 4/5 or 5/5	Feedback (1 course) 97% as 4/5 or 5/5	Feedback indicates 94% as 4/5 or 5/5	Not applicable	Participants' feedback positively rates the courses
P8. Number of online courses and number of participants in the online courses	Annual # # of participants newly enrolled	1 MOOC Data not available	1 MOOC Data not available	3 MOOCs Data not available	4 MOOCs Partial data only	4 MOOCs Partial data only SDG 14 Videos	5 MOOCs Partial data only SDG 14 Videos	6 MOOCs Partial data only SDG 14 Videos	6 MOOCs GEST = 16,238 LRT = 20,026 SDG 14 Videos 2,897 viewers
P9. Quality of online training	% of participants assess the course to be useful for enhancing skills & knowledge	4.6/5	4.6/5	4.7/5	4.7/5	4.7/5	4.7/5	4.7/5	Limited learner feedback even for basic rating
P10. Number of GRÓ graduate studies scholarships provided annually	Annual # Master's and PhD Gender ratio M/F (%)	M.Sc./M.A. = 8 4 F (50%) 4 M (50%) PhD = 2 1 F (50%) 1 M (50%)	M.Sc./M.A. = 7 4 F (57%) 3 M (43%) PhD = 5 3 F (60%) 2 M (40%)	M.Sc./M.A. = 10 5 F (50%) 5 M (50%) PhD = 4 2 F (50%) 2 M (50%)	M.Sc./M.A. = 5 2 F (40%) 3 M (60%) PhD = 2 2 F (100%) 0 M (0%)	M.Sc./M.A. = 6 1 F (17%) 5 M (83%) PhD = 4 2 F (50%) 2 M (50%)	M.Sc./M.A. = 5 2 F (40%) 3 M (60%) PhD = 3 1 F (33%) 2 M (67%)	M.Sc./M.A. = 6 3 F (50%) 3 M (50%) PhD = 1 1 F (100%) 0 M (0%)	M.Sc./M.A. = 47 21 F (45%) 26 M (55%) PhD = 21 12 F (57%) 9 M (43%)
Output N°2: Production and dissemination of new knowledge by GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipient									
P1. Number of research outputs (research project reports) annually by GRÓ fellows	Annual # of research project papers confirmed on GRÓ website	76 papers completed by the fellows	88 papers completed by the fellows	91 papers completed by the fellows	20 papers completed by the fellows	89 papers completed by the fellows	88 papers completed by the fellows	94 papers completed by the fellows	546 fellows (of 547) completed a research paper 415 confirmed on websites

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
P2. Master's thesis published annually by GRÓ scholarship recipients (research output)	Annual # of published master's thesis at universities' websites	5	9	7	3	9	7	5	45 Master's theses completed
P3. PhD papers published annually by GRÓ scholarship recipients (research outputs)	Annual # of publications in research journals	1	4	2	6	1	9	5	28 PhD papers (including theses) published
Output N°3: Professional empowerment of GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipients is increased through GRÓ community building and networking									
P1. Number of alumni events organised by GRÓ annually	Annual #	2	3	8	2	1	7	9	32 events (incl. 17 in-country, 5 conference side events, 3 online, 2 anniversary events)
P2. Number GRÓ funded alumni participating in regional and international conferences	Annual #	24	52	35	0	69 (+108 <i>remotely</i>)	35	48	263 alumni in-person attended conferences
P3. % of GRÓ short courses involving alumni in teaching/organisation of short courses	Annual # (% of GRÓ short courses involving alumni)	83% (5 of 6 events)	67% (8 of 12 events)	70% (7 of 10 events)	100% (1 of 1 event)	67% (4 of 6 events)	78% (7 of 9 events)	73% (8 of 11 events)	73% (40 of 55 events)

ANNEX 9 PARTNER COUNTRIES SUPPORTED BY GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMMES

GRÓ FELLOWSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMME IN ICELAND - 2018-2023

REGION / COUNTRY	CATEGORY* (2023)	FTP FELLOWS	GEST FELLOWS	GTP FELLOWS	LRT FELLOWS	FELLOWS 2018-2023
Africa						
Algeria **	LMIC			1		1
Burkina Faso	LDC / LLDC		1			1
Cameroon	LMIC		2			2
Cape Verde	LMIC / SIDS	5				5
Djibouti	LDC			3		3
Egypt	LMIC		2			2
Ethiopia	LDC / LLDC		2	7	5	14
Ghana	LMIC	1	6		12	19
Kenya	LMIC	5	7	28		40
Lesotho	LDC / LLDC				14	14
Liberia	LDC	11				11
Malawi	LDC / LLDC	6	15		16	37
Mauritania	LDC	1				1
Mozambique	LDC	1	8			9
Namibia	UMIC	7	3			10
Niger	LDC / LLDC				1	1
Nigeria	LMIC	10	5	1	3	19
Senegal	LDC	1				1
Seychelles	HIC / SIDS	1				1
Sierra Leone	LDC	13	2			15
South Africa	UMIC	2	1			3
Tanzania	LDC	6	1	7		14
Tunisia	LMIC		2			2
Uganda	LDC / LLDC	5	16	2	16	39
Zambia	LDC / LLDC			1		1
Zimbabwe ***	LMIC / LLDC		2			2
Asia						
Afghanistan	LDC / LLDC		4			4
China	UMIC	3	1	5		9
India	LMIC		8	5		13
Indonesia *****	LMIC	3		16		19
Iran **	LMIC			1		1
Iraq	UMIC		1			1
Kazakhstan	UMIC / LLDC			1		1
Kyrgyzstan	LMIC / LLDC				5	5
Lebanon *****	UMIC		1			1
Mongolia	LMIC / LLDC		1	2	14	17
Myanmar	LDC	2				2
Nepal	LDC / LLDC		4			4
Pakistan	LMIC		3			3

REGION / COUNTRY	CATEGORY* (2023)	FTP FELLOWS	GEST FELLOWS	GTP FELLOWS	LRT FELLOWS	FELLOWS 2018-2023
Palestine *****	LMIC		9			9
Philippines	LMIC			6		6
Sri Lanka	LMIC	7	6			13
Tajikistan	LMIC / LLDC				5	5
Uzbekistan	LMIC / LLDC				6	6
Vietnam	LMIC	2				2
Pacific (South Pacific)						
Fiji	UMIC / SIDS	1				1
New Zealand	HIC	1				1
Papua New Guinea	LMIC / SIDS	6				6
Solomon Islands	LDC / SIDS	1		1		2
Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)						
Belize ** / *****	LMIC / SIDS	1				1
Bolivia	LMIC / LLDC			4		4
Colombia	UMIC			3		3
Costa Rica	UMIC	2				2
Cuba	UMIC / SIDS	1				1
Dominica	UMIC / SIDS	1		3		4
Ecuador	UMIC			3		3
El Salvador *****	LMIC	3		7		10
Grenada	UMIC / SIDS	1				1
Guatemala ****	UMIC			1		1
Guyana	UMIC / SIDS	1				1
Jamaica	UMIC / SIDS	4	1			5
Mexico	UMIC		2			2
Montserrat	UMIC			2		2
Nicaragua	LMIC	2		4		6
Panama	UMIC	1				1
Peru	UMIC			2		2
Saint Kitts and Nevis	HIC / SIDS	1		1		2
Saint Lucia	UMIC / SIDS	2		2		4
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	UMIC / SIDS			1		1
Europe (Western Balkans and Eastern Europe)						
Bosnia-Herzegovina	UMIC		4			4
Kosovo ****	UMIC		4			4
Montenegro	UMIC		1			1
Moldova ****	UMIC / LLDC		1			1
Russia	Non-ODA		2			2
Serbia	UMIC		5			5
2018-2023 Total	Fellows	121	133	120	97	471
Gender	Female	59	102	50	48	259
	Male	62	31	70	49	212

REGION / COUNTRY	CATEGORY* (2023)	FTP FELLOWS	GEST FELLOWS	GTP FELLOWS	LRT FELLOWS	FELLOWS 2018-2023
Geographic zone	Africa	75	75	50	67	267
	Asia	17	38	36	30	121
	LAC	20	3	33	0	56
	Pacific	9	0	1	0	10
	Europe	0	17	0	0	17
Country income status (in the year Fellows enrolled)	LDC	47	53	21	52	173
	LMIC	45	55	73	45	218
	UMIC	26	23	25	0	74
	Non-ODA	3	2	1	0	6
Other country status	LLDC	11	46	17	82	156
	SIDS	26	1	8	0	35

* **Category.** Status of the country as per the OECD "DAC List of ODA Recipients effective for reporting on 2022 and 2023 flows".

LDC = Least Developed Country. **LMIC** = Lower Middle Income Country. **UMIC** = Upper Middle Income Country. Other abbreviations utilized by the evaluator: **LLDC** = Landlocked Developing Country, **SIDS** = Small Island Developing State, **HIC** = High Income Country, **ODA** = Official Development Assistance.

** Countries listed as LMIC (2022/2023) that were listed as UMIC in previous DAC List of ODA Recipients = Algeria, Iran, and Belize.

*** Countries listed as LMIC (2022/2023) that were listed as Low Income Countries (LIC) in previous DAC List = Zimbabwe.

**** Countries listed as UMIC (2022/2023) that were listed as LMIC in previous DAC List = Guatemala, Kosovo, and Moldova.

***** Change of country status as of the DAC List of ODA Recipients effective for reporting on 2024 and 2025 flows. Former UMIC now listed as LMIC = Lebanon. Former LMIC now listed as UMIC = Indonesia, Palestine, Belize, and El Salvador.

GRÓ PROGRAMME MASTER'S OR DOCTORAL SCHOLARSHIPS - 2018-2023

SCHOLARSHIPS	FTP	GEST	GTP	LRT	2018-2023
Master's - Students (individuals) enrolled on a Master's scholarship supported by the Training Programmes	11 students 7 F, 4 M	0	27 students 11 F, 16 M	6 students 2 F, 4 M	44 students 20 F, 24 M
Master's - Students (individuals) graduated with their thesis published supported by the Training Programmes	9 graduates 6 F, 3 M	0	29 graduates 12 F, 17 M	2 graduates 1 F, 1 M	40 graduates 19 F, 21 M
Doctoral - Students (individuals) enrolled on Doctoral scholarship supported by the Training Programmes	9 students 6 F, 3 M	3 students 2 F, 1 M	7 students 3 F, 4 M	1 student 1 F	20 students 12 F, 8 M
Doctoral - Papers published by PhD / Doctoral scholarship recipients	16 research papers	3 research papers	7 research papers	1 research paper	27 research papers
Doctoral - Students (individuals) on a PhD / Doctoral scholarship graduated	3 graduates 1 F, 2 M	1 graduate 1 F	2 graduates 2 M	1 graduate 1 F	6 graduates 3 F, 3 M
Master's and Doctoral - Students (individuals) enrolled (% by gender)	65% Female 35% Male	67% Female 33% Male	41% Female 59% Male	43% Female 57% Male	50% Female 50% Male

SCHOLARSHIPS	FTP	GEST	GTP	LRT	2018-2023
Master's and Doctoral - Students (individuals) enrolled from LDCs	7	3	13	5	28
Master's and Doctoral - Students (individuals) enrolled from LMICs	8	0	20	2	30
Master's and Doctoral - Students (individuals) enrolled from UMICs	5	0	1	0	6

GRÓ PROGRAMME SHORT COURSES IN PARTNER COUNTRIES - 2018-2023

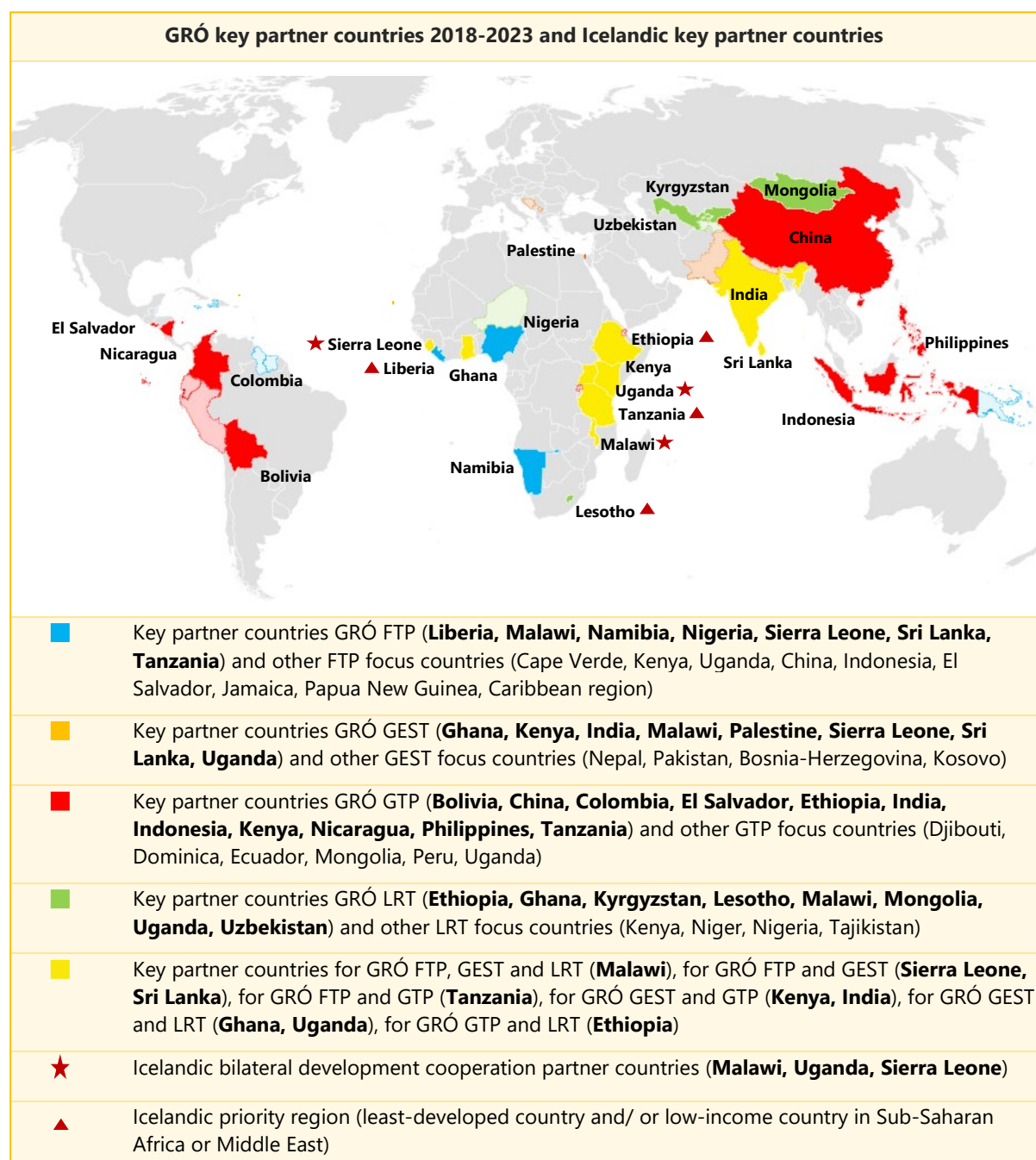
SHORT COURSES	FTP	GEST	GTP	LRT	2018-2023
Number of short training courses undertaken aimed at partner countries	9 courses 10 events	3 courses 11 events	9 courses 12 events	5 courses 7 events	25 courses * 39 events *
Number of partner countries in which short course training provided	5 countries	3 countries	5 countries	4 countries	16 countries
Number of weeks of training provided	9.5 weeks	10.5 weeks	23.5 weeks	5.5 weeks	48.5 weeks *
Number of short courses in LDCs	5 events	10 events	4 events	3 events	22 events
Number of short courses in LMICs	0	1 event	7 events	4 events	11 events *
Number of short courses in UMICs	0	0	0	0	0
Number of short courses in HICs (including study visits to Iceland)	5 events (3 study visits)	0	1 study visit to Iceland	0	6 events (4 study visits)
Number of direct beneficiaries reached by short course trainings (total number and gender disaggregated)	165 people 57 Female, 108 Male	386 people 142 Female, 244 Male	422 people 148 Female, 274 Male	160 people 66 Female, 94 Male	1,117 people * 408 Female, 709 Male
Number of countries that the direct beneficiaries originate from	30 countries	3 countries	40 countries	4 countries	50-60 countries
Number of online short training courses undertaken aimed at partner countries (and number of beneficiaries)	1 (50 people from diverse countries)	1 (50 people in Saint Lucia)	4 (396 people from diverse countries)	0	6 events 496 people
Number of training courses (medium-term duration) undertaken aimed at partner countries and beneficiaries (<i>GTP regional course in El Salvador</i>)	0	0	3 Diploma course events 86 people 25 F, 61 M	0	3 Diploma course events 86 people 25 F, 61 M

* One short course conducted jointly by GRÓ LRT and GRÓ GEST, delivered with local partners in Kyrgyzstan.

GRÓ PROGRAMME INNOVATIVE ONLINE CONTENT - 2018-2023

ONLINE TRAINING COURSES	FTP	GEST	GTP	LRT	2018-2023
Number of online training courses or digital learning products offered	1 product (SDG Videos)	3 MOOCs offered	0	3 MOOCs offered	7 products
Number of learners reached by the online / digital learning training offer	2,897 viewers / learners	16,238 learners	0	20,026 learners	39,161 learners

Figure 24: Geographical map with GRÓ and Icelandic key partner countries



SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF THE FELLOWS TRAINED IN ICELAND 2018-2023

Figure 25: Overview of fellows on postgraduate training in Iceland by training programme

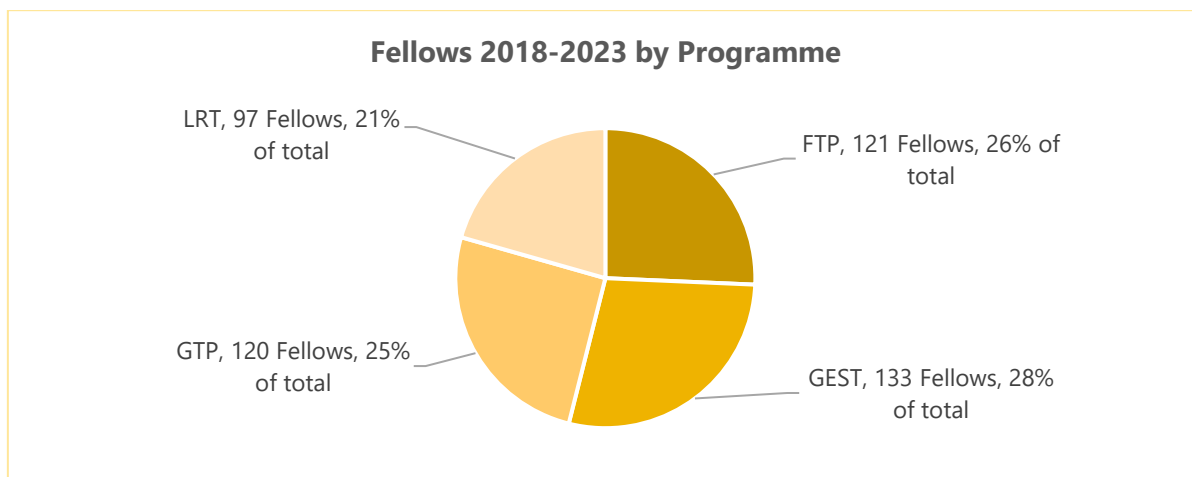
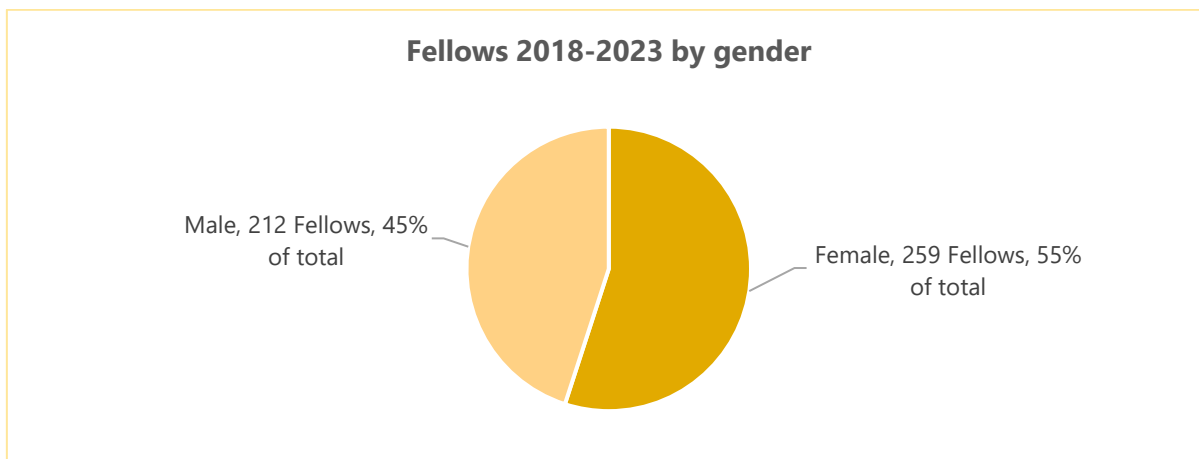
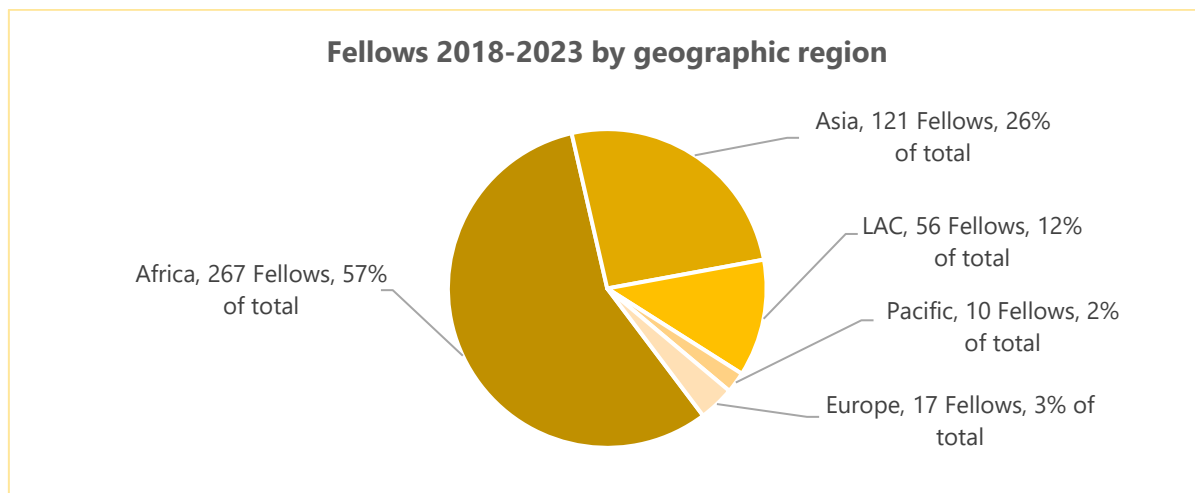


Figure 26: Overview of fellows on postgraduate training in Iceland by gender



The gender share of fellows on the GEST was predominantly female - 77% of its fellows. The gender share of fellows on the GTP was predominantly male - 58% of its fellows. The FTP and the LRT were broadly 50:50.

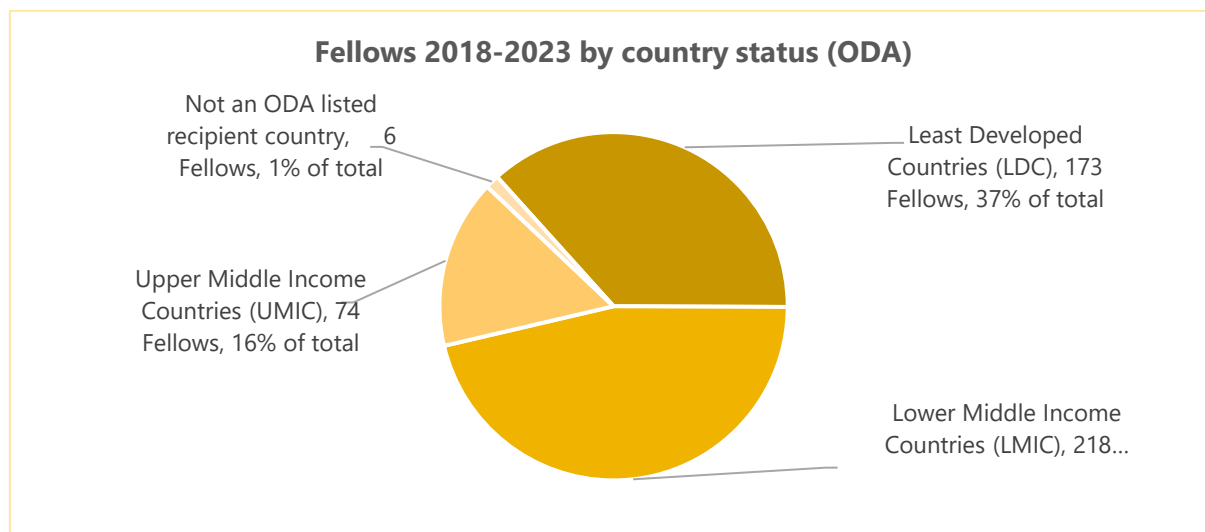
Figure 27: Overview of fellows on postgraduate training in Iceland by geographic region of origin



Fellows from Africa and from Asia attended each of the four training programmes. Fellows from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) attended the FTP, the GEST, and the GTP, but it is not a priority region for the LRT. Fellows from the South Pacific have attended the FTP and the GTP only. Fellows from Europe

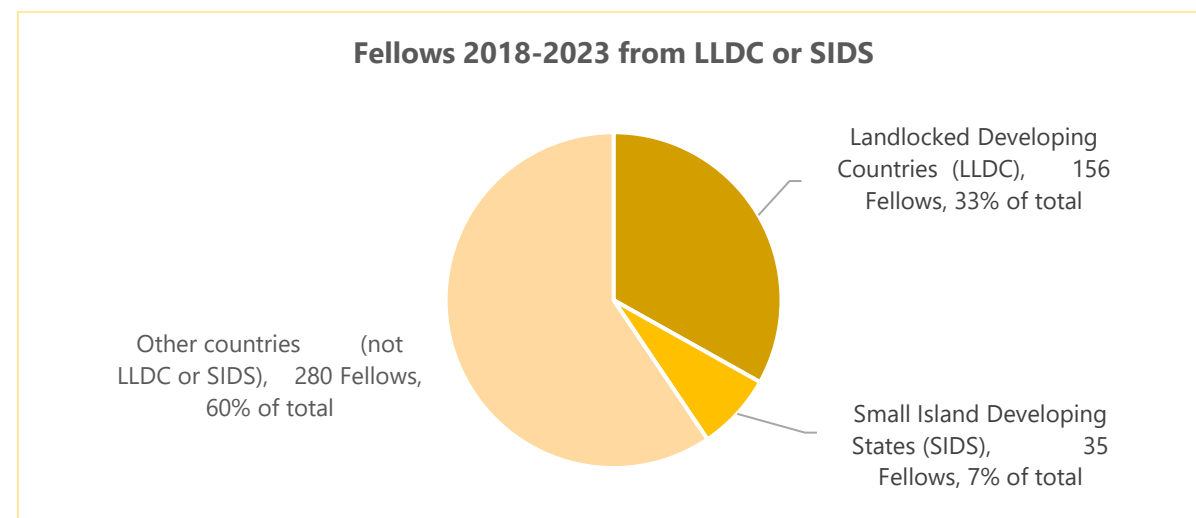
(the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe) have attended the GEST programme only, usually with co-funding via Erasmus+.

Figure 28: Overview of fellows on postgraduate training in Iceland by home country status (ODA)



A majority of the fellows on the LRT were from LDCs - 54% of its 2018-2023 fellows. The other 46% of its fellows were from LMICs. A majority of the fellows on the GTP were from LMICs - 61% of its 2018-2023 fellows, while 21% of its fellows were from UMICs and 17% from LDCs. For the FTP, 76% of its fellows were from LDCs and LMICs, for the GEST it was 81%, for both with a broadly equal share of fellows between LDCs and LMICs.

Figure 29: Overview of fellows on postgraduate training in Iceland from LLDC or SIDS



The overwhelming majority of fellows on the LRT are from LLDCs - 85% of its 2018-2023 fellows. Fellows from LLDCs also constituted a sizeable minority for the GEST - 35% of its fellows. Fellows from LLDCs also enrolled on the FTP and the GTP. The overwhelming majority of fellows from SIDS enrolled on the FTP - 74% of fellows from SIDS enrolled on the training programmes enrolled on FTP. Fellows from SIDS were 22% of the total number of FTP Fellows 2018-2023.

OVERVIEW OF THE FTP FELLOWS 2018-2023

Figure 30: Overview of FTP fellows on the 6-months training programme in Iceland by gender

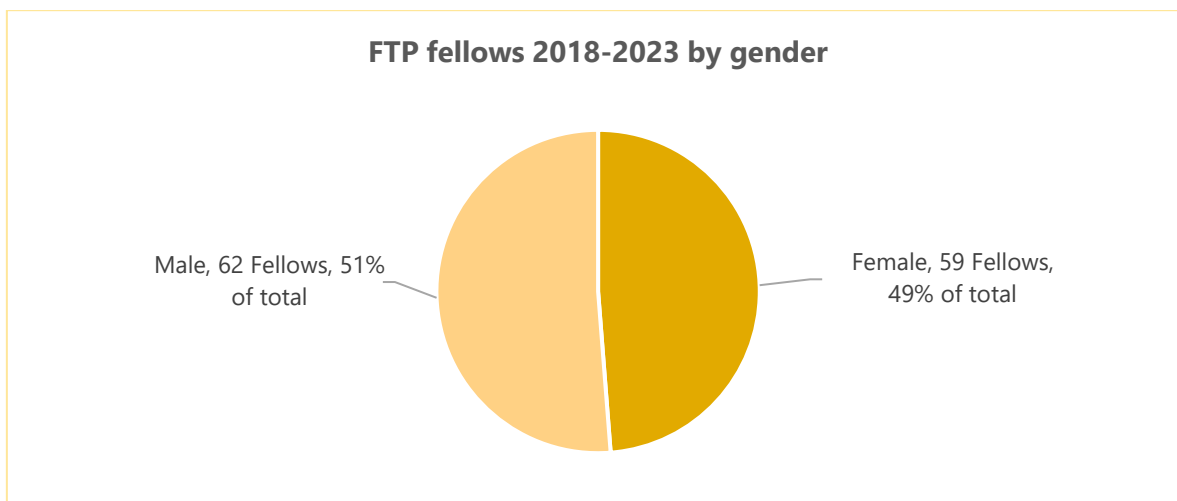


Figure 31: Overview of FTP fellows on 6-months training in Iceland by geographic region of origin

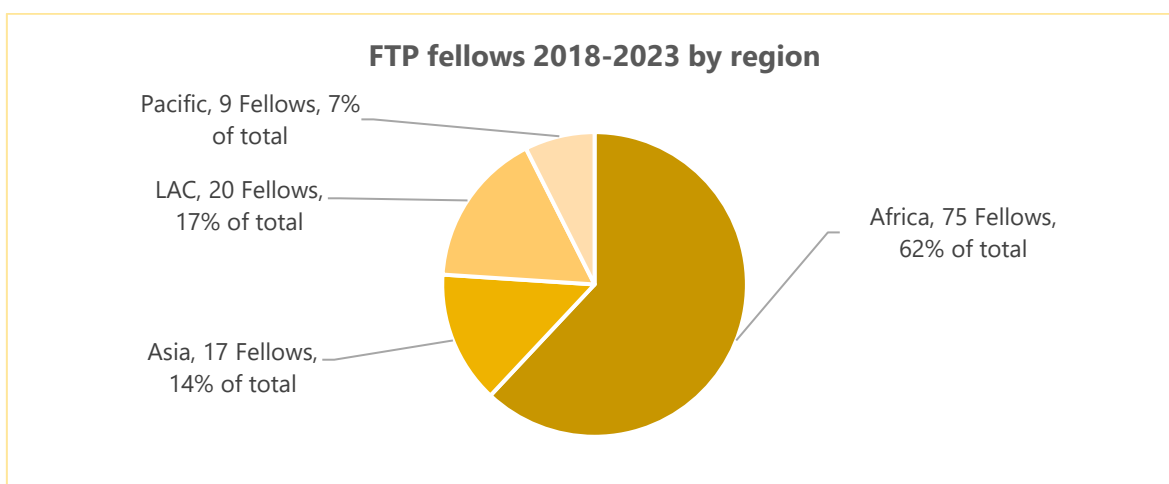
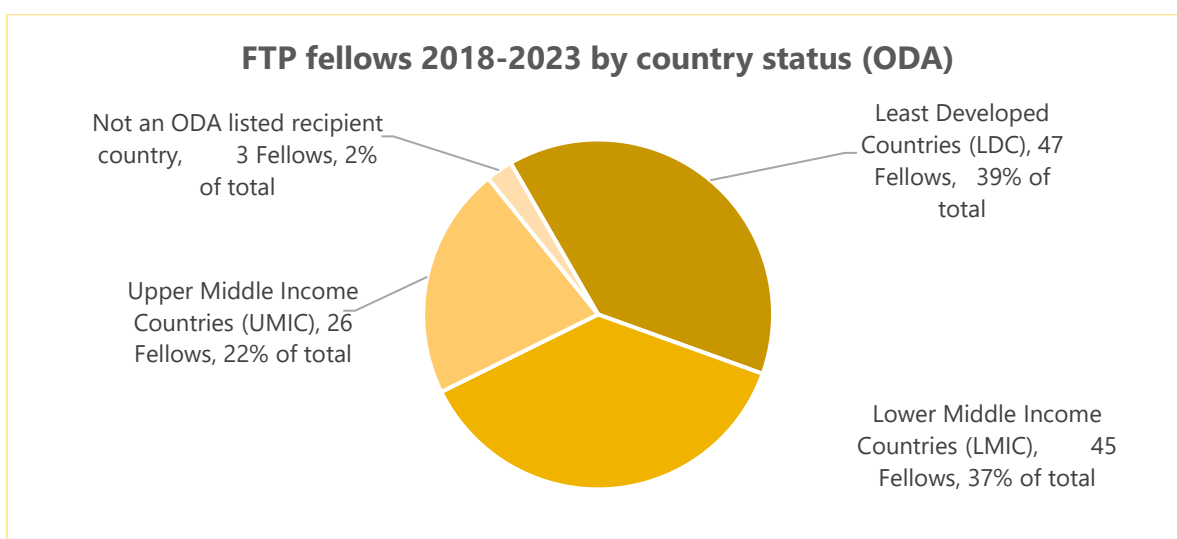


Figure 32: Overview of FTP fellows on 6-months training in Iceland by home country status (ODA)



OVERVIEW OF THE GEST FELLOWS 2018-2023

Figure 33: Overview of GEST fellows on the 5-months training programme in Iceland by gender

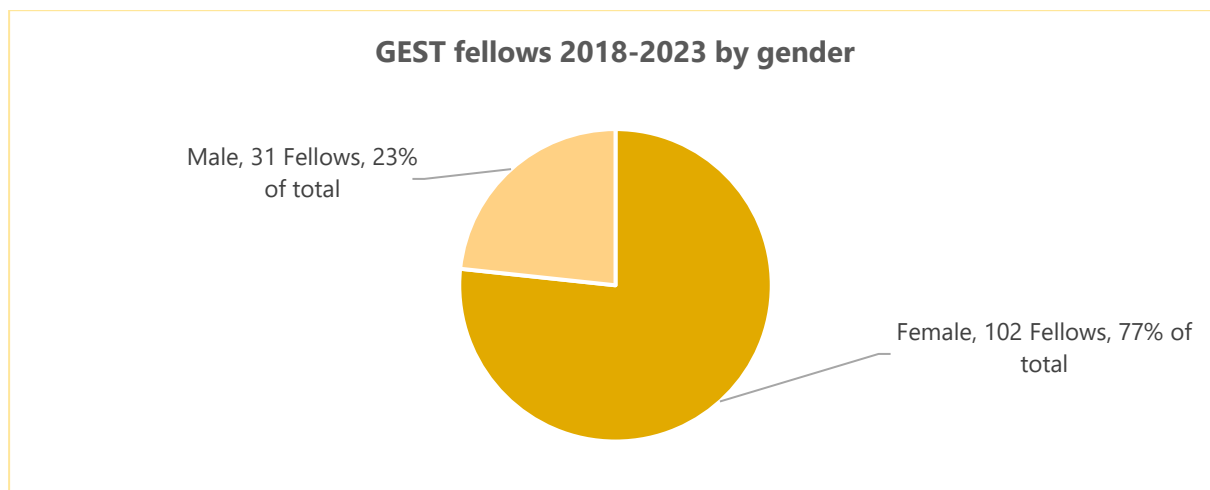


Figure 34: Overview of GEST fellows on 5-months training in Iceland by geographic region of origin

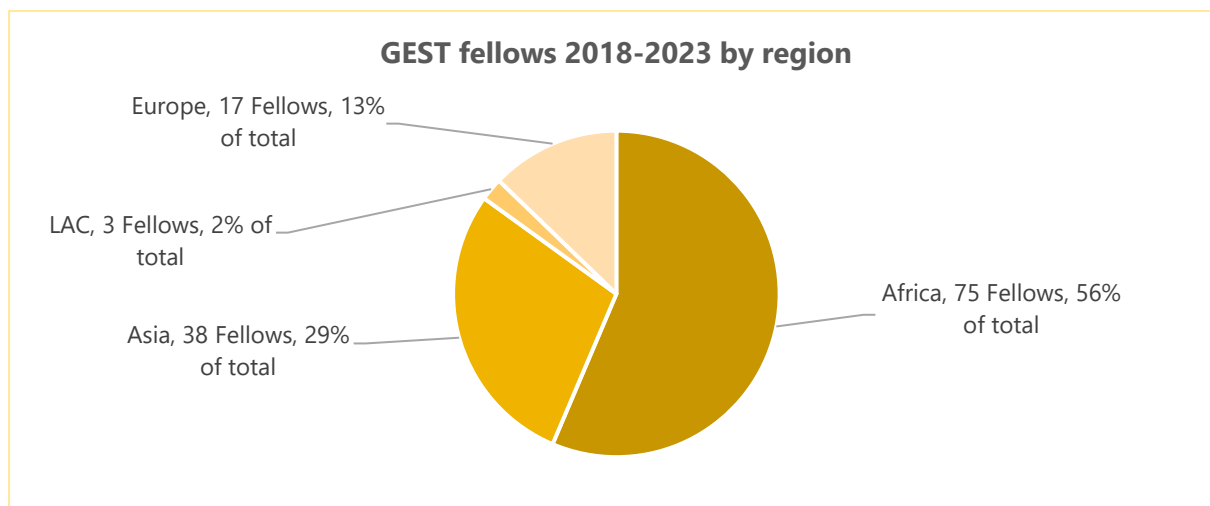
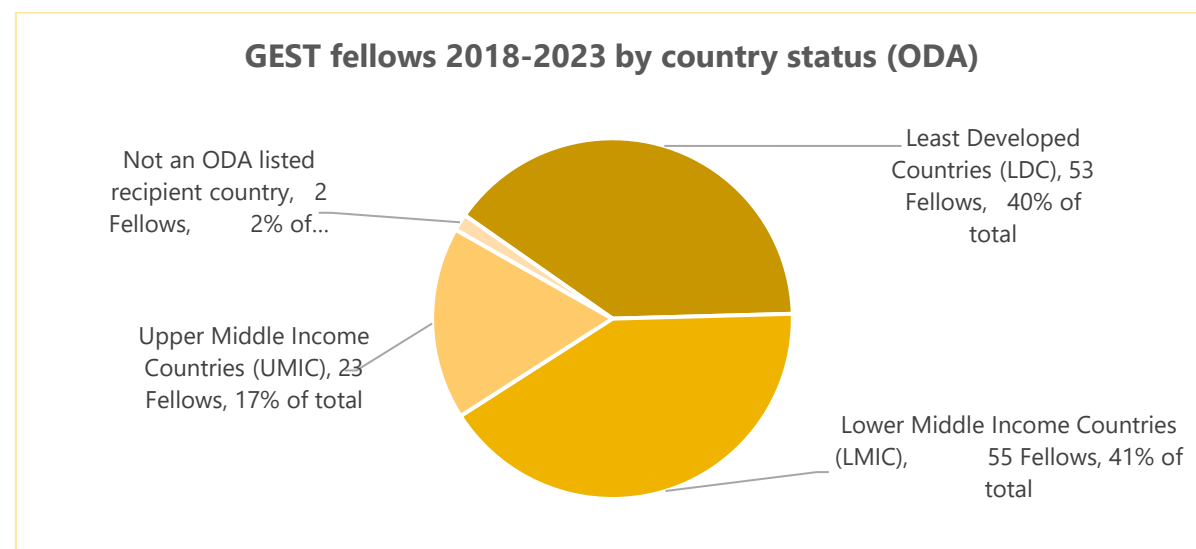


Figure 35: Overview of GEST fellows on 5-months training in Iceland by home country status (ODA)



OVERVIEW OF THE GTP FELLOWS 2018-2023

Figure 36: Overview of GTP fellows on the 6-months training programme in Iceland by gender

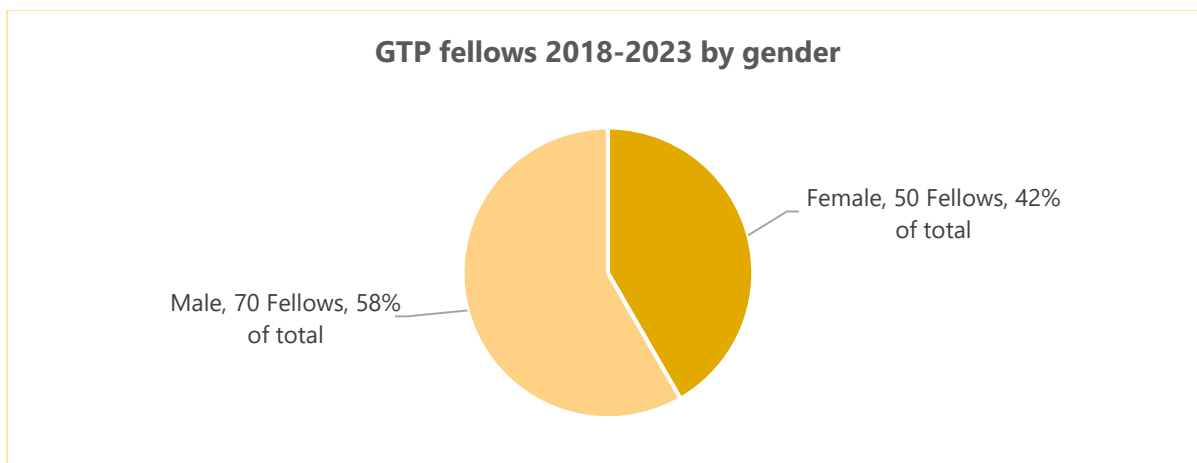


Figure 37: Overview of GTP fellows on 6-months training in Iceland by geographic region of origin

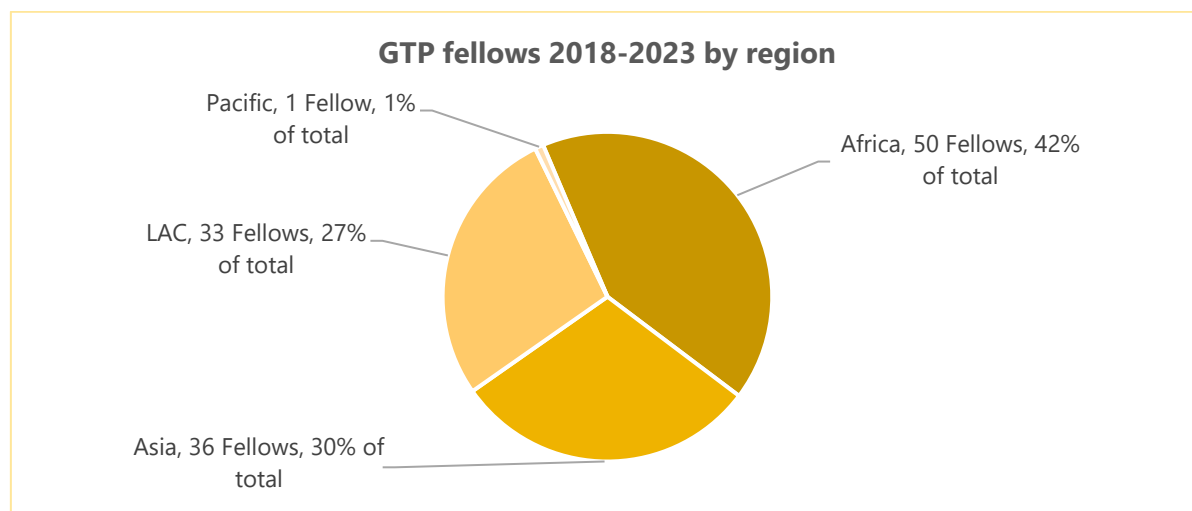
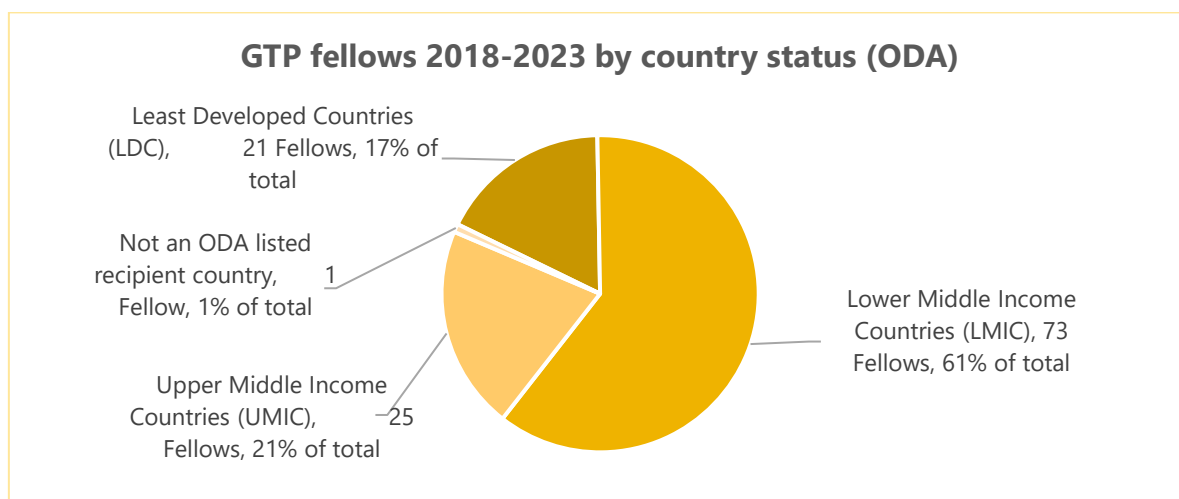


Figure 38: Overview of GTP fellows on 6-months training in Iceland by home country status (ODA)



OVERVIEW OF THE LRT FELLOWS 2018-2023

Figure 39: Overview of LRT fellows on the 6-months training programme in Iceland by gender

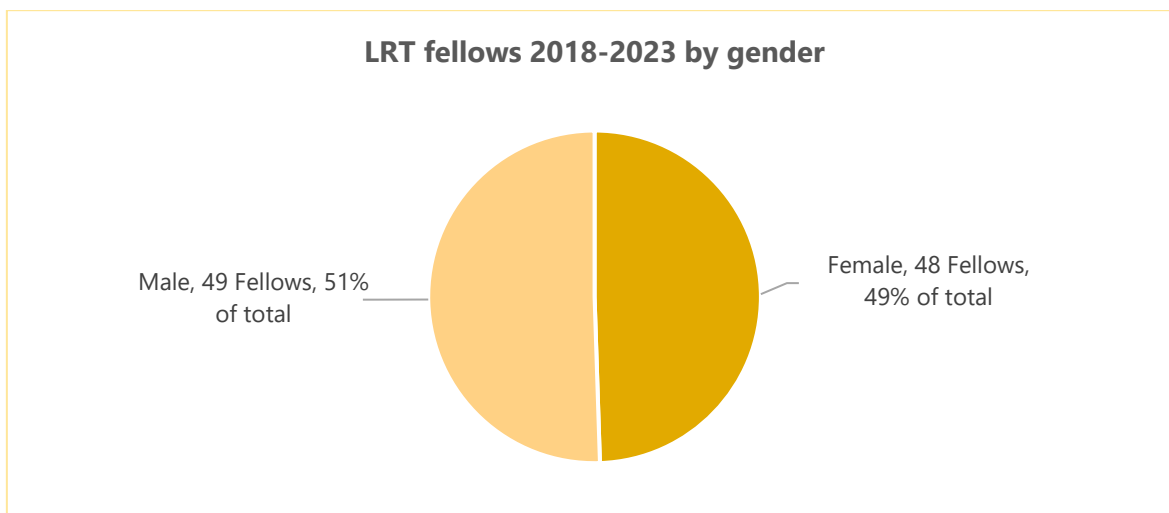


Figure 40: Overview of LRT fellows on 6-months training in Iceland by geographic region of origin

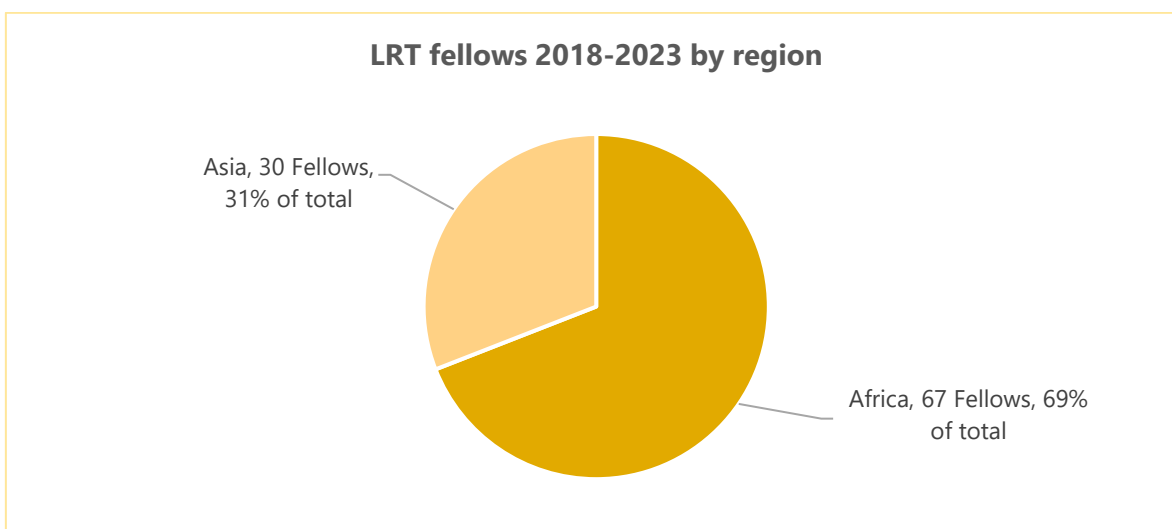
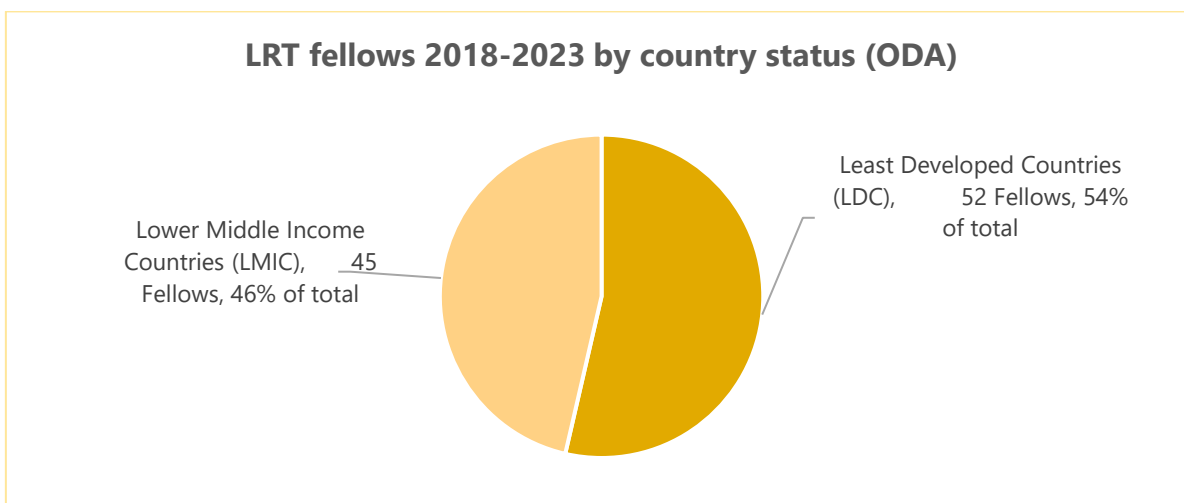


Figure 41: Overview of LRT fellows on 6-months training in Iceland by home country status (ODA)



ANNEX 10 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS THAT THE GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMMES ALIGN WITH AND SEEK TO CONTRIBUTE TO

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

As defined in the GRÓ Results Framework, the GRÓ Training Programmes primarily intend to contribute to the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): **SDG 5 Gender Equality**, **SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy**, **SDG 14 Life below Water**, and **SDG 15 Life on Land**.

Other SDGs in part contributed to include: 1 No Poverty, 2 Zero Hunger, 4 Quality Education, 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, 10 Reduced Inequalities, 13 Climate Action 16 Peace and Justice and Strong Institutions, and 17 Partnership for the goals (which highlights the importance of capacity building).

SDGS AND TARGETS	INDICATORS
Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	
5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere	5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age
	5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence
5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation	5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18
	5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation, by age
5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate	5.4.1 Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location
5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life	5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments
	5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions

SDGS AND TARGETS	INDICATORS
5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences	5.6.1 Proportion of women aged 15–49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care 5.6.2 Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education
5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws	5.a.1 (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure 5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women’s equal rights to land ownership and/or control
5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women	5.b.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex
5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels	5.c.1 Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women’s empowerment
Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all	
7.1 By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services	7.1.1 Proportion of population with access to electricity 7.1.2 Proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology
7.2 By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix	7.2.1 Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption
7.3 By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency	7.3.1 Energy intensity measured in terms of primary energy and GDP
7.a By 2030, enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology	7.a.1 International financial flows to developing countries in support of clean energy research and development and renewable energy production, including in hybrid systems
7.b By 2030, expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their respective programmes of support	7.b.1 Installed renewable energy-generating capacity in developing countries (in watts per capita)

SDGS AND TARGETS	INDICATORS
Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development	
14.1 By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution	14.1.1 (a) Index of coastal eutrophication; and (b) plastic debris density
14.2 By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans	14.2.1 Number of countries using ecosystem-based approaches to managing marine areas
14.3 Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels	14.3.1 Average marine acidity (pH) measured at agreed suite of representative sampling stations
14.4 By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics	14.4.1 Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels
14.5 By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information	14.5.1 Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas
14.6 By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organization fisheries subsidies negotiation ⁴	14.6.1 Degree of implementation of international instruments aiming to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing
14.7 By 2030, increase the economic benefits to small island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism	14.7.1 Sustainable fisheries as a proportion of GDP in small island developing States, least developed countries and all countries

SDGS AND TARGETS	INDICATORS
14.a Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology, taking into account the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Criteria and Guidelines on the Transfer of Marine Technology, in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular small island developing States and least developed countries	14.a.1 Proportion of total research budget allocated to research in the field of marine technology
14.b Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets	14.b.1 Degree of application of a legal/regulatory/policy/institutional framework which recognizes and protects access rights for small-scale fisheries
14.c Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of "The future we want"	14.c.1 Number of countries making progress in ratifying, accepting and implementing through legal, policy and institutional frameworks, ocean-related instruments that implement international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources
Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	
15.1 By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements	15.1.1 Forest area as a proportion of total land area 15.1.2 Proportion of important sites for terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity that are covered by protected areas, by ecosystem type
15.2 By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally	15.2.1 Progress towards sustainable forest management
15.3 By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world	15.3.1 Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area
15.4 By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development	15.4.1 Coverage by protected areas of important sites for mountain biodiversity 15.4.2 (a) Mountain Green Cover Index and (b) proportion of degraded mountain land
15.5 Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species	15.5.1 Red List Index
15.6 Promote fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic	15.6.1 Number of countries that have adopted legislative, administrative and policy frameworks to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits

SDGS AND TARGETS	INDICATORS
resources and promote appropriate access to such resources, as internationally agreed	
15.7 Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products	15.7.1 Proportion of traded wildlife that was poached or illicitly trafficked
15.8 By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species	15.8.1 Proportion of countries adopting relevant national legislation and adequately resourcing the prevention or control of invasive alien species
15.9 By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts	15.9.1 (a) Number of countries that have established national targets in accordance with or similar to Aichi Biodiversity Target 2 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 in their national biodiversity strategy and action plans and the progress reported towards these targets; and (b) integration of biodiversity into national accounting and reporting systems, defined as implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting
15.a Mobilize and significantly increase financial resources from all sources to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ecosystems	15.a.1 (a) Official development assistance on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; and (b) revenue generated and finance mobilized from biodiversity-relevant economic instruments
15.b Mobilize significant resources from all sources and at all levels to finance sustainable forest management and provide adequate incentives to developing countries to advance such management, including for conservation and reforestation	15.b.1 (a) Official development assistance on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; and (b) revenue generated and finance mobilized from biodiversity-relevant economic instruments
15.c Enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities	15.c.1 Proportion of traded wildlife that was poached or illicitly trafficked

ANNEX 11 GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMME EVALUATION REPORTS

Annex 11.1	PROGRAMME EVALUATION REPORT - GRÓ FTP
Annex 11.2	PROGRAMME EVALUATION REPORT - GRÓ GEST
Annex 11.3	PROGRAMME EVALUATION REPORT - GRÓ GTP
Annex 11.4	PROGRAMME EVALUATION REPORT - GRÓ LRT

ANNEX 11.1 PROGRAMME EVALUATION REPORT - GRÓ FTP

Training programme description and background context

Evaluation findings

Conclusions

Lessons learned

Recommendations

Overview of the programme's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

Prospects for future endeavours, scenarios/options

1. TRAINING PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND CONTEXT

1.1. TRAINING PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION, INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND APPROACH (OVERVIEW)

The **Fisheries Training Programme (FTP)** was founded in 1997 as part of Iceland's development cooperation agenda. It was the result of a trilateral agreement between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Icelandic Marine and Freshwater Research Institute (MFRI), and the United Nations University (UNU)⁷³. **In response to the state of global fisheries**, characterized by overexploitation of marine resources and the increased importance of fish for economic and social development and food security, FTP was an expansion of the partnership with UNU through the Geothermal Training Programme (GTP). As stated in the Icelandic parliamentary resolution on Iceland's Policy for International Development Cooperation 2019-2023, Iceland's development cooperation shall focus on areas where **Iceland's expertise can be applied** in the fight against poverty and in **reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. Like the GTP, the Iceland MFA can leverage the nation's expertise in fishing and environmental resource management to cause development changes across different regions of the world.

From its inception until 2019, FTP ran as the United Nations University (UNU)-FTP. In 2020, the partnership with the UNU came to an end and the GRÓ Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change (GRÓ) was established as an independent entity within the MFA operating as a Category 2 Centre (C2C) under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). **The programme was rebranded as GRÓ FTP**. Within UNESCO, GRÓ FTP is supposed to work closely with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), as this Commission is the natural partner for FTP in that UN Agency.

GRÓ FTP aspires to **contribute to the sustainable use of living aquatic resources in partner countries**. In this regard, the mission of the GRÓ FTP is to **strengthen institutional capacity to support the sustainable use of living aquatic resources in partner countries** through international educational and research cooperation. To this end, GRÓ FTP aims to assist partner countries in achieving their own fisheries development goals by partnering with institutions and organizations in partner countries that are key for the advancement of a sustainable fisheries sector through research and policy design and implementation.

FTP focuses on countries that qualify for Official Development Assistance (ODA) in accordance with the OECD DAC classification, including **Small Island Development States (SIDS)**. As a result of the programme's array of interventions, it is expected that alumni and their organizations will promote and implement changes conducive to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda SDGs.

To accomplish its objective, **FTP offers a 6-month training programme** at the core of the programme's training efforts. In line with the overall objective of FTP, this programme has the purpose of training young/mid-career professionals **to enhance the capacities of their organizations to enable them to**

⁷³ A pre-feasibility study was carried out to assess the suitability of having the programme in Iceland.

bring developmental change in the fisheries sectors of the partner countries. Currently, FTP offers **four lines of specialisation**⁷⁴: Fisheries Policy and Management, Aquatic Resource Assessment and Monitoring, Quality Management of Fish Handling and Processing, and Sustainable Aquaculture. So far, worldwide **503 fellows** have graduated from the programme, of which 59% were male and 41% were female.

The programme **also offers scholarships for M.Sc. and Ph.D. studies at Icelandic universities**, through which qualifying fellows continue their professional development by undertaking postgraduate education through a Master's or doctoral degree from Iceland to further contribute to development change in the fisheries sector. So far **44 total scholarships** have been granted, 21 for a master's degree and 23 to pursue a Ph.D.

In-country and regional training is also provided through **short courses and workshops**, which are tailored to the local needs with the purpose of addressing pressing local issues in fisheries and reaching a larger/wider audience; **42 short courses and 10 workshops** have been delivered worldwide so far.

Complementary to the training efforts, the programme also **provides advisory services and facilitates knowledge sharing**. In that regard, 4 study tours have taken place with a total of 58 participants from 17 countries who came to Iceland to learn about the country's fisheries success. Initially, these study tours were meant to inform the Directors of the Fisheries Divisions/Institutions from partner countries of the capacities acquired by trained fellows.

FTP strives to empower its trainee base and **supports fellows to attend conferences** related to fisheries, having supported **196 alumni in 11 international conference events** where they have had the opportunity to share their knowledge and learn from other experts and stakeholders.

In a different venue, FTP has developed a series of videos as part of its **innovative online content creation**, which are openly available through **YouTube**. These video series focus on the relationship of fisheries and the SDGs and can educate a wider audience on the economic, environmental, and social importance of fisheries.

Overall, during its 25 years of existence, **FTP has graduated 503 fellows from 68 countries**, granted **44 scholarships**, and offered **52 workshops and short courses**.

1.2. MAIN STAKEHOLDERS AND TARGET GROUP BENEFICIARIES IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

At the individual level, **young/mid-career professionals from partner countries**, according to eligibility for ODA, **engaged in fisheries related activities are the core target group of FPT**. These professionals come from government agencies such as the Ministries of Agriculture or Fisheries Divisions/Institutions of the partner countries, from academic and research institutions, from companies in the fisheries sector, from associations in the fisheries sector, and from regional government organizations.

At the institutional level, stakeholders include **national Ministries of Agriculture or Fisheries Divisions/Institutions**, 76 in 54 countries; **universities and other academic institutions**, 29 in 21 countries; **research institutions**, 19 in 14 countries; private companies of the fishing industry; **eleven in eight countries, industry associations**, three in three countries, and three **regional government organizations**.

1.3. INSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR FTP MANAGEMENT

The FTP's primary actors are the GRÓ Centre, the Iceland MFA, the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute, MATÍS-Food Research and Biotechnology, the University of Iceland, the University of Akureyri, and Hólar University College, and the Fishing Industry. In the past two years, GRÓ FTP and the Faroe Islands initiated a partnership that focusses on aquaculture, an area in which the Faroese have a

⁷⁴ The lines used to be six as per the description in the pre-feasibility study. But in order to improve the efficiency and increase consistency some of the lines were merged and some content distributed into the other lines (e.g. the environmental line).

competitive advantage; FTP receives in-kind and technical support through this partnership. The **GRÓ Centre is the commissioning agency** for the core services of the programme and establishes the annual financial contribution to the programme from the GRÓ Centre. A biannual service agreement, previously known as host institution agreement, signed between the GRÓ Centre and the **Marine and Freshwater Research Institute** allows this institute to **host the programme** and provide experts (lecturers and supervisors) and facilities for the development of training activities of the core training programme. **MATIS** hosts fellows specialising in Quality Management of Fish Handling and Processing and provides lecturers and supervisors as well as facilities for the development of training activities in that line of specialization. **The University of Akureyri** hosts the fellows specializing in Fisheries Policy and Management during the specialisation phase and provides the programme with supervisors and lecturers. **The University of Iceland** and **Hólar University College** also provide lecturers and supervisors as needed. The fishing industry complements the training needs by providing access to fishing facilities and equipment. For the delivery of short courses and workshops, **FTP partners with local educational institutions**; in the Caribbean, for example, the University of the West Indies and the University of Belize provide lecturers and participate in the design and delivery of short courses through the partnership with the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM). The Icelandic partners are also instrumental in the preparation and delivery of these in-country short courses and workshops.

In the context of **capacity building and the MFA's foreign policy agenda and objectives**, FTP often handles special requests by the Ministry, such as field trips by delegations from other countries to see firsthand Iceland's accomplishments in fisheries. In that context, GRÓ FTP has also participated in missions initiated by the MFA as part of its bilateral agenda for countries such as Sierra Leone, Uganda, Namibia, and Mozambique, to name a few.

The **MFA is the main source of funding** channelled through the GRÓ Centre to FTP to finance the FTP's numerous training programmes and special events.

Currently, the staff that manages and implements FTP includes the Programme Director, the Deputy Director, the Operations Manager, and one Specialist, with a gender composition of one female and three males. Sometimes FTP requires additional personnel, which is hired on a part time basis or short-term contracts, which brings the staff to the equivalent of 4.3 to 4.5 full time positions. Staff fluctuation is due, in great part, to budget uncertainties.

2. EVALUATION FINDINGS

2.1. PROGRAMME GOALS, STRATEGY AND APPROACH (RELEVANCE)

It is the evaluative opinion that **FTP is relevant** to the purpose of the Icelandic development cooperation goals in terms of both the specific development **problem related to fisheries** as the programme is clearly **aligned with the objectives of Iceland's policy for international development cooperation** and the cooperation efforts are directed to mostly LDCs, LMICs, and SIDS. FTP is also relevant to addressing the **cross-cutting areas of human rights, gender equality, and the environment**, as the effects of the programme's intervention facilitate the right to adequate food and the right to a healthy environment, as well as opportunity for women's increased participation along the value chain of fisheries as new knowledge in postharvest activities is produced.

2.1.1. ALIGNMENT OF THE PROGRAMME WITH ICELAND'S INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION POLICIES AND ICELAND'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT VISION AND STRATEGIES

As stated by the **2008 Act on Iceland's International Development Cooperation**, the main objective of the country's international development cooperation is to **support the efforts of partner countries to promote the sustainable use of resources**, among other goals. In that context, Iceland supports the vision of the United Nations SDGs to eradicate hunger and extreme poverty, reduce inequality within and among states, respect human rights, and treat everyone equally before the law. In that regard, Iceland's development cooperation is **guided by human rights, gender equality, and sustainable development**, so Iceland's expert knowledge should be applied in the promotion of those ideals. One of the secondary aims of Iceland's international development policy goals is the **protection of the earth and the sustainable use of natural resources**. Especially relevant to FTP is the protection and

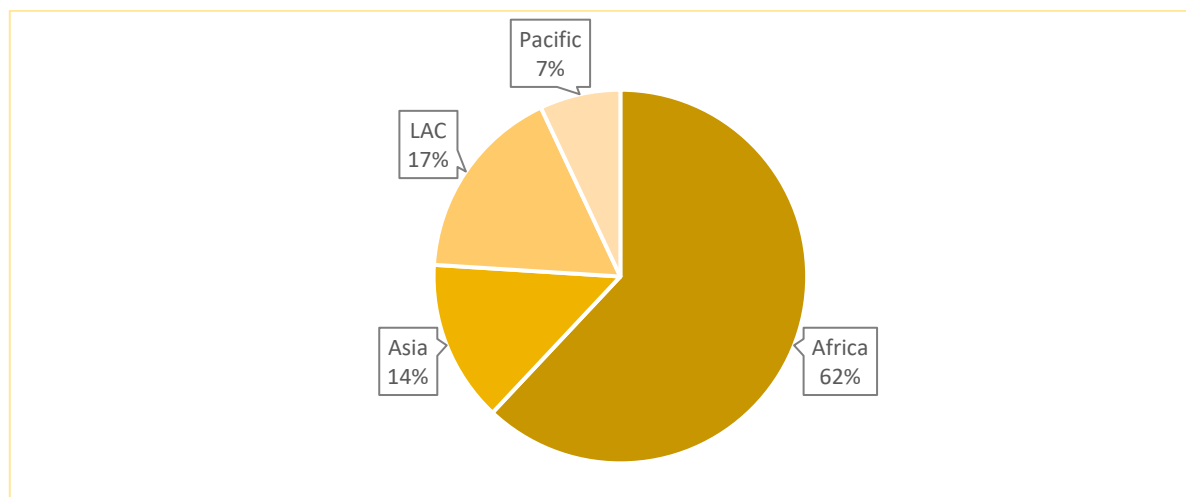
sustainable management of the oceans and waters **under SDG 14 Life Below Water**. Therefore, Icelandic efforts are expected to contribute to the improvement of the livelihoods and resilience of societies that rely on fisheries by enhancing capacities for fishing and fish processing while emphasising the provision of opportunities to participate in value chains through healthier and safer processing methods that increase the quality and value of fish products. **Development partners are selected based on convergence between the needs of the recipient country and Iceland's offered expertise**. Focus is placed on assisting **West African countries, including Sierra Leone and Liberia, and small island developing states (SIDS)**⁷⁵. Based on those goals, one of the policy objectives set forth in the Bilateral Development Cooperation Strategy is the protection of the Earth and the sustainable use of natural resources, with gender equality, human rights, and climate and environment as cross-cutting priorities and thematic focus areas of fisheries and the blue economy.

As stated by its mission, FTP aims to contribute to the sustainable use of fisheries in less developed countries. Specifically, FTP's objectives are the strengthening of institutional capacities through international educational and research cooperation by providing excellence in training and facilitating education and research opportunities. **GRÓ FTP partners with institutions and organizations in partner countries that are key for the advancement of a sustainable fisheries sector** through research and policy design and implementation.

121 fellows (50% male and 50% female) (Table 15), were trained in Iceland in the 6-month postgraduate training. 62% from African countries, 17% from Latin American and Caribbean countries, 14% from Asian countries, and 7% from the South Pacific during the period 2018-2023 (Figure 42). As for their classification for ODA purposes, 26% of the countries were LDC, 31% Low Middle-Income Countries (LMIC), 34% Upper Middle-Income Countries (UMIC), and 9% High Income Countries⁷⁶ (HIC). Of the recipient countries, 6% were Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC) and 34% SIDS.

Regarding the distribution of fellows per country category, 76% originated from LDCs or LMICs, (Graph 2), with a substantial 74% coming from SIDS.

Figure 42: Distribution of fellows by region: 2018-2023

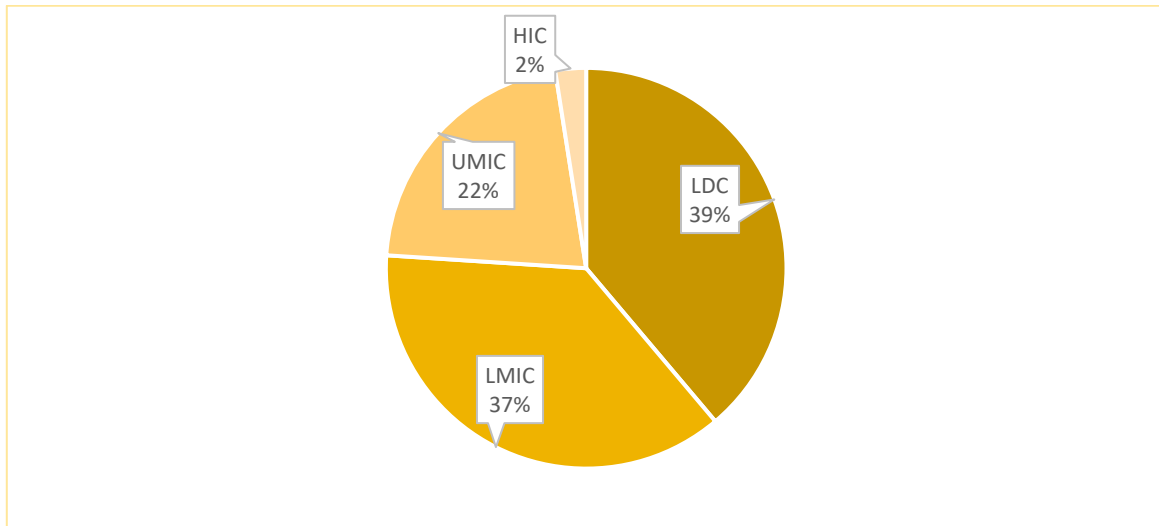


Data source: Statistics provided by GRÓ FTP

⁷⁵ Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland's policy for international development cooperation for 2019-2023, and 2024-2028.

⁷⁶ The countries involved are Seychelles and St. Kitts and Nevis, which are small island development States and, as such, are targeted by Iceland's policy for international development cooperation, and New Zealand, which paid for the training service provided.

Figure 43: Distribution of fellows by country category: 2018-2023



Data source: Statistics provided by GRÓ FTP

FTP also granted **18 scholarships**, 10 for an M.Sc. and 8 for a Ph.D. (Table 16), with 33% of the grantees being male and 64% female.

The FTP training offer included the planning, preparation, and delivery of **6 regional and one local workshop attended by 122** fisheries officers, officials from fisheries public administration, personnel of the fishing industry, and monitoring, control and surveillance staff **from 20 countries**⁷⁷ (Table 17).

⁷⁷ Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Liberia, Montserrat, Sierra Leone, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands.

Table 15: FTP Fellows by region and country: 2018-2023

Africa	Category ⁷⁸ (2023)	Fellows	Latin America and the Caribbean, LAC	Category (2023)	Fellows	Asia	Category (2023)	Fellows	South Pacific	Category (2023)	Fellows
Cape Verde	LMIC / SIDS	5	Belize	LMIC / SIDS	1	China	UMIC	3	Fiji	UMIC / SIDS	1
Ghana	LMIC	1	Costa Rica	UMIC	2	Indonesia	LMIC	3	New Zealand	HIC	1
Kenya	LMIC	5	Cuba	UMIC / SIDS	1	Myanmar	LDC	2	Papua New Guinea	LMIC / SIDS	6
Liberia	LDC	11	Dominica	UMIC / SIDS	1	Sri Lanka	LMIC	7	Solomon Islands	LDC/SIDS	1
Malawi	LDC / LLDC	6	El Salvador	LMIC	3	Vietnam	LMIC	2	Total number of fellows		9
Mauritania	LDC	1	Grenada	UMIC / SIDS	1	Total number of fellows		17			
Mozambique	LDC	1	Guyana	UMIC / SIDS	1						
Namibia	UMIC	7	Jamaica	UMIC / SIDS	4						
Nigeria	LMIC	10	Nicaragua	LMIC	2						
Senegal	LDC	1	Panama	UMIC	1						
Seychelles	HIC / SIDS	1	St. Kitts and Nevis	HIC / SIDS	1						
Sierra Leone	LDC	13	St. Lucia	UMIC / SIDS	2						
South Africa	UMIC	2	Total number of fellows		20						
Tanzania	LDC	6									
Uganda	LDC / LLDC	5									
Total number of fellows		75									

Data source: Statistics provided by GRÓ FTP

Table 16: FTP scholarships by country: 2018-2023

COUNTRY	CATEGORY	M.SC.	MALE	FEMALE	PH.D.	MALE	FEMALE
Angola	LDC	1	1				1
Cape Verde	LMIC/SIDS				1		
Bangladesh	LDC	1	1				
Ghana	LMIC	1		1			
Guyana	UMIC/SIDS	1	1				
Indonesia	LMIC				1		1
Jamaica	UMIC/SIDS	2		2			
Liberia	LDC				1	1	
Nigeria	LMIC				1	1	
Namibia	UMIC	1		1			
Suriname	UMIC/SIDS	1		1			
Tanzania	LDC				1		1

78 According to DAC classification of ODA 2022-2023 flows.

COUNTRY	CATEGORY	M.SC.	MALE	FEMALE	PH.D.	MALE	FEMALE
Uganda	LDC/LLDC	1		1	2	1	1
Vietnam	LMIC	1		1	1		1
TOTALS		10	3	7	8	3	5

Data source: Statistics provided by GRÓ FTP

Table 17: Workshops by country: 2018-2023

YEAR	HELD ON	WORKSHOP	ATTENDANTS	MALE	FEMALE
2018	Liberia*	Analysis of Vessel Monitoring System Data II	16	15	1
2018	Sierra Leon*	Analysis of Vessel Monitoring System Data I	24	18	6
2018	Sierra Leone*	Analysis of Vessel Monitoring System Data II	7	7	0
2018	Trinidad and Tobago*	Fisheries Value Chain Management Workshop	29	17	12
2019	Tanzania**	Fish quality and training in sensory evaluation of fish freshness	17	13	4
2019	Sierra Leone*	Improved Fish Smoking	9	2	7
2023	Barbados*	Fisheries Assessment and Data Modelling	20	10	10
TOTAL			122	82	40

* Regional

** Local.

Data source: Statistics provided by GRÓ FTP

2.1.2. ALIGNMENT OF THE PROGRAMME WITH THE PARTNER COUNTRIES' AND TARGET GROUPS' NEEDS AND PRIORITIES, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

Marine fishery resources have been declining as the percentage of marine fish stocks fished within biologically sustainable levels has decreased from 90.0% in 1974 to 66.9% in 2015 and 62.3% in 2021⁷⁹.

This situation has prompted countries to address the sustainability of fisheries resources. Various FTP partner nations, including Liberia, Malawi, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and the Caribbean countries, have enacted fisheries policies with goals related to sustainably managing fisheries, promoting economic viability, and ensuring long-term prosperity. These policies generally aim to contribute to food and nutrition security, economic growth, and the overall development of the fisheries sector. Additionally, countries focus on enhancing capacities for sustainable management and development of fisheries and aquaculture while conserving the environment. **Training and capacity building are essential** to bring all these policy goals to reality.

Liberia, a country that has received substantial support from FTP, has enacted a fisheries policy with an overall goal of "sustainably managed and economically viable fisheries that generate prosperity for the present and generations yet unborn"⁸⁰. Malawi's fisheries policy sets as a goal "to promote sustainable fisheries resource utilisation and aquaculture development in order to contribute to food and nutrition security and economic growth of the country", for which it requires the enhancement of capacities to sustainably manage and develop fisheries and aquaculture in Malawi⁸¹. The overall objective of

⁷⁹ FAO (2024). The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2024. Blue Transformation in action. Rome.

⁸⁰ Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Liberia (2014). Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Strategy.

⁸¹ Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development of Malawi (2016) National Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy.

Namibia's Marine Resource Policy is to ensure responsible marine fisheries used sustainably and to ensure their contribution to the country's economy and development objectives. Papua New Guinea, in its fisheries strategic plan 2021-2030, establishes a strategic action of maintaining long-term sustainable fisheries and marine resources by encouraging and strengthening fisheries management systems and processes⁸². Sierra Leone, another country with great support from FTP, in its fisheries management plan calls for the creation of a profitable fisheries sector that contributes to socio-economic development through the sustainable management and utilization of fisheries resources. For Sri Lanka, the objectives of fisheries policy focus on the sustainable management of resources and the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the fisher community. Tanzania's fisheries policy sets as its overall objective the development of a robust, competitive and efficient fisheries sector that contributes to food security and nutrition, growth of the national economy and improvement of the wellbeing of fisheries stakeholders while conserving the environment. Through regional cooperative efforts, such as the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy (CCCFP), countries also emphasize the conservation, management, and sustainable utilization of fisheries resources and related ecosystems.

As the sample of key FTP partner countries reveals, the **6-months postgraduate training programme, the scholarship programme and the in-country or regional short courses/workshops** build individual and institutional capacities that contribute to the fulfilment of **policy objectives and strategies of the partner countries** in terms of sustainably managing fisheries resources for the benefit of their economies, their fishers and fishing communities, and improving the prospects of achieving widespread food security and a healthy environment.

Most **fellows and scholarship recipients come from the Ministries or Government Agencies** in charge of implementing fisheries policies, strategies and projects. Therefore, they have the potential to apply their acquired knowledge in fisheries policy and management, stock assessment, quality management of fish handling and processing, and sustainable aquaculture in their home countries. Approximately **a third of trainees and scholarship recipients also work at academic institutions and research institutions** where they can increase collective knowledge and local capabilities in fisheries management in the promotion of achieving the SDGs.

To ensure relevance of the programme to the needs and policy objectives of partner countries, **the selection process of candidates follows a three-step process**. First, partner countries are selected based on meeting the following requirements: (1) capacity building needs that fall within FTP's offer are identified; (2) the country qualifies for ODA; (3) the country is stable; and (4) the partner institutions in those countries are willing to use and apply the capacities developed through the training programmes. Next, partner institutions within selected countries must have a mandate in the fisheries sector; these can be government agencies, academic institutions, research institutions, or companies and associations related to the fishing industry. Training and research needs are identified at this stage with the partner institution, and the institution nominates candidates for the 6-month training programme whose potential aligns to those needs. The third part of the selection process analyses the potential of candidates to apply and disseminate their knowledge upon return to their home institutions after training. These elements of **the selection process enhance the relevance of FTP interventions in addressing the fisheries issues that recipient countries face**.

The **workshops and short courses** offered by FTP also **add to the relevance** of the programme by **training local and regional staff** from stakeholders on pressing issues related to fisheries.

2.1.3. ALIGNMENT OF THE PROGRAMME WITH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY FRAMEWORKS, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GRÓ FTP's should assist partner countries in achieving their own fisheries development goals in a sustainable manner. In that regard, the programme is in line with the **Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries** (CCRF), which sets out principles and international standards for responsible practices for the

⁸² National Fisheries Authority (2021). Papua New Guinea Fisheries Strategic Plan 2021-2030.

conservation, management, and development of all fisheries. The CCRF aims to promote the contribution of fisheries to food security and food quality, the protection of living aquatic resources and their environments, and research on fisheries and their associated ecosystems. The capacities built through the programme are **consistent with these achieving principles and goals**.

The programme's interventions are also aligned with the **Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries**, which complement the CCRF and prioritize the contribution of small-scale fisheries to global food security and nutrition. These guidelines aim to realize the right to adequate food and gender equality through development strategies aimed at small-scale fisheries.

The programme also aligns with the **Agreement on Port State Measures**. For its implementation, the United Nations (UN) Food and Agriculture Organization launched capacity development efforts to assist partner countries in combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

The programme's support of the **sustainable management of marine fisheries** also directly contributes to the **conservation of the oceans**. This is key for **climate change mitigation**, as oceans absorb about 30% of CO² emissions produced by humans⁸³. Progress towards sustainable fisheries is in line with the **Paris Agreement**.

Through the programme training offering, capacities are built for the formulation and implementation of fisheries policies. In that regard, the **World Trade Organization Agreement on Fisheries Policies** can be mainstreamed, where appropriate, to prohibit harmful fisheries subsidies that have the effect of depleting fish stocks.

All the above fits in the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, where **FTP directly contributes to progress towards SDG 14 Life Below Water** and indirectly towards **SDG 1 No poverty, SDG 2 Zero Hunger, SDG 3 Good Health and Well-being, SDG 5 Gender Equality, SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production, SDG 13 Climate Action, SDG 15 Life on Land, and SDG 17 Partnerships**. In these ways FTP's training interventions **are relevant to the international community's policy frameworks, goals, and strategies and apt to fulfil them in the fisheries sector**.

2.1.4. QUALITY OF THE FTP DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The programme seeks to enhance the contribution of Iceland to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for SDGs. To do this, FTP strengthens institutional capacities in partner countries by providing **excellence in training, education, and research opportunities to young/mid-career professionals** from partner institutions in partner countries, **facilitating the professional growth** of fisheries professionals, **sharing knowledge**, and enabling knowledge exchange in a way that enables development change in the fisheries sector towards the sustainable use of living aquatic resources.

The FTP utilises a coherent mix of capacity development interventions to carry out these tasks, the core of which being the **6-month postgraduate fellowship training program**. The 6-month fellowship takes place in Iceland, and fellowship recipients can specialize in Fisheries Policy and Management, Stock Assessment, Aquatic Resources Assessment and Monitoring, Quality Management of Fish Handling and Processing, or Sustainable Aquaculture depending on the needs of their home institutions and countries. These lines of specialization are of **Iceland's particular expertise** and are subsequently offered to cause needed developmental change in the fisheries sector of the partner countries.

Another training measure from FTP is the **scholarship programme** which financially supports qualifying fellows who have completed the 6-month training programme and have been accepted at an Icelandic university to pursue an MSc or PhD graduate degree. This component of the programme further augments the capacities of the partner institutions with qualified professionals, creates opportunities for research and the creation of knowledge outputs, and allows grant recipients to further disseminate knowledge on fisheries by conducting trainings in their home countries. FTP expects and encourages

⁸³ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. U.S. Department of Commerce.

scholars to study and research topics of particular concern to their host organization and country to develop skills specialised to the needs of their homelands.

A third component of the programme is the **short courses or workshops** that are offered within partner countries or regions. These events are tailored to local contexts and pertinent issues on a country or region's fisheries and are directed to professionals in fisheries offices and private companies in the fishing industry and fishers' organizations. The knowledge gained through these training events is expected to be readily applicable to address pressing issues in the fisheries sector and in management.

Knowledge exchange through **attendance at research conferences** is another element of the programme's capacity building measures. The programme supports alumni whose research has been accepted for presentation at these conference events through payment of conference fees, travel, and accommodation to **facilitate opportunities for knowledge dissemination**.

Complementing the above training components of capacity building, the programme provides **advisory services and knowledge sharing** by hosting delegations from partner countries to learn about Icelandic fisheries and the steps that Iceland took to turn fisheries into an opportunity for its economic development.

In all, **the design of the programme is appropriate** as it holds a vertical logic that is expected to confer effectiveness to the programme. It is also the evaluative opinion that the **programme is managed appropriately** for its implementation and the results sought.

It should be mentioned, however, that while the programme has an implicit design encompassed in its training strategies throughout its website, such design is not documented in a way that would give stakeholders a clear understanding of the programme.

2.2. PROMOTION OF SYNERGIES BETWEEN GRÓ FTP AND OTHER LOCAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS (COHERENCE)

FTP complements a wider array of development efforts by Iceland, partner countries, and other donors to advance capacity development to address the sustainability of the fisheries sector in the target countries and regions. Hence, **the programme shows coherence** in the context of other efforts and initiatives to address the needs of partner countries in achieving their fisheries policy goals **without overlapping or counteracting effects**.

2.2.1. COHERENCE AND SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE WORK OF THE PROGRAMME AND ACROSS DIFFERENT DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS BY ICELAND IN PARTNER COUNTRIES OR REGIONS

Iceland has an **extensive bilateral cooperation agenda on sustainable fisheries**. These efforts span several regions and encompass various projects, each designed to foster sustainable development, improve health and livelihoods, and enhance the overall fisheries management infrastructure.

In **Liberia, Uganda, and Sierra Leone**, Iceland supports projects that focus on improving fish handling, processing, and marketing infrastructure. These initiatives often include the construction of smoke oven shelters, provision of technical assistance, and enhancement of water and sanitation facilities in fishing communities. The overarching goal is to improve the quality and safety of fish products while promoting healthier working environments and reducing environmental impacts. In Sierra Leone, GRP-FTP has already offered a workshop in Improved Fish Smoking, in tandem with Icelandic bilateral cooperation.

In **Mozambique**, Iceland's efforts are directed towards research, monitoring, and development of local fishing grounds. Similarly, in **Lake Victoria**, Iceland is developing a comprehensive fisheries management plan intended to ensure sustainable fishing practices, economic benefits, and environmental protection.

Through partnerships with the World Bank and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, in **Vietnam**, Iceland provides technical assistance tailored to the needs of local fisheries development programs. The **Caribbean** sees Iceland supporting the implementation of the Fisheries Manager information system in several islands, aiming to enhance data collection and management for more effective fisheries oversight.

Through the **Island Growth Initiative**, Iceland extends its cooperation with **SIDS**, emphasizing sustainable fishing practices and energy solutions. **Training of senior fisheries ministry officials is a key component of this initiative.** Some of the short courses in the Caribbean have been funded by this Initiative.

Multilaterally, Iceland contributes to the **World Bank's West African Regional Fisheries Program** by offering expert advice and supporting the improvement of fish smoking facilities. Additionally, Iceland participates in the **PROBLUE Fund** to bolster global efforts towards healthy and productive oceans, aligning with SDG 14. Contributions are also made to funds under the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, focusing on offshore issues in partner countries.

While these development cooperation efforts are not the result of a coordinated strategy, synergies are inferred from the nature of the interventions in the partner countries and regions. The programme, thus, exhibits **coherence** across development cooperation actions by Iceland in partner countries or regions.

2.2.2. COHERENCE AND SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE WORK OF FTP AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS BY THE KEY PARTNERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS OR BY OTHER DONORS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES OR REGIONS

Although not the result of a coordination effort, **there is a host of development initiatives in the countries where FTP focuses its efforts.** In **Liberia**, for instance, the International Development Association funds the Liberia Sustainable Management of Fisheries Project, which aims to enhance conditions for fishers by promoting value addition and supporting aquaculture development as well as **strengthening fisheries sector management and governance.** The European Union (EU), through the Communities for Fisheries project, collaborates with the government to engage local fishing communities in developing sustainable and fair management plans. These initiatives require local capacities, which GRP-FTP contributes to building.

In **Uganda**, the Directorate of Fisheries Resources (DFR) carries out the Parish Development Model, which emphasises **sustainable fishing practices**, fish farming techniques, and **resource management.** The implementation of this initiative requires the concurrence of various stakeholders to achieve the SDGs in the fisheries sector. FTP contributes by enhancing capacities, at both the individual and institutional level, to make this possible.

In **Nigeria**, the Aquaculture Development Project, funded by the Danish Government through the Danida Market Development Partnership, is a four-year initiative⁸⁴ whose goal is to establish a **sustainable aquaculture value chain** for smallholder fish farmers, seeking to improve output while minimizing pollution along the aquaculture value chain. FTP is in coherence with this initiative as it contributes to capacity development through its training in sustainable aquaculture.

In **Malawi**, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funds the Restoring Fisheries for Sustainable Livelihoods in Lake Malawi (REFRESH) project, which aims to **enhance capture fisheries management** in lakeshore districts; and the Sustainable Fisheries, Aquaculture Development, and Watershed Management Project, funded by the African Development Fund, aims to **diversify from capture fisheries to aquaculture** with the goals of enhancing aquaculture productivity and **reducing post-harvest losses.** Also, in **Cape Verde**, the Coastal Fisheries Initiative, a FAO-led project, aims to make Cape Verde's coastal fisheries more sustainable by **improving fisheries governance and management** and introducing best practices in post-harvest fish processing. The capacities developed by FTP through its training in sustainable aquaculture and quality management of fish handling and processing is needed for the implementation of these initiatives.

In **Tanzania**, the Heshimu Bahari ("Respect the Oceans") project, funded by the USAID, aims at enabling sustainable co-management and biodiversity **conservation of marine resources** through active involvement of local communities in addressing overfishing, gender-equity approaches to development,

⁸⁴ From 2021 to 2025.

and climate change mitigation. While not the result of a coordinated effort, the focus of FTP on sustainable management of fisheries coherent with the efforts of this project.

In the **Caribbean region, there are synergies with interventions that are funded by other donors.** The Programme for Strengthening Fisheries Management in African, Caribbean, and Pacific Countries, funded by the EU, aims to contribute to the sustainable and equitable management of fisheries by improving institutional capacity for fisheries and aquatic resources management. Adding to these synergies, the Japan International Cooperation Agency implements several projects in the Caribbean through the CRFM, one of which is COASTFISH, which, among other things, supports data collection and monitoring, community-based resource management, and policy development and implementation, for which capacities developed by FTP in the region are useful. Also, CRFM member States receive support from the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission for capacity building for the sustainable use of fisheries resources, as well as from the University of Belize and the University of the West Indies. While GRÓ FTP does not participate with CRFM in the coordination of capacity development efforts, it does monitor the capacity building offer by donors to avoid overlapping and jointly address the region's needs.

Hence, the **programme exhibits coherence** with other development cooperation actions by other organizations or donors in partner countries and regions.

2.2.3. DUPLICATION OR OVERLAP OF THE PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES WITH OTHER EFFORTS BY ICELAND OR OTHER DONORS

In the review done for this evaluation, given the capacity building needs in the Caribbean region and the actual assistance received in that regard, **no conclusive evidence was found of duplication or overlapping** of the activities of the programme with other efforts by both Iceland and other donors.

The programme training offer, through its capacity development mix, is clearly focused on building or enhancing the individual and institutional capacities in partner countries to bring sustainable development change in the fisheries sector. In that sense, the development projects that coincide in the partner countries from both the Icelandic development cooperation and other donors, are in synergy with the programme's effort because the trainings contribute directly to the success and sustainability of fisheries because of increased capabilities among managing stakeholders. As for multilateral development cooperation, Iceland assists multilateral organizations in reaching their objectives in their targeted countries/regions, with no apparent risk of interference with the programme's interventions.

2.3. PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS (EFFECTIVENESS)

It is the evaluative opinion that **the programme is effective in achieving its intended results** as evidenced by its outputs of graduated fellows, post-graduate scholars, and local officials trained in fisheries issues, in addition to alumni continually empowered to bring change in fisheries development matters in partner countries. The effectiveness is due to the fellow selection process, the institutional nature of selected partner organisations, the tailoring of training and research conducted to institutional and country needs, the strategic focus of short courses, and the programme's flexibility.

2.3.1. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAMME OVERALL IN REGARD TO THE DELIVERY AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE INTENDED RESULTS

During the period 2018-2023, the Programme has delivered outputs that **conform to the purpose of contributing to the enhancement of individual and institutional capacities** in order to promote and implement the changes needed for the achievement of targeted SDG 14, resulting in the sustainable development and use of fisheries resources in partner countries.

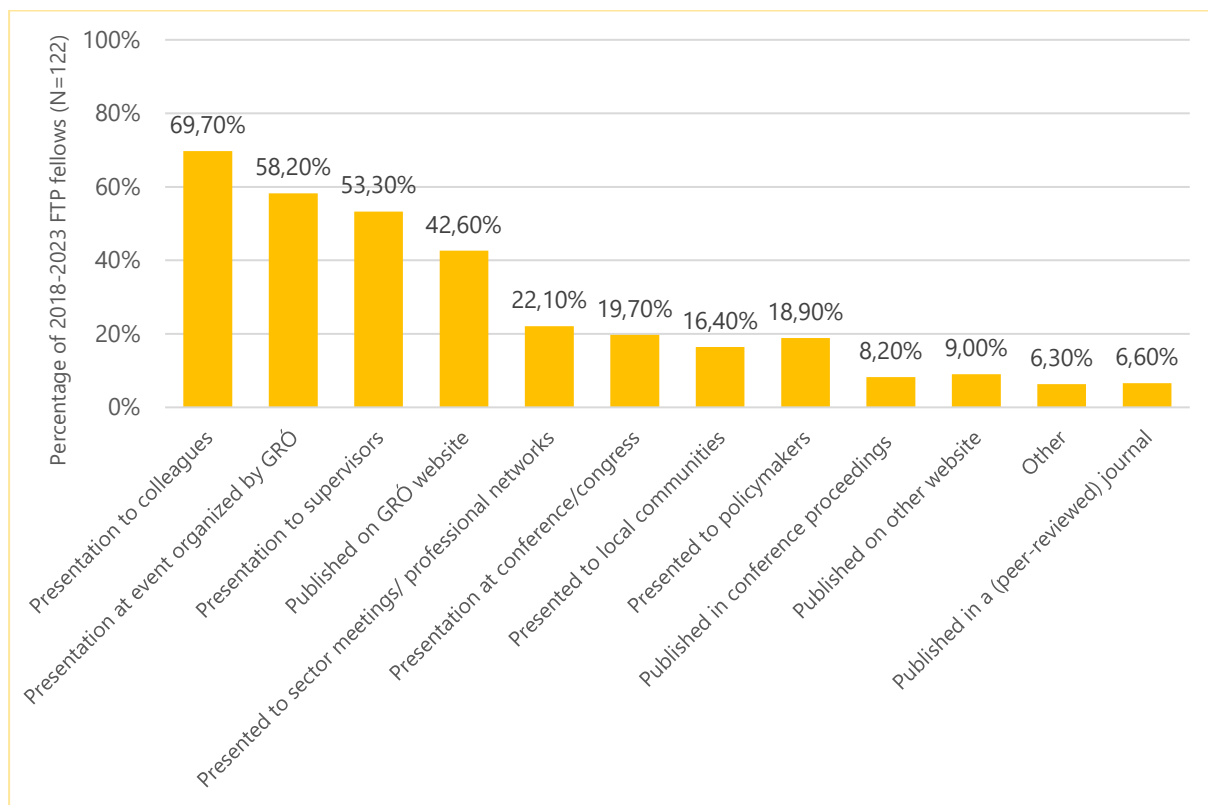
Regarding the **Increased capability of individuals and expertise of GRÓ partner organisations (Output 1)**, according to the evaluation team's questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, **FTP fellows who graduated** from the 6-month postgraduate training programme between 2018 and 2023 indicated it substantially or largely **improved their technical** (88%), **analytical** (87%), and **research skills** (88%). These high percentages are an indication that fellows are more qualified to perform the activities in their professional fields, which conveys effectiveness to the programme.

In addition, of the cohorts of fellows that graduated during the period 2018-2023, 80% agree or strongly agree that **management of their home organizations value the training they received**, which adds to the prospects of the programme’s effectiveness as it makes the application of the acquired knowledge more viable, thereby enhancing the expertise of partner organizations.

While the perceived appreciation by the organizations’ management is high, **80%** of the 2018-2023 FTP fellows, reported **having difficulties applying their knowledge** due to various reasons. The main challenge refers to **insufficient resources** to apply knowledge (61%), followed by insufficient support from the organization (37%) and unfavourable power dynamics within the home organization (23%).

Concerning the **Production and dissemination of new knowledge (Output 2)**, graduates have **used their training to share with colleagues and other experts in their respective field of expertise**. As indicated by the evaluation team’s survey, **78% of fellows have shared their knowledge** through presentations to colleagues and supervisors as well as expert networks and at events organized by GRÓ and publications through the GRÓ website (Figure 44). Sharing of knowledge begins with a poster session on graduation day, through which key research results are highlighted, and at events organized by GRÓ. Fellows **sharing their knowledge** is another element that **contributes to the effectiveness** of the programme.

Figure 44 Knowledge dissemination channels used by 2018-2023 FTP alumni



Data source: Evaluation team’s own alumni survey, multiple-choice question on dissemination channels by 2018-2023 FTP cohort.

The programme has a section on its website where fellows’ **research projects are published**, including **some university theses**. For the research papers by fellows from the 6-month training programme, the process involves editing the final draft with the assistance of FTP staff. Once the editing is complete, the papers are posted on the fellow’s profile page and in the section dedicated to publications under the Media section of FTP’s website. Regarding university theses, the publication section of FTP shares the link to Skemman, a digital repository for some Icelandic universities, including those that partner with FTP.

As for **professional empowerment through networking and community-building (Output 3)**, notwithstanding its importance, **only 36% of all FTP fellows have participated** in some form of networking (formal or informal) since their graduation. Among the 2018-2023 cohort, the share is even

lower with only 27% of the FTP having engaged in formal or informal networking since their graduation. The main reason for this low rate of networking is the **lack of awareness** of networking opportunities for 55% of FTP respondents who did not engage, and **lack of resources** for 43% of FTP respondents who did not engage. Of the 2018-2023 FTP fellows participating in formal networking events, 57% have been in an event organized by GRÓ FTP, 86% in GRÓ FTP funded participation in conferences, and 14% in FTP short courses or workshops. The main perceived benefit of networking among FTP fellows who were active is a boost in motivation to solve problems related to the technical field (75%), to find technical solutions for problems (73%) and to connect with other fellows for personal matters such as friendships (71%).

Another important activity by FTP consists of **sponsoring alumni to participate as presenters in international conferences** whose proposals have been accepted for presentation. Conference participation is a way to share knowledge by former fellows but **also to network with professionals and stakeholders in the fisheries field**, both of which contribute to the sustainability of the Programme results through increased capacities for fellows and further dissemination of knowledge products. During the period 2018-2023, **66 former fellows** (65% male and 35% female) were **supported to attend conferences**.

Another measure the FTP employs is the **engagement of former fellows in the short courses and workshops**, both as lecturers and organizers. This measure contributes to keeping alumni engaged in their learning as well as in the dissemination of knowledge, in addition to raising their profile in their home country as their visibility is enhanced through these events. For the period 2018-2013, alumni participated as organisers in 27% of the events.

For the period 2018-2023, **GRÓ fellows, trainees and their respective organisations promote and implement changes needed to achieve SDGs relevant to their field of work** thanks to the positive assessment, by management in partner organisations, of the training received by fellows. Of those responding to the team's questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, 80% indicated that management regards their training as valuable for the organisation. That has made it possible for 87% of the graduates who responded to the survey to use the training to advance their contribution in their field or sector of work.

In addition, 80% of graduates in those cohorts (2018-2023) have used their training to share with colleagues, supervisors and other experts in their respective field of expertise and 72% have substantially or extremely advanced professionally, either through promotion, salary increase, more responsibility or a scholarship for further studies.

All the above is **evidence of the programme's effectiveness** in achieving the outcome sought through the outputs delivered.

Table 18 shows the delivery of the programme's training mix that resulted in the above-mentioned outputs.

Table 18: Principal deliveries by FTP by interventions: 2018-2023

POSTGRADUATE FELLOWSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 121 fellows graduated from 36 countries, 62 male (50.4%), 61 female (49.6%), 26% from LDCs, 31% from LMICs, 34% from UMICs, and 9% from HICs; of those countries, 11 were SIDS. Geographically, 61% of fellows came from Africa, 17% from Latin-America, 15% from Asia, and 7% from the South Pacific. • Fellows specialised in Fisheries Policy and Management (37%), Quality Management of Fish Handling and Processing (23%), Sustainable Aquaculture (15%), Aquatic Resources Assessment and Monitoring (13%), Stock Assessment and Gear Analysis (7%), and Stock Assessment and Fishing Technology (4%). • The programme's quality and coherences is rated highly, as 72% of the 2018-2023 FTP fellows rated the programme's quality as high (5 out of 5 on the scale) and 76% rated the programme as very coherent (5 out of 5).

POSTGRADUATE FELLOWSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMME	
Scholarship programme	
M.Sc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 fellows (3 male and 2 female) have been awarded a scholarship for master's degree studies at the University of Iceland. • 38.5% of grantees came from LDCs; 38.5% from LMICs, and 50% from UMICs. • 9 grantees graduated, and one is still completing coursework. • 6 graduates specialised in Environmental and Natural Resources, and 3 in Food Science. • 9 theses have been published.
Ph.D.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 scholars (2 male and 6 female) were granted a scholarship to pursue a Ph.D. at the University of Iceland in Food Science (4), Environmental and Natural Resources (3), Economics (1). • 3 grantees graduated. • 37.5% of scholars are from LDCs and 62.5% from LMICs. • 3 grantees have graduated in Economics (1) and Food science (2).
Short courses/Workshops (Regional/In-country)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 short training courses were delivered in 7 events (6 regional, 1 local) in 5 partner countries. • The local course was delivered in Tanzania titled "Fish Quality and Training in Sensory Evaluation of Fish Freshness" • The regional courses were delivered in Barbados (Fisheries Assessment and Data Modelling), Liberia (Analysis of Vessel Monitoring System Data II), Sierra Leone (Analysis of Vessel Monitoring System Data I and Analysis of Vessel Monitoring System Data II), and Trinidad and Tobago (Fisheries Value Chain Management Workshop) • 122 attendees (67% male and 33% female) from 20 countries benefited from the short courses. • The subjects of the short courses are tailored to the needs of the partner countries as they have focused on the analysis of Vessel Monitoring Systems, fisheries assessment and data modelling, fisheries value chain management, and postharvest handling of fish. • The short courses are rated as useful by participants as their feedback indicated 95% considered using what they learned and 85% considered their competences had increased • Short courses contribute to the effectiveness of the programme as these courses address pressing issues in partner countries useful to participants.
Conferences and workshops	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FTP supported 17 former fellows (76% male and 24% female) to attend the International Institute of Fisheries Economics and Trade conference in 2018. • 2 former FTP fellows attended a symposium from the Organización del Sector Pesquero y Acuícola del Istmo Centroamericano (OSPESCA) and the Government of Nicaragua to discuss fisheries policy and management mechanisms in Central America and the Dominican Republic in 2019. The symposium was attended by 59 people from OSPESCA member states and 3 former FTP fellows. • The programme supported 18 fellows (67% male and 33% female) to attend the international symposium Great Lakes of the World GLOW 9 - Emerging Frontiers for Africa Great Lakes, held in Kenya in 2019. • 11 former fellows (45% male and 55% female) attended the International Institute of Fisheries Economics and Trade (IIFET) conference in 2022 with support from the programme. • Attendance by 18 fellows (61% male, 39% female) to the Aquatic Resources and Blue Economy Conference (ARBEC) was made possible through support by GRÓ FTP. • In all, 66 former fellows (65% male and 35% female) were supported to attend conferences during the period 2018-2023, enabling them to enhance their empowerment by disseminating their knowledge, learning from others, and networking.

POSTGRADUATE FELLOWSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMME

Innovative online content creation

- The programme developed a series of **five videos** that are massively disseminated through YouTube and focus on the relationship of **fisheries and the SDGs**.
- The videos, although not designed in-depth online learning, can expose a general audience to topics such as the economic, environmental, and social importance of fisheries.
- The video titles are:
 - **Introduction to the series**: An introduction to SDGs related to fisheries and the work of FTP.
 - **"Preserving the value of fish"**: addressing post-harvest losses related 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. It relates to SDG Target 14.4.
 - **"Data for sustainable fisheries management"**: outlining the importance of stock assessment and relates to SDG Target 14.4.
 - **"Defining and defending small-scale fisheries"**: presenting the trend in fisheries in the context of small-scale fisheries SDG 14.b.
- The videos have amassed **2,897 views** worldwide.

Research and knowledge creation

- **121 fellows contributed to knowledge creation** through their research at the FTP postgraduate training program; **58% of that work is published** on the GRÓ FTP website.
- 9 scholarship recipients graduated with a master's degree from the University of Iceland and published their theses in environmental and natural resources, and food science.
- 3 scholars obtained their Ph.D. from the University of Iceland, contributing to knowledge generation through academic research.

Advisory services and knowledge sharing

- The programme participated in the **FarFish project**, which aims at improving the sustainability of EU fishing outside European waters. FTP led the work package relating to capacity building and dissemination for the project. In 2020, 3 fellows, 2 from Cape Verde and 1 from Senegal, completed their 6-month training through the FarFish project.
- In 2022 the programme hosted a delegation from Indonesia of 15 mid-level fisheries officials from the Coremap-cti group from the Indonesian Ministry of National Development Planning, the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, and from the University of Halu Oleo. The purpose of this study tour was to enhance the capacity, skills, and experience of the participants on the management of sustainable fisheries, its scientific foundation, and policy implications.
- FTP hosted a delegation of **6 high-level-fisheries officials** from Sierra Leone to offer them a comprehensive overview of the Icelandic offer to support the sustainable development of fisheries in that country.
- A group of 15 specialists and policy makers from the **Pacific Island Community Knowledge Exchange**, 5 experts/task team leaders from the **World Bank**, and 2 experts from the **Pacific Islands Forum Fishing Agency** visited Iceland in 2023 to learn about the development of the fisheries management system, stakeholder cooperation, and the supportive environment for investment, innovation, education, and training.

Capacity development partnerships

- Through the partnership with the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, **FTP collaborates with the University of the West Indies** in the preparation and delivery of short courses/workshops in the Caribbean region.

Also, the evaluation of the 6-month training programme conducted by the Programme for the 2022 and 2023 cohorts resulted in a 4.57 and 4.72 score, respectively, in a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high).

The outputs delivered by the programme and the outcomes linked to the target groups that it engaged are evidence of its **effectiveness in advancing towards the results sought** by the programme.

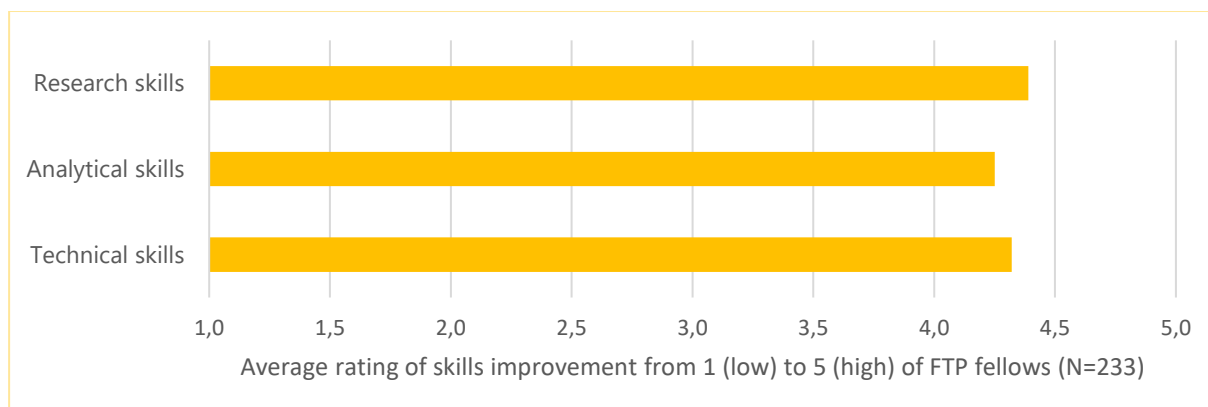
2.3.2. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DIFFERENT PROGRAMME INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND OF LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS IN REGARD TO THE DELIVERY AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

i. 6-month postgraduate training programme

The programme reached a gender balance in its flagship training programme, which in turn is likely to influence the partner institutions to foster gender equality. In addition, most trainees, through both the postgraduate fellowship training program and the scholarship program, come from partner countries, 39% from LDCs and 37% from LMICs; hence, although slightly below target, the **programme is effective** by reaching these target groups and contributing to enhancing their skills in various aspects of their professional lives.

The effectiveness of the programme through the outputs delivered is corroborated through the answers of former fellows to the evaluation team's questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni. The survey respondents rated from 1 (low) to 5 (high) how the programme improved their professional skills (Figure 45). Overall, the rating is very positive, with most FTP respondents indicating rating equal to or higher of 4 out of 5 on the scale.

Figure 45: Main professional skills of participants enhanced by the postgraduate fellowship training programme.

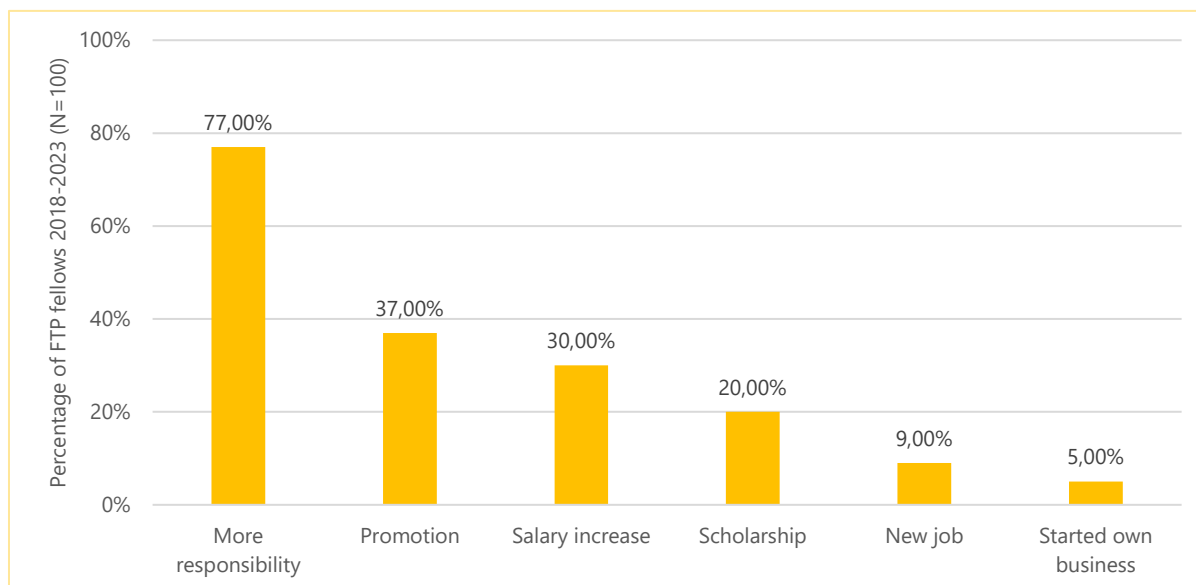


Data source: Evaluation team's own alumni survey, 5-point Likert scale rating of skills improvement by 2018-2023 FTP cohort.

From those who saw their skills substantially or largely improved, **89% were in technical skills, 89% in research skills, and 85% in analytical skills.**

Also at the personal (micro) level, GRÓ alumni who answered the evaluation team's questionnaire survey indicated that the enhanced capital made it possible for them to advance their career thanks to the postgraduate programme. Many FTP fellows were **promoted or given more responsibilities as a result of the programme**, among other effects (Figure 46).

Figure 46: Types of professional career advancement of 2018-2023 FTP fellows resulting from programme participation



Data source: Evaluation team's own alumni survey, multiple-choice question on types of career advancement by 2018-2023 FTP cohort.

During the period 2018-2023, fellows were trained primarily in Fisheries Policy and Management (38%); which corroborates the **proper targeting of the programme** as most partner countries face policy gap challenges in the fisheries sector; hence, the improvements of these capacities is expected to enhance their policy frameworks as a first step to providing context for any action in the fisheries sector. Second to fisheries policy and management, 24% of fellows specialized in Aquatic Resources Assessment and Monitoring⁸⁵. Here, the Programme also shows its proper targeting as only 48% of the total global catch has sufficient data to determine its status. This situation is presumably worse in partner developing countries, where the fellows come from. Hence, the availability of data is a necessary condition, first to inform policy and, second, to take actions in the fisheries sector for a sustainable use of this resource. Third in line of countries' needs is addressing fish postharvest losses in the value chain. It is estimated that 35% of the total harvest from world fisheries is lost and it is expected to be higher in developing countries, as they lack the infrastructure and technologies for the adequate handling and processing of fish. Hence, the Programme is on target in selecting a substantial number of fellows to specialise in Quality Management of Fish Handling and Processing. As the fish catch declines, aquaculture is a means to make up for that decline and meet the growing demand for seafood. In this regard, 15% of fellows specialised in Sustainable Aquaculture, to prepare to meet their country's needs for knowledge in fish farming.

Therefore, **the mix of fellow's specialisation is aligned with pressing issues in the fisheries sector in the partner countries** where they come from, and they have been empowered to bring change through the application of their acquired knowledge through their work. In fact, **87% of 2018-2023 FTP fellows** answering the evaluation team's questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni **acknowledge having contributed to their technical field** in several ways, mostly **through training and mentoring others (84%), conducting further research (70%), and the implementation of projects and initiatives (53%)** In addition to the pressing issues that the fellowship programme addresses, **there is also the need to address the value chain of fisheries**, along which there are important food losses, estimated at 35%. These losses put pressure on food security and on the fish stocks, as more fishing is needed to make up for those losses.

⁸⁵ For simplicity, fellows who specialised in Stock Assessment, Stock Assessment and Gear Technology, and Stock Assessment and Fishing Technology are grouped into this line of specialisation.

ii. Scholarship programme

Scholars who have graduated with a Ph.D. degree have done so in the areas of food science (2), and economics (1). As for those scholars who graduated with a M.Sc. degree, they did so in Environmental and Natural Resources (6) and in Food Science (3). which are all **relevant for the advancement of the array of SDGs** to which implementation the Programme aims to contribute, in particular to SDG 14.

The scholarship programme has great potential to bring sustainable impacts in the fisheries sector, as scholars are mostly employed by universities and research institutes, which by nature have the incentive to use and disseminate the Programme's benefits in terms of new knowledge. In this regard, the enhancement of this programme is key to the Programme success. To enhance the effectiveness of the scholarship programme, FTP restricts the number of months to receive support in Iceland to encourage scholars to spend time at home during the study period, which allows them to maintain a close connection with their home institutions while they collect data or write about their research, which in turn improves the relevance of their research in relation to country needs and in line with the GRÓ FTP strategic approach.

iii. In-country short courses/workshops

The Programme also shows effectiveness when it comes to the outcomes of the short courses/workshops, which were added to the training mix to cater to the needs of a broader audience, such as those who do not qualify for the 6-months training program and yet play an important role in the fisheries sector. The short courses/workshops in vessel monitoring systems, for example, have trained monitoring control and surveillance staff, thereby enhancing capacities that are essential for the sustainability of fisheries resources. Attendants to the short training in fisheries value chain management learned how to unlock the benefits of fisheries for the benefit of a wide spectrum of stakeholders. Participants in the training on fish quality and processing topics learned ways to improve the quality of fish and to reduce food losses after harvest. Attendees to the course on fisheries assessment and data modelling strengthened their skills in stock assessment and fisheries data analysis, which is vital to generate sound data for informed decision making and regulation in fisheries. Based on available data, the short course delivered in 2023, for instance, was rated with a score of 5 and 4 in terms of usefulness by 82% and 18% of attendants, respectively, in a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high).

As for involvement of alumni in short courses, 27% of the events involved alumni participating in the organization of events.

iv. Conferences

The Programme's efforts to support alumni to attend conferences has **fostered their empowerment** by keeping them updated in the latest developments in the fisheries sector, by allowing them to disseminate their new findings, and to connect with a wider community of the fisheries sector, which may result in opportunities for further projects, research and initiatives; 66 alumni, 35% female and 65% male were able to attend conferences through which they had the opportunity to enhance their professional empowerment.

v. Innovative online content creation

While not a formal online learning, the series of videos on the importance of fisheries and their connection with the SDGs is a **valuable educational tool for a general audience** as these videos highlight the economic, social, and environmental significance of fisheries.

vi. Research and knowledge creation

Through research by fellows and scholars, **new knowledge was created and made available through its publication**. From the publications available, 25% of graduating fellows did research on stock assessment and data collection, 18% on food quality, 10% on policy, 10% on sustainable management of fisheries, and another 10% on technical issues on fisheries. This created knowledge along with the skills gained during the training programme are part of the basis for the effects of the Programme in their home countries; **however, 80% of the FTP survey respondents experienced some sort of challenge** for their knowledge application after graduation.

vii. Advisory services and knowledge sharing

By this strategy, the programme was able to **share Icelandic knowledge in fisheries with 12 countries**⁸⁶ through high- and mid-level fisheries officials as well as policy makers and fisheries specialists. This sharing of knowledge allowed participants to have an overview of the concept of fisheries management and how a transformation from one of the poorest nation in Europe to one of the richest has happened through the fisheries development over a relatively short period of time, its scientific foundation and policy implications; as well as an understanding of bioeconomic theory, the Icelandic Individual Transfer Quota, as well as the triple bottom line approach to sustainability.

2.3.3 OVERALL FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ACHIEVEMENT OR NON-ACHIEVEMENT OF THE EXPECTED RESULTS

The following **5 factors positively affect the programme's achievement** of its expected results:

i. Country selection process

One of the key aspects of the selection process is the selection of partner countries. First, the country must qualify for **ODA**. Second, there is an assessment as to whether the prospective **country lacks the capacities needed** for the sustainable management of its fisheries and if those needs are in line with what the programme can provide, considering that the programme's offer reflects Iceland's expertise. A third consideration of country selection is that the **country has a policy in place for the sustainable development of the fisheries sector**, which ensures that the outputs delivered to the partner country fall within a planning framework and the chance for their use and application is high. It is also required that the **country is stable** for the sake of the sustainability of the programme's effects.

ii. Partner institutions

Another element that is critical for the effectiveness of the programme is the selection of partner institutions. FTP's partnerships in partner countries mostly involve the Fisheries Divisions/Institutions in charge of promoting and regulating the fisheries sector. Also, importantly but to a lesser extent, it partners with local universities and research institutes, as well as private companies and associations related to the fishing industry. It is important to mention that the predominance of Fisheries Divisions/Institutions has to do with the fact that specialised research institutions are, for the most part, non-existent in the LDCs and that academic institutions in these countries do not have high standards, in terms of both qualified staff and good quality facilities. Hence, it is customary for Fisheries Divisions/Institutions to play the role of promotion and regulating agencies of fisheries, as well as research institutions. By partnering with these types of institutions, the programme ensures effectiveness in the delivery and results of the programme mix of interventions as the mandate of these institutions is facilitated by the outputs of the programme. In fact, 73% of trainees come from the Fisheries Divisions/Institutions or government Ministries that have the mandate to promote and regulate the fisheries sector in their countries. This **partnership strategy by the Programme adds to its relevance** as the outputs, in principle, are in line with the needs of the partner institutions and, therefore, with the countries themselves. With partner universities and research institutes, where 23% of trainees come from, the prospects for the effectiveness of the programme are also high, as academic and research institutions are centres for the dissemination and creation of knowledge and these partnerships have a multiplier effect. Institutional partnerships are key to the effectiveness of the programme, as they provide institutional context for capacity development needs, and nominate qualified fellows to be trained and generate knowledge to fill those capacity gaps. The partnership agreements with institutions **ensures that trainees return to their home institutions**, which is an important element for the effectiveness of the programme.

⁸⁶ Indonesia, Sierra Leone, and from the Pacific Community (Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu).

The collaborative selection process with partner institutions further adds to the effectiveness of the programme. **Selecting candidates nominated by partner institutions ensures that institutional needs will be served.** From the pool of candidates, the programme selects those who have the academic credentials (a university degree relevant to fisheries), can apply and disseminate their acquired knowledge, and have at least one year of experience in the field with a clearly defined role in the fisheries sector and a clear understanding of the fisheries sector. Also, whenever possible, candidates are interviewed while FTP staff are on site⁸⁷, which allows the programme to address the needs of the partner institution and the qualifications of the candidate, which in turn adds to the prospects for the programme's effectiveness.

iii. Training research related to institutional/country needs

Another important factor that influences the achievement of the FTP's expected results is the fact that **training and research follows the country/institutional needs.** The programme favours focusing research on country issues for which local data is used, which contributes to ensure the application of knowledge to address fisheries issues in partner countries, thereby enhancing the prospects for the use of the programme's results to bring about development change.

iv. Strategic focus of short courses

By strategically focusing on short courses in partner countries, fisheries officials, officers, and staff of organizations related to the fisheries sector can learn and apply in the short-term the learning and tools provided in these events.

v. Programme's flexibility

The programme is flexible to adjust to the changing needs in the countries and partner institutions to better accommodate for those changes. Over the years, FTP has sent Icelandic experts to partner countries to better understand the challenges these countries face in issues such as data collection, technical know-how, facilities, and funding, among others. The programme's flexibility makes it possible to improve the design of the specialisation lines, both in terms of content and the time allocated to each topic, based on the information gathered by the experts. In that regard, the lines of specialisation of the fellowship training programme have been updated based on the programme assessment for continuous improvement, to better fit training needs. Within each line of specialisation, content is also continuously updated based on feedback for relevance and applicability. This **flexibility ensures that the programme remains relevant and therefore effective for capacity building and catalysing development change.**

2.4. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT (EFFICIENCY)

FTP is **efficiently managed.** It has **clearly established timelines and procedures** for its implementation, **as well as the flexibility** to introduce corrective measures as needed to accommodate evolving needs of partner institutions and diverse fellow profiles, as evidenced by the practice of continuous improvement in the design and implementation of the training provided. The outputs delivered by the programme are **cost effective** and, thus, the **Program is efficient** in their delivery.

2.4.1. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS, PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION, OVERSIGHT, STEERING, AND RISK MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND THE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF RESULTS

i. Programme management, planning and implementation systems

In 2023, there were **4.3 full-time equivalent positions allocated to FTP staff**, three on a full-time basis and two part-time, to manage and implement the FTP. This staff included the programme director, the deputy director, a project manager, an operations manager, and a specialist. Lecturers, supervisors, and

⁸⁷ Interviews are conducted online when physical presence is not possible.

head of lines come from the programmes' partner institutions such as the University of Iceland, the University of Akureyri, MATÍS, Hólar University College, and MFRI itself, whose services are paid by MFRI from the contributions made by GRÓ. **MFRI, as the host institution, also provides office space and access to its facilities** for the programme's activities.

Planning begins with the second meeting of **the Studies Committee**, which takes place in October with the purpose of discussing the work plan for the coming year and the status of the programme's activities. At the second meeting held in April/May the Committee **assesses the activities of the past year and plans the projects of the coming year**.

The Studies Committee is tasked with **designing and organizing the 6-month training programme in their four lines of specialty** (Aquatic Resource Assessment and Monitoring, Quality Management of Fish Handling and Processing, Fisheries Policy and Management, and Sustainable Aquaculture). They also design and organize short courses, workshops, meetings, and conferences related to fisheries in partner countries. The Committee assists the programme director in the selection of guest lecturers.

Members of the Committee also participate in defining the eligibility criteria for grants for scholarship recipients for graduate studies at an Icelandic university and selecting candidates considering the budget for the scholarship programme, which is determined by GRÓ's board. The **programme is managed by the core staff of FTP** following the plan set up by the Studies Committee in its second meeting and reviewed in its first meeting of the year. The FTP director also works with the heads of lines, who are part of the Studies Committee, in improving the 6-month training programme based on the results of the evaluation of the three Modules (Introduction, Specialisation, and Research).

There are clearly defined timelines and processes, which contribute to ensuring operational efficiency. In the case of the Programme's core training intervention, this normally runs from September to February, with a clearly defined schedule and content for each Module. In 2023, however, following the hiring of the GRÓ house, FTP was able to use the house only for three months, which forced FTP to move the fellowship programme to the period from the second half of November to the first half of May, which made it difficult to hire supervisors from the MFRI for two lines of specialisation (Sustainable Aquaculture and Aquatic Resources Assessment and Monitoring) given the regular busy schedule of experts from February to April. **FTP expects that this training programme goes back soon to its original timeframe**. The short courses are strategically planned, prepared, and delivered based on requirements by the programme's partner organizations in the targeted countries.

ii. Programme financial management and oversight systems

The **Marine and Freshwater Research Institute serves as the host and service provider** for FTP. **Under a Service Agreement** with the GRÓ Centre, MFRI provides financing for programme implementation based on a biannual programme plan and budget. As a government institute under the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Fisheries, **MFRI adheres to its own operating rules**, including internal financial management controls. Additionally, the **FTP undergoes audits as part of the GRÓ Centre's oversight**. It is worth noting that while GRÓ is the commissioning entity, **MFRI directly invoices the MFA for the services provided**. While the service agreement is biannual, **GRÓ contributions are on an annual basis**. Also, GRÓ can cancel the agreement with a six-month notice.

Financially, **the host institution arrangement is practical** for budget purposes for both GRÓ and the MFA. It is also advantageous for MFRI as it adds to the organization's portfolio of services. However, this financial arrangement leaves **FTP without a say in the budget management while still responsible for programme delivery** as the decision-making unit.

iii. Programme monitoring, reporting, oversight and steering systems

FTP has a **Studies Committee that convenes formally at least twice a year**. The Committee is made up of the four heads of the specialist lines⁸⁸, **the FTP director, who is the chair of the Committee**, and a representative from the Icelandic fishing industry. The heads of lines come from the partner institutions, the University of Akureyri, MATÍS, and the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute. Between meetings, the chairman of the Studies Committee works closely during the year with committee members on individual issues related to the committee's role.

During the year, **the Studies Committee meets** for the first time in April or May, **with the purpose of assessing the activities of the past year and to discuss the projects of the coming year**. The second meeting of the Committee takes place in October, with the purpose of discussing the work plan for the coming year and the status of FTP's activities. The new service agreement contemplates that minutes from the Committee's meeting are submitted to the GRÓ Director by the FTP Director. **The GRÓ Centre holds regular meetings with the GRÓ management team to discuss implementation matters** and upcoming actions. Typically, these meetings occur monthly excluding the summer period. Additionally, FTP attends specific information requests by GRÓ.

Monitoring and reporting are done using the Result-based Framework recently adopted by GRÓ, which, in addition to fulfilling the GRÓ Results Framework, serves **as a tool to steer the programme**. Collection of information for monitoring and reporting purposes is performed with various instruments depending on the indicator to report on. **It is planned to take a survey from the partner institutions to monitor the value training has for them** every three years, with the first one taking place in 2024.

To monitor whether graduates have used their training to advance their contribution in their field/sector of work and whether they have advanced professionally, **the programme takes an alumni survey** at irregular intervals to assess training or to gather data on alumni status and employment updates. The programme is planning to standardise the conduction of this survey to once every two years.

To monitor whether graduates have used their training to share with colleagues and other experts in the respective field of expertise, a survey is planned to ask graduates one year after graduation whether **they have had the opportunity to disseminate their research**.

Throughout its implementation, **the 6-month training program undergoes monitoring and evaluation**. Fellows evaluate each of the three modules, and their feedback contributes to ongoing module optimisation. Additionally, at the programme's conclusion, focus groups by line of specialisation meet to discuss impressions, lessons learned, and suggestions for changes. Finally, **the FTP staff reviews evaluation results and proposes actions for continuous program enhancement**. The output of this review is a written report outlining key improvements for the next 6-month training program.

The scholarship programme is monitored through admissions documents and progress reports.

Regarding the in-country or regional short courses/workshops, the partner organizations conduct a survey of the attendees at the end of the event for the purpose of gathering information on the usefulness of the course, the relevance of the content, and the quality of the materials and lectures. At times, FTP takes the lead in monitoring the delivery of these courses to ensure the success of the event, as well as the evaluation. **A final report is prepared which contains the details of the course, the results of the evaluation, the areas of strength, and the areas that need improvement**.

iv. Programme risk management and mitigation systems

The careful selection process carried out by the programme is the main risk mitigating factor for the delivery of the programme's outputs. The beneficiary countries and institutions are targeted based on their respective needs, and individuals are targeted based on **qualifications and potential to bring change**. Also, the agreements with partner institutions to relieve fellows and scholars from their

⁸⁸ Fisheries Policy and Management, Aquatic Resources Assessment and Monitoring, Quality Management of Fish Handling and Processing, Sustainable Aquaculture.

responsibilities at home **mitigates the risk of failure by allowing them to concentrate on their learning and research activities.**

Risk management also includes a **continuous monitoring of fellows by FTP staff to ensure they are on a timely path** to the achievement of their self-set goals and to identify and provide the needed support for success. This monitoring involves the participation of supervisors who play an important role, especially in the research phase of the fellowship programme.

In relation to the in-country short courses, the programme relies on the collaboration of local partners for the successful implementation of these courses. However, at times FTP takes the lead in monitoring the delivery of these courses to ensure the success of the event.

No substantial risks were identified for the period 2018-2023 for the successful implementation of FTP **except for the COVID-19 pandemic.** This global health crisis led to the cancellation of the 6-month training program in Iceland for the 2020-2021 cohort and the delivery of in-country and regional short courses. Despite these challenges, **the programme demonstrated resilience** by using the disruption as an opportunity for reflection and innovation.

2.4.2. THE USE OF PROGRAMME FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES AND THE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF RESULTS (INCLUDING ANALYSIS OF UNIT COSTS AND VALUE FOR MONEY)

According to the available data (Table 19), there are some discrepancies between the MFA/GRÓ contributions and the actual cost of the programme, which are mostly due to unforeseen changes in staff. Also, in 2023, 22 fellows, instead of the 25 planned, graduated from the 6-month training programme. There were some restrictions on spending by the MFRI that contributed to underspending in 2023. In addition, in 2024 budgetary constraints affected GRÓ as a whole, with the GRÓ Centre and GRÓ FTP sharing the biggest budgetary restrictions, which may hinder some of the programme's projects, especially expanding the scholarship programme and the delivery of in-country or regional short courses/workshops.

Table 19: FTP budget 2021-2023, actual annual costs, and MFA contribution

BUDGET LINE	2021	2022	2023
FTP actual costs (ISK)	179,325,444	234,621,220	204,573,878
MFA/GRÓ actual (ISK)	173,400,000	215,738,475	219,781,466
MFA (% of actual)	97%	92%	107%

Data source: Based on financial data provided by the MFRI through FTP.

The FTP 2023 **budget increased 2%** with respect to 2022, **below the 8.8% inflation rate** registered in 2023.

In the 2018-2023 period, the Programme delivered the following outputs:

- **121 fellows** in the 6-months postgraduate training programme in Iceland, all 121 graduating.
- **Five scholars** supported for an **M.Sc. degree.**
- **Eight scholars** supported for a **Ph.D. degree.**
- 121 direct beneficiaries from **20 partner countries**, trained through short courses/workshops.
- **59 representatives** from OSPESCA member States discussing fisheries policy and management mechanisms.
- **66 attendances** by qualifying alumni to international conferences and symposiums.
- **2,897 worldwide viewers** of the video series on fisheries.
- 64 research publications by fellows.
- Nine master theses published by supported scholars.
- Three Ph.D. theses published by supported scholar.
- **Three delegations** from partner countries, with 43 participants in all, learned about the development of the fisheries management system in Iceland.

Regarding resources used by FTP, there has been an initiative to set up a partnership with the Faroe Islands as the territory holds a comparative advantage in aquaculture. The possibility of pooling resources has the potential to create economies of scale with the benefit of lowering the unitary cost of Sustainable Aquaculture fellows.

Financially, the **delivery of training** programmes across the spectrum of FTP is **competitive** (Table 20), and thus **efficient**.

Table 20: Estimated cost per training type, based on 2024 budget

FTP TRAINING AND SCHOLARSHIP	PER FELLOW - ISK	PER FELLOW – EUR	
6-month training programme	5,300,000	35,333	
M.Sc. scholarship for 16 months	6,420,000	42,800	
Ph.D. Scholarship for 24 months	9,470,000	63,133	
SHORT COURSES/WORKSHOPS	PER EVENT - ISK	PER EVENT -EUR	PER GRANTEE – EUR
Ten-day in-country course for 15 local participants	8,050,000	56,666	3,578
Ten-day in-country course for 15 regional participants	11,000,000	73,333	4,889

Data source: Based on data provided by GRÓ FTP.

The International Ocean Institute, at its Centre in Halifax, Canada, offers a five-week training programme on Ocean Governance (Policy, Law, and Management). While this programme differs in content from that offered by FTP, it is worth noting that the fee for the programme is 5,550 EUR per person, which amounts to 28,286 EUR for the length of the fellowship programme at FTP, without covering expenses such as transportation, health care and full meals, among other expenses.

Additionally, benchmarked with universities in Europe and in the United States, **the programme is cost effective** in delivering the fellowship and scholarship programmes. The delivery of short courses/workshops is also cost effective as these are tailored to specific needs and audiences and are meant to be replicated and materials reused by lecturers, which would reduce the unitary cost as these courses are used in other events.

2.4.3. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PARTNERSHIP WITH UNESCO IN REGARD TO THE PROMOTION OF PROGRAMME RESULTS

As the partnership with the United Nations University was approaching its end, the MFA began searching for a partnership with a new United Nations agency, which resulted in an agreement with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) with the outcome of **the establishment of GRÓ as a C2C under the auspices of UNESCO in January 2020**.

Within UNESCO, **the programme works directly with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)**, which supports its member states to build scientific and institutional capacities in order to achieve the SDGs of the UN 2030 Agenda.

A C2C is a privileged partner of UNESCO, and it is expected to meaningfully contribute to the implementation of the organisation's priorities through international and regional cooperation, research, knowledge production, policy advice, and capacity enhancement, all of which coincides with the FTP's activities and outputs.

In terms of promoting the programme results, the website of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission at UNESCO makes mention of GRÓ as one of the three C2Cs IOC works with. Within the context of GRÓ, the FTP's training offer is mentioned in general terms. It also mentions FTP's objectives and its intention of contributing to the achievement of the SDGs by promoting the science based sustainable use and management of living aquatic resources in less developed countries, as well as the

number of fellows trained since the inception of the Programme and the number of partner countries. The IOC website provides the link to GRÓ and to GRÓ FTP. There is no reporting on the contributions GRÓ FTP has made to UNESCO's priorities or to IOC's strategy, which could be a vehicle for promoting the programme's results. It is worth noting that **alumni and even partner institutions in the recipient countries rarely associate GRÓ FTP with UNESCO.**

The partnership with UNESCO **does not seem to be effective** in terms of promoting FTP results there is no explicit mention of FTP achievements in terms of knowledge creation, the regions, countries and areas of development with which the programme works or events or success stories.

2.5. PROSPECTS FOR THE MAINTENANCE/CONTINUATION OF THE PROGRAMME BENEFITS (SUSTAINABILITY)

The **prospects for the sustainability** of the programme's benefits **are good**. These prospects stem from the increased human capital invested in alumni, who largely continue to work in the field of fisheries where they make contributions because of their improved technical, analytical, and research skills. The **main hindering factor** for the sustainability of the benefits of the programme arises from the **challenges faced by alumni at the home institutions** where they face lack of support. **Networking** is an element that has the potential to counteract such lack of support, but only about one third of alumni engage in networking activities.

2.5.1. PROSPECTS FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROGRAMME RESULTS AND BENEFITS

Another element that affects the sustainability of the programme's effects is **fellows continuing to be engaged in the field of fisheries**, preferably at their home institutions. In that regard, the evaluation team's questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni reveals that **85% of the FTP fellows still work in areas of government and public administrations**, and **85% are still engaged in academic or research institutes**. Those engaged in academic and research activities at education and research institutions are more likely to apply and disseminate their knowledge whether through teaching or research. Insights from key informants suggest the most challenges in staff retention are found in government and the public administration. Overall, 92% of all FTP fellows are residing in their home region in 2024. It is worth noting that fellows from critical regions (Africa, Asia, and LAC) have a high percentage of home retention, which is indicative of the sustainability of the programme's results and benefits. Additionally, **86% of the FTP fellows still work in the same technical field within the fisheries sector or have worked in it until retirement**, which is an optimistic indicator of the sustainability of the programme.

The **sustainability** of the programme's benefits **is complemented by the series of short courses/workshops** that are held both regionally and locally. These training events provide the opportunity to engage country government officers and officials of the fisheries sector, as well as staff from other stakeholders of the fishing industry. Government officials and officers receive the opportunity to learn about pressing issues in the fisheries sector and apply that knowledge in the short-term in the context of their work responsibilities, but they also have the opportunity to put in context what fellows from their organizations have learned through the training programs, which increases the potential for the application of learnings.

2.5.2. PROCESSES, MEASURES AND ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROGRAMME RESULTS AND BENEFITS

FTP provides **advice in project preparation** to alumni to improve the chance of receiving funding to enact those projects. Approved projects further bolster the sustainability of the fisheries sector and subsequently the programme results.

Also, FTP supports alumni **networking** and attendance to regional or international **conferences**, both of which have the potential for alumni to harness opportunities for projects or initiatives in their field of work.

2.5.3. FACTORS SUPPORTING OR HINDERING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROGRAMME RESULTS AND BENEFITS

i. Factors supporting the sustainability of the programme's results.

A strong sense of **empowerment is felt by most fellows** who graduate from either the fellowship programme or the scholarship programme due to having improved their human capital and access to further knowledge. Fellows' empowerment to effect change is the main driver for the sustainability of the programme's results and benefits. **Fellows' remaining in the field of fisheries** is another strong contributing factor to sustainability at their original home institutions or somewhere else within the country. Sustainability is also enhanced by **knowledge dissemination**, which itself is enhanced by **networking and publications** as the spread of knowledge and research findings has a multiplier effect.

Also key to the sustainability of the programme's effects are the **partner organizations and institutions** as they play a key role in applying the knowledge gained and research results by fellows in the programme. Sustainability of the overall programme improves when partner institutions effectively apply knowledge created through the programme.

Short courses and workshops also play an **important role for sustainability** as they provide knowledge and tools that can be applied quickly to create medium- and long-term effects to complement the benefits from other areas of the programme's interventions.

While most of the factors supporting the sustainability of the results and benefit of the programme are beyond FTP's control, FTP does play a supporting role in knowledge dissemination and alumni networking.

ii. Factors hindering the sustainability of the programme's results.

A primary factor hindering the sustainability of the programmes' benefits is the difficulty in applying the knowledge acquired and generated by alumni through capacity building activities. Most working alumni fellows face **challenges at the home institutions** due to insufficient support by their home institutions, which in turn is due to insufficient resources, unfavourable power dynamics in their organization, resistance to change in the institution, and the narrow scope of responsibilities of alumni. The inability for fellows to apply their knowledge threatens the sustainability of the programme outcomes.

Hindering factors to the sustainability of the programme's results are beyond FTP's control.

2.6. PROSPECTS FOR LONGER-TERM DEVELOPMENT EFFECTS (IMPACT)

The programme's prospects for impact are **high at the micro-level**, since the enhanced human capital has a lasting effect on the individuals who are able to improve their professional careers as well as contribute to their technical field by applying their new knowledge, provided there are favourable conditions for that. **At the meso-level, the prospects are good**, depending on the ability of partners to use the benefits provided by the programme. **At the macro-level, long-term effects are less likely** to be realised as they depend on the existence and implementation of policy frameworks and adequate regulatory frameworks, much of which is beyond FTP's control.

2.6.1. THE DIRECT EFFECTS AND LONGER-TERM PROSPECTS FOR IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME ON THE MICRO, MESO, AND MACRO LEVELS

i. Micro-level

Impacts by the programme are **mostly realised at the micro level** since the trainees' enhanced human capital in fisheries and the sustainable use of this natural resource allows them to improve their professional perspectives in the labour market. In this regard, **72% of the fellows who graduated during the period 2018-2023 report having substantially or extremely advanced in their careers**, 37% of whom were promoted, 30% saw their salaries increased, and 77% were given more responsibilities.

The enhancement of **human capital** is not only in the field of expertise, but also **technical, analytical, and research skills**, which enables them to continue learning or to create new knowledge through

additional research (70% of FTP alumni have conducted further research). Also at the micro level, it is worth noting that 52% of alumni contributed to the field of fisheries by introducing new initiatives or projects, 44% led projects in the sector, and 87% of alumni indicate that they have contributed to their technical field, mostly through training, mentoring, and research, but also through advice to policy makers and the introduction of new policies. For example, at the local level one fellow trained a coastal community on sustainable conservation of the coastal and marine resources; at the district level, another fellow offered consultation and made manuals available to a team that is interested in replicating the MATÍS Oven project.

The prospects for **effects in the long run rely on alumni having the institutional support** to participate in, launch, or lead new initiatives, which in turn depends on the will of the organizations and funding availability.

ii. Meso-level

Despite alumni facing challenges to applying their knowledge because of lack of institutional support or resources, the power dynamics in the organizations, or the resistance to change, some alumni have made important contributions at the meso-level. **26% of the FTP alumni have indicated that they have introduced new policies or procedures in their institutions.** Some examples are an alumnus currently in the process of developing **a participatory fish disease monitoring and surveillance program** in his organization; the Fisheries Division in Grenada **modernized and updated the collection and management of fish landing** data with the input of a former fellow; and at an academic institution, an alumna contributed **to the development of a course on seafood processing technology.**

At the meso-level, the **prospects for long-term effects are good**, although **they depend** to a large extent **on the valuation and support of the partner institutions** to make use of the new or enhanced capacities achieved through the Programme.

iii. Macro-level

At the macro-level, **long-term effects of the programme rely on national policy implementation and adequate legal frameworks**, which is beyond the direct control of the programme. At this level, however, according to the evaluation team's questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, **24% indicated that they have contributed to the development of policies at the regional level, 39% at the national level, and 9% at the international level.** As examples, an alumnus contributed to the preparation of maritime fishing regulations, the master plan for infrastructure to support fishing and aquaculture, and the national sea policy. In Vietnam, a fellow participated in drafting a decree on planning the country's marine protected areas. In El Salvador, a new policy for managing aquaculture in Lake Ilopango was developed based on a fellow's research conducted in Iceland. Additionally, a former fellow played a role in formulating the National Maritime Security Strategy in his country. In Malawi, the government incorporated recommendations from an alumnus's research paper into the Malawi Fisheries and Aquaculture policy.

As per the higher goals the programme contributes to, the **knowledge acquired and created by fellows who specialised in fisheries policy and management relates to all targets of SDG 14⁸⁹.** Knowledge provided and created in stock assessment is in line with SDG 14 **Targets 14.2, 14.4, and 14.7.** Knowledge provided and generated by the programme on quality management of fish handling and processing and sustainable aquaculture directly relates to **Targets 14.b and 14.7**, respectively. Of those SDGs not targeted by the programme, the outputs of the **programme relate to SDG 1**, as responsible fisheries and value chains support the livelihoods of fisherfolks. The outputs also relate to **SDG 2**, as sustainable fisheries are key for food security; **SDG 3**, as fisheries contribute to the availability of nutritious food and **SDG 5**, by enhancing the opportunities of women's participation in the value chain of fisheries. In addition, the outputs also contribute to **SDG 6**, as healthy inland aquatic ecosystems are required for good water quality; **SDG 8**, as sustainable fisheries are an important source of

⁸⁹ See Annex 10 for SDG 14 targets.

employment, particularly in the partner countries; and **SDG 12**, as sustainable fisheries imply responsible consumption and production of fish food. The programme's outputs also benefit **SDG 13**, as the oceans are important carbon sinks and fish food production has lower environmental impact than other sources of meat protein; and **SDG 15**, as inland fisheries have an effect on land.

Through their acquired knowledge and its applications, alumni have contributed to projects and initiatives linked to SDG progress. In fact, 71% of the 2018-2023 FTP respondents indicated that they have contributed to projects and initiatives linked to the SDGs. Specifically, 69% of the 2018-2023 FTP fellows worked on initiatives related to SDG 14, 58% to SDG 2 and 39% to SDG 1.

Figure 47: Engagement of 2018-2023 FTP alumni in activities relating to the SDGs



Data source: Evaluation team's own alumni survey, frequencies of SDGs mentioned among the top five SDGs by 2018-2023 FTP cohort.

Additionally, an analysis conducted by FTP for the period 2015-2023 that focused on SDG 14, found that **57% of the research conducted by fellows has implications for targets 14.2, 14.4, 14.5, 14.6, 14.7, and 14.a.**

2.6.2. FACTORS SUPPORTING OR HINDERING PROGRESS IN THE LONGER-TERM ACHIEVEMENT OF DIRECT EFFECTS AND IMPACT

i. Supporting factors

The enhancement of alumni human capital is a key driver for the programme's long-term effects and impacts. To support their role as agents of change, whether in the local, national, or international sphere, **a strong networking system would be of great support**, given that only 36% of all FTP alumni currently engage in any sort of networking. By increasing networking engagement, alumni would have more opportunities to enhance contacts with other professionals in the fisheries sector as well as with donors who could find new research initiatives or projects.

Institutional support for alumni initiatives is another important driver for the programme's effects and impacts in the long-term. Such support is key for alumni to continue engaged in further contributions in terms of producing and disseminating new knowledge related to the sustainable use of fisheries.

The **replication of short courses/workshops** at the country level is another factor that supports the long-term effects of the programme as they create synergies with the capacities that alumni bring to their institutions. In that regard, the replication of courses involves the use of materials from previous courses, such as in the case of short courses on stock assessment or building upon previous courses such as in courses on fisheries value chain or the analysis of vessel monitoring systems data.

ii. Hindering factors

Factors that hamper the programme's long-term effects and impact concern the **unfavourable power dynamics in partner institutions**, which results in alumni holding positions with a limited level of responsibility, thereby constraining their potential to contribute to the furthering of the programme results.

The **resistance to change** from partner institutions, although not widespread, is another hindering factor for the long-term results of the programme. From the evaluation team's questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, it is reported that 23% of all FTP alumni reported facing this type of challenge in their institutions.

The **lack of availability of funding in partner countries/institutions** adds to the constraints on results or impacts by the programme in the long-term as alumni see reduced possibilities to advance projects/initiatives that otherwise would have an impact in the sector. This is so given the low-income nature of partner countries, especially LDCs, which results in a situation in which the benefits of the programme are not harnessed.

2.7. HORIZONTAL THEMES/CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

It is the evaluative opinion that **the programme contributes to the crosscutting priorities** identified in Iceland's policy for international development cooperation in terms of human rights, gender equality and the sustainability of the environment in an effective way.

2.7.1. CONTRIBUTION TO GENDER EQUALITY

Iceland's approach to gender equality as part of its development cooperation policy includes, among other cross-cutting priorities, the promotion of gender equality for both men and women along the fisheries value chain by introducing healthier and safer processing methods with the aim to increase the quality and value of the products. In this regard, FTP's capacity building efforts **contribute to gender equality** by contributing to building capacities in management of fish handling and processing and in sustainable aquaculture, areas in which women are currently more involved. The capacities created or enhanced also have the potential to influence policy making by ensuring they **encourage women's participation in the fisheries sector**. These contributions are key given the fact that worldwide women have only a 24% participation as fishers and fish farmers, with their participation mostly concentrated, 62%, in the post-harvest activities⁹⁰.

While FTP contributes to gender equality, this contribution could be enhanced if the GEST Programme collaborated on research on gender equality issues in the fisheries sector.

2.7.2. CONTRIBUTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS

Iceland's policy for international development cooperation is also guided by a human rights approach, defined to include safety, power, and control over one's own circumstances.

FTP, as one of the main instruments for Iceland's international development cooperation, has the potential to improve fish harvest and postharvest handling, which in turn makes seafood more available, accessible, and stable in supply. This **positively impacts food security** and contributes to the realization of the **human right to adequate and wholesome/healthy food**. The availability, accessibility, and stability of fish food is especially relevant for artisanal fishers, who present vulnerability to the uncertainties of seasonal income. This is in line with the approach that guides Iceland's international cooperation.

FTP also has the potential to contribute to **the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment**, as the capacities enhanced through the programme can help restore and maintain aquatic natural ecosystems through the sustainable management of fisheries resources, which is also emphasised by the Icelandic approach to international development cooperation.

2.7.3. CONTRIBUTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

FTP intrinsically **contributes to the sustainability of the environment**, and as such, it is one of the implementers of the Icelandic approach to development cooperation which focus on sustainable use of marine resources and waters.

⁹⁰ FAO (2024). The state of world fisheries and aquaculture 2024: Blue transformation in action. Rome.

The capacities built through the programme's mix of training interventions have the potential to positively **impact the health of fish stocks through the sustainable use of fisheries and the restoration of fish habitats and ecosystems**. Additionally, the programme also has the potential to **improve life on land**. As aquaculture becomes the leading activity in fisheries, the potential for environmental degradation from the effluents may negatively impact environmental sustainability on land, and eventually in water. The FTP addresses aquaculture from a sustainability approach emphasizing to environmental health.

2.7.4. MANAGING AND COUNTERING THE EFFECTS OF EXTERNAL SHOCKS AND RISKS TO THE PROGRAMME

One of the biggest external shocks that affected FTP was the emergence of COVID-19, **which led the programme to the cancellation of the 2020 fellowship cohort**. The following cohort, 2021, included two more fellows to accommodate for some of the cancellations. Also, due to COVID-19, there were no offers of in-country or regional short courses/workshops or participation in conferences. The pause on training in 2020 was taken by FTP as an opportunity to review and improve the quality and process of its work and identify new opportunities for growth and innovation. While the pause due to COVID-19 was an opportunity to reflect, it made FTP lose some momentum with its partners; thus, additional efforts would be needed to relaunch those partnerships.

The ongoing **social conflict in some of the partner countries**, such as Haiti⁹¹, Mozambique, Myanmar, and Nigeria, **poses risks to the continuation of the programme in these countries** and the sustainability of its effects. However, this is beyond the programme's control.

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1. THE EXTENT THAT THE TRAINING PROGRAMME INTERVENTIONS HAVE MET THEIR INTENDED RESULTS

FTP successfully achieved its capacity development goals during the 2018-2023 period. Notably, it produced 121 graduates from a 6-month postgraduate training program in Iceland, aligning with its annual target of 25 fellows⁹². Additionally, ten qualifying fellows received scholarships for an M.Sc. degree, with nine already graduated, and eight alumni were supported in pursuing Ph.D. degrees, three of whom have completed their studies.

Regarding country eligibility, participants in the program represented 35 different countries, with 75% of them coming from LDCs or Low- and LMICs. Notably, the program's efforts aligned with Icelandic international development policy, concentrating on West African nations, specifically, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, who collectively received 28.3% of the program's benefits during the 2018-2023 period.

Between 2018 and 2023, the postgraduate fellowship training program achieved gender parity, with an equal representation of 50% males and 50% females. This accomplishment is noteworthy in terms of gender balance. Based on the answers to the evaluation team's questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, fellows highly value the quality of the fellowship training programme.

Regarding knowledge creation, graduating fellows completed research papers. Among these, 25% focused on stock assessment and data collection, 18% on food quality, 10% on policy, 10% on sustainable fisheries management, and another 10% on technical fisheries issues. **These contributions, combined with the skills acquired during the training programme, form the foundation for the programme's impact in their home countries**. However, 80% of graduates encounter challenges when applying this knowledge post-graduation.

According to the evaluation team's questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, **87% of fellows from the 2018-2023 period have made contributions to the technical aspects in their field of work thanks to the**

⁹¹ Though a qualifying country and a member State of CRFM, it has not participated in the programme since 2012.

⁹² Due to COVID-19, FTP did not offer the fellowship programme in 2020.

training they received. Additionally, 71% have experienced professional growth because of enhanced capacities. Furthermore, **71% of FTP respondents have played a role in advancing SDG 14.**

Regarding the scholarship program, of the ten fellows qualifying for an M.Sc. in the period 2018-2023, three were from LDCs, two from LMICs, two from UMICs/SIDS, and three from UMICs, nine of whom have graduated from the University of Iceland. Also, of the eight qualifying alumni who received support to pursue a doctoral degree at the University of Iceland, four were from LDCs and four from LMICs. The research by these scholars is published through the University of Iceland in the digital repository for Icelandic universities.

For the period of analysis, **short courses/workshops trained 122 local officials, officers and staff** from companies and associations related to the fisheries sector **from 20 countries** in matters of vessel monitoring systems, stock assessment and data modelling, fisheries value chain management, and postharvest handling of fish. Due to the applicability orientation of these courses, most attendees considered their competencies had been increased and intended to use their learning and tools provided in their job responsibilities.

The programme facilitated knowledge dissemination and networking for alumni by enabling their participation in international conferences and symposia. **A total of 66 alumni were facilitated to attend a relevant conference** (65% male and 35% female). Additionally, **59 representatives from OSPESCA member States convened in Nicaragua to discuss fisheries policy and management mechanisms in Central America and the Dominican Republic.**

The programme actively engaged in the FarFish project, taking a leadership role in the capacity building and dissemination work package. Additionally, it facilitated knowledge sharing by imparting Icelandic expertise on fisheries to officials and specialists from 12 countries. This exchange provided participants with insights into fisheries management concepts, scientific foundations, policy implications, bioeconomic theory, the Icelandic Individual Transfer Quota, and the triple bottom line approach to sustainability.

As part of its innovative online content creation, the programme produced **a series of videos that reached 2,897 viewers worldwide.** These videos highlight the economic, social, and environmental significance of fisheries and their connection to the SDGs. This is a good start for the programme to begin expanding its training offer through massive online means.

3.2. THE PRIMARY SUCCESSES OF THE TRAINING PROGRAMME AND THE BENEFITS GENERATED

Overall, **FTP has been successful in delivering the intended outputs** and, to some extent, its outcome, although the latter is beyond the programme's control.

The fellowship programme is key to FTP's success both in terms of delivery and results. This programme is highly recognised; on average, four to six candidates are nominated for each fellow that is selected based on academic and professional background, as well a clear notion of the needs of the fisheries sector in their countries. In fact, **the approach to the selection process is a contributing factor to the success of this training programme**, which first focuses on countries' profiles and their needs to be targeted for the programme, looking at elements such as stability and the existence of a policy for the sustainable management of fisheries. The selection of partner institutions in targeted countries is also another element of the programme's success, since they are, in principle, fertile soil for the programme's delivery.

The empowerment of fellows is a primary success of the programme, as 72% report having advanced in their professional careers thanks to having graduated from the fellowship programme. This empowerment allows them to act as **agents of change.** In this regard, 87% of the fellows who answered the evaluation team's questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni acknowledge **having contributed to their technical field** and 72% report **having undertaken projects or initiatives that related to the achievement of SDGs**, primarily SDG 14, to which 71% of fellows have contributed to.

Another success of the programme comes from the in-country or regional short courses, which have been tailored to pressing issues on the analysis of data from vessel monitoring systems,

management of value chains, postharvest handling of fish, and stock assessment and data analysis. **Short courses have shown to be useful for attendees and of ready application.**

Support for alumni to attend international conferences has been another of FTP's successes, as these events are an ideal outlet for alumni to disseminate their research results and connect with the international fisheries community, keeping them updated on fisheries issues and providing them with opportunities to engage in new projects or initiatives.

FTP has responded and adhered to the policy priorities of Iceland's development cooperation—focusing on West African countries, LDCs, LMICs, and SIDS—and **embraced the cooperation's approach** to sustainable management of natural resources, human rights, gender equality, and environmental protection. Additionally, FTP aligns with international policy frameworks and agreements related to fisheries.

3.3. THE PRIMARY CONSTRAINTS FOR RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT BY FTP

The primary constraints for the realisation of **FTP's outcomes are related to external risks beyond its control** as the partner institutions and countries must make use of the outputs delivered by the programme to render its results. As evidenced by the results of the evaluation team's questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, **a vast majority of alumni indicated experiencing challenges in applying their knowledge after graduation.** Challenges such as insufficient institutional support, lack of funding, unfavourable power dynamics in partner institution, institutional resistance to change, and the low level of responsibility assigned to them in their home institution, individually or combined, play an important role in constraining the programme from achieving the outcomes that it is meant to deliver.

At the country level, policy gaps and inadequate regulatory frameworks are also constraining factors for the realisation of FTP's outcomes. In the absence of a coherent fisheries policy in a country, the actions resulting from the application of the knowledge learned or produced through the programme lack grounding and purpose and therefore are not of interest to policy makers. These difficulties are augmented by outdated legal frameworks, which further add to the risk factors facing FTP in delivering its outcomes and impacts.

These constraints come even though FTP is careful in its selection process, both at the country and institutional levels, to ensure the proper use of the outputs delivered by the programme.

3.4. THE SUITABILITY OF FTP INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS TO GENERATE THE PROGRAMME RESULTS

The management structure and overall institutional framework for implementing FTP's programme to achieve the desired outcomes are generally appropriate.

In 2023, FTP had of 4.3 full-time equivalent staff positions to manage all the activities related to the programme's delivery. This staff is highly qualified but may sometimes get overloaded with work.

FTP's Studies Committee is responsible for the planning of the programme's yearly activities. Members of the Committee also participate in defining the eligibility criteria for grants for scholarships and selecting candidates.

There are clearly defined timelines and processes, which contribute to ensuring operational efficiency. Monitoring and reporting are done using the Result-based Framework adopted by GRÓ, which also serves as a steering tool. To monitor results, **the programme collects data from alumni through surveys.** To monitor the delivery of services, **the programme runs evaluations of the 6-month training programme while in session,** which are appropriate for timely feedback and adjustments if needed. **The scholarship programme is monitored through the admission documents and progress reports.** In-country and regional **short courses are evaluated at the end of each event** to give feedback on their usefulness, applicability and the quality of materials and lecturers. **All monitoring and evaluation procedures are considered appropriate.**

Regarding the in-country or regional short courses/workshops, the partner organization conducts a survey of the attendees at the end of the event, for the purpose of gathering information on the usefulness of the course, the relevance of the content, and the quality of the materials and lectures. A

final report is prepared, which contains, among other things, the details of the course, the results of the evaluation, the areas of strength, and the areas that need improvement.

The institutional arrangement of the programme has been a factor for its cost effectiveness, offering high quality training and educational programmes through the partnerships with the Marine and Fresh Water Research Institute, MATÍS, the University of Iceland, the University of Akureyri, Hólar University, and the Fishing industry. **This arrangement of partnerships allows the programme to be effective in delivering high quality outputs at a reasonable cost.**

Through GRÓ, **the MFA's contributes most of the programme's cost.** These contributions are made to FTP through a Service Agreement with the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute (MFRI) that is signed on a biannual basis. Such agreement can be cancelled with a six-month notice by GRÓ; however, this period of time for the notice is not suitable for MFRI since activities or preparation may already be underway, and MFRI would be required to readjust its own planning, which poses a burden on it.

The service agreement with MFRI is a practical way to fund the programme; however, it has the disadvantage that it leaves FTP without a say in the budget management despite being responsible for the programme's delivery.

3.5. OVERALL EVALUATION CONCLUSION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME

Based on a five-level scale rating⁹³, the evaluation team finds that the **overall performance of FTP is satisfactory**, as per the rating of each evaluation criterium (Table 21).

Table 21: Evaluation performance rating

EVALUATION CRITERIA	PERFORMANCE RATING
Relevance	Satisfactory
Coherence	Satisfactory
Effectiveness	Satisfactory
Efficiency	Highly Satisfactory
Sustainability	Adequate
Impact	Adequate

4. LESSONS LEARNED

The following lessons are drawn from the evaluation findings:

LESSON 1

While the selection process emphasizes choosing suitable partner institutions, **there are gaps between the needs identified by these partner organizations and how they utilize the benefits provided by FTP.** These gaps significantly hinder the programme's intended outcomes and impacts. Therefore, reassessing the partnership approach seems necessary to ensure FTP's efforts are fully leveraged. In this reassessment, two key aspects should be considered: first, **clearly identifying the capacity-building needs of partner institutions**, and second, **determining the critical mass of individuals requiring training to address those needs.**

LESSON 2

The branding value of FTP rests on Iceland's high reputation of expertise in the fisheries sector since Iceland has taken a leading role in the sustainable management of that natural resource and turned it into an economic driver. In that regard, **the partnership with UNESCO does not seem to add significant value to the programme.** Under the UNESCO partnership, the postgraduate training

⁹³ Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Adequate, Unsatisfactory, Highly Unsatisfactory. The rating criteria is provided as part of the overall evaluation report.

fellowship does not carry the same value as the UNU partnership did in terms of being associated with an academic institution.

LESSON 3

The effects of the programme would not be maximised to the extent that they could be in countries whose participation in the postgraduate training fellowship is sparse. During the period 2018-2023, for instance, 15 out of 36 countries had only one fellow trained in Iceland in the fellowship programme. At first glance, this could be seen as a diluted effort across countries; however, due to size and needs, countries have different requirements in terms of how many fellows needed to be trained. Thus, determining the critical mass by country would shed clarity on whether the critical mass needed to create developmental change in partner countries is being reached.

LESSON 4

FTP has empowered a great number of alumni worldwide and that empowerment has had positive effects on individuals in terms of career advancement. This success poses the challenge to harness that empowerment towards the overarching result of implementing changes for the achievement of the targeted Sustainable Development Goal. In that regard, enhancing alumni involvement in the activities of advisory services and knowledge sharing carried out by FTP could contribute to achieving the end result of the programme.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made to improve FTP:

1. FTP demonstrates relevance, coherence, and effectiveness in achieving its objectives. While the design of the programme is presented throughout the various webpages of FTP's website, it is recommended to **prepare a design document of the programme** presenting the problem(s) it solves, the objectives it pursues, the mix of its interventions, the implementation strategy, and the monitoring and evaluation of results in a single document. Additionally, **developing a theory of change** would help in documenting the programme's impact pathway. This would allow for clarity to stakeholders and enhanced public acceptance of the programme.
2. Given the overarching goal of GRÓ and the cross-cutting areas of human rights, gender equality, and the environment approach of Iceland's International Development Cooperation, it is recommended to **explicitly mainstream the SDGs**, in particular SDG 14, as the programme's targeted sustainable goal as well as the cross-cutting areas **in the research by fellows and scholars**. This approach would improve the relevance and effectiveness of the programme.
3. Some qualifying fellows have received support for a graduate degree. Given the potential for far-reaching impact of these graduates in their home countries and institutions, it is recommended to **expand the scholarship programme at the Ph.D. level to enhance FTP's effectiveness**. Expanding the number of scholars would also increase the prospects of long-term impacts and sustainability of the programme as scholars would most likely be employed by academic and research institutions whose mandate is the creation and dissemination of knowledge.
4. In-country/regional short courses and workshops have proven useful to address pressing issues in partner countries related to the fisheries sector. It is **recommended to replicate those courses at the country level**, according to needs, **to continue enhancing local capacities at a decreasing cost**, since those courses have already been prepared.
5. As research and knowledge creation is an important element of FTP, the dissemination of knowledge adds sustainability to the programme benefits. It is therefore recommended to publish all research papers by fellows and all theses by scholars on the website of FTP.
6. Given the potential the GEST Programme has to offer, it is suggested to **strengthen synergies with the GEST Programme**, as gender equality is an important issue in the fisheries sector, especially in partner countries where both programmes direct their efforts. There has been research done by four

GEST fellows from Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Ghana on gender in fisheries that seems promising for the fisheries sectors in those countries. In that regard, the FTP and GEST Programmes could enhance their synergies by encouraging **research on gender issues related to the fisheries sector** where important gender gaps are observed in terms of women's participation.

- It is recommended to **set up a communication strategy** with Icelandic stakeholders on the accomplishments of FTP, which would enhance public acceptance of the programme and reduce risks or threats to the existence of the programme.

6. OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME'S STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS (SWOT)

Based on findings, the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats are summarised below (Table 22).

Table 22: Programme's SWOT

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FTP brings state of the art knowledge in fisheries through its structure of Icelandic partnerships. The mix of specialisation lines of the fellowship training programme is relevant to the capacity development needs in partner countries. The programme has well established timelines and processes that ensure its efficient delivery of outputs. The programme is relevant to achieve the goals of Iceland's development cooperation policy and partner countries' policy goals. FTP is cost effective in delivering its outputs and, thus, efficient. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A dilution effect of the programme's results due to apparent insufficient country targeting. Limited synergy of FTP with the GEST Programme to advance gender issues in the fisheries sector.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worldwide increasing urgency to address the sustainability of fisheries resources. Mandate by Iceland's international development cooperation policy to support partner countries to achieve sustainable management of fisheries resources. Strong Icelandic branding in fisheries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MFA is mostly unaware of the programme successes. Impacts and their sustainability at the meso- and macro-level beyond the Programme's control.

7. PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE ENDEAVOURS, SCENARIOS/OPTIONS

Based on findings, the following scenarios and options are laid out for future endeavours by FTP.

- As the 6-month training programme is the core of FTP's training strategies, it is suggested to **explore the feasibility of adding a line of specialisation on Fisheries Value Chains** to make the programme more relevant to institutional needs. This is because postharvest losses, estimated at 35%, are an important factor hindering food security and degrade fish stocks as food losses reduce food availability.
- Given that the fellowship training programme does not earn academic credits, it is suggested to **explore the possibility with partner universities whether the fellowship programme can be accredited**. Awarding credits would add efficiency to the scholarship programme by reducing the cost of an M.Sc. by allowing fellows to finish studies faster; it would also add to the sustainability of FTP's effects as more qualifying fellows would be incentivized to pursue graduate studies.

3. While the Programme implements a careful selection of partner institutions, evidence shows that **there are barriers for partner institutions making use of the individual capacities built or enhanced** through the programme. In that regard, **it is suggested to pilot a results-based, customer driven approach**, in which partner institutions, in joint consultation with FTP, prepare a medium-term plan to address the capacity development needs. This approach would add to the sense of ownership of the programme's benefits, thereby enhancing the sustainability of the programme's results. This plan, which would take the form of a **Country Capacities Development Cooperation Strategy**, should also contain elements for the monitoring and evaluation of the cooperation efforts. By following this approach, the prospects for long-term impacts at all levels would be enhanced, as **partner institutions gain ownership** of the benefits FTP delivers.
4. FTP could enhance its efficiency by scaling up the innovative online content creation. In that regard, it is suggested to explore a possible partnership with the University of the West Indies for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) on fisheries topics or by using a Web-based learning management system such as Canvas or Blackboard. This would allow FTP to reach a wider audience at a low cost while enhancing the capacities of regional partners. In addition, it is suggested to share course materials through an OpenCourseWare to encourage their use by other lecturers, which will not only increase the efficiency of the short courses/workshops but also their sustainability.
5. The partnership with FIRUM of the Faroe Islands is an opportunity worth bolstering, as it has the potential to achieve economies of scale in the Sustainable Aquaculture line of specialisation. In this regard, it is **advisable to explore venues with FIRUM for the most efficient ways to scale up this partnership**.
6. The financial agreement with the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute is a practical approach to transfer funding for the implementation of the programme. However, **efficiency gains can be obtained if MFRI assumes the role of a budget holder** instead of an overall service provider. This would allow FTP as the decision maker, to decide on the use of funding and outsourcing for the programme's delivery.
7. Should the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute continue to be the service provider by means of the biannual agreement, it is **advisable to extend the notice period from six months to 12 months** for the cancellation of the agreement. The period extension would minimise efficiency losses, as the Institute may already have made investments or hired personnel pursuant to the provision of services.
8. The sustainability of FTP could be enhanced by increasing the support to **form alumni network organizations**. This is because networking activities open opportunities for alumni to engage in projects or initiatives on which they can apply their capabilities enhanced by the programme. In that sense, it is **suggested to have alumni chapters by region** in a way that alumni can find common issues and interest arising from the region's fisheries. This would require substantial effort on the part of FTP, but it is suggested to start by piloting one chapter. In Uganda, an alumnus based at Makerere University has already started efforts on his own for such a chapter. In fact, this former fellow is already the main contact with GRÓ Centre on this effort, but additional support may be needed.
9. Since the realisation of impacts in partner countries is the desired impact of FTP, it is advisable to **run an impact assessment in a sample of countries**, preferably **from those who have received the most support**, such as Kenya, Namibia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda, or Vietnam.

APPENDIX 2. SOME ALUMNI TESTIMONIALS

Fellows frequently expressed gratitude for how the program served as a significant **launchpad for their careers and personal growth**. Many described it as a transformative experience that provided them with **invaluable skills** and **knowledge**.

"I strongly recommend continuing this programme as it benefits beyond words the work that fellows are capable of carrying once we are back home. Being able to see and experience in first person all the improvements made by Iceland, expands our vision and translates in greater motivation to continue our work in our countries."

"It's a great program and goes beyond just academic skills. Having lifetime connections with people from various countries where we continue to engage, share knowledge, and empower one another"

"I want to appreciate the organizers and sponsors of the 6 months post-graduate fisheries training program. It was an exciting experience being in Iceland and great knowledge acquired."

"I would like to thank GRÓ FTP for arranging an excellent training program."

"The Fisheries Training Programme was very informative. Thanks to GRÓ International Centre for capacity building."

GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMME RESULTS DELIVERY & ACHIEVEMENT – GRÓ FTP

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
Outcome: GRÓ fellows, trainees and respective organisations promote and implement changes needed to achieve SDGs relevant to their field of work									
P1. Management in partner organisations assess the training to be valuable for the organisation	% of alumni survey respondents who agree (4 out of 5 on the scale) or strongly agree (5 out of 5 on the scale) that their organisation's management values and appreciates their skills from the postgraduate training (3 years after graduation)	83.3%	80.0%	86.7%	N/A	66.7%	80.0%*	81.6%*	79.8% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)
P2. Graduates have used the training to advance their contribution in their field/sector of work	% of alumni survey respondents (fellows) who agree (4 out of 5 on the scale) or strongly agree (5 out of 5 on the scale) that they advanced their contribution in their field/sector due to the postgraduate programme (3 years after graduation)	83.3%	86.7%	93.3%	N/A	66.7%	90.0%*	86.8%*	87.2% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)
P3. Graduates have used their training to share with colleagues and other experts in their respective field of expertise	% of alumni survey respondents (fellows) who report sharing their training knowledge with supervisors, colleagues and/or expert networks (3 years after graduation)	100.0%	75.0%	93.8%	N/A	55.6%	86.4%*	73.3%*	77.9% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
P4. Graduates have advanced professionally (e.g. promotion or received scholarship for further studies)	% of alumni survey respondents (fellows) who report substantial (4 out of 5 on the scale) or extreme (5 out of 5 on the scale) career advancement due to the training (3 years after graduation)	66.7%	66.7%	93.3%	N/A	44.4%	65.0%*	73.7%*	71.6% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)

**The GRÓ Results Framework suggest measuring outcome level results 3 years after programme graduation. Therefore, the indicator value for the graduation year 2022 and 2023 should be interpreted with caution. Generally, the survey findings suggest that it might take some time for outcome level results to materialise after programme completion. Therefore, the measurement 3 years after programme completion seems reasonable.*

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

P1. Number of experts trained in the GRÓ 5-6-month training programmes	Annual # of fellows Gender ratio M/F (%) Country Income level LDC and LMI (%)	21 13 F (62%) 8 M (38%) 29% LDC 33% LMIC	24 9 F (37%) 15 M (63%) 42% LDC 33% LMIC	23 12 F (52%) 11 M (48%) 43% LDC 35% LMIC	0 (COVID)	27 15 F (56%) 12 M (44%) 48% LDC 33% LMIC	23 12 F (52%) 11 M (48%) 30% LDC 39% LMIC	24 11 F (46%) 13 M (54%) 42% LDC 38% LMIC	142 72 F (51%) 70 M (49%) 56 LDC (39%) 50 LMIC (35%)
P2. Quality of the 5-6 month training	Self-assessment survey of fellows at the start and end of training on knowledge, skills and mindset (on a scale from 1 low – 5 high)	Data not available, no formal survey conducted	Data not available, no formal survey conducted	Data not available, no formal survey conducted	Not applicable	Data not available, no formal survey conducted	48% = 5/5 35% = 4/5 17% = No answer	67% = 5/5 29% = 4/5 4% = No answer	Surveys prior to 2022 relate to the quality of the process, not of the training

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
P3. Number of graduates eligible for 30 ECTS credits / Diploma degree at completion. Only applicable GEST & LRT fellows	Annual # of diploma certificates issued Graduation ratio (% of total cohort of fellows eligible)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	FTP postgraduate fellowship diploma is not eligible for ECTS credits
P4. Number of short courses (5-7 days) in partner countries	Annual # of weeks of on-site training # of participants short courses Gender ratio M/F (%)	2 weeks 31 people 6 F (19%) 25 M (81%)	3 weeks 76 people 19 F (25%) 57 M (75%)	2 weeks 26 people 11 F (42%) 15 M (58%)	0	0	2 weeks 21 people 7 F (33%) 14 M (67%) (Study visits Iceland = 2)	2.5 week 42 people 20 F (48%) 22 M (52%) (Study visits Iceland = 1)	11.5 weeks 196 people 63 F (32%) 133 M (68%)
P5. Quality of short course training	% of participants assess the course to be useful for enhancing skills & knowledge (relevant and helpful for my job) (on scale from 1 – 5)	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Not applicable	Not applicable	Data not available	82% = 5/5 18% = 4/5	Courses evaluated on variable scales; 2023 on new standard scale
P6. Number of live streaming training courses	Annual # of participants	0	0	0	0	1 course 50 people	0	0	1 course 50 people
P7. Quality live streaming training courses	% of participants assess course useful for enhancing skills & knowledge (relevant & helpful for my job) (on scale 1 – 5)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Data not available	Not applicable	Not applicable	Open seminar, no evaluation data available

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
P8. Number of online courses and number of participants in the online courses	Annual # # of participants newly enrolled	0	0	0	0	1 (SDG 14 Videos)	1 (SDG 14 Videos)	1 (SDG 14 Videos)	1 (SDG 14 Videos) 2,897 viewers
P9. Quality of online training	% of participants assess the course to be useful for enhancing skills & knowledge	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Open access, no evaluation is conducted
P10. Number of GRÓ graduate studies scholarships provided annually	Annual # Master's and PhD Gender ratio M/F (%)	M.Sc. = 4 3 F (75%) 1 M (25%) PhD = 2 1 F (50%) 1 M (50%)	M.Sc. = 4 3 F (75%) 1 M (25%) PhD = 2 1 F (50%) 1 M (50%)	M.Sc. = 5 2 F (40%) 3 M (60%) PhD = 4 3 F (75%) 1 M (25%)	M.Sc. = 4 2 F (50%) 2 M (50%) PhD = 4 3 F (75%) 1 M (25%)	M.Sc. = 5 4 F (80%) 1 M (20%) PhD = 7 5 F (71%) 2 M (29%)	M.Sc. = 4 3 F (75%) 1 M (25%) PhD = 8 6 F (75%) 2 M (25%)	M.Sc. = 2 1 F (50%) 1 M (50%) PhD = 7 6 F (86%) 1 M (14%)	M.Sc. = 11 7 F (64%) 4 M (36%) PhD = 9 6 F (67%) 3 M (33%)
Output N°2: Production and dissemination of new knowledge by GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipient									
P1. Number of research outputs (research project reports) annually by GRÓ fellows	Annual # of research project papers confirmed on GRÓ website	21	24	23	0	27	23	24	All fellows completed a paper. 82 were published on the FTP website
P2. Number of master's thesis published annually by GRÓ scholarship recipients (research output)	Annual # of published master's thesis at universities' websites	0	3	1	0	3	2	0	9

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
P3. Number of PhD papers published annually by GRÓ scholarship recipients (research outputs)	Annual # of publications in research journals	0	1	2	3	1	5	4	16
Output N°3: Professional empowerment of GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipients is increased through GRÓ community building and networking									
P1. Number of alumni events organised by GRÓ annually	Annual #	0	0	0	0	0	1 alumni meeting (side event at conference)	1 Online alumni seminar 2 in-country alumni meetings	4 events
P2. Number of GRÓ funded alumni participating in regional and international conferences	Annual # Gender ratio M/F (%)	22 7 F (32%) 15 M (68%)	17 4 F (42%) 13 M (76%)	20 6 F (30%) 14 M (70%)	0	0	29 13 F (45%) 16 M (55%)	0	88 alumni 30 F (34%) 58 M (66%)
P3. % of GRÓ short courses involving alumni in teaching/ organisation of short courses	Annual # (% of GRÓ short courses involving alumni)	50% (1 of 2 events)	25% (1 of 4 events)	100% (2 of 2 events)	No courses delivered	0% (0 of 1 event)	50% (1 of 2 events)	50% (1 of 2 events)	46% (6 of 13 events)

ANNEX 11.2 PROGRAMME EVALUATION REPORT - GRÓ GEST

Training programme description and background context

Evaluation findings

Conclusions

Lessons learned

GEST Programme- SWOT Analysis

Recommendations

Potential options to guide future endeavours of the programme

Overview of the GEST Programme Fellows 2018-2023

TRAINING PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND CONTEXT

Programme description, intervention strategies and approach (overview)

The University of Iceland hosts the **Gender Equality Studies and Training (GEST) programme** within the School of Humanities. The University established the programme in 2009 through an agreement between the University and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Iceland. The GEST programme ran as a pilot from 2009 to 2013 before becoming a part of the United Nations University (UNU) network based in Iceland in 2013. Since 2020, the GEST programme now operates as part of the GRÓ Centre with the three other Icelandic training programme for development cooperation that were formerly part of the UNU network. The GRÓ Centre is an independent agency of the MFA, operating under its own legal identity and functioning under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a Category 2 Centre (C2C) based in Iceland.

The **mission of the GEST programme is to use a multidisciplinary approach to promote gender equality and social justice in low/middle income countries and post-conflict countries** by:

- Advancing **expertise** through studies and training for professionals, scholars and organizations,
- Supporting the production of high-quality, collaborative, and policy-relevant **research**,
- Providing a platform for transnational **dialogue, knowledge dissemination** and **exchange**.

The core training offer of the GEST programme is an intensive 5-months (20 weeks) postgraduate level training and research programme (fellowship) in Iceland, like the other three Icelandic development cooperation training programmes. From 2009 to 2024, 241 individuals from 38 countries have graduated as GEST fellows on the annual 5-months fellowship programme. About half of the GEST fellows are from the four countries of Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda, and Palestine. In addition to the 5-month fellowship, the GEST programme offers **tailored short training courses delivered in partner countries**. The two-core short training courses are principally delivered with partner organizations in Malawi and in Uganda. GEST has also delivered an online course for participants in St. Lucia as well as a specific course in Kyrgyzstan in cooperation with the GRÓ Centre's LRT programme. Since 2012 through to 2023, 564 individuals have benefited from the programme's short training courses. Since 2018, the GEST programme has offered its alumni **scholarships for doctoral (PhD) degree studies**. These scholarships have developed from initially being a partial grant to support fieldwork research of one scholar to being offered as full grants for research with the University of Iceland in 2021. Since 2020, the programme has also offered creative online learning content in the form of **Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)**. The GEST programme currently offers four MOOCs on issues of gender equality and development studies. A fifth MOOC is currently being prepared, which will complete the package of GEST MOOCs. As of the first quarter of 2024, more than 17,000 individuals have enrolled in one of the GEST MOOCs.

Beside the four fundamental training programme interventions noted above, **the GEST programme promotes the empowerment of its alumni via a range of endeavours**. The GEST programme maintains a strong network for its alumni locally and globally by holding periodic online and in-country alumni meetings. It also has its **Alumni Fund**, a small-scale seed money financing mechanism to co-finance local development initiatives (projects) led by GEST alumni. To a limited extent, the programme has also supported alumni to participate in international conferences such as the meetings of the United

Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women to promote dialogue and knowledge dissemination on advancing gender equality in different contexts.

The GEST programme also **engages with partner organizations (primarily universities) in core partner countries. These partnerships provide a platform** to exchange knowledge on gender equality issues in the context of international development and design and implement training offer in their own context to develop local capacities to address these issues. This includes partnerships linked to the development and delivery of tailored short courses, as well as the integration of selected GEST training components in local university curricula. The partnerships are also important for raising awareness about the GEST programme and for identifying prospective candidates for the 5-month fellowship training.

Beyond the core training, research, and capacity development interventions, the GEST programme also promotes **transnational dialogue and knowledge exchange** on issues of gender equality via its participation in and/or the hosting of **workshops, specific training events, and/or discussion fora** in both Iceland and internationally. The programme staffs also support the undertaking of **knowledge production and exchange** through the periodic engagement in specific policy-relevant **research projects** and provision of **advisory services** for specific projects.

Main stakeholders and target groups of beneficiaries in partner countries

The **principal target group of beneficiaries** for the GEST programme are junior professionals from low-income countries and conflict/post-conflict societies in partner countries working for government ministries and agencies, civil society organisations, and educational institutes, including post-graduate students. The overall goal of the programme is to educate and train young professionals from partner countries in gender equality issues, methods, and theories to strengthen their professional capacities for advancing and implementing gender-sensitive projects in their home countries.

Other stakeholders and beneficiaries of the programme are its **university and training organization partners in a diverse range of partner countries**. During the period 2018 to 2023, the programme, through the University of Iceland, has operated institutional agreements with fourteen universities with Erasmus+, the EU funding programme to support education and training exchange and cooperation both in the EU and internationally. With Erasmus+, the GEST programme and university partners can secure external co-financing to assist specific collaborations. This includes co-financing for staff and co-funding for students at partner universities accepted on the fellowship (student exchange). Beyond Erasmus+ collaboration, the GEST programme closely works with a core set of partner organizations to promote collaboration on the development of local training capacity and training offer.

Other stakeholders for the GEST programme as partners and periodically as providers of financial contribution to the programme include the Red Cross of Iceland, RANNÍS (Icelandic Research Fund), EDDA Center of Excellence at the University of Iceland, and NIKK (Nordic Information on Gender under the Nordic Council of Ministers). The GEST programme also collaborated with the UNESCO Division for Gender Equality and other UN-organizations (like UN Women) in partner countries.

Institutional and organizational arrangements for programme management

The **main stakeholders and key primary actors** for the GEST programme are the GRÓ Centre, the MFA, and the University of Iceland. The **GRÓ Centre** is the commissioning agency for the core services of the programme and establishes the annual financial contribution to the programme via the GRÓ Centre. The **University of Iceland** has been the initiator and Host Institution for the GEST programme since its inception in 2009. The GRÓ Centre and the University agree to the division of the provision of services through a signed Service Agreement. In addition to its employment of the staffs that manage and implement the programme, the University also facilitates access to its staff, such as lecturers and supervisors that contribute to programme implementation. GEST also receives full access to facilities for its activities and standard logistical operational support from the University that is available to all Schools and Faculties. In this way, the University provides direct and indirect financial contribution to the programme. The **MFA** is the principal financier of the Icelandic training programmes for development cooperation. Since 2020, the annual contribution of the MFA is allocated to the GRÓ Centre for its onward allocation to the programmes. Additionally, the MFA periodically commissions the GEST

programme to undertake ad hoc events and to provide support within the wider context of the work agenda and policy priorities of the Ministry.

In 2023, the programme had a core staff of six people (five female, one male), to manage and implement the GEST. This includes the Programme Director, a research specialist, operations specialists, and project managers. In 2023, the GRÓ Centre financial contribution to the programme covered four Full-Time Equivalent staff positions. The University of Iceland supplements financial contribution to cover costs not covered by the GRÓ. The programme is guided by its **medium-term strategic plan and annual action plan**, developed by the programme staff in collaboration with partners and stakeholders at the University of Iceland. Specific actions, such as short courses in partner countries, are undertaken based on specific project agreements.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

1. PROGRAMME GOALS, STRATEGY AND APPROACH (RELEVANCE)

1.1. ALIGNMENT OF THE PROGRAMME WITH ICELAND'S INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION POLICIES AND WITH ICELAND'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT VISION AND STRATEGIES

The evaluator judges that the **GEST programme offer is closely aligned with and clearly relevant to the priorities of Icelandic development cooperation policy**. There is a strong focus of the GEST programme on supporting beneficiary partners and individuals in low or middle-income countries, specifically in Sub-Saharan Africa, both priority focus issues for Icelandic development policy. Gender equality is an objective prioritized across Iceland's development cooperation efforts.

The programme goal is to use a multidisciplinary approach to promote gender equality and social justice in low/middle income and post-conflict countries through knowledge transmission and capacity development.

Advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is a long-standing policy priority of the Icelandic Parliament and Government. Iceland places human rights at the heart of its policy, puts gender equality and the rights of children at the forefront of its mission, and strives to support vulnerable groups, such as LGBTQI+ persons and people with disabilities. The empowerment of women and girls applies to both Iceland's national and international development vision, policies, and strategies. Iceland's development cooperation thus aims to reflect the values of Icelandic society: respect for democracy, human rights, diversity, tolerance, justice, and solidarity.⁹⁴

Promoting gender equality is explicitly identified as one of the main objectives of Iceland's international development cooperation in the 2008 Act of Parliament establishing Iceland's development cooperation programme.⁹⁵ Subsequent Parliamentary Resolutions on Iceland's policy for international development cooperation have noted that gender equality is both **a specific and a cross-cutting objective** to be prioritized across Iceland's international development cooperation efforts.^{96 97}

⁹⁴ Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland's policy for International Development Cooperation 2024–2028.

⁹⁵ Act on Iceland's International Development Cooperation (Act No. 121/2008), Article 1 (General Provisions).

⁹⁶ Such as the Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland's policy for International Development Cooperation 2019–2023. It noted that gender equality, which is based on human rights principles, shall continue to be a priority in Iceland's development cooperation as well as a special objective/goal based on the view that gender equality and empowerment of women is the prerequisite for improvements and development, including economic advancement. It is important to duly consider gender perspectives as well as the position and rights of women in view of the national strategy on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution no. 1325 on women, peace and security. Additionally, measures shall be taken to combat gender-based and sexual violence and shall strongly emphasise women's participation and gender equality in climate related projects.

⁹⁷ The other specific and cross-cutting policy objectives/priorities of Iceland's policy are human rights, climate, and the environment.

Iceland's **gender equality strategy** for international development cooperation highlights **five focus areas for policy linked to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls**: (i) combatting gender-based violence (GBV), (ii) promoting the health of women and girls, (iii) empowering women, (iv) providing education with an emphasis on girls, and (v) engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality.⁹⁸ GEST programme training and learning content address all of the gender equality strategy's focus areas.

Icelandic **policy also notes that authorities shall support capacity building, vocational training, and work carried out to enhance the capabilities and strengths of institutions, CSOs, and professionals in partner countries to promote gender equality.**⁹⁹

The Icelandic training programmes for development cooperation, including GEST, are named in the development cooperation policy resolutions as key tools for training individuals and strengthening institutional capacity in partner countries in their respective fields of expertise.¹⁰⁰ The programmes are also clearly identified as key tools of international cooperation policy in Iceland's Voluntary National Review on its progress on the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**¹⁰¹

The evaluator judges that the **GEST programme is clearly aligned with the vision, policies, and strategies of Icelandic international development.** Advancing gender equality is a key priority for international and for Icelandic national development progress towards the 2030 Agenda.¹⁰² The GEST programme training and research actions are directly aimed at supporting development of the skills, knowledge, and understanding of young professionals on gender equality in the international development context. The actions support the development of capabilities and strengths of institutions, CSOs, and professionals in partner countries to promote gender equality in their own context. The target group of beneficiaries for the programme are primarily located in low/middle income countries.

Overview of the GEST programme training delivered for benefit of partner countries, 2018-2023

Between 2018-2023, GEST supported 133 fellows on the postgraduate level training programme in Iceland, with **81% of the fellows coming from LDCs or LMICs.**¹⁰³ This is entirely consistent with the goals of Icelandic development cooperation policy and its stated focus of directing Icelandic support towards LDCs and LMICs.

⁹⁸ GOI, MFA, Iceland's International Development Cooperation, Gender Equality Strategy.

⁹⁹ Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland's policy for International Development Cooperation 2019-2023.

¹⁰⁰ Parliamentary Resolutions on Iceland's policy for International Development Cooperation 2013-2016, 2019-2023, and 2024-2028.

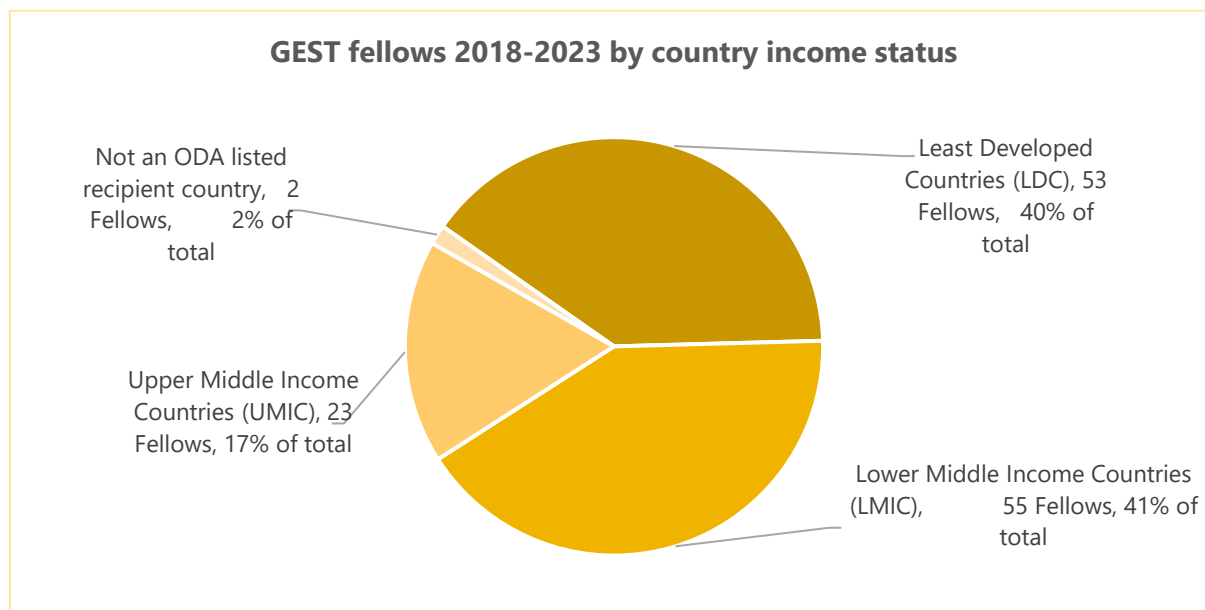
¹⁰¹ GOI, Prime Minister's Office, VNR Iceland 2023. It notes that GEST programme supports gender equality and social justice in low-income countries and post-conflict societies through research, training, and education.

¹⁰² The VNR also highlights specific areas where Iceland can advance gender equality issues domestically.

¹⁰³ As defined by the OECD on the DAC List of ODA Recipients effective for reporting on aid flows.

There were two fellows indicated as from non-ODA listed countries: one fellow from Russia in 2020 and one in 2021. The fellows were funded by the Arctic Affairs Division of the MFA, with a special allocation intended only for the benefit of fellows from the Arctic regions doing research relevant to the Arctic. Both Russian fellows were indigenous Yakuts, from the Republic of Sakha in Northern Siberia in the Russian Federation. While the World Bank has classified Russia as either upper middle income or as high income during the period 2004-2023, since 2004, the OECD has not listed Russia on the DAC list for official aid recipients.

Figure 48: Overview of GEST fellows on 6-months training in Iceland by income status of home country



Data source: statistics provided by GRÓ GEST

The 2018-2023 GEST fellows came from 34 countries. **Seventy-one (71) of the 2018-2023 cohort of fellows (53%)** came from **fourteen countries in Sub-Saharan Africa**, which is a priority region for Icelandic development cooperation policy. The two key partner countries from which 2018-2023 GEST fellows came are **Malawi** (11%) and **Uganda** (12%). Both are partner countries for Icelandic bilateral development cooperation policy and its specific support. Other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa from which the fellows came include **Mozambique** (another priority country for Iceland), Kenya, Ghana, and Nigeria. **Fifteen (15) of the cohort of fellows (11%)** came from **North Africa and the Middle East**, primarily from **Palestine** (7%), which was a priority country for Iceland. **Twenty-five (25) of the fellows (19%)** came from **South Asian countries** such as India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan. Afghanistan has been a priority country for Iceland. **Seventeen (17) fellows (13%)** came from the **Western Balkans and Eastern Europe**, including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, or Serbia.¹⁰⁴ Two fellows came from Mexico and one from Jamaica. The 2018-2023 cohort of GEST fellows consisted of **102 females (77%)** and **31 males (23%)**.

The GEST programme's offer of **scholarships for doctoral degree research studies**, initially launched in 2018, has supported one scholar from **Malawi** with a partial grant, one scholar from **Uganda**, and one scholar from **Ethiopia**. During 2018-2023, the programme supported **twelve short training course events** in partner countries, ten of which were conducted in **Malawi** and **Uganda**. These are both partner countries for Icelandic bilateral development cooperation policy, and both LDCs in Sub-Saharan Africa. In total, 370 individuals were reached via these ten training events (137 female, 233 male). Since their initial launch in 2020, **over 17,000 people** from one hundred and seventy (170) countries **have enrolled in a GEST MOOC**.¹⁰⁵ Approximately 75% of those enrolling are female, 21% male, and 4% other gender identity. 58% of learners were from OECD DAC listed developing countries during 2020-2021.

¹⁰⁴ Individuals from the Western Balkans are accepted on the fellowship due to co-financing provided via the Erasmus+ programme.

¹⁰⁵ Data on MOOC enrolment provided to the evaluator by the GEST programme.

1.2. ALIGNMENT OF THE PROGRAMME WITH THE PARTNER COUNTRIES' AND TARGET GROUPS' NEEDS AND PRIORITIES, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

The evaluator judges that the **GEST programme is clearly aligned with and relevant to partner countries' and target groups' needs, priorities, and strategies**. The level of demand for the fellowship training programme is strong clearly demonstrating it aligns with needs and local priorities. GEST also has many partnerships for collaborative engagement with local universities. The short training courses in partner countries are delivered with the local district authorities and partners.

In terms of key **partner countries for the GEST programme**, notably for its postgraduate level training and research programme (fellowship) in Iceland, the need to advance gender equality in the countries' development context is evidenced by **the current medium level to low level of gender equality** parity of female to male human development outcomes. Most of these countries also rank **high in the prevalence of gender inequality** that exists across three socio-economic dimensions.

Table 23: Gender development indices, UNDP 2021/2022 Human Development Report

Selected GEST focus countries Country	Gender Development Index		Gender Inequality Index	
	Value (2021) *	Group **	Value (2021) ***	Rank (of 170)
Ghana	0.946	3	0.529	130
Kenya	0.941	3	0.506	128
Malawi	0.968	2	0.554	142
Mozambique	0.922	4	0.537	136
Uganda	0.927	3	0.530	131
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.907	-	0.569	-
India	0.849	5	0.490	122
Nepal	0.942	3	0.452	113
Pakistan	0.810	5	0.534	135
Sri Lanka	0.949	3	0.383	92
South Asia	0.852	-	0.508	-
Palestine	0.891	5	-	-
Least Developed Countries	0.894	-	0.562	-
World	0.958	-	0.465	-

* Where 1 = parity of female to male human development index values/outcomes

** Group 1 = high equality, Group 2 = medium to high equality, Group 3 = medium equality, Group 4 = medium to low equality, Group 5 = low equality

*** On a scale from 0 to 1, where 0 = no inequality in achievement between women and men in reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market, and 1 = maximum inequality in achievement between women and men

The programme responds to the needs and priorities of its partner countries and individuals seeking to extend their knowledge and practical skills linked to advancing gender equality in their countries. The fellows are young professionals who already graduated from local universities and seek to deepen their understanding of gender equality issues and applying insights on gender as a tool for advancing local change and development. The **GEST programme fellows work at a diverse range of institutions** that sponsor their application. Approximately 35-40% of the GEST fellows work in local or international civil society organizations, 25-30% work in local government or public services, 15-20% work in academia, 10% work in international organizations in their country, and 5% work in the private sector or are self-employed.

The GEST programme commonly receives minimally 170 applications per year via its open call from people nominated by their organization to participate in the annual postgraduate level training and research programme. The individuals and their organizations clearly consider the GEST programme curriculum as relevant to their needs and priorities. Periodically, the programme has been requested by

other development actors to select fellows from within their local network of experts in partner countries to participate on the fellowship, such as with UN Women in Mozambique. In these cases, the development actor provided financial contributions to GEST, which further confirms the relevance of the programme to local needs in partner countries.

The GEST programme, via the University of Iceland, also operates cooperation **agreements with a range of universities in partner countries**, such as Makerere University in Uganda, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUNAR) in Malawi, Birzeit University in Palestine, the University of Ghana, the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and the University of the West Indies. The partner universities voluntarily undertake these endeavours in individual agreements. The intensity of the extent of cooperation between GEST and its individual partners varies, partially driven by the extent of co-funding the partners may obtain (for instance via Erasmus+) to undertake staff and/or student exchange or short courses. The long-standing partnership between GEST and Makerere University began in 2010.

The beneficiaries of the GEST programme's support for **short courses** delivered in partner countries, such as in Malawi or Uganda, have commonly been local professionals and experts working in the **district-level of government and/or local civil society** organizations. These trainee beneficiaries include health, social welfare, education, and environmental experts and workers. The GEST short courses were delivered in several districts with a particular attention to the full consent of the targeted district-level authority and its participation in planning and organization of training events.

1.3. ALIGNMENT OF THE PROGRAMME WITH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY FRAMEWORKS, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The evaluator judges that the **GEST programme closely aligns with and is relevant to promoting an understanding of the international development policy frameworks, goals, and strategies for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment**. The programme has promoted its close association with the UN Commission on the Status of Women. The work of the programme aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDG 5 Gender Equality.

A core objective of the GEST programme is to advance knowledge transmission and exchange for the understanding **of the international normative and policy frameworks**, instruments, agreements, and institutions dealing with gender equality and women's rights. This is strongly embedded within the GEST training offer across its different intervention tools and approaches as well as GEST networking efforts. Developing an understanding of the fundamental international normative and policy frameworks and their application in an international and national context is a vital component of the learning process. With an understanding of the international norms complemented by an analysis of the core theories and topics on gender equality, learners obtain skills to support the norms' application and analysis in their home countries/region.

The GEST programme closely relates to key UN instruments relevant to gender equality and the protection of women's rights and fundamental freedoms, most notably the **UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979)** and the **UN Security Council Resolution no. 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (2000)**. The programme also closely relates to the work of key UN organizations and commissions linked to advancing gender equality such as the **UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**, and **UN Women**. The programme directly works towards the goal of **SDG 5 Gender Equality of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, in addition to aspects of SDG 4 Quality Education, SDG 8 Decent Work, SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities, SDG 13 Climate Action, SDG 16 Peace, Justice, Strong Institutions, and SDG 17 Partnership.

1.4. QUALITY OF THE PROGRAMME DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The evaluator judges that the **GEST programme is well designed, and targeted to deliver its intended benefits to the direct beneficiaries of the programme.** The programme offers a coherent mix of training interventions targeting young professionals with tailored training offer of different levels of intensity. There is good level of synergy and focus across the training offer mix.

The programme is designed to serve as a knowledge sharing force towards a world where young gender equality scholars and professionals set the agenda for change.¹⁰⁶ The programme is designed to support **young professionals and scholars in low and middle-income countries working in gender equality** as the **primary direct beneficiaries of the programme.** The individual beneficiaries can be empowered to utilize their acquired expertise to act as change agents in their respective professional fields through the exchange of knowledge and skills facilitated by GEST. This may be achieved in the context of their professional work, as well as community engagement and advocacy.

Programme Fellows' **home institutions or organizations** also benefit from the programme through the training provided to the primary direct beneficiaries. However, it is beyond the control or the realm of potential intervention of GEST to ensure that the acquired knowledge and skills are directly shared or utilized in the home institution or organization's framework, operations, or agenda.

The programme provides a cohesive mix of training interventions. The core postgraduate level training programme (fellowship) in Iceland and graduate studies scholarships provide the direct beneficiaries in-depth knowledge transmission and understanding on gender equality issues and supports them to undertake specific research and to produce new knowledge. The offer of short training courses in partner countries is designed to provide tailored training, traditionally of one-week duration, to benefit local communities, professionals, and experts working in the local district-level of government and/or from local civil society organizations. The training focuses on specific issues at the nexus of gender and development. In these trainings, target groups are clearly defined as audiences and potential beneficiaries. While the trainings cover theory, they are primarily oriented to the practical acquisition and application of skills and tools. GEST MOOCs aims to reach a significantly larger audience of learners than can be achieved with the other training interventions. Each MOOC is a substantive training and learning course, indicatively requiring 30-40 hours of engagement.

The GEST programme has specifically sought to develop synergies across its training intervention offer building on the existing framework of the programme's expertise and areas of focus. For instance, specific module topics and content of the fellowship training have been tailored for utilization in the context of the MOOCs or short training courses in partner countries.¹⁰⁷ There is also promising potential for synergy between the GEST MOOC offer and the GEST short course training offer.

The core programme staff manages the GEST programme in close collaboration with the University of Iceland, its host Institution and original initiator of the programme. The programme is guided by a medium-term strategic plan, as well as a series of strategies or action plans and working papers on the evolution of its core training and capacity development interventions. Management of the specific programme interventions with the key partners in partner countries (mainly universities and training or research institutes) is developed from agreed institutional arrangements for the collaboration as well as project agreements for specific intervention activities.

The management arrangements and overall approach in terms of programme design is appropriate.

¹⁰⁶ Vision statement of the GRÓ GEST programme, GRÓ GEST Strategy 2023-2027.

¹⁰⁷ For instance, linkage between the MOOC on Gender Violence with the fellowship module, and between the MOOC Gender and Climate Change and the Short Course Gender and Climate Change, delivered in Malawi and in Uganda, with the fellowship module.

2. PROMOTION OF SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE PROGRAMME AND OTHER LOCAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS (COHERENCE)

2.1. COHERENCE AND SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE WORK OF THE PROGRAMME AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS BY ICELAND IN PARTNER COUNTRIES OR REGIONS

The evaluator judges that the **GEST programme complements the wider development efforts of Iceland linked to advancing gender equality undertaken at the international level and in partner countries**. However, there is only partial direct evidence of coordination or actual synergy created between the different efforts supported by the MFA with the efforts of the GEST programme.

The GEST programme is consistent with and **complements the wider development efforts of Iceland linked to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls** in partner countries, regions, and internationally. The GEST programme's training and learning content offer addresses all the focus areas of the Icelandic gender equality strategy for international development cooperation.

At the global level, Iceland is strongly committed to advancing the **Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda** outlined in UN Security Council Resolution no. 1325. At partner country level, in partnership with UN Women, Iceland has supported Malawi and Mozambique to create and implement National Action Plans on WPS. Iceland is also engaged in UN Women's Generation Equality Forum under **CEDAW** as the co-leader in the Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence (GBV).¹⁰⁸ Iceland also actively engages in the **UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**. The work of GEST addresses these issues through its training provision and its networking activities. The GEST programme organized a side-event to the annual session of the CSW in 2018, 2019, and 2024. GEST programme is also a key partner for the MFA of Iceland for the work and events of the Nordic Women Mediators Network.

In the **partner countries for Icelandic bilateral development cooperation policy**, particularly Malawi, Uganda, and more recently Sierra Leone, the work of the GEST programme complements the focus of the MFA's Country Strategy Papers on promoting gender equality within the framework of Icelandic support. Malawi and Uganda are both long-standing partners for GEST in terms of fellows on the postgraduate training in Iceland, while GEST accepted its first fellow from Sierra Leone in 2018 (with another in 2023). In Malawi and Uganda, GEST's tailored short course training targeted at the district-level of government and/or local civil society creates good synergy with the wider efforts of the MFA to support the district-level authorities promoting local development and basic service provision, as well as the advancement of gender equality. Local examples of this are short courses delivered in Malawi in Mangochi and in Nkhotakota districts.

2.2. COHERENCE AND SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE WORK OF THE PROGRAMME AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS BY THE KEY PARTNERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS OR BY OTHER DONORS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES OR REGIONS

The evaluator judges that the **GEST programme complements the wider development efforts of the programme's key partner organizations in partner countries**. The majority of these are local universities providing academic training and knowledge exchange on gender equality. The programme complements wider training efforts of other donors to promote capacity development.

The **key partnership organizations for the GEST programme in partner countries are universities and training organizations**. GEST operates an institutional agreement with most university partners for potential collaboration initiatives for co-financing under the Erasmus+ programme. As the partners drive the collaboration, the initiatives complement their wider efforts to promote capacity development, knowledge transmission, and exchange on gender equality and women's rights.

¹⁰⁸ GOI, MFA, Iceland's International Development Cooperation, Gender Equality Strategy.

With a limited number of universities, the GEST programme, via the University of Iceland, also operates specific **Memorandum of Understanding** to promote closer and more specific partnership collaboration. These address collaboration on the development of short training courses and/or other training tools, and/or the development of local university course curricula on topics of gender equality. The collaboration complements the wider efforts of the partners to extend their training and learning offerings. Equally so, the collaboration with specific training organizations in partner countries complements their efforts to provide a quality training offer and to extend the range of courses within their offer package.

Other donors active in the provision of capacity development training for young professionals for benefit of partner countries with which Iceland maintains strong ties of cooperation, include Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. They provide tailored training of different durations on various topics including gender equality. The GEST programme offer complements these wider development efforts to provide training. Since the training offers of these donors and those of the GEST are of different levels of intensity and organization and the partner or strategic countries for these donors' capacity development efforts only partially match with those of the GEST programme, it is not feasible to create synergy of the efforts.

GEST programme activities are also consistent with those of the **UN organizations** working in partner countries to advance gender equality. The GEST programme interventions complement the focus of **UN Women** on issues of governance, women's economic empowerment, ending violence against women and girls, and peace and security. GEST has collaborated closely with UN Women in Mozambique. Gender equality is a global priority for UNESCO. Since 2019, GEST also has been collaborating with **UNESCO's** Division for Gender Equality and the Social and Human Sciences Sector. GEST interventions primarily align with strategic objectives two and three of UNESCO's gender equality framework, empowering women for environmental action, promoting inclusion, and combatting GBV. The focus of GEST also closely aligns with UNESCO's cross-cutting focus on women, peace, and security.

2.3. Duplication or overlap of the programme with other efforts by Iceland or other donors

The evaluator judges that **there is no duplication or overlap of the GEST programme activities with the other development efforts of Iceland or other donors.** There is limited clear risk.

There is **no evidence of duplication or overlap** of the GEST programme activities with other development efforts undertaken by Iceland or by other donors.

The GEST programme provides training on gender issues for young professionals from a diversity of low and middle-income countries. The bulk of Iceland's bilateral development cooperation support targets district-level programmes and community initiatives to enhance local social infrastructure and the sustainable use of natural resources as a means to promote socio-economic development. The bulk of Iceland's multilateral development cooperation support seeks to assist Iceland's multilateral partners respond to local development needs, including humanitarian needs. There is no clear risk of duplication.

The capacity development training offer of other donors and that of the GEST programme are complementary, but the training offers are substantially variable in terms of their design and intensity as well as principal priority partner countries. There is no clear risk of duplication or overlap of efforts.

3. PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS (EFFECTIVENESS)

3.1. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAMME OVERALL IN REGARD TO THE DELIVERY AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE INTENDED RESULTS

The evaluator judges that the **GEST programme is highly effective in achieving training provision outreach, with approximately 16,800 individuals (learners) directly reached through its training offer during the period 2018-2023.** In total 132 fellows have graduated with a diploma degree confirming their completion of the fellowship training programme in Iceland, three alumni have been supported to undertake their doctoral research studies, 436 people were trained via short courses in partner countries, and 16,238 learners were reached via the GEST programme MOOCs offer. **The beneficiaries positively rate the quality and relevance of the training and the knowledge transmission.**

A summary of the principal programme **outputs** delivered during the period 2018 to 2023 is below.

Table 24: *GEST programme, principal output results achieved via the programme 2018-2023*

INTERVENTION	PRINCIPAL OUTPUTS DELIVERED/ACHIEVED 2018-2023 - GEST PROGRAMME
Postgraduate training in Iceland (Fellowship)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 133 fellows enrolled from 34 countries, 53% from Sub-Saharan Africa, 102 female (77%), 31 male (23%), 40% from LDCs, 41% from LMICs, and 17% from UMICs, listed for ODA • 132 fellows graduated (99.25% graduation rate), obtaining a diploma degree with their finalized research/project papers on gender equality confirmed on GEST's webpage • The quality of the training programme modules, in terms of knowledge obtained and its value to the fellows, is overall highly rated by fellows with 90% satisfied or highly satisfied • On a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), 54% of the fellows rated the individual programme module learning as 5/5, with 36% as 4/5, and 6% as 3/5, and 3% as 2/5, and 1% as 1/5 • 16% of fellows' papers relate to issues of health rights including sexual and reproductive health, 27% relate to issues of GBV and security, 8% relate to issues of environment and climate change, agriculture, and fisheries, 39% issues of community cultural understanding and awareness on issues of gender equality and local challenges, and 11% relate to issues of empowerment, business, entrepreneurship, and migration
Doctoral scholarships (PhD research)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three doctoral scholars supported, all from LDCs • One received a partial grant to support field work research, the other two received full grants for study • One scholar from Malawi, one from Uganda, and one from Ethiopia, two females (67%) and one male (33%) • One scholar has graduated, the other two are expected to defend their theses in 2025 • Four research papers have been published, and two submitted to journals for publication • One scholar participated at an international conference to present her research outputs
Short courses in partner countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three short training courses have been delivered in four partner countries, with a total of twelve specific training events delivered (one online due to the COVID pandemic) • The Gender and Climate Change course has been delivered twice in Uganda and three times in Malawi at district and community level with 145 beneficiaries reached • The Teaching Gender to Youth course has been delivered at district and community level once in Malawi, four times in Uganda, and once in St. Lucia, with 275 beneficiaries reached • The Gender, Environment and Sustainable Land Management course has been delivered in cooperation with LRT and its partners once in Kyrgyzstan, with 16 beneficiaries reached • The quality of the training courses in regards to relevancy and helpfulness to the trainees and in their job, is overall highly rated by trainees with 97% satisfied or highly satisfied • On a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), 72% of the trainees rated the short course as 5/5, with 25% as 4/5, and 3% as 3/5, zero trainees rated the benefit of the course as 2/5 or 1/5

INTERVENTION	PRINCIPAL OUTPUTS DELIVERED/ACHIEVED 2018-2023 - GEST PROGRAMME
MOOCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three MOOCs were progressively launched during 2020-2023, a fourth in early 2024 • A total of 16,238 learners enrolled on one of the GEST MOOCs during 2020-2023, of whom approximately 75% were female, 21% male, and 4% of other non-binary gender identity • Learners originate from 170 countries, 58% of learners from developing countries • During 2020-2023, a total of 1,088 learners enrolled on the edX verification track, with 689 (63%) successfully completing the course final exam and receiving a certification of passing
Alumni empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19 events have been organized by GEST aimed at the professional empowerment of its alumni through community building and networking with and for its alumni • Eleven meetings were held with GEST alumni country chapters in seven countries • Two online Alumni Seminars were held, during which fourteen alumni presented research • Eleven alumni participated at the GEST 10th Anniversary event held in Kenya, of whom six alumni presented their research at the seminar undertaken in collaboration with UNESCO • Three alumni have received grants via the GEST March 8 Alumni Fund for their implementation of specific local development initiatives to promote gender equality and change in their home countries. 160 women entrepreneurs were direct beneficiaries of two of the projects, and victims and survivors of violence were beneficiaries of the other project • The GEST programme has also undertaken two surveys of its alumni in 2019 and 2023, to obtain feedback on post-fellowship outcomes of alumni • The programme has also sought to involve its alumni in the organization and delivery of GEST's short courses in partner countries, as realized at seven of the twelve events • Since 2020, the programme also runs a GEST Podcast which features alumni
Capacity development partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During 2018-2023, the GEST programme had cooperation agreements with fourteen universities under the Erasmus+ programme. 46 postgraduate students from thirteen universities were co-financed with Erasmus+ as GEST fellows • Staff mobility for training exchange cooperation with twelve universities were co-financed via Erasmus+ • The programme also operates close partnerships with Makerere University in Uganda, and Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUNAR) in Malawi, and with Pangea, a non-government organization in Uganda, to build local training provision
Other actions (incl. research and advisory services, and workshops)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GEST programme has organized side events at annual meetings of the UN CSW, undertaken by GEST in partnership with Icelandic MFA, and other partners (like UN Women) • The programme supported or staff participated at approximately 35 public lectures or seminars on issues of gender equality undertaken in Iceland primarily for local audiences • Core programme staff have also been involved in research projects and awarded grants for research

The GEST programme has **very successfully engaged with a diverse range of learners from partner countries as direct beneficiaries** through a mix of training interventions of different levels of depth and duration. The programme has ensured strong engagement with direct beneficiaries in LDCs or

LMICs. It is evident, based on direct beneficiaries' and partner stakeholders' feedback as to the quality and relevance of the training provided indicate that the GEST training **interventions have enhanced individual competences, knowledge, skills, and attitudes linked to advancing gender equality in the context of local development**. The training interventions are well targeted in terms of the audiences to be reached. Young professionals from partner countries are targeted via the fellowship, district-level and local community experts as well as public services are reached via the short courses, while the MOOCs offer an open learning resource without time constraint for a broad audience of learners to investigate gender issues.

The **fellows return to their home countries and organizations** upon completing the training in Iceland **empowered** to share and apply the insights and skills they obtained. The district-level **beneficiaries of the short courses are empowered to undertake change at the local level** aligned with the series of local strategic action plans related to gender issues and development prepared within the training process. During the period 2018-2023, the four **short courses in Malawi have benefited three districts** Mangochi, Mchinji, and Nkhotakota districts, with nine local actions plans adopted. The six **courses in Uganda have benefited more than fifteen districts**, each supported to develop and implement local action plans. It is not credible to assess the extent that **MOOCs** have directly empowered the individual learners. By design, they focus on reaching as many people as possible, and are not comparable to many standard training approaches. Learners may use parts of each individual course that they need or interest them. However, it is evident that **more than 1,000 people (7% of learners) enrolled in the verification track** and thereby most likely were motivated to advance their knowledge and skills for their benefit.

The **GEST alumni community building and networking** actions ensure periodic connection with and between its alumni as well as empowers them via opportunities to present their latest research, be involved in local short courses, or undertake local development projects to promote gender equality.

The evaluator judges that **the direct results of the GEST programme establish a strong basis to promote behavioural change of the individuals** (direct beneficiaries) **and at their home organizations** to utilize and apply the learning, skills, and tools obtained via the training. This will result in a diverse range of local initiatives **to advance gender equality and local development change**.

Linked to the programme's intended outcomes, a summary of the direct **outcomes** is below.

Table 25: GEST programme, direct outcomes achieved via the programme 2018-2023

- **88%** of GEST's cohort of 2018-2023 fellows responding to the external evaluation team's online questionnaire survey agreed or strongly agreed that they were **able to advance their contribution in their technical field of work** thanks to the postgraduate training programme in Iceland.
- **84%** of the 2018-2023 GEST respondents indicated **contribution** to their technical field of work **by way of training or mentoring of others**. **69% were directly involved in the implementation of projects or reform initiatives** (in 90% of cases, respondents led the project or initiative). **58% were involved in further research**. **49% had advised local communities in the field of gender equality**. **40% were involved in advising national or local policy makers**. **24% were involved in advising private sector partners**.
- **73%** of respondents indicated they had **shared their knowledge** with colleagues and networks.
- **74%** of respondents mentioned they had substantially or extremely **advanced professionally** in their career due to their enhanced skills, **74%** indicated they had more responsibility, **53%** mentioned moving to a new job position and professional level, **43%** mentioned a salary increase, **38%** indicated promotion, **17%** had secured a scholarship, and **6%** indicated starting their own business.
- **75%** agreed or strongly agreed that the **management of their organization appreciates and values the knowledge and skills** that the fellow gained from the post-graduate training programme.
- **77%** of the 2018-2023 GEST respondents indicated that they had contributed to achieving progress on the SDGs.

- From the **short courses**, approximately twenty districts in Uganda and in Malawi adopted and now implement local action plans to advance gender equality within their local development. This has resulted, for instance, in several gender equality initiatives within supported schools.
- From the **GEST March 8 Alumni Fund**, tangible benefits and outcomes are realized by the direct beneficiaries of the supported projects linked to the economic empowerment of women and combatting violence against women, as well as at local community level via the range of community awareness/sensitization campaigns undertaken on gender equality issues.

Responses to the external evaluation team's online questionnaire survey indicate that 78% of all GEST alumni respondents have achieved **substantial or extreme career advancement**, and a further 11% have achieved moderate advancement. Responses to the GEST Alumni Survey conducted in 2023 indicate that 87% of the alumni credit the programme benefits to help advance their career.

3.2. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DIFFERENT PROGRAMME INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND OF LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS IN REGARD TO THE DELIVERY AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

The following specific issues per intervention are concerned with the effectiveness of the different programme intervention strategies and local partnerships in the delivery and achievement of the results.

Postgraduate level training and research programme (fellowship) in Iceland

Prior to 2020, the GEST programme adapted the programme's fellowship curricula structure and content offer annually with the trial of elective course modules occurring in 2017 and in 2019. In 2019, "Gender, Labour and Migration", and "Gender, Health and Education" were the elective options. The feedback provided by the fellows on the latter elective module indicated **significant disparity** as to how the fellows judged it in terms of the learning outcomes as compared to all other modules during the period 2018-2023.¹⁰⁹

The **GEST fellowship curriculum consists of six standard modules** of study. These are fine-tuned by the GEST programme after each year's training, but the core offer is largely consistent.

- Module 1: Theories and Concepts of Gender
- Module 2: Project Development Tools (previously called Gender and Development: Tools and Strategies 2018-2022))
- Module 3: Gender, Violence and Security
- Module 4: Gender, Labour and Migration (first offered in 2019 as an elective course module)
- Module 5: Gender, Environment and Climate Change
- Module 6: Final assignment research/project paper prepared by the fellows

While year 2020 was notably challenging for training delivery due to the COVID pandemic, the fellows still judged the relevance and quality of the learning outcomes highly with 93.5% giving a 4/5 or 5/5 rating. The fellows' rating of the learning outcomes obtained has improved since then with the exception of 2023.¹¹⁰

Overall, the quality of the training modules is highly rated by the fellows in terms of knowledge obtained and its value with **90% satisfied or highly satisfied**, as shown below for years **2018-2023**.

¹⁰⁹ 33% of fellows on the course rated it as 1/5 or 2/5 (based on the average across three questions on learning outcomes).

¹¹⁰ Data on fellows' rating of individual training modules provided to the evaluator by GEST programme for years 2017-2024.

Table 26: GEST fellowship training, fellows' feedback on the overall learning outcomes obtained

YEAR	1/5 (LOW)	2/5	3/5 (NEUTRAL)	4/5	5/5 (HIGH)
2018	2.7%	2.7%	9.8%	18.6%	66.3%
2019	2.2%	8.3%	8.2%	22.1%	59.1%
2020	0%	1.0%	5.5%	51.4%	42.1%
2021	0%	1.7%	1.7%	35.0%	61.6%
2022	0%	0%	1.4%	49.6%	49.0%
2023	2.2%	3.5%	10.7%	36.8%	46.8%
Average	1.19%	2.85%	6.20%	35.60%	54.16%

Data source: Data on fellows' feedback on learning outcomes and its relevance provided by the GEST programme

The higher level of low rating (1/5) in 2018 is primarily, but not exclusively, linked to the module **Gender, Environment and Climate Change** (5.8% rated it 1/5). It was **also the only course in 2023 rated as 1/5** by 11.1% of respondents (while a further 11.1% rated it 2/5). **The higher level of low rating (1/5 or 2/5) in 2019** is primarily linked to the course on **Gender, Health and Education**. It was the only course with a fellows' response rating at 1/5, while a further 22.2% rated it at 2/5. Also in 2019, 8.3% of respondents rated **Gender and Development** a 2/5 and 11.1% rated the newly offered elective course **Gender, Labour and Migration** a 2/5. This module also contributed to the lower assessment in 2023 as 6.3% rated it as 2/5. Comparison of the overall rating of the individual training modules during the period is below.

Table 27: GEST fellowship training, fellows' feedback on individual modules (2018-2023 average)

MODULE	1/5 (LOW)	2/5	3/5 (NEUTRAL)	4/5	5/5 (HIGH)
Theories	0.5%	3.0%	5.3%	38.7%	52.5%
Development	0%	1.4%	7.3%	36.6%	54.7%
Violence	0.4%	0.4%	4.8%	28.7%	65.8%
Labour	0%	3.5%	6.5%	38.3%	51.7%
Environment	3.4%	3.1%	7.2%	40.6%	45.7%

Data source: Data on fellows' feedback on learning outcomes and its relevance provided by the GEST programme

The feedback from the GEST programme and its alumni indicate that the **course content is fine-tuned and adapted by the programme academic staff based on fellows' feedback about the effectiveness of the courses** to ensure suitable and appropriate knowledge and skills transfer. This supports the progressive refocusing and improvement of the training content offer for future fellows. Changes made in the **Gender, Environment and Climate Change** module have resulted in a 100% rating as 4/5 or 5/5 in 2024 up from only 61% in 2023. Similarly, 100% of the fellows rated the **Gender, Labour and Migration** module in 2024 as 4/5 or 5/5. The overall level of fellows' rating of the 2024 programme learning outcomes was 97.0% as 4/5 or 5/5.

GEST fellows responding to the external evaluation's questionnaire survey indicated the leading areas in which **the training programme supported their skills improvement** was in gender awareness, followed by personal development, LGBTQI+ awareness, intercultural skills, interpersonal skills, human rights awareness, leadership skills, climate change awareness, and policy analytical skills.

Scholarships for postgraduate studies

The GEST programme has only provided limited support to its alumni by means of scholarships for postgraduate studies, with only three GEST alumni supported to date for doctoral degree studies. It was the last of the four Icelandic training programmes for development cooperation to offer scholarships.

Their production of new knowledge relates to issues of (i) women's participation in the fish value chain and value chain governance in Malawi, (ii) gender and climate change in Sub-Saharan Africa, gender transformative climate proofing in agriculture and natural resources in Uganda, and (iii) the role of the state, gender and politics in Ethiopian international peacekeeping. The **effectiveness of the interventions is broadly fully in-line with standard expectation of such scholarship grants**. Research has progressed and the scholars have accordingly produced specific research outputs.

Short training courses delivered in partner countries (including online)

The **effectiveness of the GEST short training course offer** to ensure knowledge transmission and to offer practical tools to the direct beneficiaries to utilize and apply the obtained expertise **is strongly evident**. While standard statistical data on the assessed quality of courses is not available from each of the short training course events, those where such data is provided approximately showed **97% of the direct beneficiaries were either satisfied or highly satisfied** with the relevance and usefulness of the training.

The **short courses are evidently oriented to the practical application of new understanding and skills by the direct beneficiaries** – local experts working in district-level public services and civil society groups. The development of local action plans to advance gender equality issues in specific areas (such as agriculture, environment, and education) at the district and community level are valuable outputs. They form a basis for a more strategic approach to promote gender equality across district offices and services. Reports of the training provider partner for the Teaching Gender to Youth courses in Uganda indicate solid progress achieved by the schools to implement local change through follow-up visits that they have undertaken to the primary schools of which staff were trained a few months prior. The toolbox of measures introduced from the course to support the integration of gender is positively received.

While the GEST programme offers two generic short training courses on gender equality issues, Teaching Gender to Youth, and Gender and Climate Change, the generic **courses are fully tailored to the specific needs and country context of the partner organizations and request its collaboration** to organize the delivery of local training course offer. This is directed by the training partners in close collaboration with GEST. In Malawi and Uganda, the training partners ensure the engagement of relevant national government authorities, such as the ministries responsible for gender and social policy or environment, water, and natural resources. GEST programme reports on the short courses and those of partner organizations attest to an effective partnership established to promote quality training.

In addition to short courses delivered in partner countries, the GEST programme is periodically requested to provide short courses on gender equality issues for the fellows of the other GRÓ training programmes.

Creative online training content, MOOCs

Specific and detailed assessment of the GEST MOOC offer is provided in the case study report on GEST.

Since their launch, over 17,000 people have enrolled on one of the GEST MOOCs of which 75% are female. More than 3,000 learners enrolled in 2023 alone when GEST only offered three MOOCs. Most learners are from partner countries on the DAC list of ODA recipients. 7% of learners took the verification track between 2020-2023 and successfully passed the final exam at a stellar rate of 63%.

The evaluator judges that provision of **the MOOCs is an effective intervention modality for the programme to increase its learning outreach and direct audience** of people interested to know more about gender equality issues. The MOOCs provide perspectives on the role for gender equality and challenges for its realization in the context of achieving global and sustainable, equitable, and just development. **The MOOC offer is substantive** as each provides a detailed theoretical overview, analytical skills and tools, and practical case examples linked to the subject area, rather than short, summary overviews of issues. Development of the GEST MOOC offer is still on-going: the fifth and final stand-alone MOOC will be developed in 2024-2025 and the full **Online Programme in International Gender Studies** will follow in 2026. The latter will significantly enhance the GEST offer and its potential to reach gender equality practitioners and professionals that seek to undertake a detailed learning course dedicated to gender equality. The potential for this programme to become an **edX MicroMasters**

programme will further enhance the effectiveness of the MOOCs as a learning package and the value to learners of their formally enrolling on the verification track. GEST also has a clear strategy to utilize its MOOC content as a bridge to its other offerings, such as short training courses in partner countries or in working in partnership with other universities, which will in-turn enhance the effective use of its MOOCs.

Research and knowledge creation (by the GEST fellows and scholars)

During the period 2018-2023, **132 fellows finalized projects or research papers**. Of these, approximately 63% are academic and/or practical research papers on issues of gender and 37% are development project initiative proposals linked to advancing gender equality in specific areas at the local level. The research papers and development project initiatives form a basis for further immediate action and/or knowledge sharing and exchange by the alumni on their return to their home country and organization upon completion of the fellowship. The fellows' research outputs are also accessible via the GEST website, as a means for knowledge sharing. However, as the project/research papers are not demarcated by gender issue topic area, or key subject matters addressed, this may not be easily realized.

GEST fellows responding to the external evaluation's questionnaire survey indicated **the means by which they had disseminated their research post-fellowship**. The main channels were presentations for colleagues (57%), for local communities (33%), at policy meetings or professional networks (32%), presentations at local conferences/congress (21%), or publication in conference proceedings (8%).

Scholars on doctoral degrees have effectively progressed with their studies and fieldwork research including the pre-drafting and final production of research papers, journal articles, and chapters for their final theses. Four research papers by scholars were published in journals. Two papers have been submitted to journals for publication. Scholars are currently drafting additional papers.

Workshops and conferences / Platforms for knowledge exchange and dialogue

GEST's attendance at the **annual meeting of the UN CSW** in New York and the organization of side events to discuss specific topics in gender equality are effective means for the GEST programme to collaborate with partners on the international level. GEST undertakes its side events at the CSW in partnership with UN Women and/or national government partners such as that of Iceland, Malawi, and Zambia. The annual meeting of the CSW is a key forum for international partners, national governments, and civil society organizations to explore and advance the application of gender equality and international norms.

The programme or staff have also supported and participated in a range of **public lectures, seminars, and workshops in Iceland** to promote dialogue and knowledge exchange on gender equality issues. These endeavours are commonly undertaken with key partners based at the University of Iceland, such as the EDDA Research Center and the Institute for Gender, Equality, and Difference (RIKK), as well as other institutions such as the Icelandic Red Cross, the MFA, the Nordic Women's Mediator Network, or local research institutes. These represent an effective means to provide development education and awareness raising (DEAR).

Alumni empowerment, community building and networking

GEST's periodic **online alumni seminar** provide the opportunity for its alumni to present their latest research in accordance with specific, pre-defined topics in order to guide online dialogue and knowledge exchange. GEST announces the topic areas well in advance, and alumni are asked to indicate their interest to prepare and present original research. In 2020, the topic for discussion was the impact on gender of the COVID pandemic and responses, and in 2023 topics included ensuring gender sensitive financing for climate change measures.

GEST fellows responding to the external evaluation's questionnaire survey indicated a strong level of participation and interest in alumni networking, as 70% of the 2018-2023 GEST fellows have participated in networking activities (formal and informal) since their graduation. 64% indicated that networking with

the alumni was a key benefit to boost their individual motivation to overcome challenges to promoting gender equality and 46% reported that networking was beneficial for finding job opportunities.

Effectiveness of the Alumni Fund is strongly evident as results were achieved both in the professional empowerment of alumni as leaders of change as well as the results of the individual supported projects to advance gender equality and social justice and achieve real change in their local communities. The Fund is a clear **statement and symbol of the trust GEST has in its alumni** and their capacity to lead on delivering solutions to advance gender equality and local development benefits. Supported projects are all relevant to advancing gender equality and promoting gender transformative approaches to achieve meaningful social and economic change in partner countries and communities. The direct effect of two of the supported projects is the economic empowerment of the women (the direct beneficiaries of the projects), which most closely aligns with SDG 5.5.¹¹¹ One of these projects also aligns with SDG 5.b,¹¹² while another also aligns with SDG 7.1.¹¹³ The direct effect of the third project, a community-based response to address issues of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), most closely aligns with SDG 5.2 and SDG 16.1.¹¹⁴

Specific and detailed assessment of the GEST Alumni Fund is provided in the case study report on GEST.

Advisory services and knowledge sharing (including capacity development partnerships)

During the period 2018-2023, the core programme staffs have been involved in ad hoc externally funded research projects or services. This has included work such as that with UN Women in Mozambique on peace, security, and recovery, or with UN agencies on gender and environmental outlook.

GEST operates a number of partnerships with local universities in partner countries under the Erasmus+ programme to promote staff and knowledge exchange and capacity development of partners. However, the actual extent of the success of these partnerships is reliant on the provision of co-financing from Erasmus+. GEST has established close bonds of partnership with Makerere University in Uganda and LUNAR in Malawi. The long-standing partnership with Makerere University¹¹⁵ since 2010 covers academic cooperation and the development of tailored short courses. Makerere University has also provided a co-supervisor to support the doctoral research studies of one of the GEST PhD scholars since 2022. The partnership with LUNAR principally focuses on short courses. Yet even with these partners, the intensity of the cooperation realized is still largely driven by the availability of funding rather than steered by a medium-term plan for collaboration.

3.3 Overall factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the expected results

The evaluator highlights the following key factors influencing the achievement of the programme results:

- The programme promotes the careful targeting of its interventions, especially for the selection of fellows for the postgraduate diploma programme in Iceland. The selection of fellows follows a rigorous application, review, and interview process. The first step in the process is the nomination of the candidate by their home organization after which candidates are then invited to submit a comprehensive application. The application process requires the applicants to propose an idea for a final assignment with the support of their nominating organisation. With an increased number of

¹¹¹ SDG target 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life (including women's economic empowerment / business management).

¹¹² SDG target 5.b: Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

¹¹³ SDG target 7.1: Ensure universal access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy services.

¹¹⁴ SDG target 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking, and sexual and other types of exploitation.

SDG target 16.1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

¹¹⁵ The School of Women and Gender Studies, in Makerere University's College of Humanities and Social Sciences, currently offers undergraduate and postgraduate courses and programmes linked to issues of gender equality. Including a postgraduate diploma (1-year duration) in gender and local economic development, a master of arts (2-years duration) in gender studies, and a doctoral degree (3-years duration) in women and gender studies. It also offers a diverse range of e-learning resources, including MOOCs.

nominations and applications in the last five years, the GEST programme has advanced the application process further, by requiring the applicants to present an outline of their intended research paper/project since 2019. Since 2022, applicants were required to explain in detail the commitment and support of their organization to the research and its future dissemination. Since 2023 (for the 2024 cohort), the detailed Topic Selection Form is now fully integrated directly into the basic application form for the programme. This ensures all fellows arrive in Iceland with a clear focus and outline of their intended research.

- Since 2020, the GEST fellowship curriculum consists of six standard modules of study. In previous years, the offer partially changed on an annual basis as to the modules provided. The fellows' rating of the learning outcomes obtained has improved since 2020, bar a blip in 2023.
- GEST has clearly established processes to obtain feedback from the fellows on the programme modules (e.g. on learning outcomes and the organization/delivery of the modules). These responses provide insights for GEST's annual review of the programme and the improvement of modules for the next programme.
- The careful targeting of the short courses and the provision of practical tools in partner countries to benefit district-level public service staff and community groups has ensured that knowledge and skills, and gender action plans can be immediately applied at local level.
- There is strong potential to promote synergies between GEST's MOOC content and its other training offer.

The evaluator highlights the following factors influencing non-achievement of the programme results:

- Because GEST fellows come from a diverse range of organizations, civil society groups, universities, research institutes and government, there are difficulties for GEST to follow-up at the institutional level to monitor the effectiveness of the training or how it was utilized internally from the home organization's perspective. The principal feedback mechanism on follow up is the fellows contacted by GEST post-fellowship.
- GEST fellows responding to the external evaluation's questionnaire survey indicated the principal challenges they face in utilizing and applying their knowledge are insufficient resources, reluctance to change in their institution or home country, or unfavourable power dynamics.
- While the MOOCs provide a larger audience of learners, MOOCs are not comparable to in-person training with clear time-bounds. The benefit is that the learner proceeds at self-pace or can focus on specific interests within the online learning resource. However, MOOCs, by their nature, are not designed to obtain detailed feedback from learners as to the benefits obtained. As such, the principal means to assess effectiveness of the MOOCs is through the verification track.

4. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT (EFFICIENCY)

4.1. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS, PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION, OVERSIGHT, STEERING, AND RISK MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND THE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF RESULTS

The evaluator judges that the **operational efficiency of the programme is good (satisfactory)**. Delivery of the intended programme results is in a timely manner in terms of quantity and quality. Financial management of the programme is in accordance with Icelandic requirements for a public service institution. Programme monitoring, reporting, and steering mechanisms are generally good. However, the evaluator judges there is some room for improvement linked to the short courses. The principal risk to the programme's implementation, effectiveness, and efficiency during 2018-2023 was the impact of the COVID pandemic. GEST demonstrated adaptive management in its response.

Programme management, planning, and implementation systems

In 2023, the programme had a core staff of six people (five female, one male) to manage and implement the GEST including the Programme Director, a research specialist, operations, and project managers. They are employees of the University of Iceland, the Host Institution for the GEST programme.

GRÓ Centre financial contribution to the programme covered **four Full-Time Equivalent staff positions**. In addition to its employment of the staff that manage and implement the programme, the University also facilitates access to its staff other lecturers and supervisors that contribute to the programme implementation and delivery. The University also provides the programme with full access to facilities for its activities as well as standard logistical operational supports available to all Schools and Faculty of the University. The **University provides direct and indirect financial contribution to the programme**.

In accordance with the goals set in its medium-term **strategic plan and action plan**, the programme prepares detailed **annual action plans** documenting its proposed different interventions, in accordance with standard process and practice across all Schools and Faculty of the University. As the MFA is the principal financier of the programme, now channelled via the GRÓ Centre, the annual action plan is also subject to final consultation with the GRÓ Centre as to the extent of its financial contribution to the proposed actions.

Most of the different programme interventions operate based on clearly defined processes and timelines. For instance, the application for the fellowship opens in March for the subsequent year's intake, with the interview process, and final selection of candidates lasts until October. The fellowship runs in Iceland from January to May following a clearly defined schedule and process for delivery of the programme modules. In addition to the training, support, and supervision of fellows' research papers, GEST offers fellows field study visits within Iceland to introduce them to the gender scene and stakeholders in Iceland. The GEST MOOCs offer principally open in March and run through to late year. The GEST Alumni Fund opens applications from March 8 until April for grant awards in summer. The clearly defined timelines and programme decision-making steps **promotes operational efficiency**. The only programme intervention for which a clearly defined annual process is not established is the short courses in partner countries. The short courses are delivered by demand from GEST's partner organizations. These courses rely on the availability of local funding which is not predictable. Nevertheless, GEST's collaboration with interested partners follows a clearly defined process for the detailed scoping of courses, the development of course content, and the final delivery of short courses.

Programme financial management and oversight systems (including audit)

The **University of Iceland is a public education institution** and thereby must ensure it operates in conformity with the requirements of the **Public Finance Act** No. 123/2015 of Iceland. GEST's management of the programme, including its financial management and accountability, is in accordance with the requirements of the University's internal management processes and systems. The GEST programme is subject to the University's internal financial management control systems and audit. The programme is also subject to periodic external audit directed by the University and/or the GRÓ.

The **GRÓ Centre and the University signed a Service Agreement** outlining the provision of the GEST programme as an Icelandic training programme for development cooperation. The first Service Agreement was for four years from 2020-2023, and the second is for the two years 2024-2025.¹¹⁶ **GRÓ Centre's makes its financial contribution to the programme on an annual basis.** Negotiations between the GRÓ Centre and the University/GEST on the annual budget for the subsequent year traditionally start in the third quarter of the year. GRÓ Centre is formally responsible to start the process of negotiation, and a final budget decision is reached late in the year. Sometimes confirmation of the budget contribution is not released until the year of programme implementation. This creates uncertainties about funding for the subsequent year and thereby challenges for efficient financial and operational planning by the programme.

Specific agreements outline the **financial aspects of the programme's actions**, including: (a) agreements with the individual fellows selected for the training programme in Iceland, (b) agreements with scholars on doctoral degree studies, (c) agreements with partner organizations for the delivery of

¹¹⁶ Prior to 2020, the MFA had specific cooperation agreements, and annual budgets, with each of the four training programmes.

short courses, and (d) agreements with alumni granted funding for local development initiatives under the GEST Alumni Fund. These agreements establish clear process about the extent of and the specific provision of the GEST grant, as well as the obligations of the partners involved.

There is **no evidence**, to the knowledge of the evaluator, of **operational inefficiency** in the system in terms of financial management by the GEST programme or its oversight by the University or auditors.

Programme monitoring, reporting, oversight, and steering systems

The University, as Host Institution, is responsible to submit **quarterly financial information to the GRÓ Centre** on the programme. The University/GEST also provides an **annual progress report**. The GRÓ Centre convenes quarterly meetings with the Programme Directors of the four training programmes to address implementation issues and plan upcoming actions. Additionally, the programme responds to ad hoc requests for information from the GRÓ Centre. The GEST programme noted that, although the operational efficiency of their reporting system to the GRÓ Centre is generally good, it has encountered challenges at times due to the variability of the reporting formats.

The **GEST programme has a well-established internal monitoring system to support programme steering**. These systems include various methods for gathering feedback linked to the training provided. GEST requests its **fellows** to complete a survey for each training module of the programme covering both learning outcomes, the organization and delivery of the training. This feedback from fellows on the individual training modules strongly supports programme steering. Since 2019, the programme also holds end-of-programme focus group discussions (FGDs) with its fellows to gather feedback as to what has worked positively, operational aspects to be improved, and discuss the immediate goals for the fellows on their return to the home country. Since 2023, the programme also follows up with a final programme survey two to three months after returning. The programme follows up with individual fellows 12-16 months after returning, and in 2019 and in 2023 the programme conducted a questionnaire survey of all its alumni.

The **MOOCs** programme does have a system to obtain formal learner feedback at the completion of the course, but the extent of feedback received is minimal (1% or less). This is inherent across almost all MOOCs, possibly due to their open-access nature.

The partner organization delivering **short courses in partner countries** with the support of GEST conduct an end-of-training survey of the beneficiaries. The short course training reports provided to the evaluator (by the GEST programme) indicate that trainings conclude with an exchange of feedback on the course, for which a narrative text is provided to summarize the feedback and lessons learned. Unfortunately, standard statistical data on the trainees' assessed quality of the short courses is not reported for each of the short course events delivered.

Programme risk management and mitigation systems

The GEST program **carefully targets its interventions to minimize risks** and ensure the successful, effective, and efficient delivery of intended programme results. The selection process for fellows is rigorous, including the strengthened systems for definition of the final assignment research or project paper. GEST collaborates with a limited number of trusted partner organizations in partner countries, particularly for the short courses. Most programme interventions follow clearly defined process and timelines. The evaluator finds no evidence for operational inefficiency in the system in terms of GEST's risk management and mitigation systems.

The principal risk to the programme's implementation, effectiveness, and efficiency during 2018-2023, was the impact of the **COVID pandemic**. This caused disruption for the programme during 2020 and 2021. Nevertheless, the GEST programme demonstrated adaptive management in its response. The 2020 cohort of fellows began training in Iceland in January 2020 before being converted to online training and support systems in March 2020. It was feasible to conduct the end of the training programme delivery and the final graduation ceremony in-person. GEST also postponed the start of the 2021 training programme in Iceland to August. Yet, the fellows' feedback on the quality of the knowledge and learning outcomes obtained during the time indicates successful delivery of the programme despite the

pandemic's disruption. The programme also adapted its Teaching Gender to Youth short course for online provision in St. Lucia.

4.2. THE USE OF PROGRAMME FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES AND THE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF RESULTS (INCLUDING ANALYSIS OF UNIT COSTS AND VALUE FOR MONEY)

The evaluator judges that the **programme deploys financial and human resources efficiently and economically cost effective** in terms of the interventions and the results delivered. The varied daily cost per beneficiary across the interventions is due to the different intensity of the training and amount of direct support provided by GEST. The unit costs per intervention are value for money. The daily cost per beneficiary of the fellowship has increased by 11% from 2016 to 2023. This is significantly less than Iceland's rate of inflation over the same period.

During the period **2018-2023**, the actual **total cost expenditure incurred by the GEST programme** was **approximately ISK 975,000,000 (approximately EUR 6,500,000)**. The **MFA of Iceland**, since 2020 via the GRÓ Centre, has **contributed approximately 78%** of the programme costs incurred in 2018-2023. In addition to the direct financial support of the University of Iceland, the programme has also secured external co-financing to support its actions from the Erasmus+ programme for fellows and staff exchange and different UN partner organizations for the development and provision of the MOOCs, as well as other financing from Nordic and Icelandic partners. GEST short courses in partner countries receive co-funding from local training organizations and partners.

An overview of the **GEST programme annual budget expenditure and MFA contribution** is below.

Table 28: GEST programme budget 2018-2023, actual annual costs, and MFA contribution

BUDGET LINE	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
GEST actual costs (ISK)	144,009,726	133,428,951	185,357,768	171,969,362	158,774,411	179,748,815
-MFA/GRÓ actual (ISK)	109,600,000	117,249,999	137,993,563	123,600,000	129,500,000	143,734,579
-MFA (% of actual)	76%	88%	74%	72%	82%	80%

Data source: Financial data on annual actual costs provided by the GEST programme

Overall, the GEST programme **annual budget costs have increased by 24.8% from 2018 to 2023**. This is largely **consistent with the Icelandic rate of inflation over the period**.

The variability in the GEST programme annual budget costs is primarily a reflection of the extent to which GEST accesses external funding to conduct specific training, research, or advisory service projects. For instance, during 2020-2022, GEST utilized an Erasmus+ co-funding grant to develop two MOOCs. The increased programme costs in 2020, is also a reflection of costs incurred due to the COVID pandemic.

The **principal training outputs delivered** by the programme during the period **2018-2023** include:

- 133 fellows on the 5-months postgraduate training programme in Iceland with 132 graduating.
- Three scholars supported for doctoral degree research studies.
- 436 direct beneficiaries trained in short courses working at district-level in partner countries, trained via short courses.
- 16,238 learners enrolled on the GEST programme MOOCs offer.

Programme costs (including staff, administrative and overhead costs) **in 2023 per output** are listed below.

Table 29: GEST programme costs 2023 by main programme training interventions

INTERVENTION	ACTUAL COST (ISK)	OUTPUTS DELIVERED	COST ESTIMATE PER OUTPUT
Fellowship training in Iceland (5-months duration)	107,411,365	23 fellows trained/graduating 23 research or project papers completed	Approx. 4,670,060 ISK per fellow (approx. EUR 31,134) Approx. 32,207 ISK per fellow/day (approx. EUR 215)
Scholarships (PhD) (1-year study costs / 12-months duration)	13,667,485	2 scholars supported	Approx. 6,833,740 ISK per scholar (approx. EUR 45,558) Approx. 18,723 ISK per scholar/day (approx. EUR 125)
Short courses (5 days duration)	18,671,272	244 people trained	Approx. 76,522 ISK per person (approx. EUR 510) Approx. 15,304 ISK per person/day (approx. EUR 102)
MOOCs (annual operational costs)	1,000,000	3,074 learners enrolled	Approx. 325 ISK per person (approx. EUR 2)

Financial data on actual costs by interventions in 2023 provided by the GEST programme

The evaluator judges that **the unit costs per intervention represent value for money**. The variability in terms of the daily cost per beneficiary between the fellowship, scholarship, and short courses is a logical reflection of the different intensity of the training and the level of direct support provided by GEST across interventions. The **daily cost per beneficiary of the fellowship in 2023 has increased by 11% when compared to the costs from 2013-2016 data¹¹⁷, significantly less than the Icelandic rate of inflation** over the same period.

4.3. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PARTNERSHIP WITH UNESCO TO SUPPORT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

The evaluator judges that **GEST's partnership with UNESCO generally works well**. However, the partnership is **still in the earlier phase of development**. The COVID pandemic hindered the initial development of a partnership. GEST has collaborated with UNESCO country offices and national commissions and developed MOOCs with UNESCO headquarters. However, there is limited coordination of activities between the GEST and those of UNESCO under its programmes/priorities.

In the 2019 feasibility assessment the preliminary links between the Icelandic training programs and UNESCO's work were identified. After discussions between the partners the GRÓ Centre was established as a C2C under the auspices of UNESCO.

The UNESCO proposal to its Executive Board on the establishment of the GRÓ Centre as a C2C noted that the content of GEST closely linked to UNESCO's global priority on gender equality and the work of the Education Sector and the Social and Human Sciences Sector. The evaluator also highlights the programme's connection to UNESCO's cross-cutting focus on women, peace, and security, UNESCO's global priority on Africa, and the work of UNESCO's Division for Gender Equality.

Since establishing affiliation with UNESCO, GRÓ GEST has sought collaboration with UNESCO headquarters, programmes, country offices, and national commissions in partner states. **GEST has collaborated with UNESCO offices and partners in Kenya** and held **formal meetings with UNESCO representatives in Malawi, Uganda, Ghana, Palestine**, and UNESCO headquarters. The UNESCO country office and the national commission representatives expressed interest to assist the programme in identifying local partners and prospective junior professionals in gender equality as well as apply the

¹¹⁷ NIRAS, Evaluation of the UNU Programmes in Iceland, 2017.

expertise of local GEST alumni fellows in the future activities of UNESCO. GEST has also collaborated with UNESCO headquarters, the Division for Gender Equality, and the Social and Human Sciences Sector in GEST's initial development of the **MOOC on Men, Boys, and Masculinities**. In 2023, GRÓ and United Nations Volunteer Programme signed an agreement for funding **GRÓ GEST – UNESCO Gender Equality Specialist** with the **UNESCO Office in New Delhi, India**. This will be a 12-month position for a specialist to work on the inclusion of gender equality considerations into social inclusion and transformation policies across South Asian countries.

GEST's interaction with UNESCO generally works well. However, there is limited direct coordination of activities between those of GEST and those of UNESCO under its programmes and priorities.

5. PROSPECTS FOR THE MAINTENANCE AND CONTINUATION OF THE PROGRAMME BENEFITS (SUSTAINABILITY)

5.1. PROSPECTS FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROGRAMME RESULTS AND BENEFITS

The evaluator judges that the **prospects for the sustainability of the programme results and benefits delivered are good**. GEST alumni demonstrate a strong sense of ownership of the programme results and the benefits they obtained. They are adaptable to find alternative options available to support utilization of their skills in their home organization or at other organizations. The development of local action plans to advance gender equality issues at district and community level as part of the short training courses in partner countries are key products to ensure sustainability.

Prospects for the sustainability of the programme results and benefits delivered are good.

The **direct beneficiaries of the training benefitted immediate from the knowledge transmission and exchange on gender issues**. They have obtained new insights and understanding of the interplay between gender and other socio-economic issues and international and local development challenges. The **fellows** return to their home organization/institution with their final research paper/project prepared to share their new knowledge, as well as their research paper/project prepared as the final assignment of the programme with both their home organization and local networks of gender experts and practitioners, and development workers. The direct beneficiaries of the **short courses** return to their institution, primarily district-level public services, also prepared to share their new knowledge and practical tools. The development of local action plans to advance gender equality issues at district and community level in specific areas (such as agriculture, environment, and education) are key products to ensure sustainability.

Linked to the **fellows' home organization**, and their ownership of the benefits obtained by the fellows, 75% of GEST alumni (2018-2023 cohort) indicated that **the management of their organization appreciates and values the knowledge and skills the fellow gained** from the postgraduate training programme based on the evaluator's survey. A further 15% indicated they thought their organization was somewhat neutral on the subject. An astounding 84% of the GEST alumni have advanced their contribution in their technical field of work, mainly through mentoring of others (84%) and implementing projects related to gender equality (69%). Half (50%) of GEST alumni responding to the survey also indicated the importance of networking within their technical field as the key means to support the sharing and the application of their knowledge. Only 35% of respondents indicated strong support from their home organization to utilize and apply their knowledge by implementation of subsequent initiatives, while 17% of respondents indicated that they had insufficient support of their institution. GEST alumni indicated the principal challenges they face in utilizing and applying their knowledge are linked to insufficient resources of their institution (44%), reluctance to change in their institution or home country (28%), or unfavourable power dynamics in their institution (24%). Among the 2018-2023 GEST survey respondents, 53% of GEST alumni ultimately seek new jobs to utilize their skills due to these barriers.

GEST alumni demonstrate a strong sense of ownership of the programme results and the benefits they obtained. They often find alternative options available to support utilization of their skills. The GEST programme **alumni networking** and community building actions are also important means to empower alumni and sustain their sense of community as practitioners in promoting gender equality.

Approximately 70% of the 2018-2023 GEST alumni responding to the evaluator's survey indicated their participation in networking (formal and informal) since their graduation. Alumni responding to the survey indicated a key benefit of the networking is to connect with fellows for personal matters, to boost motivation to act in new initiatives and to identify new job opportunities.

The GEST programme's core **university and training organization partners** feel a high level of ownership of the benefits obtained in the development of local training content and short courses. The partners have incorporated the training content and courses into their training offer programme, and they can be further utilized (replicated or scaled up) by the organization as funding allows.

Finally, the **GEST programme** ensures sustainability of the programme benefits, in terms of the provision of a package of training interventions on issues of gender equality, by the continuation and further development of the GEST programme. GEST has a clear medium-term strategy for the further development of the programme offerings. This includes creating a holistic package of measures to maximize synergies, and a strategy for the further development of its alumni networking and empowerment support actions. Its strategic plan aims to complete the final MOOC in late 2025 and preparation and marketing of the full Online Programme in International Gender Studies by early 2026. The strategic action plan also foresees cooperation over the period with alumni, university, and training organization partners to develop local training course curriculum based on the online courses, suitably tailored to local need. These actions shall ensure the benefits of the MOOCs are delivered in various means including as stand-alone courses, a comprehensive Online Programme, and in courses in partner countries. The University of Iceland is responsible to ensure sustainable institutional capacity and viability of the programme. The MFA, via the GRÓ Centre, is the primary financial resource to ensure sustainability.

5.2. FACTORS SUPPORTING OR HINDERING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROGRAMME RESULTS AND BENEFITS

The evaluator highlights the following key factors supporting sustainability of the programme results:

- **GEST alumni have a strong sense of ownership of the benefits** from the programme and actively seek to share their knowledge and skills within their home countries and communities to promote change.
- GEST's core **partner organizations** engage with the programme with the goal to improve the quality of and range of their **local training offer**. All are committed to **further utilizing the courses**.
- GEST's **short courses provide valuable practical tools** and local development plans as key products.

The evaluator highlights the following key factors hindering sustainability of the programme results:

- The principal challenges GEST alumni face in utilizing and applying their knowledge are insufficient resources of their institution, reluctance to change in their institution or home country, or unfavourable power dynamics in their institution. A substantial minority of GEST alumni ultimately seek new jobs to utilize their knowledge and skills as future change agents due to these issues.

6. PROSPECTS FOR LONGER-TERM DEVELOPMENT EFFECTS (IMPACT)

6.1. THE DIRECT EFFECTS AND LONGER-TERM PROSPECTS FOR IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME ON THE MICRO-, MESO-, AND MACRO-LEVEL

The evaluator judges that the **prospects for longer-term development effects of the programme are good**. GEST alumni indicate that projects or reform initiatives have contributed to progress advancement on the SDGs. **Alumni indicate projects and initiatives linked to all SDGs, with 93% of the 2018-2023 GEST fellows indicating projects and initiatives specifically linked to advancing SDG 5 Gender Equality**. The GEST Alumni Fund mechanism empowers alumni as change agents and delivers real local impact.

Prospects for longer-term development effects of the programme are good. Prospects are strongest on the micro-level (including the individual beneficiary or community) and the meso-level (such as within a partner organizations), but also good on the macro-level (including national policy level or process).

77% of the 2018-2023 GEST alumni responding to the evaluator's survey reported conducting projects or initiatives to progress the SDGs. This directly aligns with the **GRÓ training programmes intended impact of facilitating fellows, trainees, and organizations to promote progress towards achieving the SDGs**. This includes local initiatives that alumni supported in addition to projects implemented with their organisations. The survey asked alumni that had implemented projects or initiatives to select maximum five SDGs related to the actions. The GEST alumni had collectively contributed to all SDGs, with 93% indicating that projects linked to progress on SDG 5 Gender Equality. **The top 5 SDGs that the alumni respondents indicate their contribution toward are as follows:**

Table 30: SDGs that the 2018-2023 GEST programme alumni have contributed to advance progress on

SDG 5	SDG 4	SDG 10	SDG 13	SDG 3
93%	43%	34%	25%	21%

GOPA external evaluation GRÓ alumni online questionnaire survey (2024)

Additional specific direct evidence of the immediate and longer-term prospects for development effects and impact of the programme comes from the GEST alumni initiatives supported by the **GEST Alumni March 8 Fund**. Supported projects are all relevant to advancing gender equality and promoting gender transformative approaches to achieve meaningful social and economic change in partner countries and communities. **Gender equality and development results achieved by the individual projects are strongly evident**. Two of the projects have contributed to advance women's economic empowerment and one has contributed to address issues of sexual and GBV through community-based responses and support networks. Projects directly supported 160 women entrepreneurs, as well as victims and survivors of GBV. Sensitization and promotion campaigns, projects have also collectively reached significant numbers of local community with gender-inclusive and gender equality advocacy. The development effects of the projects align with a range of SDGs, namely 5, 7 and 16, and specific targets.

An overview of the main GEST programme impacts on the micro-, meso- and macro-level is below.

On the **micro-level**, the **direct beneficiaries of the different GEST training interventions** have acquired knowledge and understanding on gender issues and the interplay of gender equality and development. This has the potential to inform their own decision-making and engagement on advancing gender equality at the household, community, national, or international level. **GEST's alumni** have undertaken **further local research initiatives** to advance the **production of new knowledge** on gender equality issues. The alumni have also implemented local projects or reform initiatives to advance progress on the SDGs, especially SDG 5 Gender Equality. These deliver development effects and socio-economic benefits at the community level in their home countries. For example, alumni have contributed to capacity building of district-level staff and local community organizations to mainstream gender equality assessment and gender responsive budgeting in their operations. **GEST alumni are empowered to act as change agents delivering real development effects**. Two **GEST Alumni Fund** projects specifically focused on women's economic empowerment have successfully promoted community acceptance of women pursuing entrepreneurial goals. They have also ensured that women and girls receive the necessary education and training to support these goals. The women entrepreneurs, who are the direct beneficiaries, serve as social role models for other women and girls. Additionally, the Solar Sister project has had a long-term impact by encouraging the use of clean energy sources, thereby reducing carbon emissions at both the household and community levels. This community adoption of clean energy options has resulted in the mitigation of several tons of CO₂.

On the **meso-level**, different actors such as home or partner organizations of the direct beneficiaries have utilized the benefits of the programme to guide their operations. As noted above, 77% of **GEST alumni** responding to the evaluator's survey indicated undertaking projects or initiatives within their country to achieve the SDGs. The organizations with which they work have incorporated the results of the project initiatives either through internal organizational reforms or the adoption of local development models and approaches, such as, the Association of Fishers and Lake Users in Uganda adopting a gender strategy. The home or partner organizations of the alumni have all incorporated the project results from **GEST Alumni Fund projects** as development models. Approximately twenty districts in Uganda and in Malawi have adopted and implemented local action plans to advance gender

equality within their specific local development actions and efforts using insights from the **short courses**. This has resulted, for instance, in several gender equality initiatives taken within supported primary schools and other development efforts to deliver socio-economic benefits at local community level. GEST programme's core **university and training organization partners** have incorporated GEST's training content and short courses into their training offer programme. They can be further utilized (replicated or scaled up) by the organization as future funding allows. GEST plans to cooperate further with partners in key countries to develop local training course curriculum and specific offerings based on the GEST MOOCs. These actions will ensure wider application of the GEST content in the delivery of local training actions in key partner countries and increase the number of people that benefit from training and knowledge on gender equality issues.

On the **macro-level**, 40% of GEST alumni responding to the evaluator's survey indicated their contribution to the development of policies at the national level through advising policy makers, drafting of policy papers and guidance notes. 13% contributed to changes at the international policy level, and 28% contributed to the development of policies at sub-regional (meso) level. One example of this is the development of a gender and equity handbook for the human capital development programme by an alumna for the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development in Uganda.

6.2. FACTORS SUPPORTING OR HINDERING PROGRESS IN LONGER-TERM ACHIEVEMENT OF DIRECT EFFECTS AND IMPACT

The evaluator highlights the following key factors supporting the impact of the programme results:

- **GEST alumni are empowered to act as change agents** delivering real, local development effects to advance gender equality. Most alumni have achieved significant professional career advancements in their field of work and are now leaders in promoting change. Through their local networking efforts, alumni have established connections within communities and at various levels of government (micro, meso, and macro) in their countries and strong relationships with donor partners.
- The **GEST short courses** in Malawi and in Uganda are **well established** and offered by reliable training partner organizations. As demanded by other districts, the training is easy to replicate across districts and there is **potential to extend** the range of partner countries targeted for GEST short courses.

The evaluator highlights the following key factors hindering the impact of the programme results:

- The main challenges to achieving development impact are political or civil instability in the countries and unfavourable political or power dynamics that hinder the mainstreaming of gender issues and the consideration of gender aspects in public policy formulation and implementation.
- The lack of available funding in partner countries to promote reform initiatives and development projects with a significant gender perspective is another challenge.
- Socio-cultural factors can hinder the initial acceptance of gender-inclusive approaches.

7. CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITIES OF ICELANDIC INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

7.1. CONTRIBUTION TO GENDER EQUALITY

Iceland's **gender equality strategy** for international development cooperation highlights **five focus areas for policy linked to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls**: (i) combatting GBV, (ii) health of women and girls, (iii) empowerment of women, (iv) education with an emphasis on girls, and (v) engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality.

GEST programme training/learning content addresses all of the gender equality strategy's focus areas.

The programme promotes understanding and knowledge exchange on the interplay of gender across development policy and the role of women in the promotion of sustainable and just development. The programme also ensures understanding of the **Women, Peace, and Security** agenda. The GEST programme was involved in supporting the work of UN Women in Mozambique in the area.

7.2. CONTRIBUTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS

Linked to the cross-cutting priority of **human rights**, the programme provides an understanding of gender equality issues and perspectives on gendered inequalities in society in its trainings. The training programme thereby contributes to the focus of Icelandic policy on the promotion and protection of the rights of the most marginalized and vulnerable populations and the focus on democracy building and governance through a strong civil society.

7.3. CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Linked to the cross-cutting priority of **climate and environment**, the training programme provides a strong focus on Gender and Climate Change aspects. This includes a specific module under the fellowship training in Iceland, one of the core GEST short courses, and a major component of the fifth GEST MOOC all devoted to the nexus of gender and climate change. The training programme thereby contributes to the focus of Icelandic policy on climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience measures, and the focus on sustainable use of natural resources.

7.4. MANAGING AND COUNTERING THE EFFECTS OF EXTERNAL SHOCKS AND RISKS TO THE PROGRAMME

The principal external shock to the programme's implementation during 2018-2023 was the **COVID pandemic** which caused significant disruptions for the programme during 2020 and 2021. Nevertheless, the GEST programme demonstrated adaptive management in its response and successfully delivered the fellowship programme in 2020 and in 2021, with fellows rating the learning outcomes positively. The delivery of short courses in Malawi on Gender and Climate Change were postponed from 2020 to 2021.

Another significant external shock was the change of regime in Afghanistan. GRÓ GEST had an active/valid institutional agreement through the ERASMUS+ scheme with the University of Kabul, and ten Afghan fellows had completed the postgraduate program since 2009. The Icelandic Government agreed to provide the GEST Afghan alumni protection in Iceland upon GEST's request, which three families accepted and thus relocated to Iceland in autumn 2021 thanks to relentless support from GEST staff in Iceland. An eleventh Afghan had been accepted by GEST to attend the postgraduate fellowship training in autumn 2021, prior to the change of regime. They chose to resettle in Europe instead of joining the programme. The GEST programme has responded to provide support to the Afghan fellows' individual situations and needs to the extent it could do so. GEST removed reference to them on its webpage to protect their identity.

CONCLUSIONS

The extent the training programme interventions have met their intended results

The evaluator assesses that **the GEST programme has successfully delivered the intended capacity development results**. During the period 2018-2023, the principal training outputs delivered by the programme include 132 fellows graduated from the 5-month fellowship programme in Iceland, three GEST alumni supported for doctoral degree research studies, 436 direct beneficiaries, working at district-level in partner countries, trained via short courses, and 16,238 learners enrolled on the GEST MOOCs offer.

GEST's core training intervention, **the fellowship programme in Iceland**, has graduated 132 fellows with a diploma degree from the University of Iceland between 2018 and 2023, averaging 22 graduates per year. These fellows came from 34 countries, with **81% originating from LDCs or LMICs**. The majority (53%) were from fourteen countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The two primary partner countries for the 2018-2023 GEST fellows were **Malawi** (11%) and **Uganda** (12%), both of which are key partners in Iceland's bilateral development cooperation policy. The 2018-2023 cohort included 102 females (77%) and 31 males (23%). **Overall, the quality of the training modules is highly rated by the fellows with 90% satisfied or highly satisfied** (rating the learning outcomes as 4/5 or 5/5) with the knowledge obtained and its value to them. Each graduating fellow completed a project/research paper, of which approximately 63% are academic research papers on issues of gender and 37% are development project initiative proposals for advancing gender equality in specific areas at the local level. The research

papers/projects form a basis for further immediate action and/or knowledge sharing exchange by the alumni on return to their home country.

In response to the external evaluation team's online questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, **84% of GEST's cohort of 2018-2023 fellows responding indicated that they were able to advance their contribution in their technical field of work** thanks to the postgraduate training programme. In addition, **74% of respondents indicated they had advanced professionally in their career** due to their enhanced skills, while **77% indicated they had contributed to achieving progress on the SDGs**.

Through the provision of **scholarships for doctoral degree research studies**, the programme has supported three doctoral scholars, one of whom received a partial grant to support fieldwork research. Two scholars are female (67%) and one male (33%), and all three are from LDCs of **Malawi, Uganda, and Ethiopia**, respectively. One scholar has graduated and the other two scholars are to defend their theses in 2025. The **effectiveness of the interventions is fully in-line with standard expectation of such scholarship grants**. Scholars' research has progressed and scholars have produced specific outputs in the form of research papers published in journals and presentations of their progress on research projects.

The programme delivered training through **short courses** to 436 local experts working in district-level public services (including primary schools) and civil society groups on specific gender issues. Ten of the twelve short courses during 2018-2023 were in either **Malawi or Uganda**. The short courses are evidently oriented to the practical application of new understanding and skills by the direct beneficiaries and providing access to practical tools to support the integration of gender considerations and responses into the planning and local delivery of public services and community engagement. Approximately **97% of the direct beneficiaries were either satisfied or highly satisfied** with the relevance and usefulness of the training.

The **MOOCs** have achieved **significant outreach**. MOOCs offer unlimited participation and open access to education for dispersed audiences worldwide over the internet, allowing learners to do the courses on their time. In 2023 more than 3,000 learners enrolled in the three MOOCs GEST offered at the time. Most learners are from partner countries on the DAC list of ODA recipients, and approximately 75% of the enrolled learners are female. The programme launched a fourth MOOC in early 2024 and plans to complete a fifth MOOC in 2025. **The percentage of learners on the MOOC verification/certification track passing the academically graded final exam (63.3%) is reasonable**. Reflecting that the final exam follows an academic grading policy, 63.3% is a low grade B pass rate.

For the **development of the capacity of local partner organizations** to design and implement capacity development training and knowledge transmission on gender equality, the GEST programme, through the University of Iceland, operates close partnership with Makerere University in **Uganda**. This covers academic cooperation and the development of tailored short courses. The programme collaborates on short courses with Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUNAR) in Malawi. The collaborations function well. During 2018-2023, GEST also had partnerships with fourteen universities under the Erasmus+ programme, co-financing 46 postgraduate students as GEST fellows with Erasmus+ as well as co-financed staff mobility for training exchange with twelve universities.

The GEST programme **alumni networking** and community building actions are also important means to empower alumni and sustain their sense of community as gender practitioners. Approximately 70% of GEST alumni responding to the evaluator's survey indicated their participation in formal and informal networking activities.

The primary successes of the training programme and the benefits generated

The **primary successes** of the GEST programme are the local development results generated by the success of the fellowship programme, the short courses, and the GEST Alumni March 8 Fund.

The **fellowship programme** is strongly in demand. GEST commonly receives at least 170 applications from the open call to participate in the annual postgraduate level training and research programme. The selection of fellows follows a rigorous application, review, and interview process. There is considerable attention to applicants' intended research paper and the commitment and support of their organization

to the research and its future dissemination. The fellows strongly rate the relevance and the quality of the learning outcomes obtained and have shown improved ratings since 2020, barring a blip in 2023. The overall level of fellows' rating of the 2024 programme learning outcomes was 97.0% satisfied or highly satisfied (rating as 4/5 or 5/5). Responses also show fellows return to their home countries empowered to act as change agents: feedback from the evaluator's survey indicates that 77% of GEST alumni respondents undertook projects or initiatives to progress the SDGs, of which 93% were actions contributing to SDG 5 Gender Equality.

The careful targeting of the **short courses in partner countries** to benefit district-level public service staff and community groups, including the provision of practical tools, has ensured that knowledge, skills, and gender action plans can be immediately applied by the beneficiaries at the local level. Approximately twenty districts in Uganda and in Malawi adopted and now implement local action plans to promote gender equality within their local development planning. This has resulted in several gender equality initiatives undertaken in areas such as agriculture, environment, and education.

Effectiveness of the **Alumni Fund** is strongly evident in its results achieved both in the professional empowerment of alumni as leaders of change and the results of the individual supported projects to advance gender equality and social justice to achieve real change in their local communities.

Furthermore, the **MOOCs** are highly relevant to enhance the programme offer and outreach. MOOCs generate a lot of value due to their modest operational costs. GEST has specifically sought to develop a comprehensive package of MOOCs, each of which is a substantive training and learning course. GEST will package the final set of five individual MOOCs into a collective Online Programme in International Gender Studies. This could be eligible for possibly becoming an **edX MicroMasters programme**, an online graduate level course offered by the University of Iceland/GEST. GEST has also sought to develop synergies from its MOOCs to its other intervention offers to enhance the overall coherence of the GEST programme offer, its outreach, and value-for-money.

Finally, the GEST programme strongly aligns with the priorities of Icelandic international development cooperation policy and goals, linked to gender equality, climate change and environment, human rights, and the focus on LDCs, LMICs, and Sub-Saharan Africa. The programme also strongly aligns with international policy frameworks/norms for gender equality, including on Women, Peace, and Security.

The primary constraints for results achievement by the training programme

The **primary constraints** for results achievement of the programme's capacity development efforts **are all external risks**, largely beyond the direct or even intermediate control of the programme.

GEST alumni respondents to the evaluation team's questionnaire survey indicate the principal challenges they face in utilizing and applying their knowledge are linked to **insufficient resources** of their institution, **reluctance to change** in their institution or home country, or **unfavourable power dynamics** in their institution. More broadly, principal challenges to achieving development impact relate to political or civil instability in the countries or unfavourable political or power dynamics to the mainstreaming of gender issues and consideration of gender aspects in the formulation and implementation of public policy.

The programme seeks to mitigate the risks with the precise targeting of its short courses and the rigorous review of applicants for the fellowship, including their prior detailed outline of the intended research paper and of their home organization's support for the research. However, the risks remain out of the influence of the programme. Nevertheless, the alumni remain empowered as change agents, and they adapt to find alternative options available to support utilization of their skills. A significant minority of GEST alumni ultimately seek new jobs to utilize their skills. This accounts for the overall success rate of GEST alumni involved in the implementation of local projects or reform initiatives.

The suitability of the programme management arrangements to efficiently and effectively generate the programme results

The management arrangements and overall approach in the programme design is generally appropriate. **In 2023, GEST had a core staff of six people** (five female, one male) to manage and implement the GEST. GRÓ Centre's contribution to the programme covered four Full-Time Equivalent staff positions.

The programme prepares detailed **annual action plans** outlining its proposed interventions in accordance with the goals set in its **medium-term strategic plan**. The majority of the different programme **interventions operate based on clearly defined process and timelines**. The clearly defined timelines and decision-making steps **promote operational efficiency**. The GEST programme's internal monitoring systems are well established and support programme steering. However, the evaluator notes that the **short course training reports** do not always provide specific statistical data on the beneficiaries' feedback as to the relevance and helpfulness of the training to their job.

GRÓ Centre's contribution to the programme is on an annual basis. Negotiations between the GRÓ Centre and the University/GEST on the annual budget for the subsequent year traditionally start in the third quarter of the year. The GRÓ Centre traditionally confirms final decision on the contribution late in the year, although on occasion confirmation it is confirmed in the annual year for implementation. The GEST programme noted that the operational efficiency of the reporting system to the GRÓ Centre, while broadly good, has been challenging at times due to the variability of the reporting formats provided by the GRÓ Centre.

The **MFA of Iceland**, since 2020 via GRÓ Centre, **contributed approximately 78% of the programme costs incurred 2018-2023**. In addition to the direct financing of the University of Iceland, the GEST programme has secured external co-financing via the Erasmus+ programme and from Icelandic partners.

The evaluator judges that **the unit costs per intervention represent value for money**. The variability in terms of the daily cost per beneficiary between the fellowship, scholarship, and short courses is a logical reflection of the different intensity of the training and the amount of the direct support provided by GEST. **The daily cost per beneficiary of the fellowship in 2023 has increased by 10.5% since 2013-2016. This is significantly less than Iceland's rate of inflation over the period (25.2%).**

Overall evaluation conclusion on the performance of the GEST programme

The evaluator judges that **the overall performance of the GEST programme is satisfactory** (good).

EVALUATION CRITERION	PERFORMANCE RATING
Relevance	Satisfactory
Coherence	Satisfactory
Effectiveness	Satisfactory
Efficiency	Satisfactory
Sustainability	Satisfactory
Impact	Satisfactory

LESSONS LEARNED

Based on the evaluation findings, the evaluator highlights the following key lessons learned as to the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, its management, implementation, and delivery of results.

Table 31: GEST programme - lessons learned

CRITERION	LESSONS LEARNED
Relevance, Coherence	The GEST programme is clearly aligned with and relevant to partner countries' and target groups' needs and priorities . The level of demand for the 5-months fellowship programme is strong (commonly well in excess of 170 applicants annually), clearly demonstrating it aligns with needs and priorities. The GEST programme complements the wider development efforts of the programme's key partner organizations in partner countries . The majority of these are local universities or training organizations providing training and knowledge exchange on gender equality issues.

CRITERION	LESSONS LEARNED
Relevance, Effectiveness	<p>The GEST programme offer is closely aligned with and clearly relevant to the priorities of Icelandic development cooperation policy. The programme has a strong focus on supporting beneficiary partners and individuals in low or middle-income countries particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, aligning with priority focus issues for Icelandic international development policy.</p> <p>The GEST programme closely aligns with and is relevant to promoting an understanding of the international development policy frameworks, goals, and strategies for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, such as on Women, Peace, and Security.</p>
Effectiveness	<p>The GEST programme is well designed and targeted to deliver its intended benefits to the direct beneficiaries of the programme. The programme offers a coherent mix of training interventions, targeting young professionals with tailored training offer of different levels of intensity. There is good level of synergy and focus across the training offer mix.</p> <p>The programme is highly effective in achieving training provision outreach, with approximately 16,800 individuals (learners) directly reached through its training offer during the period 2018-2023.</p>
Effectiveness, Sustainability, Impact	<p>The careful targeting of the short courses in partner countries to benefit district-level public service staff and community groups, including via the provision of practical tools, has ensured that the knowledge, skills, and gender action plans can be immediately applied at the local level. The quality of the short training courses is highly rated by trainees with 97% satisfied or highly satisfied with courses being relevant and helpful for the trainees and in their job.</p>
Effectiveness, Impact	<p>The MOOCs are substantive as a training/learning resource. They provide learners a detailed theoretical overview, analytical skills, tools, and practical case examples in the subject area. They are not short, summary overviews of issues completed in one-day. After completing the fifth MOOC in 2025, GEST intends to package the MOOCs into a full Online Programme in International Gender Studies to launch in 2026. This will significantly enhance the GEST offer and its potential to reach gender equality practitioners and professionals that seek to access a detailed learning course dedicated to gender equality. The potential for the programme to be an edX MicroMasters will further enhance the effectiveness of the MOOCs as a learning package and the incentive for learners of to formally enrol in the verification track.</p>
Effectiveness, Impact	<p>The GEST Alumni Fund is a very effective modality to support the professional empowerment of its alumni as leaders of change. The individual supported projects have each delivered results to advance gender equality and social justice and achieved change in their local communities.</p>
Effectiveness, Impact	<p>The GEST programme only rarely supports alumni to participate in international conferences. This would be an effective means to empower alumni as emerging leaders, as funding streams allow. The annual meeting of partners at UN CSW in New York is a key forum on gender issues that presents apt opportunity for GEST.</p>
Efficiency	<p>While generally appropriate, the programme management arrangements need strengthening to consistently obtain and report trainees' feedback on the quality of short courses.</p>
Efficiency	<p>Operational efficiency of the reporting system to GRÓ Centre, while broadly good, has been challenging at times due to the variability of the reporting formats provided by the GRÓ Centre.</p>
Efficiency	<p>The unit costs per intervention represent value for money. The cost per beneficiary of the fellowship has increased since 2016, but it was significantly less than Iceland's rate of inflation.</p>

CRITERION	LESSONS LEARNED
Efficiency, Effectiveness	The partnership with UNESCO is still in the earlier phases of development. GEST has collaborated with UNESCO country offices and national commissions (e.g. Kenya). However, there is limited coordination of activities between the partners under UNESCO's programmes and priorities.
Sustainability, Impact	GEST alumni have a strong sense of ownership of the benefits they obtained, and actively seek to promote change by sharing their knowledge and skills within their home countries and communities. GEST alumni are empowered to act as change agents delivering real, local development effects to advance gender equality. The majority of alumni have achieved significant professional career advancement in their field of work and now lead on promoting change.
Sustainability, Impact	The principal challenges GEST alumni face in utilizing and applying their knowledge are insufficient resources of their institution, reluctance to change in their institution or home country, or unfavourable political or power dynamics. Due to this, a significant minority of alumni ultimately seek new jobs to utilize their knowledge and skills as future change agents.

GEST PROGRAMME – SWOT ANALYSIS

Table 32: GEST programme – SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GEST offers a coherent mix of training interventions of different levels of intensity, with a good level of synergy and focus across the training offer mix • The high quality of the fellowship programme and the learning results achieved is confirmed by the strong level of positive feedback from the fellows • Demand to attend the fellowship is very strong • Short courses in partner countries provide essential practical tools to ensure that knowledge and skills can be applied at the district and community level • The GEST Alumni Fund is an innovative modality to empower alumni as change agents in their country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GEST programme has not provided support to its alumni to attend leading international conferences (less than five in total), such as the UN CSW • Standard statistical data on the feedback from the beneficiaries of the short courses is not collected • The programme falls marginally short of the GRÓ Centre target of 25 fellows enrolled annually
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative outputs can be increased through expansion of the delivery of short courses • Short courses with trusted organizations in partner countries Malawi and Uganda can be scaled-up • Short courses can be replicated in other focus partner countries for the programme • Alumni empowerment via networking can be boosted by GEST's provision of support for alumni to attend the annual meeting of the UN CSW • Online Programme in International Gender Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of a clear financial perspective to support planning medium-term collaboration with partner organizations in focus partner countries

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evaluation findings, the following programme level recommendations are made:

1. Further effort is needed by the GEST programme in order for it to consistently meet the GRÓ Centre target of 25 fellows annually enrolled on the programme in Iceland. The demand for the fellowship programme is very strong, and the programme has the capacity to train minimally 25 per year. While recognizing that 25 fellows annually is considered an ideal number in terms of programme manageability, learning outcomes, and pastoral care, this is an indicative number. The evaluator assesses that the GEST programme has the capacity to train slightly more than 25 fellows annually.
2. GEST programme fellows have produced a sizeable body of diverse new knowledge products via their final assignment production of a research or project paper. The vast majority of these are available on the GEST programme website. They represent a valuable source for the purpose of knowledge sharing and learning. Currently these are accessible via the GEST programme website on the basis of the country of focus of the research or project paper. It is not possible to search the collection of papers on the basis of their theme(s), which limits the potential for researchers to utilize the knowledge products for comparative research across a range of countries. It is recommended that GEST programme consider the introduction also of a thematic search function.
3. To date, the GEST programme has not provided meaningful support to its alumni to attend international conferences. This is primarily due to limited financing for such actions. In this, the GEST programme stands out in comparison to the other GRÓ programmes (237 of their alumni attended leading international conferences in their field during the period 2018-2023). The most significant international conference for the GEST programme is the annual meeting of global partners, including civil society, at the UN CSW. It is recommended that the GEST programme provide support to its alumni to attend the event. This would significantly complement the valuable support to alumni empowerment provided via the GEST Alumni Fund. As practical, a fixed number of alumni that are supported annually should be agreed with GRÓ Centre, rather than constantly fluctuating.
4. The GEST programme also has a significant under-representation compared to other programmes in terms of the number of grants for postgraduate scholarships. This is not due to a lack of demand, but the lack of available funding. Expanding the number of scholars should be a priority.
5. GEST programme systems for gathering feedback from the direct beneficiaries of the fellowship are commendably strong. The system for gathering standard statistical data from direct beneficiaries of short courses in partner countries is not yet as commendably strong. While the reports prepared linked to the delivery of the short courses provide feedback from the beneficiaries on the course, this is sometimes in narrative format as to lessons learned, rather than standard statistical data also.
6. The short courses delivered in partner countries have proven very successful. It is recommended that GEST programme seek to scale-up its two core short courses in the key partner countries for its short course offer, namely Malawi and Uganda. Both are partner countries for Icelandic bilateral development cooperation support. The country strategy papers of the MFA for both countries have medium-term indicative financial frameworks. Thereby, it may be possible to develop a medium-term plan for roll out of courses delivered across a different range of districts within the countries. The ultimate goal is for the partner organizations to take over full leadership for course delivery.
7. Beyond delivering short courses in Malawi and Uganda, it is recommended that the GEST programme replicate the courses in other key focus partner countries. This is dependent on the demand of partner organizations, and the development of a solid partnership for collaboration. The programme has started the process to identify potential partners, and is encouraged to continue.

POTENTIAL OPTIONS TO GUIDE FUTURE ENDEAVOURS OF THE PROGRAMME

Specifically in Malawi and Uganda, for short course delivery, the GEST programme should develop an initial exit strategy in collaboration with partner organizations, including the Embassy of Iceland in the countries. The relevance and high quality of the short courses for the direct beneficiaries in the two countries is already strongly evident. The GEST programme's level of support to further scale-up the

courses in-country should naturally decrease over the medium-term, as local partner organizations enhance their capacity. In addition, partner organizations are able to access longer-term financiers to undertake country specific training initiatives, as compared to the GEST programme's annual budget. The Embassy of Iceland, and MFA, as long-term bilateral partner for the countries, is a reliable partner.

There is clear potential to replicate the GEST programme short courses in other focus partner countries. While this is demand driven, it is clear that the delivery of short courses in partner countries should be undertaken over several years, as a viable way to concentrate the focus of effort, and ensure that a critical mass of capacitated individuals is trained. The selection of potential countries should be undertaken with consideration as to how such short courses can complement the focus of the GEST fellowship alumni.

There is clear potential to further strengthen GEST programme collaboration with Makerere University, in Uganda, linked to the development of high quality course content and modules. Makerere University offers a range of courses and modules, and a range of gender-oriented related university programmes. It is also active in utilizing online learning/educational tools such as MOOCs within its educational approach. There is good potential for the development of specific further course content, utilizing GEST expertise and course content, suitably tailored to local needs. Such collaboration would complement the activities of the LRT programme in its partnership endeavours with Makerere University.

GEST programme has a clear and logical plan for wider utilization of its MOOC offer, including to build learning synergies with its other programme interventions. The development of a full Online Programme in International Gender Studies, indicatively requiring 6-9 months duration for online learning, which could be offered as an edX MicroMasters, is a key step to strengthen the quality assurance of the MOOC offer, and also to increase the number of learners enrolling for the verification of their learning outcomes.

OVERVIEW OF THE GEST PROGRAMME FELLOWS 2018-2023

Figure 49: Overview of GEST Fellows on 6-months training in Iceland by gender

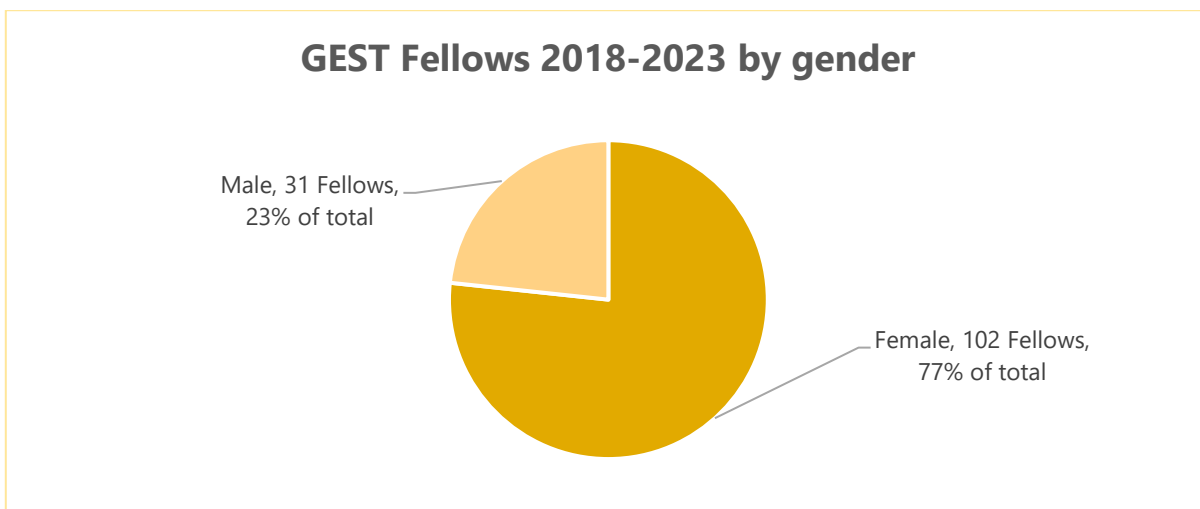


Figure 50: Overview of GEST Fellows on 6-months training in Iceland by geographic region of origin

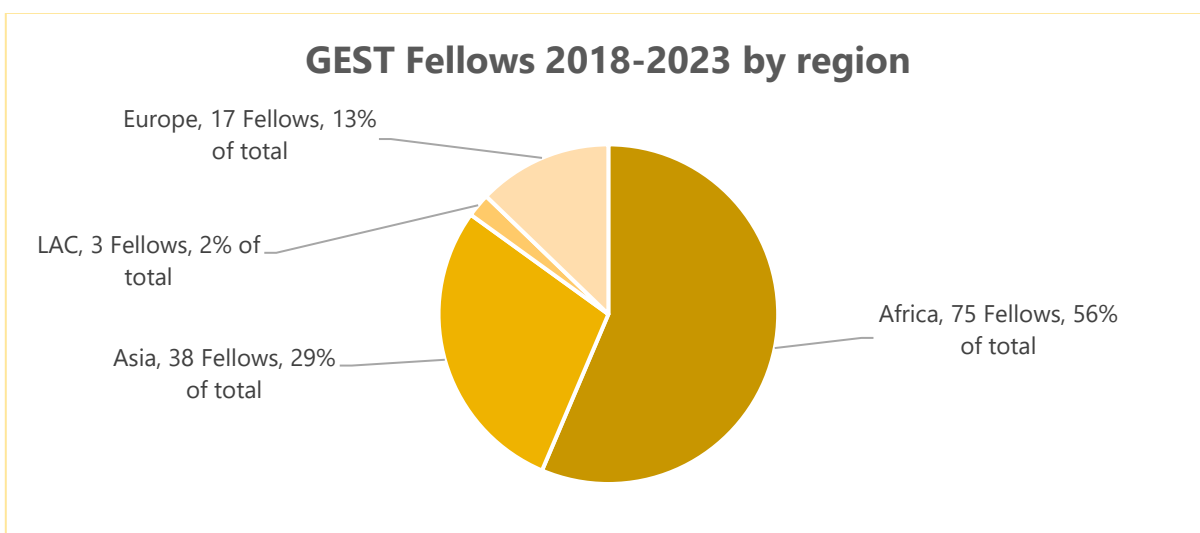
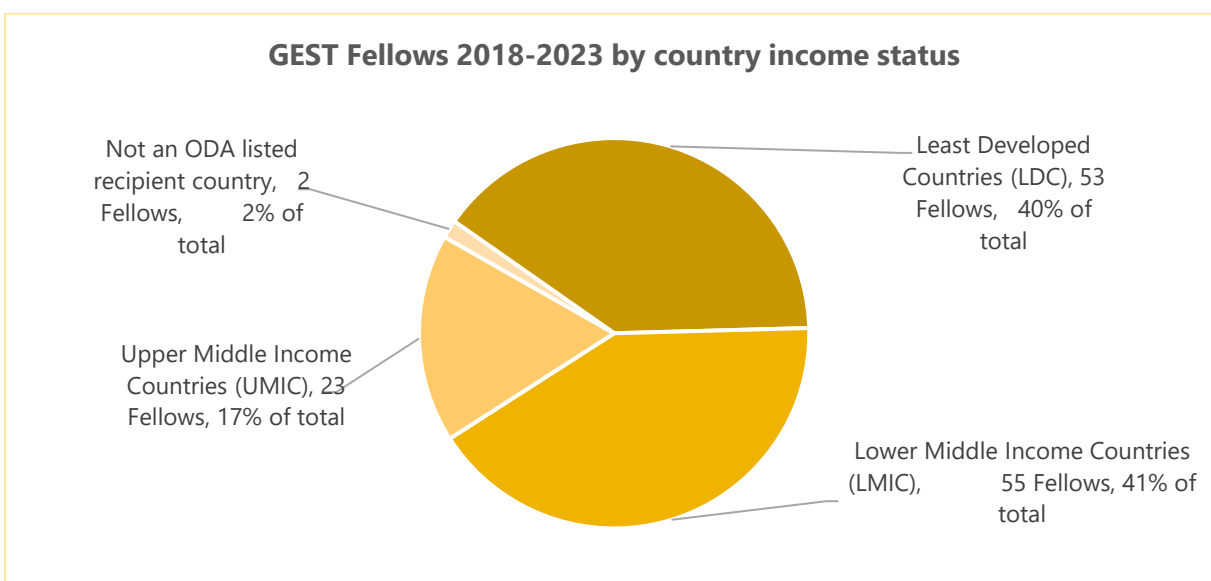


Figure 51: Overview of GEST Fellows on 6-months training in Iceland by income status of home country



GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMME RESULTS DELIVERY & ACHIEVEMENT – GRÓ GEST

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
Outcome: GRÓ fellows, trainees and respective organisations promote and implement changes needed to achieve SDGs relevant to their field of work									
P1. Management in partner organisations assess the training to be valuable for the organisation	% of alumni survey respondents who agree (4 out of 5 on the scale) or strongly agree (5 out of 5 on the scale) that their organisation's management values and appreciates their skills from the postgraduate training (3 years after graduation)	87.5%	64.3%	73.3%	N/A	75.0%	91.7%*	80.0%*	75.0% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)
P2. Graduates have used the training to advance their contribution in their field/sector of work	% of alumni survey respondents (fellows) who agree (4 out of 5 on the scale) or strongly agree (5 out of 5 on the scale) that they advanced their contribution in their field/sector due to the postgraduate programme (3 years after graduation)	100%	85.7%	80.0%	N/A	93.8%	91.7%*	80.0%*	87.5% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)
P3. Graduates have used their training to share with colleagues and other experts in their respective field of expertise	% of alumni survey respondents (fellows) who report sharing their training knowledge with supervisors, colleagues and/or expert networks (3 years after graduation)	87.5%	73.3%	68.8%	N/A	83.3%	60.0%*	73.7%*	72.7% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
P4. Graduates have advanced professionally (e.g. promotion or received scholarship for further studies)	% of alumni survey respondents (fellows) who report substantial (4 out of 5 on the scale) or extreme (5 out of 5 on the scale) career advancement due to the training (3 years after graduation)	87.5%	64.3%	73.3%	N/A	81.3%	83.3%*	73.3%*	73.9% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)
*The GRÓ Results Framework suggest measuring outcome level results 3 years after programme graduation. Therefore, the indicator value for the graduation year 2022 and 2023 should be interpreted with caution. Generally, the survey findings suggest that it might take some time for outcome level results to materialise after programme completion. Therefore, the measurement 3 years after programme completion seems reasonable.									
Output N°1: Increased capability of individuals and expertise of GRÓ partner organisations to design and implement programme activities in respective professional fields									
P1. Number of experts trained in the GRÓ 5-6-month training programmes	Annual # of fellows	18	24	23	20	20	23	23	151
	Gender ratio M/F (%)	12 F (67%)	19 F (79%)	16 F (70%)	14 F (70%)	19 F (95%)	18 F (78%)	16 F (70%)	114 F (75%)
	Country Income level LDC and LMI (%)	6 M (33%) 50% LDC 33% LMIC	5 M (21%) 50% LDC 25% LMIC	7 M (30%) 43% LDC 43% LMIC	6 M (30%) 55% LDC 35% LMIC	1 M (5%) 30% LDC 40% LMIC	5 M (22%) 13% LDC 61% LMIC	7 M (30%) 48% LDC 43% LMIC	37 M (25%) 62 LDC (41%) 61 LMIC (40%)
P2. Quality of the 5-6 month training (average response to questions per module, e.g., on increased understanding, increased interest, applicability of the learning obtained)	Self-assessment survey of fellows at the start and end of training on knowledge, skills and mindset (on a scale from 1 low – 5 high)	74% = 5/5	66% = 5/5		42% = 5/5	62% = 5/5	49% = 5/5	47% = 5/5	
		18% = 4/5	19% = 4/5	59% = 5/5	51% = 4/5	35% = 4/5	50% = 4/5	37% = 4/5	57% = 5/5
		4/5	4/5	22% = 4/5	8% = 3/5	4/5	4/5	4/5	33% = 4/5
		5% = 3/5	10% = 3/5	8% = 2/5	8% = 2/5	2% = 3/5	1% = 3/5	11% = 3/5	6% = 3/5
		2% = 2/5	3% = 2/5	8% = 2/5	5% = 3/5	2% = 3/5	1% = 3/5	3% = 2/5	3% = 2/5
1% = 1/5	3% = 1/5	2% = 1/5	1% = 2/5	2% = 2/5	0% = 2/5	0% = 2/5	1% = 1/5	1% = 1/5	
		1% = 1/5	3% = 1/5	0% = 1/5	0% = 1/5	0% = 1/5	2% = 1/5		

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
P3. Number of graduates eligible for 30 ECTS credits/ Diploma degree at completion of 5-6 month training (ratio from enrolled fellows). Only applicable GEST & LRT fellows	Annual # of diploma certificates issued	18	23	23	20	20	23	23	150
	Graduation ratio (% of total cohort of fellows eligible)	100%	96%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	99%
P4. Number of short courses (5-7 days) in partner countries	Annual # of weeks of on-site training			3 weeks		1 week		7 weeks	
	# of participants in short courses Gender ratio M/F (%)	0	0	115 people 36 F (31%), 79 M (69%)	0	27 people 8 F (30%), 19 M (70%)	0	244 people 98 F (40%), 146 M (60%)	11 weeks 386 people 142 F (37%) 244 M (63%)
P5. Quality of short course training	% of participants assess the course to be useful for enhancing skills & knowledge (relevant and helpful for my job) (on scale from 1 – 5)	No courses	No courses	64% = 5/5 36% = 4/5	No courses	75% = 5/5 16% = 4/5 9% = 3/5	No courses	75% = 5/5 20% = 4/5 5% = 3/5	72% = 5/5 25% = 4/5 4% = 3/5
P6. Number of live streaming training courses	Annual # of participants	0	0	0	0	1 course 50 people	0	0	1 course 50 people
P7. Quality live streaming training courses	% of participants assess the course to be useful for enhancing skills & knowledge (relevant and helpful for my job) (on scale from 1 – 5)	No courses	No courses	No courses	No courses	73% = 5/5 24% = 4/5 3% = 3/5	No courses	No courses	73% = 5/5 24% = 4/5 3% = 3/5

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
P8. Number of online courses and number of participants in the online courses	Annual # # of participants newly enrolled	0	0	0	1 MOOC 6,942 learners	1 MOOC 1,955 learners	2 MOOCs 4,267 learners	3 MOOCs 3,074 learners	3 MOOCs 16,238 learners
P9. Quality of online training	Annual # enrolled on verification track % verified/certified as passing	No courses	No courses	No courses	No data	No data	No data	No data	1,088 enrolled for verification 63% passed
P10. Number of GRÓ graduate studies scholarships provided annually	Annual # Master's and PhD (by gender) Gender ratio M/F (%)	0	1 PhD (not in Iceland) (partial grant) 1 Female	1 PhD (not in Iceland) (partial grant) 1 Female	1 PhD (not in Iceland) (partial grant) 1 Female	2 PhD (at UI, Iceland, Year 1) 1 F, 1 M	2 PhD (at UI, Iceland, Year 2) 1 F, 1 M	2 PhD (at UI, Iceland, Year 3) 1 F, 1 M	3 PhD 2 Female, 1 Male 100% LDC
Output N°2: Production and dissemination of new knowledge by GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipient									
P1. Number of research outputs (research project reports) annually by GRÓ fellows	Annual # of research project papers confirmed on GRÓ website	18	23	23	20	20	23	23	150 fellows completed a paper, which were published on GEST website (150/151 = 99% of fellows)
P2. Number of master's thesis published annually by GRÓ scholarship recipients (research output)	Annual # of published master's thesis at universities' websites	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
P3. Number of PhD papers published annually by GRÓ scholarship recipients (research outputs)	Annual # of publications in research journals	1 published	1 published	0	1 published	0	1 published 1 submitted to journal	1 submitted to journal	4 published 2 submitted to journals
Output N°3: Professional empowerment of GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipients is increased through GRÓ community building and networking									
P1. Number of alumni events organised by GRÓ annually	Annual #	2 -2 country meetings	1 -1 country meeting	6 -4 country meetings -10 th Anniversary Event -Alumni Survey	2 -Online Alumni Seminar -Alumni Fund award	0	5 -4 country meetings -Alumni Fund award	5 -2 country meetings -Online Alumni Seminar -Alumni Fund award -Alumni Survey	21 events -13 country meetings -2 Online Alumni Seminars -3 Alumni Fund awards -2 Alumni Surveys -1 Anniversary Event
P2. Number of GRÓ funded alumni participating in regional and international conferences	Annual #	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	4 alumni
P3. % of GRÓ short courses involving alumni in teaching/ organisation of short courses	Annual # (% of GRÓ short courses)	No courses delivered	No courses delivered	0% (0 of 3 events)	No courses delivered	50% (1 of 2 events)	No courses delivered	86% (6 of 7 events)	58% (7 of 12 events)

ANNEX 11.3 PROGRAMME EVALUATION REPORT - GRÓ GTP

Training programme description and background context
Evaluation findings
Conclusions
Lessons learned
Recommendations
Swot analysis
Potential options to guide future endeavours of the programme

TRAINING PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND CONTEXT

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION, INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND APPROACH (OVERVIEW)

Geothermal resources are distributed unevenly worldwide, and many low- and middle-income countries possess significant untapped geothermal potential. The most valuable resources are easily accessible with high temperatures and low levels of dissolved gases and chemicals. High-temperature geothermal fluids are primarily found near tectonic plate boundaries and local hot spots with substantial volcanic and seismic activity, such as 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 are also present in other environments like deep sedimentary basins.¹

Harnessing geothermal energy requires collaboration of different expertise. For instance, geoscientists explore and identify potential resources, drilling engineers design and drill wells to extract the fluids, reservoir engineers evaluate and manage the resource, and other engineers design and construct power plants, heating systems, and necessary infrastructure. Additionally, environmental scientists assess the environmental impacts of geothermal utilization, and project managers coordinate all these efforts. The GTP is a postgraduate training programme founded with the purpose of developing the necessary expertise to utilize geothermal resources in partner countries. As stated on the GRÓ website, GTP **aims at assisting lower to middle-income countries (LMIC) in capacity strengthening for geothermal exploration and development.**

For the last century, Iceland has increasingly used geothermal resources for various purposes including space heating, electricity generation, horticulture, aquaculture, industrial processes, snow melting, among other uses. In 2020, geothermal energy heated 90% of the homes, and geothermal power plants had an installed capacity of 755 MWe generating over 30% of the country's electricity. **This extensive use of geothermal energy has consequently contributed to the establishment of a large workforce in the geothermal sector. Consequently, Iceland is well-equipped to contribute to global geothermal development².**

The GTP was founded in 1978 and began operating in 1979 with only two fellows receiving comprehensive training for close to six months. Since then, this six-month training has been the core activity of the programme and has operated on a yearly basis, except 2020 when it had to be postponed due to the COVID pandemic. From its establishment until 2023, 790 fellows have graduated from the programme. In the first three decades since the GTP was established the programme has continuously grown to accept more trainees and learning through more activities. Some new formats such as hybrid online courses were developed during the COVID-19 period (and replicated during following years), but overall, **the activities remained relatively unchanged.** The main change that occurred in the 6-month training programme was that during the 2010-2016 period the number of training participants per year

¹ Source: International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change, Theory of Change 2022-2027.

² Source: Axelsson et al (2023) GRÓ Geothermal Training in Iceland: Geothermal Capacity Building in Developing Countries for 45 years. Proceeding of the World Geothermal Congress 2023.

was much higher, ranging between 28 and 34. Afterward, it was stabilized around 23-25 participants per year.

In 1999, GTP began supporting exceptional fellows of the 6-month training programme for further studies at the University of Iceland. Initially, the support was for MSc studies and adding PhD studies in 2008. In 2013 the GTP made a similar agreement with Reykjavik University. Since the GTP started supporting MSc and PhD students, 81 students have completed MSc degrees and 5 individuals have earned their PhD with GTP's support. Since 2005, short courses and workshops have been offered outside of Iceland on a regular basis in Kenya and El Salvador as well as other places based on particular needs. Recently, short courses have also been available online since the COVID-19 outbreak. As a result, more than 3,000 participants have benefitted from participating in 81 events. The last main component of GTP's training offer is the organization of regional 5-month training programmes.³ They have been held in Kenya, China, and most substantially in El Salvador, for which an evaluative case study was developed (see Annex 12). GTP is also planning the organization of a regional and longer training in Kenya.

In summary, the main GTP activities are as follows:³

1. **Six-month training programme in Iceland** for approximately 24-25 fellows per year.
2. **Funding scholarships for MSc and PhD students** at the University of Iceland or Reykjavik University.
3. Organization of short courses abroad.
4. Supporting **the 5-month Geothermal Diploma Course** for Latin America in El Salvador.
5. **Other non-GRÓ funded training activities**, including customer designed courses and individual training.

As set in the 2022-2027 GRÓ Theory of Change (ToC), **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 LMICs through training and research in different aspects of geothermal development.**

The GTP works with selected low- and medium-income countries with proven and likely geothermal potential as well as intentions or policies to develop the resources. **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.** Crucial current partners in low- and medium-income countries are LaGeo, a geothermal company in El Salvador; the Kenya Electricity Generating Company, KenGen; and the Geothermal Development Company (GDC) in Kenya.

While the target group is quite varied, it mainly includes early and mid-career professionals of public institutions and companies working in the geothermal sector.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

1. PROGRAMME GOALS, STRATEGY AND APPROACH (RELEVANCE)

1.1. ALIGNMENT OF THE PROGRAMME WITH ICELAND'S INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION POLICIES AND ICELAND'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT VISION AND STRATEGIES

The evaluator judges that GTP's offer is closely aligned with and clearly relevant to the priorities of Icelandic development cooperation policy. There is a strong focus of GTP on supporting beneficiary partners and individuals in LMICs. **The use of geothermal energy and other renewable energy sources to pursue SDG 7 is an objective prioritized across Iceland's development cooperation efforts.**

³ Source: Axelsson et al (2023) GRÓ Geothermal Training in Iceland: Geothermal Capacity Building in Developing Countries for 45 years. *Proceeding of the World Geothermal Congress 2023.*

As stated in the Icelandic parliamentary resolution on Iceland's Policy for International Development Cooperation 2019-2023, Iceland's development cooperation shall focus on areas where **Iceland's expertise can be applied in the fight against poverty and in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. The overall goal of Iceland's development cooperation is to reduce poverty and hunger, and to promote general well-being based on human rights, gender equality, and sustainable development. The policy also sets two secondary goals: **the protection of the environment and the sustainable use of natural resources**.

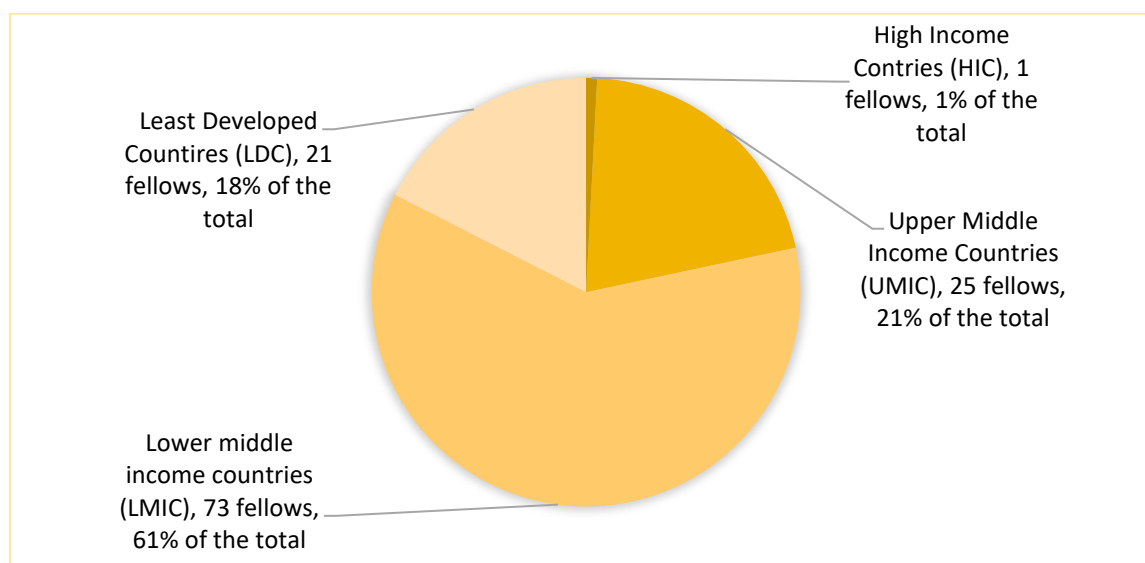
The protection of the environment and the sustainable use of natural resources involve increasing the resilience of societies and enhancing economic growth based on equal and sustainable resource use as well as taking measures against climate change. As specified in the parliamentary resolution, this includes increasing the use of geothermal energy and other renewable energy sources to pursue SDG 7.⁴

The mission of GTP to facilitate access to and promote the sustainable utilization of geothermal resources is fully in line with the parliamentary resolution on Iceland's Policy for International Development Cooperation 2019-2023. Iceland has extensive and well-known experience in the field of geothermal energy. Therefore, utilizing Iceland's expertise in geothermal energy aligns well with the specifications of the parliamentary resolution, which advocates for applying Iceland's expertise to undertake both domestic and international projects.

Overview of the GTP training delivered for benefit of partner countries, 2018-2023

During 2018-2023, GTP supported **120 fellows** in the **postgraduate level training programme in Iceland**, with 78% of the fellows coming from least developed countries (LDCs) or LMICs. This is entirely consistent with the goals of Icelandic development cooperation policy and its stated focus of **directing Icelandic support towards LDCs and LMICs**.

Figure 52: Overview of the GTP fellows in 6-months training in Iceland by income status of home country



Data source: statistics provided by GRÓ GTP

Since the establishment of GTP, fellows from 67 countries were trained. The GTP fellows from 2018-2023 came from 28 countries. 49 of the fellows (41%) came from seven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is a priority region for Icelandic development cooperation policy. The main partner country for GTP fellows from 2018-2023 is Kenya (23%). Other Sub-Saharan African countries from which the fellows came include Ethiopia, Tanzania, Djibouti, Nigeria, Zambia, and Uganda. Uganda is also a priority country for Iceland. 36 of the fellows (30%) came from Asia: 16 (13%) from Indonesia and the rest from China,

⁴ Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Thirty-three (28%) came from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The main country in this region is El Salvador, from where seven fellows came (6%). The rest are from Bolivia, Colombia, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Montserrat, Nicaragua, Peru, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines. One fellow came from Algeria in North Africa (1%) and one from the Solomon Islands in Oceania (1%). **This distribution reflects the importance of geothermal resources for these countries.** The GTP fellows from 2018-2023 consisted of 50 females (42%) and 70 males (58%).

During the period of 2018-2023, GTP offered scholarships for master's degree studies to one MSc student from an MFA partner country, i.e. Uganda. No scholarships for doctoral studies were offered to MFA partner countries like Malawi, Uganda, or Sierra Leone or to priority countries like Mozambique. This is due to a lack of geothermal resources in these countries or a lack of policies to support the utilization of geothermal resources.

In the same period, short trainings were organized in Kenya and El Salvador through UNU-GTP or GRÓ funding. Other short trainings were organized in Rwanda, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Iceland through other funding sources like the MFA. In total, 422 individuals (148 females and 274 males) were reached through 12 training events. Four training events were held in LDCs and seven were in LMICs.

Additionally, four online training events were organized with 396 participants from various countries. Three of these were funded by GRÓ while the fourth was funded by the MFA outside the GRÓ budget.

1.2. ALIGNMENT OF THE PROGRAMME WITH THE PARTNER COUNTRIES' AND TARGET GROUPS' NEEDS AND PRIORITIES, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

The evaluator judges that GTP is clearly aligned with and relevant to partner countries' and target groups' needs, priorities, and strategies, especially regarding policies and strategies on electricity generation from geothermal resources. The level of demand for the fellowship training programme is strong, clearly demonstrating that it aligns with needs and local priorities.

The reduction of greenhouse gases through an increased generation of electricity from renewable energy – specifically including geothermal energy – is an explicit objective of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) for the energy sectors of key partner countries from where numerous students have been intentionally trained. These include El Salvador, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica, Mexico, Tanzania, and Djibouti. In addition, **a greater exploitation of geothermal resources is mentioned as a key strategy to achieve objectives included in planning documents of countries, which, have also provided a high number of trainees for GTP.** These documents include the Kenya Vision 2030 and Ethiopia's Low Emissions and Climate Resilience Development Strategy (2020-2025). In this way, **GTP is well aligned with the policies and strategies of partner countries.**

The GTP specifically targets early and mid-career professionals who are in a potential position to boost the exploitation of geothermal resources in their own countries. The fellows are young professionals who have already graduated from local universities and are seeking to deepen their understanding of geothermal energy. An analysis of the survey results shows **that the vast majority of fellows work in public institutions or in public sector enterprises. More precisely, 53% of the fellows were working in public institutions when they enrolled in the 6-month training programme, 21% in public sector enterprises,** 16% in academia or research institutions, 7% in private companies, and the rest in national civic society and non-government organizations, international non-government organizations (NGOs), or are self-employed. Overall, GTP responds to the needs and priorities of individuals seeking to extend their knowledge and practical skills linked to the exploitation of geothermal resources in their home countries.

Although the evaluation team has no precise data on the organizations for which **beneficiaries of short training work, their distribution is probably like that of the 6-month training programme** since similar criteria are used to select short training participants. The main expected difference is that for short training a proportion of trainees come from the same organizations organizing the training together with GTP.

In this regard, three key GTP partner organizations are LaGeo in El Salvador, the Kenya Electricity Generating Companies (KenGen), and the Geothermal Development Company (GDC). These state-owned companies with expertise in the exploitation and utilization of geothermal resources regularly contribute to the organization of short trainings. Additionally, LaGeo also organizes an intensive 5-month diploma course. These partner organizations are committed to expanding the pool of geothermal experts in their regions. By participating in GTP training programmes, they also benefit by training their personnel and enhancing their reputation as leading companies in geothermal energy.

1.3. ALIGNMENT OF THE PROGRAMME WITH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY FRAMEWORKS, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES

The evaluator judges that GTO closely aligns with and is relevant to promoting an understanding of the international development policy frameworks, goals, and strategies for greenhouse gas mitigation and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change., It also advances gender equality and women's empowerment. The work of the programme contributes to the UN SDGs, particularly SDG 7 (Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all).

Overall, the purpose of GTP is to assist countries with significant geothermal potential in training groups of specialists to work in various aspects of geothermal exploration and development. This strengthens their capacity to develop and utilise their geothermal resources and to reduce use and dependence of fossil fuels.

Geothermal energy is considered a renewable energy source. With very few exceptions, the amount of greenhouse gases emitted from geothermal power plants is extremely low. Therefore, a greater utilisation of geothermal resources contributes to international climate change mitigation commitments.

More precisely, **promoting the utilisation of geothermal resources as an energy source contributes to SDG 7 and aligns with Iceland's international conventions and obligations, such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.** By focusing on strengthening capacity in geothermal exploration and development in LMICs, **GTP also contributes to Iceland's commitments under the Paris Agreement, which emphasise climate-related capacity-building for partner countries and calls on developed countries to enhance support for capacity-building actions in partner countries.**

1.4. Quality of the programme design and management approach

The evaluator judges that GTP is well designed and steered to deliver its intended benefits to the direct beneficiaries of the programme. The programme offers a coherent mix of training interventions targeting young and mid-career professionals with a tailored training offer of different levels of intensity. There is a good level of synergy and focus across the training offer mix.

The programme provides a coherent mix of training interventions. The core of the training proposals is the 6-month training programme, which provides fellowships for 24-25 trainees each year. After an initial 6-week introductory period, fellows split to attend specialized training through lectures, practical work, and visits to geothermal sites for another period of 5 to 6 weeks. **Fellows can choose from eight different lines of specializations⁵** that provide practical specific training. Typically, up to five of the eight lines of specialization are offered per year. The final period of 12 weeks is devoted to individual research projects under the guidance of a supervisor. **The individual project is chosen to have a direct relevance to the work of the fellow at home to offer a valued specialization opportunity for fellows.**

A different approach is used in El Salvador through the 5-month regional diploma where approximately 30 trainees attend all modules for the whole duration of the diploma. The only specialization opportunity is the one-month final project. Interviews and focus group discussions (FGD)

⁵ These are: geothermal geology, geophysical exploration, reserve engineering and borehole geophysics, chemistry of geothermal fluids, environmental science, geothermal utilization, drilling technology, and project management and finance.

with alumni of the diploma revealed that this approach helps students learn the jargon, main tools, and technologies used in all the different facets of a geothermal development project. This is important since geothermal development projects need a wide variety of experts. However, as the evaluative case study reports, such a general coverage approach **limits specialization opportunity**. It should also be noted that the diploma in El Salvador focuses more on geothermal resources in volcanic areas which are particularly relevant for the region.

In addition to the trainings mentioned above, scholarships for MSc and PhD students. While the offer of scholarship is quite flexible (depending also on applications), in practice, four or five MSc scholarships have been offered per year during the 2018-2023 period. In the same period, GTP funded one PhD scholarship per year until 2021, three PhD scholarships in 2022, while no PhD scholarships were provided in 2023. The overall objective of the scholarships is to enable graduates of the 6-month training in Iceland to pursue further specialization with the University of Iceland or Reykjavik University. Having attended the 6-month training programme fulfils 25% of the ECTS credits required for the MSc degree.

Finally, GTP offers three main types of short trainings: 1) one or two-week training in El Salvador completely funded by GRÓ and whose specific topics are different for each training edition and are decided in agreement with the trainees' home organizations, thus ensuring that the training provided is relevant for the needs of partners in the region; 2) three-week training in Kenya covering all main aspects of early stages of geothermal development, which tend to be similar from year to year and are also funded by the two partner organizations in Kenya; and 3) tailored trainings on different topics that serve as a platform for discussion for more in-depth training for experts around specific topics, usually funded by the MFA outside of the GRÓ budget. All trainings cover a theory component but also include practical applications of the skills and tools that have been acquired.

This diverse range of training options facilitates the selection of suitable candidates for the more intensive training programmes. Specifically, short trainings are often used to observe and choose potential participants for the 6-month training in Iceland or the 5-month diploma programme in El Salvador. Successful completion of the 6-month training is a prerequisite for scholarships for MSc and PhD programmes.

During the last year, GTP was managed by three full-time staff members: one programme director, one deputy director, and one project manager. **Without additional temporary support from ÍSOR, GTP had to postpone certain tasks, such as the review of the final project reports of the 6-month training programme prior to publication.** At the time of writing this report, the most recent published final project work report written by a 6-month fellow dates to 2021. During the summer of 2024 a new position was created: the senior specialist. So currently, GTP has 3.5 permanent staff.

The management of specific programme interventions with key partners in partner countries is derived from established formal institutional arrangements for collaboration.

2. PROMOTION OF SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE PROGRAMME AND OTHER LOCAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS (COHERENCE)

2.1. COHERENCE AND SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE WORK OF THE PROGRAMME AND ACROSS DIFFERENT DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS BY ICELAND IN PARTNER COUNTRIES OR REGIONS

The evaluator judges that **GTP complements other development** efforts funded by the government of Iceland only **to a very limited extent. Synergies with other projects are now outdated and the GTP initiative has not received recent funding within the framework of other interventions.** Additionally, the choice of priority countries is understandably guided by the potential for geothermal resources development rather than coherence considerations with bilateral interventions.

The data on the countries where trainings are organised, and the origin of trainees indicate that the main training activities are not fully coherent with Iceland's development efforts in its partner countries. In the 2018-2023 period, only two fellows of the 6-month training programme in Iceland came from one of the three Iceland partner countries for bilateral cooperation, both from Uganda. Also, only one MSc scholarship recipient is from one of the three partner countries, also from Uganda. **This**

misalignment is because GTP has focused on countries with significant geothermal development potential, which is still relatively limited in Malawi and Uganda and likely non-existent in Sierra Leone.

Until 2017, GTP actively participated in MFA-ICEDA funded development projects aimed at building local capacities through bilateral initiatives, primarily geothermal exploration in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania. These projects and organized trainings were signed in 2013 or 2014 and lasted until 2018. That project was implemented in collaboration with several partners including UNEP, the World Bank, and the African Union. The main objective of that project was to assist countries in the East Africa Rift System to analyse geothermal potential by conducting reconnaissance and surface exploration studies and to build capacity and expertise in the field of geothermal development and utilization. Involved partner countries were Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya and Tanzania. Within this project UNU GTP organized several trainings in partner countries and Iceland. It is worth noting that the final evaluation of the project concluded that the “framework agreement” between the project and ÍSOR and UNU GTP appears to be a value for money response.⁶

Apart from the above outdated cases, synergies between the work of GTP and development efforts by Iceland in partner countries appear to be limited.

2.2. COHERENCE AND SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE WORK OF THE PROGRAMME AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS BY THE KEY PARTNERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS OR BY OTHER DONORS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES OR REGIONS

The evaluator judges that **GTP complements the wider development efforts of the programme’s key partner organizations in partner countries** of public geothermal or electricity companies. The programme also complements wider training efforts of other international financial institutions to promote capacity development and the success of investments in geothermal exploration.

The key partner organisations for GTP in partner countries are geothermal companies, namely LaGeo in El Salvador, the Kenya Electricity Generating Companies (KenGen), and the Geothermal Development Company (GDC) in Kenya. These are all state-owned companies with expertise in the exploitation and utilisation of geothermal resources. They regularly contribute to the organisation of short trainings, and LaGeo in El Salvador organises an intensive 5-month diploma. **While these three partner organisations have clearly demonstrated a commitment towards expanding the pool of geothermal experts in their region, they also directly benefit from GTP training offer by training their personnel and positioning their organisation as companies with well-reputed expertise in geothermal energy in the region.**

In addition to these three partner companies, GTP also regularly collaborates with organizations in Indonesia, the Philippines, China, and Colombia, which regularly nominate candidates for the 6-month training in Iceland. Partner companies in Colombia also send employees for trainings in El Salvador. In China, GTP has offered an advisory role to the newly established Sino-Icelandic GTP, which is managed by Sinopec. Cooperation was also established with the World Bank on an ad hoc basis.

The training activities implemented by GTP also complement the programmes funded by other international financial institutions. Since 2006, GTP has provided support to the KenGen training objectives in Kenya to organise introductory short courses on geothermal energy. These lasted two weeks until 2008 and three weeks since then. The Geothermal Development Company (GDC) became another important partner in 2009, which participated in the delivery of short courses together with KenGen. So, since 2009 GDC was also supported by GTP. Additionally, every year some KenGen staff attend the 6-month training in Iceland. GDC has also sent staff to be trained in Iceland (especially in the 2010-2015 period) at their own cost, but their participation has been less regular than for the case of KenGen. The participation of KenGen staff in the 6-month training in Iceland is often funded by KenGen own resources or by projects that the World Bank Group channels through beneficiary countries through

⁶ Source: GOPA (2019) External Final Evaluation of the Geothermal Exploration Project. GEP/ICE23066-1301

KenGen. In this regard, in 2019, the World Bank funded a 5-year project supporting 17 training centres in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. The KenGen training centre was selected as the TVET reference training centre for energy topics. While most of the World Bank grant investment is for infrastructure upgrade, a large remainder is for training KenGen experts. In this way, GTP short training at KenGen will benefit from the World Bank investments.

The case study for El Salvador shows that GTP training activities organised with LaGeo complements the technical assistance and capacity building project on geothermal exploration funded by the German government and implemented by the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) for the Central America Integration System member countries. The development of technical knowledge that GTP is promoting through training is highly relevant for the BGR project; the project even has two trainees who have been accepted for the diploma training programme in El Salvador.

Improvements in skills and knowledge are crucial for the success of grants and loans provided by international organisations to support the development of geothermal projects. The Inter-American Development Bank has stated in a recent analysis⁷ that grants and concessional funding programmes will continue to play a vital role in increasing the feasibility of geothermal projects in LAC.

2.3. DUPLICATION OR OVERLAP OF THE PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES WITH OTHER EFFORTS BY ICELAND OR OTHER DONORS

The evaluator judges that there is no duplication or overlap of GTP activities with the other development efforts of Iceland or other donors.

This evaluation found no evidence of duplications of the GTP activities with other development efforts by Iceland or other donors. The tailored short trainings held by GTP, which are often funded by the MFA, are targeted at a different audience than those funded by GRÓ, meaning no risk of duplication.

There is no evident risk of duplication given that the majority of Iceland's multilateral development cooperation support is intended to assist partners in addressing local development or humanitarian needs.

3. PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS (EFFECTIVENESS)

3.1. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAMME OVERALL IN REGARD TO THE DELIVERY AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE INTENDED OUTPUTS

The evaluator judges that **GTP is highly effective in delivering outputs and providing training outreach with 1,067 individuals directly reached through its training offer during the period 2018-2023.** In that period, 120 fellows have graduated with a diploma from the fellowship training programme in Iceland, 86 individuals have graduated from the regional 5-month diploma in El Salvador, 7 scholars have been supported to in their doctoral research studies and 24 students to take an MSc programme. Additionally, 422 people were trained through short courses in partner countries, and 396 learners accessed the online training. **The beneficiaries positively rate the quality and relevance of the training and the knowledge transmission.**

A summary of the principal programme **outputs** delivered between 2018 and 2023 can be found below in Table 33 and in figures 53 and 54 below.

⁷ Gischler, G. et al (2020) Harnessing geothermal potential in LAC: A perspective on the road ahead. IADB

Table 33: The GTP main training activities via the programme in the 2018-2023 period

INTERVENTION	PRINCIPAL OUTPUTS DELIVERED/ACHIEVED
Postgraduate training in Iceland (Fellowship)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 120 fellows from 28 countries participated in the 6-month, of which 50 were female (42%) and 70 were male (58%). 18% were from LDCs, 61% from LMICs, 21% from UMICs, and 1% from HICs. Geographically 41% came from Sub-Saharan Africa, 30% came from Asia, 28% from LAC, and the remaining 1% from North Africa and Oceania. • Four to five different lines of specialization are offered each year. • Survey results show that 2018-2023 GTP fellows rated the programme's overall quality (4.79 out of 5) and coherence (4.76 out of 5) very highly. They also report substantial or large skills improvements (4.18 out of 5), specifically in the fields of research skills, interpersonal skills and personal development.
Doctoral scholarships (PhD research)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven students (three female and four male) have received scholarships (for doctoral studies. Four were from the LDCs Djibouti, DRC, and Tanzania which had two doctoral students, while three were from the LMICs of Kenya, Bolivia, and India. • Two scholars have earned their PhDs and one more is expected to graduate soon. • The doctoral students have published seven research papers.
MSc scholarship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27 (11 female and 16 male) students have received scholarships for MSc studies. • Nine were from LDCs (33%), 17 were from LMICs (63%) and one was from a UMIC (4%). • 29 students (12 female and 17 male) have obtained an MSc degree from the University of Iceland or Reykjavik University.
Short courses in partner countries & online courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 training events were delivered in six countries: Iceland, Kenya, El Salvador, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Rwanda. Seven of the 13 training events were funded by GRÓ and took place in Kenya and El Salvador. • The GRÓ-funded three-week training in Kenya on geothermal exploration and development of geothermal resources was delivered five times reaching 205 total participants (75 women and 130 men). Two different one-week GRÓ-funded trainings were organized in El Salvador reaching a total 122 participants (49 women and 73 men). Overall, 327 individuals (124 women and 203 men) participated in GRÓ-funded trainings. • 422 individuals (148 female and 274 male) in total participated in in-person short trainings held in person when including non- GRÓ funded training. • Four online 2-day training events were also organized, three of which courses were funded by GRÓ. 396 (172 female and 269 male) individuals participated in the online training. • The percentage of fellows who were involved in short courses after their graduation from the training programme in Iceland is highest among GTP fellows.
5-month diploma in El Salvador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 5-month diploma named "Geothermal Diploma Course for Latin America" Was carried out in 2018, 2019, and 2022 reaching 86 participants (37 female and 49 male). • 78% of the diploma participants came from LMICs; 63% were from El Salvador. • The 5-month diploma covered all main aspects of geothermal resources utilization in its 11 modules. • Participants reported a high level of satisfaction with the programme in their final survey.

INTERVENTION	PRINCIPAL OUTPUTS DELIVERED/ACHIEVED
Capacity development partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During 2018-2023, GTP operated in cooperation with three different companies for the organization of GRÓ-funded training activities: LaGEO in El Salvador, the Kenya Electricity Generating Company (KenGen) and the Geothermal Development Company (GDC) in Kenya. Other cooperating institutions of non-GRÓ funded training included the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Icelandic MFA, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Eritrean Ministry of Mines and Energy.

The GTP has successfully engaged with a diverse range of learners from partner countries as direct beneficiaries. This achievement has been made possible through a variety of different training interventions. The programme has prioritized strong engagement with trainees from LDCs or LMICs, with the latter being the great majority (see above Table 33).

Figure 53: GTP Fellows 2018-2023 by gender region

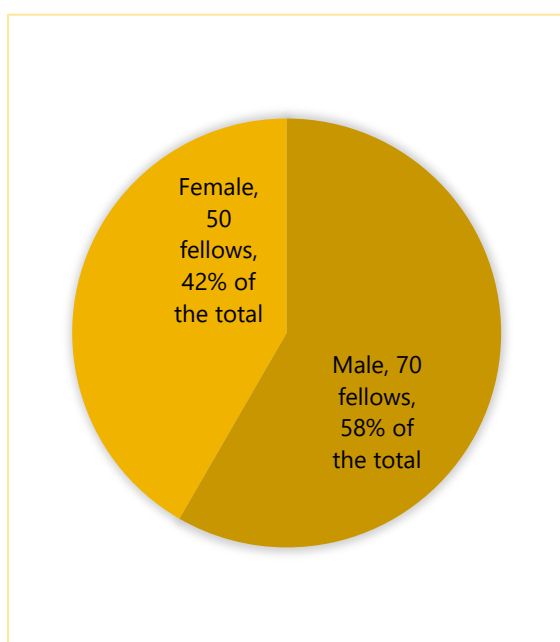
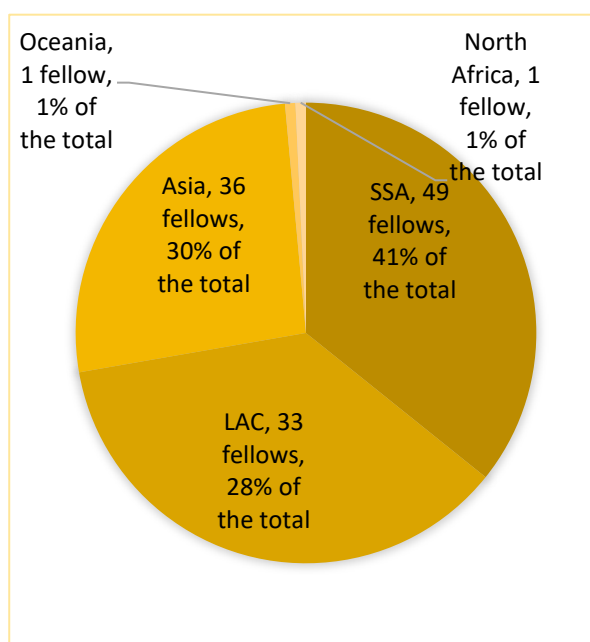


Figure 54: GTP Fellows 2018-2023 by geographical region



Data source: statistics provided by GRÓ GTP

As per GRÓ Results Framework, the expected effectiveness at the output level consists of 1) Increased capabilities and expertise of partner organizations, 2) Production and dissemination of new knowledge, 3) Professional empowerment through networking and community building. Main elements of analysis of the expected outputs are reported in Table 34.

Table 34: the GTP's 6- month training outputs as reported in the evaluation online survey

DOMAIN	MAIN OUTCOMES
Skills improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the 2018-2023 cohort of respondents of the evaluation online survey were asked to rate the extent to which the post-graduate 6-month training contributed to improving skills on a scale from 1 (no improvement) to 5 (large improvement) the highest scores for 2018-2023 GTP fellows were for research skills (4.53), technical skills (4.48), and personal development (4.47). The lowest scores were for environmental and climate affairs. The average score across all assessed type of knowledge/ skills was 4.18 out of 5 for the 2018-2023 graduates, suggesting that the programme strongly contributed to skill improvement. While all training components were highly appreciated (no training component had a score lower than 4.5, on a scale from 1 to 5), 2018-2023 GTP fellows deemed individual research projects and fieldwork to be the most valuable training modules, both with an average score of 4.75.
Research delivered	<p>The 2018-2023 GTP survey respondents developed a number of research and knowledge outputs linked to the training programme in Iceland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 97% of respondents delivered a final project report 50% of respondents delivered an MSc thesis 34% of respondents developed a conference paper (the highest percentage among the four training programmes) 14% composed a policy report 11% published a journal article 3% of the respondents delivered a PhD dissertation
Alumni empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A total of 117 training fellows or former fellows were supported to attend the World Geothermal Congress (WGC) in 2020 (postponed to 2021) and 2023, with 69 individuals participating in the 2020 WGC and 48 in the 2023 WGC. GTP financed this outside of GRÓ's core funding through funds accrued from training activities in past years. Former GTP fellows or scholarship recipients lectured and presented their research in 12 training events and four online trainings. The GTP organized side events at the WGC with former and current fellows and held an anniversary workshop in 2018 in Iceland. Former fellows were invited to give presentations on the impacts that GTP had in their countries. In 94% of the short courses and diploma events of the 2018-2023 period, GTP involved former fellows in teaching and organization

Alumni empowerment was promoted by directly inviting former fellows to contribute to teaching and lecturing in short courses and by sponsoring their participation in the World Geothermal Congress (WGC). This event, now held every three years, was reported to be crucial for current and former fellows to present their research work and actively engage in networking.

3.2. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DIFFERENT PROGRAMME INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND OF LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS IN REGARD TO THE DELIVERY AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF OUTCOMES

The evaluator judges that the training activities have contributed to outcomes in skills development and to advancing the careers of beneficiaries in their home countries. Exchanges of experiences among beneficiaries are a main element through which GTP contributes to the advancement of geothermal resource utilization.

6-month training in Iceland

Table 35 below defines the main changes at the individual, that GTP has contributed to, based on the results from the online survey evaluation.

Table 35: the GTP's 6-month training direct outcomes at the individual level, as reported in the evaluation online survey, 2018-2023

DOMAIN	MAIN OUTCOMES
Career advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When asked to what extent their professional career has advanced due to the participation in the 6-month postgraduate training programme in Iceland, 68% of the 2018-2023 GTP survey respondents report that they have extremely or substantially advanced. Further 25% report moderate advancement and only 8% report no or slight advancement. It should be noted that the percentage of GTP fellows, who have extremely or substantially advanced is higher for older cohorts (81% for GTP fellows before 2017), most likely due to the fact that they have had more time to advance professionally after programme graduation.
Type of professional career advancement	<p>2018-2023 advanced their career in different ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 78% of respondents reported having more responsibilities 31% reported having gained a scholarship 24% reported a promotion 20% of respondents reported a salary increase 12% reported having a new job 4% reported starting a new business

Based on the feedback received from direct beneficiaries of the 6-month training and the results of the survey reported in Table 36, **it is evident that the quality and relevance of the training provided by GTP have played a significant role in enhancing individual competences, knowledge, and skills related to the utilisation of geothermal resources**. The fact that the training is delivered **by industry experts and seasoned professionals** was highlighted in the qualitative answers to the online survey as a key factor in maintaining the relevance and up-to-date nature of the curriculum aligned with current industry practices.

Additionally, a significant strength noted among the qualitative answers to the online survey was the programme's **emphasis on practical and field-based learning, including field trips and hands-on projects** that complement theoretical knowledge.

A key for reinforcing individual skills is the **final research project**. As confirmed by the interviewed fellows of the 6-month training in Iceland, the final project represents a unique **opportunity for specialisation** in a field as diverse as geothermal development. The case study on the training activities in El Salvador reports that similar considerations apply to the final project of the 5-month Geothermal Diploma Course for Latin America.

According to the results reported by the 6-month training fellows included in Table 35 above, **completing the 6-month trainings was considered very beneficial for advancing the careers of former fellows**. The most common forms of professional career advancement were taking on more responsibilities, receiving a scholarship for further studies and receiving a promotion.

The results of the survey also suggest that the 6-month training in Iceland was highly appreciated by the institutions for which fellows work. Around 86% of the 2018-2023 (strongly) agreed with the statement that their organisation's management appreciates and values the skills they have gained from the postgraduate training programme.

The survey results find that the knowledge from the postgraduate programme is actively spread in institutions and the technical sector after programme completion. 78% of the 2018-2023 GTP fellows have shared their knowledge from the postgraduate programme with their supervisors, colleagues and a broader expert network.

Similarly, **the survey results suggest that former fellows contributed to their subject area with the knowledge they acquired.** 89% of the 2018-2023 GTP fellows (strongly) agree with the statement saying that they were able to advance their contribution in their field/subject area thanks to the postgraduate training programme.

The survey also offers additional insights on fellows' actual contributions, as reported in the Table 36 below.

Table 36: the GTP Fellows' contribution to the geothermal area / subject

Type of contribution	Percentage of GTP respondents
Training and mentoring of others	77%
Further research	75%
Contribution to the international debate	34%
Introduction to initiatives /projects	57%
Implementation of projects	63%
Leading projects	58%
Introducing new policies or procedures in my institution	24%
Advising private entities or institutions	27%
Advising policymakers or high-level decision-makers	30%
Advising local communities	28%
Contributing to changes in policies at the regional level	17%
Contributing to changes in policies at the national level	21%
Contributing to changes in policies at the international level	7%

Source: Evaluation online survey

Table 36 shows **the most frequent contributions from all GTP fellows were training and mentoring others, conducting further research, and implementing geothermal development projects.** The results also suggest that training in Iceland contributes to former fellows assuming leadership positions as 58% of the GTP respondents reported that they were leading a project in their technical field.

5-month diploma in El Salvador

An analysis of the 5-month diploma in El Salvador is included in the case study (see Annex12).

Short trainings

The short courses are oriented towards the practical application of new understanding and skills. The evaluation team had access to the short course surveys of four courses funded by GRÓ⁸. An analysis of the results reveals that in all courses **the percentage of respondents reporting that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the training's usefulness and relevance for their work was above 90%.** Additionally, for all four trainings considered, **the percentage of respondents reporting that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the general content provided was again above 93%.**

The short course in Kenya covers the main aspects of early geothermal development project over a three-week period, while the short courses in El Salvador generally last one week and focus on specific topics. This is because in El Salvador, GTP is involved in the organization of a 5-month intensive diploma programme that serves to provide a general knowledge on geothermal development, so in-depth short courses are more useful. It should be noted that in East Africa, apart from Kenya and Ethiopia, geothermal development is very limited. Therefore, developing courses that cover all the relevant aspects for geothermal development is a way to promote the use of geothermal resources in the region. In El

⁸ For 2018 and 2023 in Kenya and for 2022 and 2024 in El Salvador.

Salvador, the main topic of the short course is chosen after consulting the main institutions expected to send trainees **to ensure they are relevant to the needs of the partner organisation.**

A short training cannot match the impact of a more intensive, costly, and longer training. However, direct observation of a short training in El Salvador and interviews with short training participants revealed that one of the main perceived benefits of short trainings was **the continuous exchange with peers and lecturers on technical aspects faced in similar countries and contexts.** This is particularly relevant for short courses since the participants come from the same geographic region (e.g., Latin America or East Africa) where the underground geothermal resources share common characteristics. This is also confirmed by the survey administered by GRÓ at the end of the short course in Kenya held in 2018, where many respondents (41%) reported that the most important learning experience was sharing knowledge of geothermal projects and well techniques in other countries.⁹

Scholarships for postgraduate studies

As reported in the final evaluation report of the scholarship programme, **GTP has offered the highest number of scholarship grants over the longest period among all GRÓ-funded training programmes.**¹⁰

Since 2018, GTP has supported 27 MSc students (11 females and 16 males) and seven PhD students (3 females and 4 males) for studies at the University of Iceland or Reykjavik University. Of the seven PhD scholars supported, four were from LDCs and three from LMICs. Nine of the MSc students supported were from LDCs and 17 from LMICs.

The MSc programme is held at the University of Iceland and Reykjavik University (at the Iceland School of Energy). GTP has agreements with both universities to recognise the GTP 6-month training programme as equivalent to 30 ECTS coursework of a master's programme. This allows students to reduce their studies by one semester, although they can complete the full 120 ECTS master's programme if beneficial.

In the same period, 29 MSc scholarship recipients (12 females and 17 males) graduated (some of these were awarded a scholarship before 2018), and two students (both males) were awarded a PhD. At the time of this evaluation, another PhD student was very close to finishing his thesis, and another one is progressing well.

Research and knowledge creation

During the period of 2018-2023, a total of 73 final research projects were published on the GRÓ website. **The GTP publication database has grown to become one of the largest open-access databases on geothermal research in the world.**¹¹ 29 MSc theses and 138 papers presented at GTP workshops and short trainings have been published on the GTP website along with final research reports from the 6-month fellowship. Furthermore, four papers written by the GTP staff were published in the proceedings of the 2020 or 2023 WGC. The evaluation team also identified seven academic journal articles on Google Scholar that were published between 2018 and 2023 by current or previous PhD scholarships funded by GTP.

In general, **research papers and projects serve as a foundation for alumni to take immediate action, share knowledge, and exchange ideas upon their return to their home country and organisation after completing sponsored programmes.**

⁹ This same question was not included in other GTP surveys for short training.

¹⁰ Source: Gollifer, S.E., Harðardóttir, E., Bottomley (2023). An evaluation of GRÓ's master's and doctoral scholarship programme. Final report.

¹¹ Axelsson, G., Haraldsson, I., Ómarsdóttir, M. and Hardardóttir, V. (2023). GRÓ Geothermal Training Programme in Iceland: Geothermal Capacity Building in Developing Countries for 45 years. *Proceedings World Geothermal Congress 2023*, Beijing, China, April 17 – 21, 2023

GTP fellows reported which ways they had disseminated their research and knowledge products linked to the programme post-fellowship in the evaluation survey. The main channels used by 2018-2023 GTP fellows were presentations to colleagues (72%), presentations at GRÓ-organised events (68%), presentations to supervisors (61%), publications on the GRÓ website (48%), and presentations at conferences (34%) as well as conference proceedings (26%).

Networking

Consistent with the findings presented above on the benefits of sharing technical solutions, the online survey reveals that of the respondents who participated in networking activities, the main perceived benefit is **discussing technical solutions**. Other important benefits were, personal matters such as friendships, **boosting motivation** and **developing joint research or projects**.

A main networking event actively promoted by GTP is the WGC. 117 training fellows or alumni fellows were supported to attend the 2020/21 WGC and the 2023 WGC. The GTP utilized funds generated from previous training activities outside GRÓ's primary funding.

The survey results also show that social media has an increasingly important role in facilitating alumni networking forums through email lists, Facebook and Whatsapp.

3.3 OVERALL FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ACHIEVEMENT OR NON-ACHIEVEMENT OF THE EXPECTED RESULTS

The evaluator notes the following key factors influencing the achievement of the programme results:

- The programme emphasises careful targeting of its efforts, particularly in selecting fellows for the postgraduate diploma programme in Iceland. The selection process for fellows involves a thorough review of applications and an interview process.
- An important aspect of the selection process is the observation of short training participants by the GTP staff. The main criterion to select fellows is the potential contribution of applicants to the development of the geothermal sector in their home countries.
- The 6-month training is organised around eight different specialisations with the specific offer of specialisation areas for a programme decided upon by GTP yearly. The development of geothermal projects requires a diverse range of expertise employing a relatively high number of specialisations enables GTP to address the countries' needs for specific expertise.
- The GTP has clearly established processes to obtain feedback from the fellows on the learning outcomes and the delivery of programme modules which provide insight for its annual review of the programme and subsequent adaptations.

The evaluator highlights the following factors influencing non-achievement of the programme results:

- The GTP does not use normal tracer tools to follow alumni career development. Given the limited staff resources GTP has, it is difficult for the GTP to properly correspond with fellows' home organisations to assess their perspective on the effectiveness of the programme.
- The GTP fellows responding to the external evaluation's questionnaire survey indicated that the principal challenges they face in utilising and applying their knowledge are insufficient resources.

4. Programme implementation and adaptive management (Efficiency)

4.1. Programme management arrangements, planning, monitoring and evaluation, oversight, steering, and risk management systems, and the efficient and effective delivery of results

The evaluator judges that **the operational efficiency of the programme is satisfactory**. Delivery of the intended programme results is timely, and financial management of the programme is in accordance with the service agreement and the internal control system set by the hosting institution. Programme monitoring, reporting, and steering mechanisms are of good quality.

Programme management, planning, and implementation systems

For its first 42 years, GTP was operated at Orkustofnun, the National Energy Authority of Iceland. It is now hosted at ÍSOR under a contract with GRÓ. ÍSOR is a research institute focusing on all aspects of geothermal resource exploration and development making it suitable to be a cooperative partner for GTP. Currently, the programme has 3.5 full-time staff, including GTP director, the deputy director, a project manager and a senior advisor. A few ÍSOR staff members are expected to contribute to GTP's activities, but in reality ÍSOR staff contribution has been lower than originally expected. GTP staff was quite small when it was set out in 1979 (hosted by Orkustofnun) with only two staff members. The number of staff was then increased and reached six staff members in the second decade of this century. When this evaluation took place the number of staff was three.. The reduction of staff has caused an increase in the workload of the remaining staff.

Temporary assistants are also recruited on a need basis. For instance, during the summary of 2023, two summer employees were hired as part-time assistants to support the 6-month training programme and the update of GTP's webpage and database.

Annually, the GTP hires 80 lecturers and support staff from Iceland's leading geothermal institutes, universities, engineering companies, or energy companies to meet the needs of the programme and its trainees at any given time. **This pool of expertise constitutes the programme's resource base and is its greatest asset.** A significant part of the lecturers come from ÍSOR.

Since the MFA, through the GRÓ Centre, is the main source of funding for the programme, the yearly action plan of GTP is assessed by the GRÓ Centre to determine the annual amount of financial support provided for the proposed actions.

The GTP interventions operate based on clearly defined processes that are conducive to achieving operational efficiency. There is no strict deadline for application to the 6-month training. Generally, **candidates are chosen from nominations made by companies and institutes¹²**, and these nominating institutions, in Africa, Asia, and LAC countries, are largely the same organisations whose employees attend the short trainings. Each year, GTP runs four or five lines of specialisation; therefore, candidates are selected from the pre-established database based on the requested line of specialisation [more details on the selection process are reported below under the risk management and mitigation section]. The database of nominated experts includes the result of interviews conducted by GTP staff for the purpose of selecting fellows. The 6-month training in Iceland lasts every year from late May to November.

The timeline to apply for an MSc or PhD scholarship is well defined. The deadline for application is 30 November every year. This leaves enough time to GTP to award scholarships before the deadlines set by the two partner universities for enrolling in MSc and PhD programmes (1st February). **The scholarships are awarded only to fellows who have completed the 6-month training in Iceland.**

The short training in Kenya has been held every year (except for 2020) in November for a total of three weeks. In the period covered by this evaluation, the short training in El Salvador generally lasts one week and is typically held in September¹³, and the 5-month diploma programme in El Salvador takes place between the end of June and the end of November. However, for the period considered by this evaluation, the training activities in El Salvador have not taken place every year, which was mainly due to COVID-19 pandemic: The short training was held in 2018 and 2022, and the 5-month diploma was organised in 2018, 2019, and 2022.

In addition to GRÓ-funded short courses, GTP also organises other short courses informally named "tailored training" or "customer designed courses". While in the past they were also paid

¹² In some cases, staff members of institutes contact GTP directly to request a fellowship. However, they are still required to provide a recommendation and support letter from their institute.

¹³ The only exception was the 2024 edition, which lasted two weeks and was held in February.

by beneficiary organisations¹⁴, since 2018 they have been mainly funded by the MFA outside of the GRÓ budget. “Tailored trainings” are designed to meet the needs of beneficiary institutions and have been organised in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), MFA/ICEIDA.

Programme financial management and oversight

The GTP is operated by ÍSOR - a state-owned non-profit geothermal services firm. ÍSOR was founded after the GeoScience Division of Iceland's National Energy Authority, Orkustofnun, became an independent entity in 2003. The company provides a range of activities and services leveraging over seventy years of ongoing expertise in geothermal and general geoscience research and development.

The GTP is subject to ÍSOR's control procedures and internal financial management including annual audits.

The GRÓ Centre and ÍSOR signed a Service Agreement to operate GTP. The first Service Agreement became effective as of 8 February 2021 and covered the period up to the end of 2023. A subsequent agreement extends the relationship for two years in 2024 and 2025. This second service agreement was signed after long negotiations that lasted around six months for all the GRÓ-funded training programmes. It is the opinion of interviewed ÍSOR's management, that this second service agreement better clarifies ÍSOR's role and expectations and gives more flexibility to ÍSOR to allocate ÍSOR staff to deliver results.

The GRÓ Centre annually determines and confirms its financial contribution to the programme late in the year.

Programme monitoring, reporting, oversight, and steering systems

The academic activities of the programme are governed by an 8-member Studies Board.

As per contractual obligation, ÍSOR submits an annual progress report of the GTP to GRÓ. The GRÓ Centre convenes periodic meetings with the programme directors of the four training programmes to address implementation issues and upcoming actions. The programme also responds to the ad hoc requests from the GRÓ Centre to provide information.

The GTP's internal monitoring systems is properly established. Fellows in the 6-month programme complete a survey assessing content, presentation, and usefulness of every lecture in both the 5-6 week introductory and specialised period of the programme. The educational value and the overall organization of field visits are also assessed through surveys. Fellows also assess accommodation, office space, and lifestyle in Iceland through surveys. Finally, fellows assess the quality and availability of supervision received and the facility used during their final projects. The survey has been slightly altered since 2018 with improvements. Surveys are also organized for short trainings and for the 5-month diploma in El Salvador. For both the 6-Month Training Programme in Iceland and the diploma in El Salvador the GTP administers a survey to assess the satisfaction of training participants. These surveys well serve the purposes of GTP since they provide useful information to improve the following editions of the trainings. However, given that different criteria are used for different phases of the training, it is not possible to provide an overall score for the whole training. So, a detailed analysis of how the overall satisfaction of the training was is not possible.¹⁵

14 E.g., In Romania and in Portugal courses were organized and funded by the EEA grants, funded by Iceland Lichtenstein and Norway to reduce economic and social disparities and strengthening bilateral cooperation with the EU.

15 For the 6-Month Training, the questionnaire used asks respondents to assess the satisfaction of each individual lecture of Phase 1 (the first 4-5 weeks of introductory lectures) using three criteria (content, presentation and usefulness). For Phase 2, respondents are asked to address different questions for the group work, the field work through various criteria (education value, duration, organization, etc.), and their satisfaction with the specialization module. Respondents are then asked to assess the individual project phase through new criteria (quality of supervision, availability of supervisor, facility and access to data). Other logistical aspects are also assessed, including office space, staying in Iceland, accommodation.

The GTP has no formal career-tracing methodology of alumni fellows, but it still tries to keep track of former fellows in an informal way. As such, GTP was able to provide records for 65 fellows when the evaluation team asked for data about career advancement of former fellows and scholarship recipients. Such records were collected through personal communications between former fellows and GTP staff. Since the geothermal sector is small, this informal system of records for personal progression allows for some career tracking of fellows. The fact that the career records provided per year of awarded fellowship ranged from 1 to 10, indicates that the records collected are largely incomplete (the number of fellowships provided per year is much higher).

Programme risk management and mitigation systems

The GTP aims to minimize risks to the successful, effective, and efficient delivery of programme results through its careful selection of trainees and targeted interventions. The selection of fellows is conducted through a rigorous process. **GTP only accepts nominations for the 6-month training from the head of the geothermal research and utilization institutions and universities in specialized fields that are considered most relevant to promote geothermal development in their countries.**

Applications from individuals are not accepted. Requirements are also clearly defined and include holding a university degree in science or engineering or economics for the project management and finance specialization line. Also, the candidate should hold a minimum of one year of practical experience in geothermal fields and should be in a permanent or long-term position at the government owned energy company, research institution, or university. Fellows are selected through site visits and extensive personal interviews. Due to the high costs associated with international travel, it is not feasible to conduct site visits in all requested countries annually. Therefore, personal interviews are conducted in each country for a period of two to three years at a time, or as opportunity allows. To save on travel costs and time of interviewers, interviews are often at the same time as GTP short courses. Remaining interviews are conducted online.

For the short courses and 5-month diploma, training activities in partner countries are operated in strong collaboration with two trusted partner organizations in Kenya and one in El Salvador.

The limited number of programme staff poses significant risks for the operation of the programme. If one staff member quits or another falls ill, the implementation of the programme would be seriously affected.

A main risk to GTP's implementation during 2018-2023 was the impact of the COVID pandemic which caused total disruption for the programme in 2020 when no trainings could be held. Trainings were not converted to an online modality. In 2021 the programme managed to resume the 6-month training in Iceland and the short training in Kenya. Online trainings of a 2-day duration were held in 2020, 2021, and 2022

Another reported risk is **visa applications**. Given the long processing time of immigration applications, GTP strives to conclude the selection of fellows by November or December to begin the following June.

4.2. THE USE OF PROGRAMME FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES AND THE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF RESULTS (INCLUDING ANALYSIS OF UNIT COSTS AND VALUE FOR MONEY)

The evaluator judges that the **programme financial and human resources are efficiently deployed and cost effective** in terms of the interventions and the results delivered. The variability in terms of the daily cost per beneficiary between the interventions reflects the different intensity of the training and level of direct support provided. The unit costs per intervention provide **value for money**.

Table 37 details GTP's financial data for the 2018-2023 period. The figures show that its total budget has constantly decreased since 2021 due to a lesser contribution from GRÓ in 2022 and 2023. This occurred despite substantial increase in the inflation rate in Iceland.¹⁶ However, GRÓ took over some costs from

¹⁶ The average annual inflation rate of the 2018-2023 period was 5%, calculated using data provided by Statistics Iceland.

GTP like housing and travel costs of fellows. In 2022, other funding sources partially compensated for the decrease in transfers from GRÓ. In 2021, transfers from GRÓ increased compared to 2019, but other sources of funding decreased. As a result, the total budget was lower than in 2019. Total operating expenditures follow the same trend as total income.

Table 37: GTP income statements (ISK)

YEAR	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Transfers from GRÓ/MFA	245,900,000	269,988,366	n/a	281,482,738	256,948,530	228,485,080
Other revenues	65,717,243	52,472,983	n/a	33,993,749	47,760,273	38,716,163
Total income	311,617,243	322,461,349	n/a	315,476,487	304,708,803	267,201,243
Total oper. expenses	309,583,585	316,612,421	n/a	316,675,546	306,334,647	270,741,947
GRÓ/MFA (% of total income)	79%	84%	n/a	89%	84%	86%

Sources: UNU GTP annual report 2018 and 2019; ÍSOR income statements 2021, 2022 and 2023

The total budget for 2023 was 14% lower than in 2018. One consequence of the reduction in budgeted resources was that the annual short training in El Salvador was not held in 2019 (in El Salvador, training costs have been almost entirely covered by GTP). Also, GTP staff reported a lower quality of logistical support provided to fellows as a result of budget cuts.

Table 37 shows GTP's revenue capacity outside of the GRÓ transfer which consist of resources obtained by partner institutions to fund fellows and contributions to other training costs.

The tables below report actual expenditures in Kenya and in El Salvador for the last three editions of the courses. In Kenya, GRÓ has contributed between 45% and 48% of the total cost, while in El Salvador GRÓ has covered between 81% and 96% of the annual expenditures. In Kenya, short courses have been largely funded by the two partner organisations KenGen and GDC.

Table 38: Actual costs for GRÓ-funded short courses in Kenya

Year	GRÓ GTP		KENGEN	GDC	TOTAL
	(ISK)	(USD)	(USD)	(USD)	(USD)
2023	20,263,670	148,779	100,832	80,684	330,295
2022	22,816,585	160,635	96,152	80,684	337,471
2021	23,738,440	182,071	93,840	96,920	372,831

Data source: statistics provided by GRÓ GTP

Table 39: Actual costs for GRÓ-funded short courses in El Salvador

Year	GRÓ GTP		LAGEO	TOTAL
	(ISK)	(USD)	(USD)	(USD)
2024	24,200,000	177,680	6,625	184,305
2022	9,770,164	68,785	16,420	85,205
2018	12,748,718	109,591	8,561	118,152

Data source: statistics provided by GRÓ GTP

Table 40 shows a cost comparison across GTP's main interventions in 2022. The table distinguishes both costs covered by GTP and costs covered by other contributing organizations. For the 6-month training, these are power companies in Kenya and the Philippines that funded three fellows from Kenya and one fellow from the Philippines, respectively. For short courses, other financiers are KenGen and GDC in Kenya and LaGeo in El Salvador. For the scholarships, the total cost per person in the table below also includes the housing benefits provided by the Government of Iceland (GOI).

Table 40: Costs comparison (ISK) across main GTP training interventions in 2022

INTERVENTION	GRÓ DIRECT ACTUAL COST	TOTAL DIRECT ACTUAL COST	OUTPUTS	GRÓ DIRECT COST PER PERSON	GRÓ COST PER PERSON INC. MANG & OPER. EXPENSES*	GRÓ DIRECT COST PER PERSON PER DAY	TOTAL DIRECT COST PER PERSON	TOTAL DIRECT COST PER PERSON PER DAY
6-month training	87,609,287	106,711,495	23 fellows	3,809,099	6,043,978	21,643	4,639,630	26,362
Scholarships	47,765,310	48,245,310	14 MSc and 7 PhD students	2,797,200	3,013,474	7,664	3,277,200	8,979
Short course in Kenya	22,816,585	46,738,959	43 participants	530,618	724,759	26,531	1,086,953	54,348
Short course in El Salvador	9,770,164	11,991,462	46 participants ^φ	212,395	290,105	38,617	260,684 [†]	47,397
5-month diploma in El Salvador	28,380,873	28,380,873	27 participants	1,051,143	1,435,732	6,961	1,051,143 [†]	6,961

φ: It also includes the 27 students who attended the diploma programme

† The short course in El Salvador and the diploma programme were held at the same time with the same participants. The local partner's contribution was allocated only to the short course

* As per data provided by GTP, management and operational costs have been allocated in the following way: 53% for the 6-month training course, 16% for scholarships, 23% for short trainings and training abroad (these were then distributed proportionally to the costs of the training abroad). The remaining 8% is estimated to cover other activities.

Sources: LaGeo 5-month diploma report; the GTP monitoring data; the GTP detailed costs for short courses; the GTP annual budget and costs, WB annual average exchange rate; communication with the GTP management

When assessed on a per student and per student/day basis, the 5-month diploma in El Salvador has a very low cost, suggesting high value for money for this intervention. As explained in the GTP case study report, the low cost per person of the 5-month diploma in El Salvador is mainly due to the low number of scholarships provided (10) in relation to the total number of participants, the fact that travel costs are spread over a relatively high number of days, and the low cost of accommodation. The relatively higher cost per person per day of the short training in El Salvador is due to the short course duration of 5.5 days.

The scholarships for MSc and PhD students are less expensive than the 6-month training because GTP does not have to cover the cost of lecturers and other teaching costs, which are directly paid by the two partner universities.

Finally, Table 41 below presents annual reports on cost data for the 6-month training in Iceland. The average total cost per fellow is ISK 4,447,000, 12% lower than that of the 2012-2016 period.¹⁷

¹⁷ Source: NIRAS, Evaluation of the UNU Programmes in Iceland, 2017.

Table 41: Annual direct costs of the 6-month training in Iceland

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Average
Total Number of fellows	24	24	0	25	23	24	24
Fellows funded by GRÓ	20	20	0	25	19	21	21
GRÓ cost (1000 ISK)	86,643	90,921	n/a	112,825	87,609	76,009	90,802
Total cost (1000 ISK)	112,262	113,193	n/a	112,825	106,711	88,536	106,705
GRÓ cost per GRÓ-funded fellow (1000 ISK)	4,332	4,546		4,513	4,611	3,619	4,324
Total cost per fellow (1000 ISK)	4,678	4,716		4,513	4,640	3,689	4,447

Data source: statistics provided by GRÓ GTP

4.3. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PARTNERSHIP WITH UNESCO IN REGARD THE PROMOTION OF PROGRAMME RESULTS

The evaluator judges that **GTP's partnership with** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (**UNESCO**) is **still in the earlier phase of development** and thus have a low level of collaboration. Despite positive correspondence, there are no tangible effect of the partnership with UNESCO.

As clearly highlighted in the 2019 UNESCO proposal for the establishment of GRÓ presented to the UNESCO 40th General Conference, **there are programmatic linkages between GTP and UNESCO's Natural Resources Science Sector**, most notably with the UNESCO Earth Science and the Geo Hazard Risk Reduction section and the International Geoscience and Geoparks programme.

However, despite amicable interactions between UNESCO and GTP, actual collaboration has remained very limited.

Additionally, local partners interviewed reported no perceived change in operations since GTP has been operating under the GRÓ Centre as a Category 2 Centre (C2C) under the auspices of UNESCO.

5. PROSPECTS FOR THE MAINTENANCE/ CONTINUATION OF THE PROGRAMME BENEFITS (SUSTAINABILITY)

5.1. PROSPECTS FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROGRAMME RESULTS AND BENEFITS

The evaluator judges that the **prospects for the sustainability of the programme results and benefits delivered are good**. GTP partner organizations have demonstrated strong ownership of the results. Overall, the home organizations of GTP former fellows appreciate the knowledge acquired and perceive it to support the application of new knowledge. Networking is an important element to empower alumni.

The financial sustainability of GTP interventions depends on continued funding contribution from the GOI. While partners contribute a minor part of the training costs by funding some fellowships for their employees or by contributing to short trainings, programme costs have been mainly covered by the government through the MFA.

However, **the three local partners - KenGen and GDC in Kenya, and LaGeo in El Salvador - have demonstrated clear ownership by contributing to the costs of short trainings and by providing staff to lecture and organise trainings.**

Immediate benefits are evident when evaluating sustainability from the perspective of training participants. Participants gain valuable knowledge and skills while exchanging understandings on how

to utilize and geothermal energy resources. Upon returning to their home organizations, fellows are prepared to share their newly acquired knowledge and present the results of the final projects they completed during the training.

The analysis of the evaluation online survey suggests that fellows' training in Iceland is highly appreciated by the management of their home organisations. Indeed, 85% of GTP respondents reported that they agree or strongly agree with the statement "the management of my organisation appreciates and values the skills I gained from the post-graduate training programme". Additionally, 51% of the GTP respondents reported that a key factor in applying their knowledge and skills after graduation was support from their home institution. This figure confirms that for the GTP, support from the home institution has been perceived as a positive element that is conducive to the sustainability of results.

The survey shows that the **GTP respondents believe that they have contributed to their subject area** since 93% agreed or strongly agreed with a statement saying, "I was able to advance my contribution in my field/subject area thanks to the post-graduate training." As reported in Table 36 above, the main types of contributions consisted of training and mentoring others (77% of the GTP respondents), further research (75%), and the implementation of new projects (63%).

The GTP alumni networking is an important means of empowering former fellows. 63% of the survey respondents participated in networking events, where addressing technological solutions was a key perceived benefit for 77% of GTP survey respondents who participated. Other important key benefits were gaining access to job opportunities for 79% of GTP respondents and boosting motivation for 63% of respondents. The GTP has also prioritized supporting the participation of fellows and alumni in the World Geothermal Conference (WGC) to promote networking.

The involvement of alumni in organizing and teaching short courses and the 5-month diploma is a recurring approach that GTP promotes to empower former fellows. Indeed, for 94% of the short training course and diploma events held during the 2018-2023 period, former fellows were involved in teaching or organizing the training events.

The GRÓ Centre aims to capacitate individuals and institutions in their partner countries to contribute to positive changes within these countries. The extent to which fellows remain within their country and region thus is a critical sustainability factor. The survey results indicate that most GTP fellows are still living in the same country after programme completion contributing to changes there. In 2024, **84% of the GTP survey respondents are still residing in the same region** compared to their residency before training programme participation. This indicates a sustained contribution within partner countries.

One key factor in sustained results refers to the technical field/ subject area of fellows. The survey suggests that almost **80% of the GTP fellows are still working in the same technical field/ subject area in 2024** or have worked in that field until retirement. This indicates that most fellows continue to contribute to the same technical area, in which they have been trained in Iceland, which indicates that the training programme is sustainable in that regard.

5.3. FACTORS SUPPORTING OR LIMITING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROGRAMME RESULTS AND BENEFITS

The evaluator highlights the following key factors supporting the sustainability of the programme results:

- The GTP alumni actively seek to share their knowledge and skills within their home countries and communities to promote change.
- The three main partner organizations of GTP have demonstrated ownership of the local training activities in their home countries, and they are all committed to further utilizing the courses.
- The climate change agenda calls on governments and companies to increase investments in clean energy sources. A higher number of trained geothermal experts will be essential in the future to meet greenhouse reduction and fossil fuel diversification objectives.

The evaluator highlights the following key factors hindering the sustainability of the programme results:

- The sustainability of the programme depends on continued funding provided by the GOI and the MFA. Ultimately, this **funding depends on political decisions**.
- The main challenge GTP alumni face in utilizing and applying their knowledge is linked to insufficient resources of their institution (for 42% of respondents). Other perceived barriers are insufficient support by the home institution (for 27% of respondents) and limited scope and responsibilities (for 24% of respondents).

6. PROSPECTS FOR LONGER-TERM DEVELOPMENT EFFECTS (IMPACT)

6.1. THE DIRECT EFFECTS AND LONGER-TERM PROSPECTS FOR IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME ON THE MICRO, MESO, AND MACRO LEVELS

The evaluator judges that the **prospects for longer-term development effects of the programme are good**. The GTP former fellows indicate that projects or reform initiatives have contributed to advancing progress on the SDGs. **2018-2023 GTP alumni indicate contributions mainly related to SDG 7 and 13. There are impacts at the individual (micro), meso, and macro levels with impacts at the individual level being strongest.**

The GRÓ's expected impact as defined in its ToC is, "Through capable individuals and organisations, partner countries progress towards the achievement of the targeted SDGs by promoting the sustainable use of natural resources; strengthening resilient natural and human systems; advancing equality and human rights; and improving human wellbeing".

The online survey results show that 63% of the 2018-2023 GTP fellows have contributed to projects that are related to the SDG achievement. Among these, **90% of GTP respondents have contributed to projects/ programmes/ policies initiatives that address SDG 7**, "Affordable, reliable and sustainable modern energy for all," and **39% to SDG 13**, "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact." The top five SDGs that the alumni respondents indicate their contribution toward are reported below in Table 42. GTP fellows have made contributions through efforts in geothermal energy development, policy advocacy, and community engagement directly supporting SDG 7 by promoting affordable and clean energy solutions. By implementing climate mitigation and adaptation projects, conducting research, and participating in environmental conservation campaigns, they contribute to SDG 13 by addressing climate change and promoting sustainability.

Table 42: SDGs that the 2018-2023 GTP online respondents have contributed to advancing progress on

SDG 7	SDG 13	SDG 5	SDG 9	SDG 17
90%	39%	27%	20%	16%

Source : Evaluation team's own alumni survey

On the micro-level, the direct beneficiaries of GTP training interventions have acquired the knowledge and skills needed for geothermal resources utilisation. This has the potential to inform their decisions on the development of new geothermal projects and the improvements of existing ones. Indeed, the evaluation online survey revealed that further research (75% of the GTP respondents) was frequently reported as the fellow's contribution, followed by the implementation of projects/initiatives (63% of respondents), and the introduction of initiatives or projects (57% of the GTP respondents).

Impacts at the meso and macro levels less clear and more difficult to measure and assess. Interviews conducted with former participants of the 6-month trainings, the 5-month diploma in El Salvador, and short courses showed **various instances of changes introduced in organisations by GTP learners because of the knowledge and skills acquired during the trainings**. Some examples are reported in the case study for El Salvador. The results of the online survey show that 24% of the GTP respondents reported having introduced new policies or procedures in the institutions where they work.

At the macro level, 88% of the GTP fellows (strongly) agree that the programme was relevant for their country's needs. Moreover, **30% of the GTP respondents to the online survey reported that they have contributed input to policy makers or high-level decision makers**, 17% have reported contributing to changes in regional policies, 21% have contributed to changes at the national level, and 7% for the international policy framework. In addition to that, many GTP fellows hold high level positions within their country, allowing them to make impactful contributions at that level (e.g. Senior Exploration Geologist at the Geological Survey of Papua New Guinea).

Overall, the prospects for long-term development effects of GTP are good. Some impacts at the organisational and policy level evident, but the results of the survey suggest that prospects for impacts seem to be higher at the micro-level by improving knowledge, skills, and careers of individual learners.

6.2. FACTORS SUPPORTING OR HINDERING PROGRESS IN THE LONGER-TERM ACHIEVEMENT OF DIRECT EFFECTS AND IMPACT

The evaluator highlights the following key factors supporting the impact of the programme results:

- **The two partner organizations in Kenya and the partner organization in El Salvador are established companies that have a long-term objective to position themselves as reputable organizations** with strong expertise in geothermal energy and a commitment towards advancing the utilization of geothermal energy in the region.
- The climate change crisis will require more countries to devote more investments to alternative energy sources. More expertise is needed to further explore and exploit geothermal energy.

The evaluator highlights the following key factors limiting the impact of the programme results:

- Interviewed key experts indicated the regulatory framework of countries where trainees come from is often a constraint for the utilization of geothermal energy in different countries.
- **The exploration of geothermal energy is a high-risk endeavour for investors.** The availability of grants and concessional credit will be crucial for continued exploration.

7. HORIZONTAL THEMES/ CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

7.1. CONTRIBUTION TO GENDER EQUALITY

The GTP promotes gender equality in many ways. **First, it has a "gender-based candidate selection policy."** GTP encourages home organisations to nominate female candidates for training activities. As reported in a paper written by GTP staff¹⁸ and presented at the 2023 WGC, GTP **offers women in the geothermal sector a rare opportunity to advance their careers since training chances are unfortunately more often given to their male colleagues.**

However, **given that men are overrepresented in the geothermal sector, the percentage of women participating in all GTP training activities is higher than that of the actual professional landscape.** From 2018 to 2023, women accounted for 41% to 43% of the MSc and scholarship recipients, 42% of the fellows in the 6-month training in Iceland, 43% of the 5-month diploma in El Salvador, and 36% the short course participants. It should be noted that in 2024 the 6-month training programme enrolled 14 women out of 26 participants, thus reaching gender equality.

The GTP also promotes the recruitment of female teachers for training activities. **The fact that women lecture on topics that are typically male dominated, such as drilling, can be inspiring for women and promote greater acceptance of women in the field among men.**

For the 14th consecutive year, Iceland has taken the top position as the most gender-equal country according to the Global Gender Gap Index.¹⁹ **A 6-month experience in this sort of social environment**

¹⁸ Ómarsdóttir, M., Axelsson, G., Haraldsson, G. I., and Hardardóttir, V. (2023). Successes and challenges of Geothermal Training: Behind the scenes insight into the UNU/GRÓ Geothermal Training Programme. Proceedings of the World Geothermal Congress 2023. Beijing, China, April 17 – 21, 2023.

¹⁹ Source: World Economic Forum (2023). Global Gender Gap report.

can promote the acceptance and normalization of women in the workplace among fellows from cultures where it is not common. The GTP staff report also emphasises the empowering effects of the experience for women who come from countries with restrictive cultural views on gender. The authors highlight numerous cases of women who join the programme feeling timid and reserved at first but over time develop the confidence to use the space to **develop skills to effectively tackle adversity and challenges.** This makes the opportunity of the programme a transformative and empowering experience for many women.

7.2. CONTRIBUTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are not directly relevant to GTP and are therefore not addressed in trainings. However, being exposed to life experiences in Iceland can contribute to a new understanding of human rights. The aforementioned paper mentions a case that illustrates this point. A 6-month fellow discovered the existence of women's shelters while staying in Iceland. These shelters provide refuge for women who need to escape from abusive homes. In her own country, abuse and violence against women are unfortunately common, and she had never heard of such shelters before. Taking advantage of her opportunity to study geothermal energy, she visited the shelters and conducted interviews with the staff members, hoping to gather information on how to establish a similar shelter in her own region. Upon her return, she contacted the ministry in the capital city and advocated for the establishment of a women's shelter in her region, where female abuse is prevalent.

7.3. CONTRIBUTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The environmental risks of geothermal development projects are addressed in GTP trainings, and environmental science is one of the eight areas of specialisation in the 6-month training. Environmental and social management of geothermal projects is covered in 11 modules of the 5-month diploma. Environmental aspects and risks of geothermal development were also included in the 2017, 2022, and 2024 editions of the short courses in El Salvador. Additionally, environmental, social, and regulatory issues and tools for addressing them were incorporated into all editions of the short courses in Kenya.

The utilisation of geothermal energy can serve as a substitute for electricity and heat generation from fossil fuels. Therefore, **any development in geothermal energy exploitation to which GTP contributes has the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.**

Additionally, GTP fellows are required to practice recycling both at the GTP office and in their provided accommodation. For some of them, this is their first exposure to recycling practices, which also provides valuable environmental education.

7.4. MANAGING AND COUNTERING THE EFFECTS OF EXTERNAL SHOCKS AND RISKS TO THE PROGRAMME

The principal external shock to the programme's implementation during 2018-2023 was the impact of the **COVID pandemic.** All planned GTP training activities were cancelled in 2020 and were not substituted with online training. Training activities were resumed in 2021 with the 6-month fellowship and the short training in Kenya.

CONCLUSIONS

The extent that the training programme interventions have met their intended results

The GTP's mission to facilitate access to and promote the sustainable utilisation of geothermal resources aligns perfectly with the priorities of Iceland's Policy for International Development Cooperation 2019-2023. Additionally, GTP's alignment with Iceland's commitment to the SDGs, particularly SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), demonstrates a coherent integration with Iceland's national development vision, strategies, and international commitments.

The GTP interventions are well-aligned with the needs and priorities of the partner countries and target groups. The strong demand for the fellowship training programme indicates its relevance and alignment with local priorities, particularly regarding electricity generation from geothermal resources.

Many partner countries, including El Salvador, Kenya, and Ethiopia, have national strategies that prioritise the reduction of greenhouse gases by exploiting geothermal resources. Additionally, the GTP training activities are placing emphasis on low enthalpy resources and direct heat utilization, which are expected to play an increasingly important role in local economic development.

The programme is effective in targeting individuals who can significantly impact geothermal development in their respective countries as results show the majority of GTP fellows work in public institutions, public sector enterprises, and academia.

The programme offers a coherent mix of training interventions, targeting young professionals with tailored training offers of different levels of depth. The core intervention is the 6-month training programme fellowship in Iceland which allows a high degree of specialisations for fellows. The 5-month diploma in El Salvador has a similar intensity to the 6-month fellowship programme but offers very limited specialisation opportunities. This comprehensive approach to training limits the depth of expertise that participants can achieve in specific areas but can focus on regionally relevant issues for El Salvador such as using volcanic geothermal resources.

The evaluator assesses that GTP has successfully delivered the intended capacity development results. During the period 2018-2023, the principal training outputs delivered by the programme include 120 fellows graduated via the 6-month fellowship programme in Iceland, 86 persons trained via the regional 5-month diploma in El Salvador, 27 former fellows supported for MSc degree, 7 for doctoral research studies, 422 direct beneficiaries trained through short courses, and 396 learners enrolled in GTP online offer.

Regarding the 6-month training in Iceland, the average number of fellows graduated from the 6-month training in Iceland per year was 24 excluding 2020 when no training took place due to COVID-19. The fellows came from 28 countries. 78% of fellows came from LDCs or LMICs, and 41% of the fellows came from countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The key partner country from which 2018-2023 GTP fellows came is Kenya (23%). **Overall, the quality of the individual training sessions is highly rated by the fellows.** Each graduating fellow completed a research paper/project **which form a basis for further immediate action and knowledge sharing exchange by the alumni upon return to their home country.**

In response to the external evaluation team's online questionnaire survey of GRÓ alumni, **89% of the 2018-2023 GTP fellows (strongly) agree with the statement saying that they were able to advance their contribution in their field/subject** area thanks to the postgraduate training programme. Additionally, **68% of 2018-2023 GTP respondents indicated they had advanced professionally** in their career due to their enhanced skills. The online survey results show that **63% of the 2018-2023 GTP fellows have contributed to projects that are related to the SDG achievement.** Among these, 90% of GTP respondents have contributed to projects/programmes/policies initiatives that addressed SDG 7, "Affordable, reliable and sustainable modern energy for all," and 39% to SDG 13, "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact."

The programme has supported 7 doctoral scholars (3 females and 4 males) by providing scholarships for doctoral studies. Four scholars come from LDCs and 3 come from LMICs. Two Kenyan students have earned a PhD degree, and another scholar from Tanzania is close to finishing his. From 2018 to 2023, GTP initiated supported for 27 MSc students (11 females and 16 males) and saw 29 in total graduate (12 females and 17 males) including those who were granted a scholarship just before the 2018 evaluation period. 9 of the supported MSc students were from LDCs and 17 were from LMICs. The effectiveness of the interventions aligns with the standard expectation of such scholarship grants. In the 2018-2023 period, the PhD-supported scholars have produced 7 papers published in academic journals demonstrating the creation of significant research outputs by scholars.

Through the short courses, the programme delivered training to 422 local experts working in a wide range of institutions including public companies and government institutions. All GRÓ-funded short courses were held in Kenya or El Salvador. Short trainings in Kenya are introductory trainings covering all main aspects of geothermal energy while short trainings in El Salvador are shorter than those in Kenya but tend to focus in-depth on specific topics. **More than 90% of short course participants were either satisfied or highly satisfied with the relevance and usefulness of the training.**

The offer of online courses was relatively limited, with only four online courses organized, each lasting for 2 days. However, participation was very high, as 396 individuals enrolled in the courses (172 female and 269 male). GTP staff plans to increase the offer of online training activities, however, continuous budget cuts and limited human resources have represented a main constraint.

The GTP has actively contributed to enabling three local partner organizations to design and implement trainings. Two of these organizations are based in Kenya and one in El Salvador. These organisations direct benefit by becoming regional experts in geothermal energy through participating in the training programmes, positioning themselves as regional experts in geothermal energy. **They have shown a clear commitment to improving professional capacities to develop geothermal projects in their respective regions. The two organizations in Kenya have also significantly contributed to the cost of the short trainings, and one has regularly funded fellows for the 6-month training in Iceland.**

The GTP alumni network is also an important means to empower alumni and build a community of geothermal experts, especially for addressing technological solutions as reported by alumni. Participation in the WGC has been key in facilitating networking. The empowerment of alumni is also actively promoted by involving former fellows in teaching and organizing training events, such as short courses of the 5-month diploma in El Salvador.

The primary successes of the training programme and the benefits generated

The GTP has strongly contributed to creating a pool of geothermal experts in LDCs and LMICs with the most significant geothermal potential.

The fellowship programme is strongly in demand. **The selection of fellows is based on a rigorous review of nominated practitioners and an interview process. As part of the selection process, considerable attention is given to ensuring that the chosen fellows are in positions that enable them to make an impact on the utilization of geothermal resources in their countries. In order to ensure the selection of fellows with significant learning potential, GTP often uses short courses to observe experts nominated for the fellowships.**

The results of the online survey indicate that the perceived quality and coherence of the training was very high. The same survey also indicates that the 6-month training programme has strongly contributed to fellows' skill development with the highest degree of reported improvement in the areas of technical skills, research, and analytical skills. While all training components were highly appreciated, individual research projects and fieldwork were deemed to be the most valuable training modules. **Fellows go back to their countries empowered to drive change in their area of specialization.** Additionally, fellows consider **completing the 6-month training beneficial for career advancement.** The most frequent forms of career advancement are taking on more responsibilities and receiving job promotions. GTP has also trained 86 experts through the regional 5-month diploma during the 2018-2023 period. **The regional 5-month diploma is a very cost-efficient training intervention that has contributed to growing the pool of geothermal experts in an area with high geothermal potential from volcanic origin.**

Regarding short trainings, the end-of-course survey reports detail very high satisfaction with the usefulness and relevance of the training for the participants' work. The main training topics for the short trainings in El Salvador are chosen based on the institutions expected to send trainees to best align to their needs. In Kenya, where GTP does not organize an intensive 5-month training like in El Salvador, the three-week training is an introductory course touching on the main aspects of early geothermal development. In this way, **GTP makes sure that short courses are tailored to the needs of the country context and partner organizations.**

Short trainings also represent an important opportunity for networking. GTP actively promotes alumni networking in different ways especially by supporting the participation of fellows the WGC. One main benefit of alumni networking is exchange on technological solutions with peers and colleagues who have faced similar problems.

The GTP's commitment to promoting gender equality is evident through its proactive policies and initiatives. By implementing a "gender-based candidate selection policy," GTP actively encourages the nomination of female candidates for training activities, providing women in the geothermal sector with essential opportunities to advance their careers. Gender equality has not been achieved in GTP trainings in the 2018-2023 period. It was achieved in 2024 for the 6-month training, but it will be difficult to maintain it due to the overrepresentation of men in the geothermal industry. Additionally, GTP's emphasis on recruiting female teachers serves as an inspiring model for gender inclusivity to the fellows. **GTP training has a profound gender-transformative impact in providing women from culturally restrictive backgrounds the chance to access professional training in an inclusive environment.** These experiences not only empower women to gain confidence in an assertive environment but also equip them with the skills necessary to overcome challenges in their professional and personal lives.

The primary constraints for results achievement by the training programme

The primary constraints for achieving results in the programme's capacity development efforts are external risks largely beyond the direct or even intermediate control of the programme.

The coherence of GTP with other development efforts by Iceland in partner countries or regions is limited. The programme's activities and the distribution of fellows indicate a focus on countries with significant geothermal development potential rather than those with bilateral cooperation agreements with Iceland **which is rational given the programme's objectives of geothermal development.**

Past synergies, such as those with the MFA-ICEDA funded projects in East Africa, demonstrate the potential for greater coherence. However, recently the MFA has paid less attention to promoting the utilization on geothermal resources in East Africa. **Where possible, future initiatives could benefit from reinvigorating these synergies to enhance the coherence and impact of Iceland's development efforts.**

The respondents to the evaluation team's questionnaire survey indicate that **the principal challenges they face in utilizing and applying their knowledge are insufficient resources within their home institution.** Another risk was the complicated procedures required to grant an immigration visa which delayed the arrival of some fellows.

The programme seeks to mitigate these risks through a rigorous selection of nominated candidates for the 6-month training and by including support from their home organization. In order to reduce risks related to immigration procedures, GTP selects experts well in advance of the beginning of the annual programme.

The suitability of the programme institutional arrangements to generate the programme results

The evaluation of GTP reveals a comprehensive and efficient operation that has successfully adapted to changing circumstances and maintained high standards of training and financial management.

The GTP demonstrates satisfactory operational efficiency, delivering intended programme results in a timely manner and maintaining high standards in both quantity and quality of services. The financial management adheres to the service agreement and internal control systems established by the hosting institution, ÍSOR. **The programme benefits from robust planning and monitoring systems, ensuring effective delivery of results and incorporating feedback from previous editions of the trainings.**

The programme's management and implementation systems are well-structured and effective. Initially operated at Orkustofnun, GTP has successfully transitioned to ÍSOR. Despite a reduction in full-time staff, the programme has effectively leveraged temporary assistants and support from ÍSOR staff to meet its operational needs. The pool of expertise drawn from leading geothermal institutes, universities, engineering companies, and energy companies constitutes a significant and essential asset for the delivery of the programme.

The financial management of GTP is robust and benefits from ÍSOR's control procedures and internal financial management systems. Annual audits and a service agreement with the GRÓ Centre provide additional oversight.

Available resources have been diminishing over time. As a result, the average cost per fellow of the 6-month training in Iceland is 12% lower than the cost per fellow of the 2012-2016 period. **Despite a reduction in budgeted resources, particularly from GRÓ transfers, the programme has managed to sustain its operations and adapt its activities accordingly.**

All of the GTP's training activities are well-organized and responsive to the needs of the geothermal sector. The selection process for fellows is rigorous, ensuring that only highly qualified and relevant candidates are chosen.

The programme's financial and human resources are efficiently deployed and offer high value for money. The variability in daily costs per beneficiary reflects the different intensities of training and support provided. The six-month training programme in Iceland, scholarships for MSc and PhD students, and short courses in Kenya and El Salvador are all managed cost-effectively, **while the five-month diploma in El Salvador is most cost-effective.**

The sustainability of the training programmes in El Salvador and Kenya depends on the continued partnership with local companies and the ongoing provision of funds from GTP. There are indications of financial commitments from partner companies. In Kenya, the two companies assume important portions of the short training costs while in El Salvador the financial contribution from the local partner LaGeo has been less. However, the evaluative case study for El Salvador shows that there has been a significant in-kind contribution through the provision of lecturers and facilities. Additionally, in 2018, LaGeo's financial contribution has been exceptionally high, and discussions are ongoing to fund the diploma course independently. More specifically, for the new 5-month diploma edition in El Salvador, GTP is expected to significantly reduce its contribution, while still playing a role to ensure the quality of the training.

Overall evaluation conclusion on the performance of the GTP

The evaluator judges that **the overall performance of the GTP is satisfactory** (good).

Table 43: Evaluation performance rating

EVALUATION CRITERION	PERFORMANCE RATING
Relevance	Highly satisfactory
Coherence	Adequate
Effectiveness	Satisfactory
Efficiency	Satisfactory
Sustainability	Satisfactory
Impact	Satisfactory

LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons 1

Two crucial aspects need to be considered for a training programme to have an impact on the utilization of geothermal resources in a certain country. The first one is the potential of the trainee's home organization to utilize geothermal resources and promote their usage in the home country, and the second one is the current or future position that the trainee will hold within the home organization.

An organization's potential contribution to the utilization of geothermal resources can be assessed rather easily. However, evaluating a candidate's potential to influence an organization is a much more complicated task that requires analysing the candidate's personal potential while also considering their home organization's ability to empower fellows through its organizational structure and procedures.

Insights from GTP show that a careful assessment of both aspects is essential for training institutions.

Lesson 2

The partnership with UNESCO has not brought any tangible effects since its beginning. One expected benefit from UNESCO through the partnership was the added credibility from its brand reputation. However, the country of Iceland has a strong reputation concerning technical knowledge of geothermal resources. Key informants interviewed in El Salvador stated the Icelandic origin of any GTP expert lecturing on geothermal energy signals competence and credibility. This "country of origin" reputation effect holds more brand value than an international organisation brand such as UNESCO.

Lesson 3

The GTPs in El Salvador and Kenya demonstrate that repeating the training over several years with the same partner organisation is a viable way to expand training in partner countries. The success of these programmes relies on the active involvement of well-established state-owned geothermal companies. These three involved companies have an extensive history in geothermal utilization and a strategic goal of contributing to the growth of the geothermal sector in the region. Building the necessary skills for geothermal development requires specific professional expertise. To replicate the training supported by GTP in El Salvador and Kenya in other countries, it will be crucial to identify partner organisations that have strong expertise in geothermal development, share the same commitment as LaGeo, KenGen, and GDC to advancing the geothermal community, and have a long-term vision of promoting the use of geothermal resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The focus of the programme's activities and the distribution of fellows is on countries with significant geothermal development potential, rather than those with bilateral cooperation agreements with Iceland. As a result, the coherence of the GTP with other development efforts by Iceland in partner countries or regions is limited. In future initiatives, **GTP should establish synergies with other development interventions funded by the GOI to enhance the coherence and impact of Iceland's development efforts.** However, attention should be paid to avoid that offering geothermal training in countries that have no viable resources or plans to develop geothermal resources.
2. The GTP's offering for online training has been limited. This is a missed opportunity to expand the pool of experts in the geothermal field at a relatively low cost. **GTP should consider investing greater efforts to improve the online offer.** This additional activity would probably require additional financial resources.
3. The evaluative case study on the 5-month diploma in El Salvador has shown that this specific training intervention is very cost-effective for enlarging the pool of geothermal experts in the region. However, the recent graduation of El Salvador from LMCI to an UMIC poses a challenge for aligning future GRÓ-funded activities with the objective of focusing on LMICs. **GTP and LaGeo should pay special attention to ensure that a larger portion of trainees are from LMICs.** In addition, the general nature of the offered curriculum in the 5-month diploma limits specialisations needed for work in the geothermal sector. If offering many different specialisation fields (as done for the 6-month training in Iceland) is not an option due to costs and logistical considerations, a **possible alternative for GTP and LaGeo could be to offer two broad specialisation areas: one for the earth sciences (including geothermal geology, geochemistry, and geophysics) and another for plant development and drilling.**
4. The GTP has tracked part of the alumni in an informal way, but it has not used a formal tracing method to keep track of the career advancement of alumni. This is a missed opportunity to properly assess the impact of the training programme once fellow return to their countries. However, with the limited number of available staff it will be hard for GTP to properly implement a regular survey. **GRÓ should consider the implementation of a tracer survey for all supported training programmes.**

POTENTIAL OPTIONS TO GUIDE FUTURE ENDEAVOURS OF THE PROGRAMME

Currently, GTP has no synergies with other development interventions funded by Icelandic international cooperation. Previous collaborations, such as those with the MFA-ICEDA funded projects in East Africa, demonstrate the potential for more partnerships. The MFA could explore possibilities to engage GTP in development interventions in future projects to improve the coherence and effectiveness of Iceland's development initiatives.

The establishment of geothermal training centres in partner countries is an opportunity to be further explored. These should not only be limited to the provision of short trainings but also to longer and more intensive training. The 5-month regional diploma in El Salvador represents an excellent example that could be replicated in East Africa with potential financial contribution from other donors and partner companies. Data provided show that such an option may be particularly cost-effective. However, any long-term training outside of Iceland would not have the same transformative potential on gender aspects that a 6-month living experience has in Iceland.

SWOT ANALYSIS - GTP

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GTP is a well-known training institution in the field of geothermal energy that has effectively contributed to augmenting the number of geothermal experts in LDCs and LMICs There are significant positive impacts of GTP in advancing the skills of fellows, contributing to further research, and advancing career opportunities for fellows. GTP has been able to actively engage three key companies as long-term partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited alignment of GTP with other development efforts funded by the GOI Limited offer of online training Reduced number of permanent GTP core staff
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The international development cooperation projects that the Icelandic MFA funds on geothermal resources exploration and exploitation offer considerable opportunities to involve GTP in capacity-building for those projects, thus improving the alignment of GTP with Icelandic international development cooperation. The KenGen training centre was selected as the TVET reference training centre for energy aspects of a regional World Bank investment (approximately 70% of the World Bank grant investment is for infrastructure upgrade, while a large part of the remaining part is aimed at funding the pedagogical and training skills of KenGen experts). There are opportunities to replicate the organization of an intensive regional diploma of long duration as done in El Salvador to establish a permanent training centre focused on geothermal energy. In the past, LaGeo has demonstrated the capacity to assume a substantial part of the training cost and discussions are ongoing to fund the diploma independently from GTP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any training activity implemented outside of Iceland will not have the same transformative potential on gender aspects that Iceland provides. Continuous cuts to the GTP budget may undermine GTP's training capacity.

GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMME RESULTS DELIVERY & ACHIEVEMENT – GRÓ GTP

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
Outcome: GRÓ fellows, trainees and respective organisations promote and implement changes needed to achieve SDGs relevant to their field of work									
P1. Management in partner organisations assess the training to be valuable for the organisation	% of alumni survey respondents who agree (4 out of 5 on the scale) or strongly agree (5 out of 5 on the scale) that their organisation's management values and appreciates their skills from the postgraduate training (3 years after graduation)	92.9%	68.8%	78.3%	N/A	100%	87.0%*	91.7%*	85.7% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)
P2. Graduates have used the training to advance their contribution in their field/sector of work	% of alumni survey respondents (fellows) who agree (4 out of 5 on the scale) or strongly agree (5 out of 5 on the scale) that they advanced their contribution in their field/sector due to the postgraduate programme (3 years after graduation)	92.9%	81.3%	91.3%	N/A	94.7%	91.3%*	83.3%*	91.4% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
P3. Graduates have used their training to share with colleagues and other experts in their respective field of expertise	% of alumni survey respondents (fellows) who report sharing their training knowledge with supervisors, colleagues and/or expert networks (3 years after graduation)	78.6%	88.9%	76.0%	N/A	83.3%	69.2%*	84.0%*	79.7% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)
P4. Graduates have advanced professionally (e.g. promotion or received scholarship for further studies)	% of alumni survey respondents (fellows) who report substantial (4 out of 5 on the scale) or extreme (5 out of 5 on the scale) career advancement due to the training (3 years after graduation)	71.4%	68.8%	65.2%	N/A	80.0%	56.5%*	70.8%*	67.9% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)

**The GRÓ Results Framework suggest measuring outcome level results 3 years after programme graduation. Therefore, the indicator value for the graduation year 2022 and 2023 should be interpreted with caution. Generally, the survey findings suggest that it might take some time for outcome level results to materialise after programme completion. Therefore, the measurement 3 years after programme completion seems reasonable.*

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

P1. Number of experts trained in the GRÓ 5-6- month training programmes	Annual # of fellows	23	24	24	0 (COVID)	25	23	24	143
	Gender ratio M/F (%)	8 F (35%) 15 M (65%)	9 F (38%) 15 M (63%)	11 F (46%) 13 M (54%)		12 F (48%) 13 M (52%)	9 F (39%) 14 M (61%)	9 F (38%) 15 M (63%)	58 F (41%) 85 M (59%)
	Country Income level LDC and LMI (%)	35% LDC 57% LMIC	25% LDC 54% LMIC	21% LDC 54% LMIC		20% LDC 68% LMIC	4% LDC 65% LMIC	17% LDC 71% LMIC	29 LDC (20%) 88 LMIC (62%)

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
P2. Quality of the 5-6 month training	Self-assessment survey of fellows at the start and end of training on knowledge, skills and mindset (on a scale from 1 low – 5 high)	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available, no formal survey conducted	Not applicable	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	A survey is conducted based on different criteria and questions for different topics and phases, which makes it impossible to determine a single score
P3. Number of graduates eligible for 30 ECTS credits / Diploma degree at completion of 5-6 month training. Only applicable GEST & LRT fellows	Annual # of diploma certificates issued Graduation ratio (% of total cohort of fellows eligible)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	The GTP postgraduate fellowship is not eligible for ECTS credits
P4. Number of short courses (5-7 days) in partner countries	Annual # of weeks of on-site training # of participants in short courses Gender ratio M/F (%)	<i>SDG Africa</i> = 3 weeks 63 people (35% F) <i>SDG LAC</i> = 1 week 66 people (48% F)	<i>SDG Africa</i> = 3 weeks 32 people (34% F) <i>SDG LAC</i> = 1 week 76 people (38% F)	<i>SDG Africa</i> = 3 weeks 38 people (39% F)	0 (COVID)	<i>SDG Africa</i> = 3 weeks 50 people (36% F)	<i>SDG Africa</i> = 3 weeks 43 people (35% F) <i>SDG LAC</i> = 1 week 46 people (43% F)	<i>SDG Africa</i> = 3 weeks 43 people (37% F)	<i>SDG Africa</i> = 18 weeks 269 people, 97 F (36%) <i>SDG LAC</i> = 3 weeks 188 people, 81 F (43%)

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
		<i>Customer-designed courses = 0.6 weeks 16 people (25% F)</i>	<i>Customer-designed courses = 0.5 weeks 54 people (30% F) LAC Diploma = 30 people</i>	<i>Customer-designed courses = 1.3 weeks 22 people (9% F) LAC Diploma = 29 people</i>			<i>Customer-designed courses = 0.2 weeks 19 people (32% F) LAC Diploma = 27 people</i>		<i>Customer-designed courses = 2.6 weeks, 111 people, 28 F (25% F) LAC 5-month diploma = 86 people, 25 F (29%)</i>
P5. Quality of short course training	% of participants assess the course to be useful for enhancing skills & knowledge (relevant and helpful for my job) (on scale from 1 – 5)	SDG Africa = 4.6/5 SDG LAC = 4.42/5	SDG Africa = data not available SDG LAC = 4.46/5	SDG Africa = data not available	Not applicable	SDG Africa = data not available	SDG Africa = data not available SDG LAC 95% respondents	SDG Africa = 98%	Survey results for 2018 Africa have not been made available. The 2019 and 2023 surveys did not include questions on usefulness. In 2021 and 2022 no survey was done for course in Africa. The 2022 survey LAC and 2023

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
									Africa is not on a 1-5 scale
P6. Number of live streaming training courses	Annual # # of participants	0	0	0	1 course 46 people (26% F)	1 course 64 people (14% F)	2 courses 286 people (37% F)	0	4 courses 396 people 127 F (32%)
P7. Quality live streaming training courses	% of participants assess the course to be useful for enhancing skills & knowledge (relevant and helpful for my job) (on scale from 1 – 5)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	97% 4.63/5	Data not available	94%	Not applicable	2021 survey did not include a question on usefulness of course. Perc. figures refer to the quantity of persons that scored at least 3 on a scale from 1 to 5.
P8. Number of online courses and number of participants in the online courses	Annual # # of participants newly enrolled	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	No online courses offered
P9. Quality of online training	% of participants assess the course to be useful for enhancing skills & knowledge (on scale from 1 – 5)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
P10. Number of GRÓ graduate studies scholarships provided annually	Annual # Master's and PhD Gender ratio M/F (%)	M.Sc. = 5 3 F (60%) 2 M (40%) PhD = 1 1 M (100%)	M.Sc. = 5 2 F (40%) 3 M (60%) PhD = 1 1 M (100%)	M.Sc. = 5 2 F (40%) 3 M (60%) PhD = 1 1 M (100%)	M.Sc. = 5 2 F (40%) 3 M (60%) PhD = 1 1 F (100%)	M.Sc. = 4 1 F (25%) 3 M (75%) PhD = 1 1 F (100%)	M.Sc. = 4 2 F (50%) 2 M (50%) PhD = 3 1 F (33%) 2 M (67%)	M.Sc. = 4 2 F (50%) 2 M (50%) PhD = 0	M.Sc. = 32 14 F (44%) 18 M (56%) PhD = 8 3 F (38%) 5 M (63%)
Output N°2: Production and dissemination of new knowledge by GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipient									
P1. Number of research outputs (research project reports) annually by GRÓ fellows	Annual # of research project papers confirmed on GRÓ website	23	24	24	0	25	0	0	All fellows completed a paper. 96 were published on the GTP website
P2. Number of master's thesis published annually by GRÓ scholarship recipients (research output)	Annual # of published master's thesis at universities' websites	5	6	5	3	5	5	5	34 published
P3. Number of PhD papers published annually by GRÓ scholarship recipients (research outputs)	Annual # of publications in research journals	0	2	0	2	0	2	1	7 papers published
Output N°3: Professional empowerment of GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipients is increased through GRÓ community building and networking									
P1. Number of alumni events organised by GRÓ annually	Annual #	0	1 (anniversary workshop)	0	0	1 (side event of the WGC)	0	1 (side event of the WGC)	3 alumni events

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
P2. Number of GRÓ funded alumni participating in regional and international conferences	Annual # Gender ratio M/F (%)	0	0	0	0	69 in-person, 108 remotely	0	48 in-person 20 F (42%) 28 M (58%)	117 in-person 108 remotely
P3. % of GRÓ short courses involving alumni in teaching/organisation of short courses	Annual # (% of GRÓ short courses involving alumni)	100% (3 of 3 events)	83% (5 of 6 events)	100% (3 of 3 events)	100% (1 of 1 event)	100% (2 of 2 events)	100% (6 of 6 events)	100% (1 of 1 event)	95% (21 of 22 events)

Annex 11.4 Programme Evaluation Report - GRÓ LRT

LRT Background

GRÓ LRT Evaluation findings

Conclusions

Lessons Learned

Recommendations

SWOT Analysis

Potential options to guide future LRT Endeavours

GRÓ LRT BACKGROUND

TRAINING PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION, INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND APPROACH

The **GRÓ Land Restoration Training Programme (LRT)** began in 2007 as a 3-year pilot project. In 2010, it was established as a full United Nations University (UNU) training programme made possible by an agreement between the Government of Iceland's (GOI) **Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA)**, UNU, and the Icelandic implementing partners, the **Agricultural University of Iceland** and the **Soil Conservation Service of Iceland (SCSI)**¹. It was thus the third UNU programme in Iceland joining UNU Geothermal Training Programme (GTP) established in 1978 and the UNU Fisheries Training Programme (FTP) established in 1998. In 2013, the UNU Gender Equality Studies and Training (GEST) programme was added to the Icelandic UNU portfolio as the fourth training programme. The partnership with UNU ended in 2019, and beginning in 2020, the four training programmes operate under the **GRÓ Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change**. The GRÓ Centre is an independent agency of the MFA, operating under its own legal identity and as a "Category 2 Centre (C2C) under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)"² based in Iceland.

The mission of the LRT is to assist low- and middle-income countries to combat land degradation, promote sustainable land management, and restore degraded land through strategic capacity building for individuals and institutions.

The programme is built on the assumption that the training activities provided through GRÓ LRT contribute to participants' capacity to act as catalysts of change in their respective home countries and regions. In the context of LRT, such **desired change is directly defined by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15³ and indirectly defined by SDGs 1, 2, 12, and 13**. Its objective for change also aligns with **the objectives of other international conventions** such as the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD).

The GRÓ LRT offerings include the following capacity-building activities:

¹ Since 1 January 2024, the former Soil Conservation Service of Iceland (SCSI) is known as 'Land and Forest Iceland' after a merger with the former Icelandic Forest Service.

² "Category 2 Centres under the auspices of UNESCO" do not seem to be sharply defined and an exact definition could not be found on the official UNESCO websites. One rather vague description found at <https://www.unesco.org/en/partnerships/institutes?hub=953> reads: "[Category 2 Centres under the auspices of UNESCO] are entities legally external to UNESCO and associated with the Organization through various arrangements, as approved by the General Conference. UNESCO can be represented on their governing bodies, but they do not apply UNESCO's rules and regulations and are not led by UNESCO staff members. Though independent of UNESCO, they are a privileged partner of the Organization with access to UNESCO's logo and international and intergovernmental bodies and networks, and may leverage UNESCO's international reach and convening powers." The GRÓ Centre is listed as a Category 2 Centre under "Earth Sciences" within the UNESCO field of competence of "Natural Sciences".

³ "Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss"

Six-month LRT programme in Iceland (“6-month LRT Programme”)

GRÓ LRT’s core activity is an annual 6-month postgraduate-level training on ecological restoration and sustainable land management in Iceland. It has been held every year since 2007 except for 2020 when it was cancelled due to the COVID pandemic. A total of 198 individuals have graduated from this training as of the end of 2023.

The programme is divided into two sections: the first is training on the principles and processes of land degradation, ecosystem restoration and sustainable land management in the form of lectures, practical training, fieldwork, exercises and group work, while the second is an individual research project in the field of ecosystem restoration and sustainable land management. Since 2022, successful completion of the 6-month LRT programme is awarded with a Postgraduate Diploma from the Agricultural University of Iceland, worth 30 credits of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). **Participation in the 6-month LRT programme is fully funded by GRÓ LRT.**

Short courses in partner countries

GRÓ LRT also offers **in-country short courses on land restoration tailored to the local context in selected partner countries.** The first short course took place in **Uganda in 2017**. Through the end of 2023, three short courses have been offered in Uganda, three in Mongolia, and one in Ethiopia to a total of 169 participants (24 per course). Additionally, a short course on gender, the environment, and sustainable land management was offered in Kyrgyzstan to 16 participants in 2023 in collaboration with GRÓ GEST.

Postgraduate scholarship programme

GRÓ LRT further offers a **limited number of postgraduate scholarships** (usually not more than two at a given time according to the available budget) for selected LRT alumni to pursue their **MSc or PhD studies** at the Agricultural University of Iceland. In addition, there has been a MA scholarship at the University of Iceland. Until the end of 2023, a total of 7 LRT postgraduate scholarships have been awarded (5 MSc, 1 MA, 1 PhD).

Online Courses

GRÓ LRT has further co-developed three **MOOCs**⁴ as **publicly available online training courses**. By the end of 2023, a total of 20,026 individuals have enrolled on these courses and 1,957 are confirmed to have completed them.

Other

Furthermore, GRÓ LRT supports activities that **foster continued exchange, exposure, and professional growth among the 6-month LRT programme alumni.** These activities include support of selected 6-month LRT programme alumni to attend relevant **international conferences** as well as support towards the **formation of alumni networks.**

GRÓ LRT is **developing collaboration models with selected partner universities** for the **in-country delivery of land restoration training courses through the respective partner institutions.** A case

⁴ 2017: MOOC titled “Landscape restoration for sustainable development: A business approach” (<https://www.coursera.org/learn/landscape-restoration-sustainable-development>) funded and developed in consortium with others

2019: MOOC titled “Business Model Innovation for Sustainable Landscape Restoration” (<https://www.coursera.org/learn/bmi-sustainable-landscape-restoration>)

2019: MOOC titled “Sheep in the Land of Fire and Ice” (<https://sheepfireice.wordpress.com/>)

study on a potential collaboration with Makerere University in Uganda has been conducted in line with this evaluation.

MAIN STAKEHOLDERS AND TARGET GROUPS

The **primary target group** of GRÓ LRT are **early- to mid-career academics and professionals from least-developed (LDC), low-middle income (LMIC), and upper-middle income countries (UMIC)**. The programme has worked with a total of 14 countries since 2007 and 11 countries during the evaluation reference period of 2018 to 2023. Three quarters of the course participants during the evaluation reference period came from the following five countries: Uganda (LDC), Malawi (LDC), Lesotho (LDC), Mongolia (LMIC) and Ghana (LMIC). LRT most recently accepted two students from Kenya (LMIC) as its newest partner country in 2023.

The participants of the 6-month LRT programme are identified and selected through nominations from partner institutions – usually universities, government institutions, or non-governmental organizations (see 0 for a list of all GRÓ LRT partner institutions per country between 2018 and 2023).

To be eligible for the 6-month LRT programme in Iceland, applicants must (i) have at least a Bachelor's degree in a relevant field, (ii) be employed by a GRÓ LRT partner institution, (iii) have a guarantee of returning to their workplace within the partner institution after completing the programme, and (iv) be under 40 years of age. In addition, there is a limited number of places (two for the 2025 cohort) for staff from African biosphere reserves through the UNESCO "Man and the Biosphere" (MAB) programme.

Each annual cohort of participants ideally consists of a heterogeneous mix of ideally only one participant from a given partner institution. This principle shall level the ground between the participants and ensure that all participants have to get out of their known environment and comfort zone.

INSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR MANAGEMENT OF THE LRT PROGRAMME

GRÓ LRT was an individual UNU programme until 2020, when it became part of the GRÓ Centre. **The GRÓ Centre oversees the programmes and bundles high-level administrative, contractual, reporting, and budgeting functions of four training programmes in international development under the auspices of UNESCO**. The GRÓ Centre operates under its own legal identity and is guided and overseen by a Governing Board as a unit within the MFA. GRÓ is guided by three policy frameworks: The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, Iceland's Policy for International Development Cooperation, and UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy.

Core funding for GRÓ LRT is provided by MFA through the GRÓ Centre as part of Iceland's ODA budget. Some external funding is obtained by GRÓ or GRÓ LRT through counterpart contributions from partner institutions, external grants, and participation in international projects.

GRÓ LRT is hosted by the **Agricultural University of Iceland and implemented jointly with Land and Forest Iceland** (which is the result of a merger of the **Soil Conservation Service of Iceland** and the Forestry Service in 2024).

GRÓ LRT EVALUATION FINDINGS

PROGRAMME GOALS, STRATEGY AND APPROACH (RELEVANCE)

Alignment of the LRT programme with Iceland's development cooperation policies, and with Iceland's national development vision and strategies

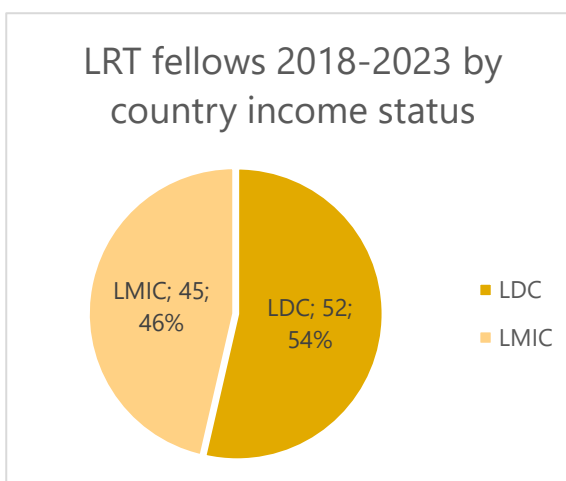
The evaluation finds that **GRÓ LRT is strongly aligned with Iceland's development cooperation priorities** and is therefore **highly relevant**.

Iceland's **international development cooperation policy 2024-2028** supports the SDGs and the 2015 Paris Agreement and emphasizes four thematic areas. Among these is the thematic area of 'climate affairs and natural resources', which **refers to SDG 15 and places strong emphasis on sustainable land use and restoration of habitats**.

Similar to its bilateral partner countries and multilateral organizations, Iceland's international development cooperation policy defines the GRÓ Centre as a development cooperation partner. The GRÓ Centre plays an important role in building capacities among individuals and institutions in low- and middle-income countries in fields in which **Iceland's expertise is strong**. One such field is **land restoration** as Iceland has more than a century of experience in nationally coordinated restoration of degraded ecosystems and sustainable land management.

All GRÓ LRT's partner countries are either low- or middle-income countries. Of Iceland's listed partner countries for bilateral development cooperation, Malawi and Uganda are strongly represented in the GRÓ LRT programme showing **GRÓ LRT is well-aligned with Iceland's bilateral development cooperation priorities**.

Figure 55: Six-month LRT programme fellows 2018-2023 by country income status (data labels show country income status as well as absolute and relative numbers of corresponding LRT fellows).



Alignment of the LRT programme with the partner countries' and target groups' needs and priorities, policies and strategies

The evaluation finds that **GRÓ LRT is strongly aligned with the partner countries' and target groups' needs** and, therefore, **highly relevant**.

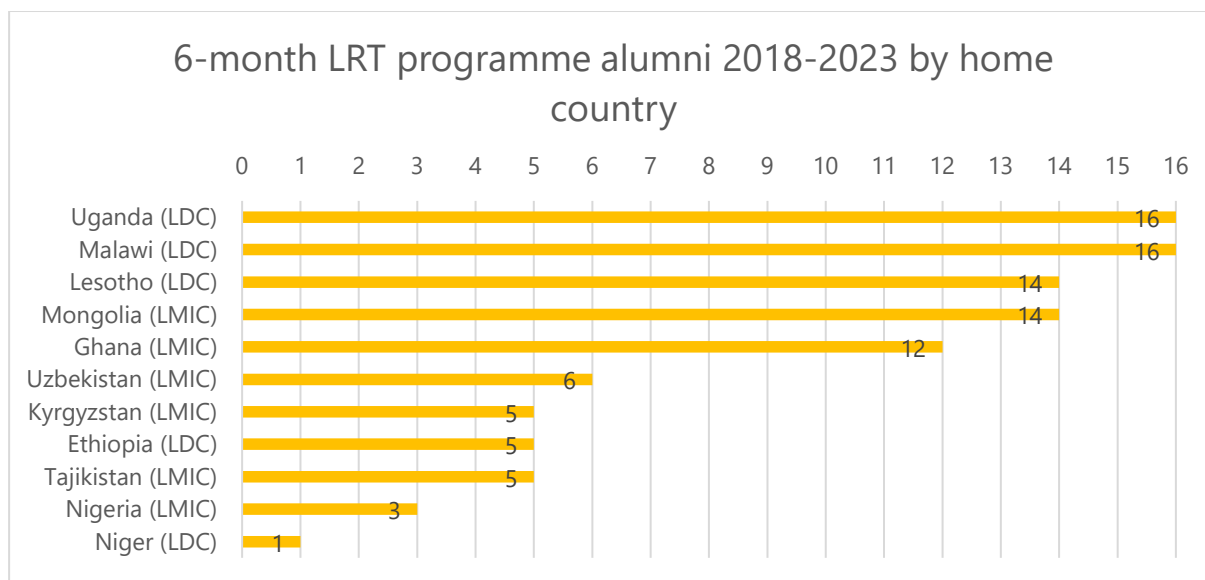
Figure 56 shows the distribution by country of the 97 fellows of the six-month LRT programme from 2018 to 2023. A total of partner 11 countries were involved. All LRT scholarship recipients and short course participants are also from these countries. Seven of the countries are in Africa and four are landlocked countries in central Asia. **All these countries are United Nations (UN) member states and have agreed to the SDGs as well as ratified or acceded to the UNCCD, the 2015 Paris Agreement, and the CBD.** These international treaties set clear priorities for these countries which are relevant to the objectives of GRÓ LRT.

While the causes of land degradation and the context of land restoration differ between countries, interviews conducted for this evaluation indicate that **land restoration is highly important to all partner countries**. Alumni and lecturers from Uganda's 6-month LRT programme highlighted the country's significant land restoration needs due to severe land degradation driven primarily by high population growth and expanding extractive activities. In contrast, alumni from Uzbekistan emphasized

the necessity of restoring and sustainably managing the country's extensive rangelands, as well as addressing challenges related to pollution. In both cases, **the need for well-trained experts in the respective country to address these challenges was emphasized**. GRÓ LRT's objectives are perfectly aligned to meet this need.

Alumni confirmed that the **programme content aligns well with the national contexts of the training participants**, and that the **principles and methods taught are universally applicable** to land restoration activities. The exposure of 6-month LRT programme participants to Iceland's land degradation challenges and land restoration solutions was generally described as both **relatable and inspiring**.

Figure 56: Six-month LRT programme fellows 2018-2023 by country.



In-country short courses are prepared in collaboration with experts from local partner institutions and tailored to the context and challenges of the area where the courses take place. Ugandan interview partners involved in the preparation and implementation of the LRT short courses in Uganda confirmed that these courses were highly valued by participants as exposure to land restoration related challenges and solutions.

Alignment of the LRT programme with international development policy frameworks, goals and strategies

The evaluation finds that **GRÓ LRT is strongly aligned with the international development policy frameworks, goals, and strategies** and is therefore **highly relevant**.

GRÓ LRT's objectives are well-aligned with the SDGs. GRÓ LRT aims to **contribute directly to SDG 15 and indirectly to other SDGs including 1, 2, 12, and 13**, as well as the objectives of other international conventions such as **the three Rio Conventions UNCCD, UNFCCC, and CBD**.

GRÓ LRT's objectives **align with global initiatives such as the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030)** of which GRÓ LRT was approved as an official supporting partner in 2021. The initiative, led by the UN Environment Programme and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, aims to accelerate land restoration globally.

The GRÓ Centre is listed as a C2C under the auspices of UNESCO in the **UNESCO field of competence of "Natural Sciences" in the sub-category "Earth Sciences"**. UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029 (UNESCO, 2022) formulates four strategic objectives, with the second objective reading, "Work towards sustainable societies and protecting the environment through the promotion of science, technology, innovation and the natural heritage". GRÓ LRT is **well-aligned with this strategic objective**.

Quality of the LRT programme design and management approach

The evaluation finds that **GRÓ LRT offers a well-designed high-quality programme which is well-managed at programme level and well-aligned with the overall programme objectives.**

According to the GRÓ Centre ToC, the desired outcome of GRÓ is that 'GRÓ training participants, fellows, and scholarship recipients and their respective organizations promote and implement changes needed to achieve the SDGs relevant to their field of work'. Outputs of the individual programmes towards this outcome are

1. **Increased capability of individuals and expertise of GRÓ partner organizations** 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.**

Output 1 concerning the increased capability of individuals is under the most direct control of the GRÓ LRT programme. The 6-month LRT programme is found to be a **high-quality offering** based on decades of relevant academic and practical expertise. Its curriculum is cogent and updated regularly. Fellows appreciate the balance between theoretical and practical elements, the close interaction with lecturers and supervisors, and the exposure to Icelandic society, landscapes, and infrastructure. The high quality of the programme is further demonstrated by the intention of various partner institutions, such as Makerere University in Uganda and Samarkand State University in Uzbekistan, to replicate the training course in their respective countries. The success of the course relies heavily on the selection of motivated and qualified participants. To ensure this, programme management employs a careful and principled selection process through partner institutions and conducts in-country interviews by GRÓ LRT staff. By committing to the long-term enhancement of individual capacities within partner institutions, the programme also strengthens the overall capacity of these institutions. The 6-month LRT programme **design and management approach is clearly derived from the desired outcome and the respective outputs.**

The **production and dissemination of knowledge by GRÓ training participants is actively supported at various levels.** An entire module of the 6-month LRT programme is dedicated to scientific methods and dissemination skills including academic writing and presentation. The GRÓ LRT website makes the 6-month LRT programme project papers of programme fellows and final Master's and PhD theses of scholarship recipients available online. **Former fellows are supported in attending relevant international conferences and workshops** to present, network, and exchange knowledge.

During the 6-month LRT Programme, the foundation for **GRÓ community building and networking** is laid by a focus on team building and fostering a friendly intercultural atmosphere. After the programme, community-building and networking support is rendered primarily through the organization of alumni meetings. **The degree of participation in such networks depends on the interest, availability and awareness of the individuals and is largely beyond the control of GRÓ LRT.** The formation of alumni groups appears to be working within a given partner country as international coordination proves difficult and usually depend on personal relationships formed during the 6-month LRT programme in Iceland.

PROMOTION OF SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE PROGRAMME AND OTHER LOCAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS (COHERENCE)

Coherence and synergies between LRT and other GRÓ programmes as well as different development efforts by Iceland in partner countries or regions

The evaluation finds that **GRÓ LRT is coherent with other GRÓ programmes as well as different Icelandic development efforts**. There is **no indication of duplication of efforts**. There are **synergies with other activities, particularly GRÓ GEST**.

The GRÓ LRT activities are **coherent with the other branches of Icelandic development cooperation**. **No indication of any duplication of effort with other GRÓ programmes or different Icelandic development efforts** was found.

GRÓ LRT works extensively with two of the three bilateral partner countries defined in Iceland's development cooperation policy in its work with Uganda and Malawi. This demonstrates coherence towards Iceland MFA's larger bilateral development cooperation plan.

In Uganda, Icelandic bilateral aid focuses on two districts in the fields of education, water and sanitation. **GRÓ LRT has complemented that effort** through training government officers from the current and past target districts through the 6-month LRT programme. This improved their capacity to effect participatory change and strengthen their existing relationship with Iceland.

Iceland's multilateral development cooperation happens through multilateral institutions such as UN agencies, the World Bank, and global funds such as the Green Climate Fund. Collaboration happens through contractual core contributions, special earmarked contributions, or the secondment of experts. The work of these **multilateral institutions in the GRÓ LRT partner countries could indirectly benefit from enhanced capacity** of local experts in the field of land restoration.

Synergies exist both in terms of technical cooperation and in the field of professional empowerment and alumni networking with other GRÓ programmes by creating an interdisciplinary network of professionals.

There are strongest **synergies with the GRÓ GEST programme** since **gender is of high importance to land restoration and sustainable land management**. The 6-month LRT programme features various lectures and sessions with a particular emphasis on gender-related issues. GRÓ LRT and GRÓ GEST implemented a short course on gender, the environment, and sustainable land management in Kyrgyzstan in 2023. Furthermore, both ongoing and new collaborations with partner universities for the development of in-country courses on land restoration could benefit from additional insights from GRÓ GEST.

Potential synergies exist with GRÓ FTP with regards to negative impacts of poor land conditions on downstream aquatic biota and with GRÓ GTP in that LRT expertise may help mitigate negative effect on environment/nature caused by geothermal power development, and restore disturbed areas.

Coherence and synergies between LRT and other development efforts by the key partnership organizations or by other donors in partner countries or regions

The evaluation finds that **GRÓ LRT is coherent with other development efforts by key partners and other donors**. There is **no indication of duplication of efforts**. There is **significant potential for synergies through the collaboration with selected partner institutions**.

Significant potential for synergy exists with selected partner institutions who expressed interest in collaboration with GRÓ LRT to develop in-country offerings which are strongly inspired by the 6-month LRT programme in Iceland. The most interest comes from **Makerere University in Uganda and Samarkand State University in Uzbekistan**, both of which have been partner institutions since the

beginning of the LRT programme and have strong, trustful relationships with LRT. Collaboration with these partner institutions has the potential to increase the output of well-trained individuals in the respective partner countries. This strategy could allow GRÓ LRT to eventually focus their efforts, particularly concerning the 6-month LRT programme, on other partner institutions and countries, all while maintaining their existing collaborations. **A detailed case study was conducted on the envisaged collaboration between GRÓ LRT and Makerere University in Uganda.** The corresponding report is attached to this evaluation.

GRÓ LRT is **associated with the UN system** through its partnership with UNESCO. The 'Man and the Biosphere' programme, which is UNESCO's leading initiative in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, constitutes a networking platform which provides possible synergies with UNESCO. The strengthening of professional capacities in partner countries by GRÓ LRT may also **correspond with efforts by UN agencies in ecosystem restoration in line with the Rio Conventions.**

With regards to the **activities by other donors in partner countries or regions, this evaluation has not found any indication of duplication of efforts.** The demand for scholarships and capacity building in the GRÓ LRT partner countries certainly exceeds the supply of those offering such opportunities. Furthermore, while other academic scholarship programmes exist (e.g. through the German Academic Exchange Service or the US Fulbright Programme), these are usually linked to regular university courses in the donor countries, but do not constitute a specially tailored programme like GRÓ LRT. In that regard, **the 6-month LRT programme appears to be unique in its combination of quality, experience, and long-term commitment to partner countries and institutions.**

PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS (EFFECTIVENESS)

Effectiveness of LRT regarding the delivery and the achievement of intended results

Since the transition from being an independent UNU programme to becoming part of GRÓ, no explicit result framework has been formulated at GRÓ LRT Programme level. Therefore, **the result framework applied by this evaluation to measure the performance of GRÓ LRT during the evaluation period 2018-2023 is derived from the GRÓ Strategic Priorities 2022-2027**, which formulate three outputs and one outcome at GRÓ Centre level. The targets formulated in the GRÓ Strategic Priorities 2022-2027 apply to the year 2027, i.e. they specify where the GRÓ Centre wants to be in 2027. In the following, the effectiveness of GRÓ LRT is analysed against these outputs and the outcome. '

Section 2.3.2 provides a rather qualitative analysis of the effectiveness of the different GRÓ LRT intervention strategies. The contribution of GRÓ LRT towards the desired impact of GRÓ is analysed in section 0. For future progress monitoring and evaluation of programme-level performance, **it is recommended that targets be formulated at programme level which consider characteristics of each respective programme.**

The evaluation finds that **GRÓ LRT is effective in the delivery of outputs.**

Quantitatively, the 6-month LRT Programme is on the right track towards the 2027 target. In terms of country income status and gender balance priorities, the 6-month LRT Programme is perfectly compliant.

The number of postgraduate scholarships could be increased through corresponding budgetary allocations and in-country scholarships to achieve the 2027 target.

Assuming that parity between the four training programmes is envisaged regarding the GRÓ-level target figure, **the annual target for the number of short courses is highly ambitious.**

The programme **effectively supports the production and dissemination of knowledge by its trainees.**

Regarding the achievement of outcomes, the evaluation finds that the effectiveness of the programme at the micro/individual/local level is high.

At the meso/institutional level, there are significant outcomes for long-term partners, but outcomes are difficult to assess for all partner institutions in general.

Programme outcomes at macro/country/policy/SDG level are hard to measure and attribute.

The alumni survey as well as anecdotal evidence suggest macro-level outcomes, but a more systematic approach by GRÓ (LRT) to capture those is recommended.

It is recommended that LRT-specific targets be formulated to then correspond with the overarching GRÓ-level result framework.

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

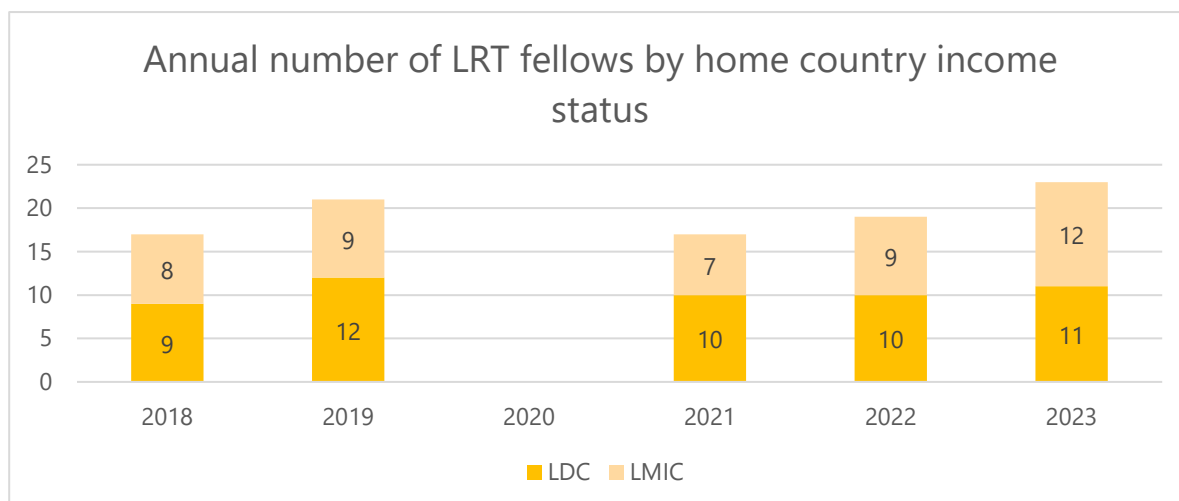
1.1: Train at least 100 fellows in Iceland per year (25 per GRÓ programme). Priority shall be given to fellows from LDCs and LMICs. The ratio for UMIC fellows should not exceed 30% per programme and 20% of the overall number of GRÓ fellows per year. The programmes should aim for gender parity.

Between 2018 and 2023, a total of 97 fellows were trained with an average of 19.4 fellows per year⁵. Although this number is below the target of 25 fellows per year, note that the target of 25 fellows was formulated in 2022 and that attendance in previous year was affected by COVID travel restrictions. The 2024 LRT cohort has 23 fellows, indicating that LRT is on track towards meeting the 2027 target. Historically, GRÓ LRT has been considering about 20 fellows per annum as a sustainable target figure.

54% of LRT fellows were from LDCs and 46% were from LMICs between 2018 and 2023. GRÓ LRT, is therefore fully compliant with the set priorities on national representation. Figure 55 below provides an annual breakdown of the corresponding figures.

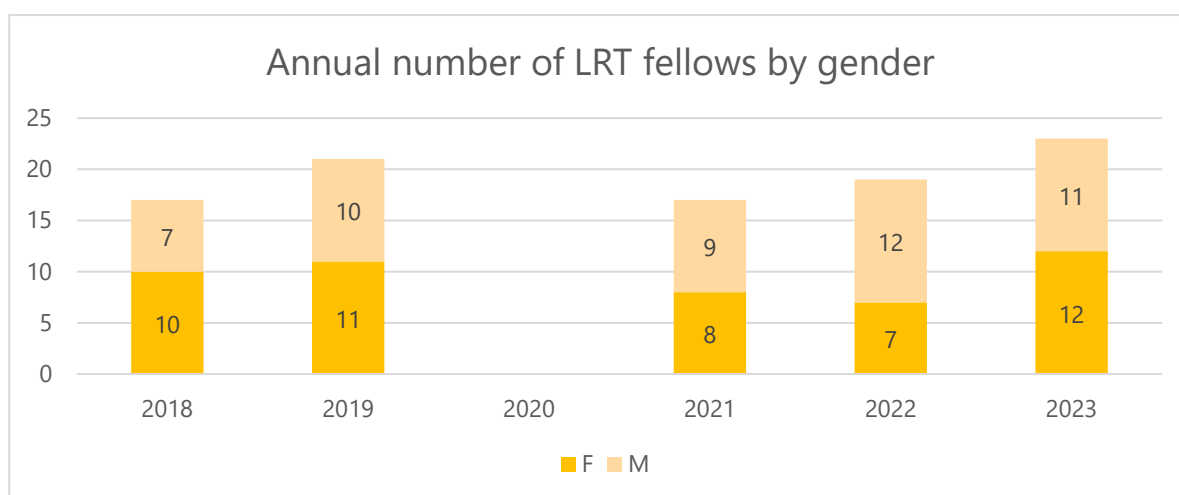
⁵ The 6-month LRT programme could not take place in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, this year is not considered in the statistics.

Figure 57: Annual number of LRT fellows by home country income status between 2018 and 2023.



49% of LRT fellows were female and 51% male between 2018 and 2023. This virtually constitutes perfect gender parity. GRÓ LRT, therefore, is fully compliant with the set priorities. Figure 58 below provides an annual breakdown of the corresponding figures.

Figure 58: Annual number of LRT fellows by gender between 2018 and 2023.



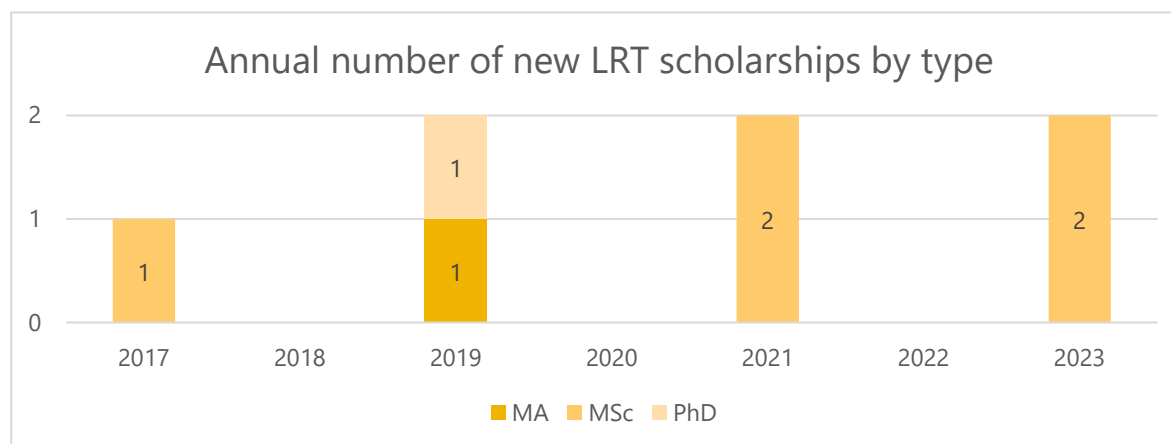
In summary, GRÓ LRT has been consistently below the desired output of 25 fellows per year but is progressing towards meeting this figure. GRÓ LRT is perfectly compliant with the GRÓ priorities in terms of country income status and gender parity.

1.2: Grant 20 new postgraduate scholarships to GRÓ fellows per year in Icelandic or partner universities.

In total, seven new postgraduate scholarships have been awarded by GRÓ LRT in Icelandic universities, six of those during the evaluation reference period 2018-2023, resulting in an annual average of 1.2 new scholarships (the year 2020 is not considered due to the Covid-19 pandemic). **Error! Reference source not found.**9 below provides an annual breakdown of the postgraduate scholarships by type. The target would be five new GRÓ LRT scholarships per year by 2027, assuming that parity between the four training programmes is envisaged regarding the above GRÓ-level target figure. **The LRT outputs during the evaluation reference period have been significantly below this target figure** (however, note that this target was formulated only in 2022 and applies to the year 2027). GRÓ LRT staff emphasized that the number of postgraduate scholarships has been limited only by the available core funding and that budget allocations thus far have not been in line with this target. All scholarship recipients are either from LDCs (5/7; 71%) or LMICs (2/7; 29%). In terms of gender distribution, three (43%) are female and four (57%) are male.

A cost-effective approach to increase the number of new LRT postgraduate scholarships could be the collaboration with partner universities in target countries to offer in-country postgraduate courses on land restoration. Scholarships could then be funded by GRÓ LRT for study in those courses. For more detailed information, refer to the attached case study on the envisaged collaboration between GRÓ LRT and Makerere University in Uganda.

Figure 59: Annual number of new LRT scholarships in Icelandic or partner universities.



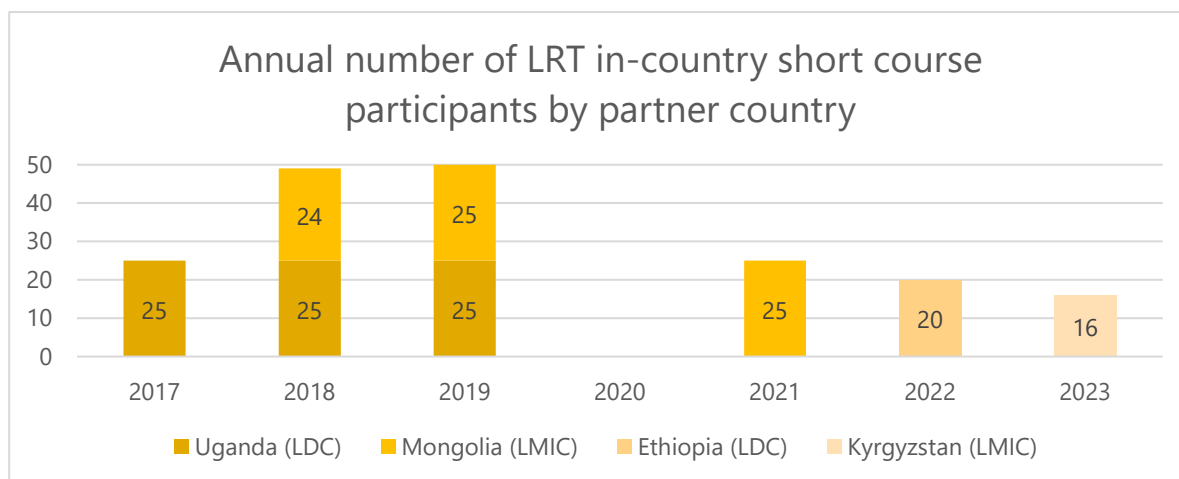
1.3: Host at least 25 short courses annually in partner countries/online.

In total, eight short courses have been offered by GRÓ LRT in partner countries, seven of those during the evaluation reference period 2018-2023, resulting in an annual average of 1.4 in-country short courses (the year 2020 disrupted the delivery of short courses in Uganda due to the Covid-19 pandemic). **Error! Reference source not found.**0 below provides an annual breakdown of the in-country LRT short courses and respective participant numbers. Note that the 2023 short course was hosted in collaboration with GRÓ GEST. No information is available on any online short courses offered by GRÓ LRT during the reference period other than the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) covered in the following section.

In terms of short courses, the principle of parity between the four training programmes is not applicable to the above GRÓ-level target figure, since programmes such as GEST and GTP host relatively many short courses, whereas LRT hosts relatively few short courses. Overall, the four programmes combined are on track regarding this target. **To increase the LRT outputs, there is room and demand to bring back the number of short courses delivered by LRT at least to pre-Covid levels.**

Furthermore, the output could certainly be increased by means of online short courses. However, the evaluation finds that online courses would by no means constitute equivalent replacements of in-country short courses. **It is therefore recommended to revise/refine the target of this output,** possibly by setting distinct targets for in-country and possible online short courses.

Figure 60: Annual number of participants in in-country short courses hosted by GRÓ LRT.



1.4: Produce 4 online teaching tools per year

To date, a total of three online teaching tools in the form of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have been (co-)produced by GRÓ LRT, two of those during the evaluation reference period 2018-2023. One course was produced in 2017 and the other two in 2019. This corresponds to an annual average of 0.33 online teaching tools during the evaluation reference period 2018-2023 (assuming that the Covid-19 pandemic would not have affected the production of online teaching tools, the year 2020 is included here). Assuming that parity between the four training programmes is envisaged by the above GRÓ-level target figure, the target is one online teaching tool to be produced by GRÓ LRT per year. **The LRT output during the evaluation reference period has been significantly below this target figure, however noting that this target was formulated only in 2022 and applies to the year 2027.**

Table 44: MOOCs (co-)produced by GRÓ LRT and their respective enrolment and completion statistics as of the end of 2023.

Year	MOOC	Enrolled	Completed	Completed %
2017	A Business Approach to Sustainable Landscape Restoration	11,347	1,149	10%
2019	A Business Model Innovation for Sustainable Landscape Restoration	6,443	808	13%
2019	Sheep in the land of fire and ice	2,236	NA	NA
	TOTAL	20,026	1,957	10%

An impressive total of more than 20,000 participants have enrolled in the three MOOCs as of the end of 2023. The completion rates for the courses range between 10% and 13%, which are in the common range of completion rates for MOOCs in general. No completion figures are available for the MOOC “Sheep in the land of fire and ice”.

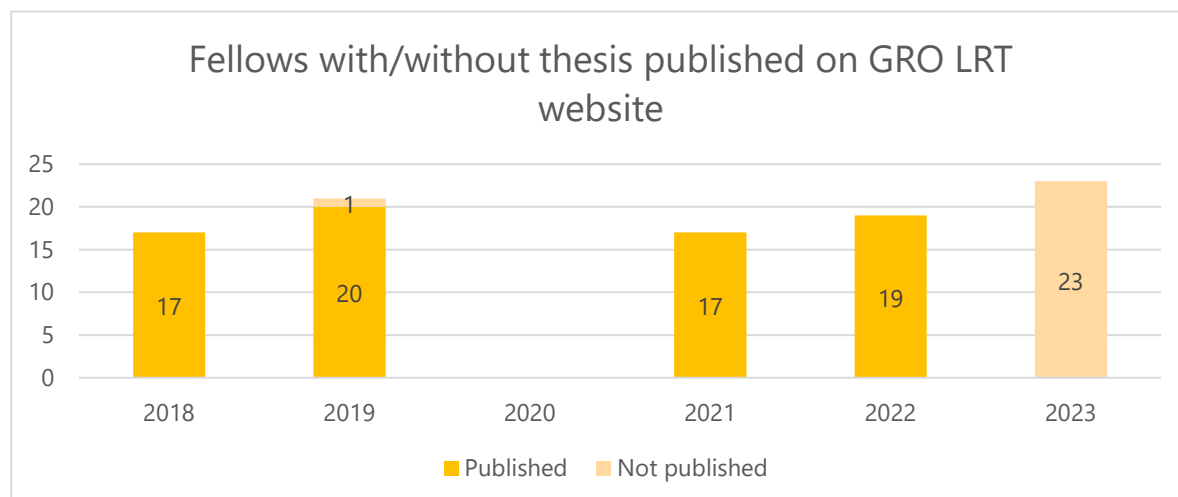
In 2019, GRÓ LRT, as a partner in the ENABLE consortium funded by Erasmus+, further co-developed an online space for a growing community of people involved in large-scale landscape restoration called ‘4 Returns’ (see: <https://4returns.commonland.com>). In total 2,239 members are currently a part of the platform, which includes information about the MOOCs and study cases created by the consortium, as well as other material. One of the study cases and teaching notes describes the Hekluskógar project in South Iceland which examines how to transition from barren desertified land to a resilient and healthy woodland that can provide ecosystem services to the people in the area and beyond. The case was mainly written by GRÓ LRT staff and can be found here: <https://repub.eur.nl/pub/119752/>.

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

2.1: Publish research produced by GRÓ on its website.

GRÓ LRT publishes final project papers produced by the 6-month LRT Programme fellows as well as final university theses of LRT scholarship recipients on its website. In rare case when the overall quality of the output is found insufficient, or the final paper is incomplete, the full version of the output is omitted and only the abstract is published. This is related to cases where fellows did not manage to finalize a final project paper of acceptable quality by the end of the 6-month LRT Programme, or when the final paper is part of an ongoing study that will be published elsewhere. Nonetheless, even unpublished papers are considered to hold significant value as essential internal working documents for the fellows and their respective institutes. **Error! Reference source not found.** below provides an annual breakdown of the LRT final project papers published on the GRÓ LRT website. The papers for the 2023 cohort are yet to be published on the website. All three university theses which have been produced by LRT scholarship recipients thus far are fully available on the website.

Figure 61: Annual number of 6-month LRT Programme fellows by the publication status of their final project paper published on the GRÓ LRT website.



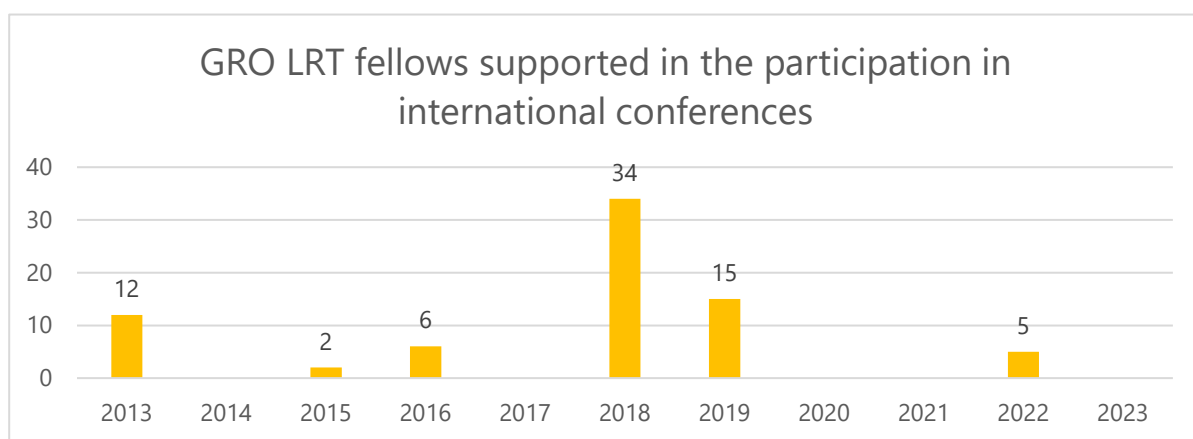
2.2: Host yearly seminars where GRÓ fellows and scholarship recipients introduce their findings.

All 6-month LRT programme fellows present their findings at a seminar held towards the end of the 6-month programme. Usually, this is a two-day seminar, with each session lasting half a day, and with each fellow having 10 minutes to present their findings. In the case of the only GRÓ LRT PhD scholarship so far, the PhD dissertation defence in November 2022 was open to interested parties for attendance in person or virtually via Microsoft Teams. Likewise, when finishing a master’s degree, students need to present their master studies at an open seminar.

2.3: Support fellows to participate in international conferences.

In total, GRÓ LRT has supported/facilitated the participation of 74 fellows in international conferences, 54 of those during the evaluation reference period 2018-2023, resulting in an annual average of 10.8 supported fellows. **Error! Reference source not found.** below provides an annual breakdown of the fellows supported. It shows a high variance between years, pointing towards a rather opportunity-based approach (i.e. based on the occurrence of suitable conferences/events) for this support. In 2018, the 11th Society for Ecological Restoration Europe Conference was held in Reykjavik when the 17 fellows of that year plus 17 former fellows attended the conference.

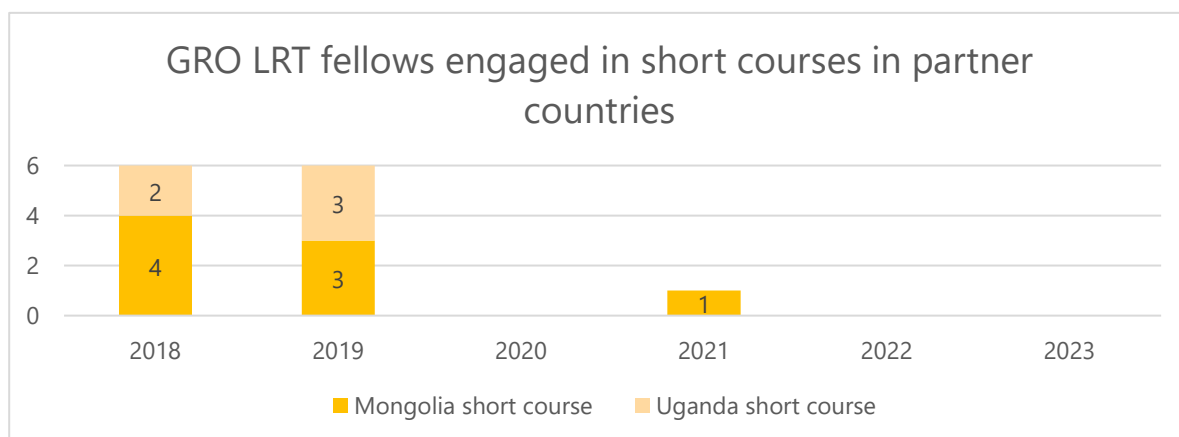
Figure 62: Annual number of fellows supported by GRÓ LRT in the participation in international conferences.



2.4: Engage former fellows in short courses and training in partner countries.

GRÓ LRT has engaged 13 former fellows in the preparation and delivery of short courses in partner countries during the evaluation reference period 2018-2023. Error! Reference source not found. below provides an annual breakdown of the fellows engaged per short course.

Figure 63: Annual number of GRÓ LRT fellows engaged in short courses in partner countries.



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

3.1: Host a minimum of one short seminar for alumni in specific home countries/regions per year.

Joint alumni events for all GRÓ alumni from Uganda were held in 2023 and 2024 in Kampala with the estimated participation between 20% and 30% of all Ugandan GRÓ alumni. The Ugandan GRÓ alumni intend to formalize their group under a legal entity. These alumni activities were piloted in Uganda, with the aim to roll out further to other countries in future.

Furthermore, GRÓ LRT representatives regularly visit the partner countries to interview candidates for the upcoming 3-4 annual cohorts. In line with these visits, the GRÓ LRT representatives meet with the LRT alumni from that country to further cultivate relationships. It is understood that these meetings are rather meant to maintain relationships and follow-up on alumni’s careers than constituting formal seminars.

3.2: Create an alumni platform for networking.

This output is considered more relevant at GRÓ Centre level.

Setting up LRT-specific alumni platforms in separate countries is not considered a feasible option by GRÓ LRT. However, GRÓ LRT encourages former fellows to nourish networking in their respective countries. In some countries (e.g. Ghana and Mongolia), alumni formed social media groups to communicate and share information on available grants, seminars, their work, etc.

3.3: Study the feasibility of setting up an alumni fund to support alumni in implementing projects at home.

No information could be found regarding GRÓ LRT specific activities in this regard. This output is considered more relevant at GRÓ Centre level.

3.4: Support annual social media campaigns with alumni participation.

This output is considered more relevant at GRÓ Centre level.

In terms of social media outreach, GRÓ LRT is maintaining social media channels on Facebook, X and LinkedIn. In 2023, GRÓ LRT celebrated the World Environment Day as well as GRÓ LRT day (on the same day) by sharing short videos from 6-month LRT Programme fellows. This was meant to energize the LRT alumni, remind them of the "LRT family" and to raise awareness of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

3.5: Peer learning events/seminars organised.

Beyond the annual seminars at the end of the 6-month LRT Programme, no information could be found regarding regular GRÓ LRT peer learning events/seminars. In the past, seminars were organised in line with relevant conferences, e.g. during the 2018 Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) Europe Conference in Iceland and the 2019 SER World Conference in Cape Town. However, no such seminars have been organised since then.

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.

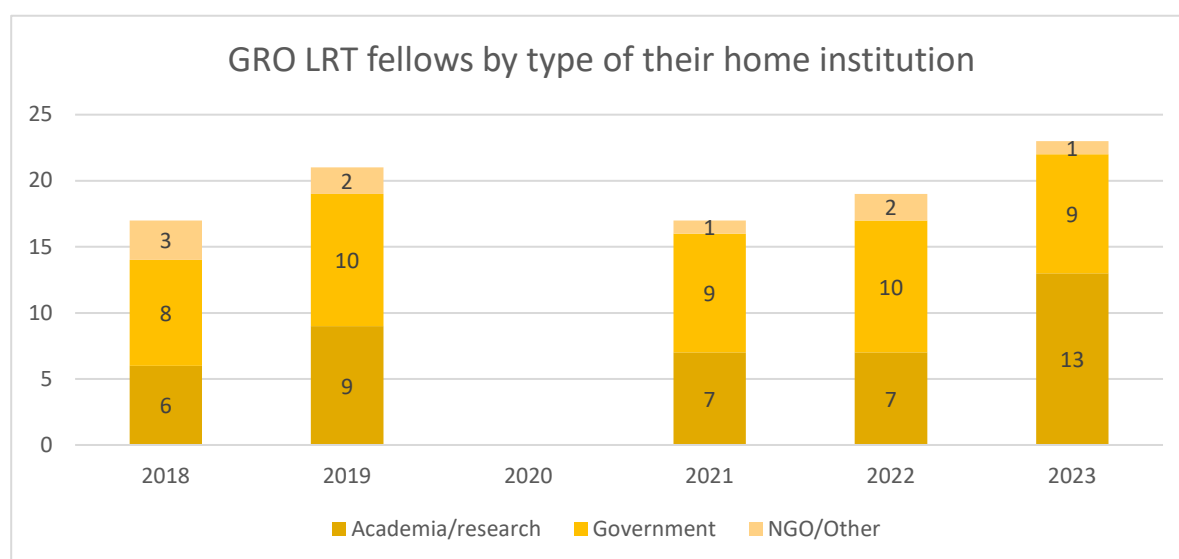
In the context of this evaluation, the **micro level is considered as the individual and/or local level**. Local here is used in the sense of spatial extent over which an individual has some degree of influence. For example, in the context of Uganda, this would be a district in which an environmental officer of the local government operates.

At the micro level, the programme clearly has the most immediate and attributable impact, since it directly trains individuals. **Both focus group discussions (FGDs) with alumni and the alumni survey indicate that impact at the micro level is high.** Many alumni expressed that the 6-month LRT training constituted the point of departure or an important stepping stone in their professional careers in technical fields related to land restoration. The term 'life-changing experience' (in the positive sense) was used to describe the 6-month LRT Programme by various alumni interviewed in line with this evaluation. With regards to career advancement, GRÓ LRT 2018-2023 alumni gave the programme a mean rating of 3.88/5 on a 5-step scale with 1 being no career advancement and 5 being extreme advancement. Regarding the type of career advancement resulting from the 6-month LRT Programme, 70% indicated that they assumed more responsibility, followed by further scholarships⁶ (34%), promotions (29%), and salary increases (27%).

⁶ Both scholarships related to GRÓ LRT and not.

The **impact brought about by individuals within their local/immediate sphere of influence is also found to be significant**. On a 5-step scale with 1 being strong disagreement and 5 being strong agreement, the average rating of 2018-2023 GRÓ LRT by its alumni on whether they were able to advance their contribution in their field/subject area thanks to the 6-month LRT Programme was 4.6/5. Of the LRT alumni participating in the alumni survey, 79% indicated that they contributed to their technical field through training/mentoring of others, 64% through advising local communities and 63% through the implementation of projects/initiatives. This impact **depends on the type of work environment of each LRT alumni**. Figure 64 below provides an annual breakdown of the GRÓ LRT fellows by the type of their home institution during the evaluation reference period 2018-2023. Alumni employed in academia rather create further impact through teaching and research, whereas government employees create impacts in an applied setting. For example, various Ugandan alumni who are local government employees in one of the more than hundred districts confirmed that, as a direct result of the 6-month LRT training, they were able to make an impact at local/district level in terms of awareness, planning and decision-making with regards to land restoration.

Figure 64: Annual number of GRÓ LRT fellows by type of their home institution.



The farther the considered impact level is from the level of the individual direct beneficiaries, the longer it takes for measurable impacts to materialize and the harder it becomes to attribute possible changes directly to the programme. This fact reigns true at the **meso level of the home or partner institutions of the training participants**. While the average level of agreement by GRÓ LRT alumni to the statement that “the management of my organization appreciates and values the skills I gained from the post-graduate training programme” is very strong (4.6/5), quantifiable impacts at the meso level are hard to measure especially when considering only progress towards the SDGs is defined as expected meso-level outcomes in the GRÓ theory of change (ToC). This is also due to the fact that there is no more granular definition of such (expected) impact available than the very high-level and rather vague formulation in the GRÓ ToC that ‘partner countries progress towards the achievement of the targeted SDGs’. In this regard, also refer to the textbox on ‘Training a critical mass’ below. A clearer definition of meso- and macro-level targets may help to better measure and quantify programme impact.

There is **high impact at the level of long-term academic partner institutions**, e.g. Makerere University in Uganda, Samarkand State University in Uzbekistan, the Mongolian University of Life Sciences and the University for Development Studies in Ghana. These have benefitted from the programme over many years and have a high number of LRT alumni as employees and in management positions. Both universities have set a strong agenda towards land restoration and intend to develop their own LRT-inspired postgraduate offerings. This finding underscores the importance of long-term partnerships and support in creating long-term impact.

Effectiveness of the different LRT Programme intervention strategies and of local partnerships in regard to the delivery and the achievement of results

Section 0 provided a quantitative assessment of programme effectiveness against the GRÓ Centre Strategic Priorities formulated in 2022. **The present section aims to consider the qualitative aspects of the programme and its various intervention strategies.**

This evaluation finds that the intervention of the **6-month LRT Programme is highly effective**. This is supported by systematic feedback from GRÓ alumni, with **LRT consistently receiving high quality-related ratings**.

LRT postgraduate scholarships are found to be effective. This finding is in line with the findings of a specific in-depth evaluation of the GRÓ scholarship component conducted in 2023.

The **in-country short courses are found effective in locally raising awareness and creating capacity in land restoration**.

While **LRT MOOCs are found to be effective in terms of enrolment, and quality, it needs to be determined whether the alignment between MOOC participants and LRT target groups is sufficient to justify the effort**.

6-month GRÓ LRT programme

The 6-month LRT programme, constituting the core activity of GRÓ LRT, is an academic postgraduate course offered to early-career working professionals from eligible partner institutions. The course consists of eight modules which bring together disciplines relevant to land restoration and sustainable land management and aim to provide a balance of theory and practice, lecture hall and fieldwork, and hard and soft skills. The curriculum has been reviewed regularly since the course was piloted in 2007 and continuously updated accordingly.

Interviewed alumni attested to the programme's high quality. A systematic⁷ online survey among GRÓ alumni conducted in June 2024 in line with this evaluation supported this finding, **with GRÓ LRT consistently receiving high quality-related ratings**. On a 5-step scale with 1 being low and 5 being high, **GRÓ LRT received the average rating of 4.8/5 for programme quality and 4.8/5 for programme coherence** by the 2018-2023 LRT fellows. The same is true for ratings on skills improvement (4.2/5) and the **usefulness of the individual programme components (4.6/5)**.

Since 2022, successful completion of the programme yields a certificate worth 30 ECTS credits, corresponding to one semester of a three- or four-semester Master's programme. **The introduction of the ECTS credits is a direct response to course feedback from previous alumni and is very much appreciated by GRÓ LRT fellows/alumni**.

Participation in the programme is fully funded by GRÓ LRT, including travel, accommodation, sustenance, tuition, and required equipment. This is an important element of the course, in that it i) allows participants from poor backgrounds to participate in the course; ii) levels the ground between participants with different economic backgrounds; and iii) allows the participants to fully focus on the programme, which has been described as intensive by alumni interviewed for this evaluation.

The design of the programme implies a dense curriculum and schedule during the 6 months in Iceland. Therefore, not all relevant topics can be covered in depth and according to the individual interest of each participant. Corresponding feedback was received from alumni, including the suggestion for extending the programme duration in order to enhance in-depth coverage of topics. This feedback is expected and sensible but would probably also be expressed in a programme of any duration. The

⁷ The survey response rate among all LRT alumni since 2007 was 78.4%, with almost perfect gender balance. For the evaluation reference period 2018-2023, the LRT alumni response rate was 82.5%, with almost perfect gender balance.

evaluation finds that intensity and limited coverage is intrinsic to the programme design and that the programme does not have the ambition/objective to function equivalently to a full university master's course. Instead, this issue may be addressed through early expectation management among selected candidates.

The programme has shown a **strong success rate in course completion**. During the evaluation period, all fellows fully graduated except for two fellows in 2022 and two fellows in 2023. In both years, these fellows did not pass the second course of the programme (individual research project) and thus only obtained 15 out of 30 ECTS credits. If these are not counted as completing the programme, the completion rate still stands at 96%. Key to this success is the **well-designed and rigorous participant selection process**. The selection process is carried out together with the in-country partner institutions (see Annex 6.2 for a list of GRÓ LRT partner institutions between 2018 and 2023) and relies on long-term relationships built over the years with these organizations. The participant selection process usually happens in a 3-4 year cycle. The partner institution first creates a list of eligible candidates, which are then interviewed by GRÓ LRT staff online and/or during country visits. The resulting shortlist of candidates can then participate in the programme during the following 3-4 years. Eligibility criteria are i) at least a Bachelor's degree in a relevant field; ii) permanent employment with the partner institution; iii) a guarantee by the employer that candidates can return to their position upon completion of the programme; and iv) less than 40 years of age at the time of participation.

This selection approach is designed to minimize brain drain from the partner countries and maximize the chance that the enhanced capacity of participants contributes to land restoration capacities within their respective institution and their home country at large.

Scholarships for postgraduate studies

Out of the seven postgraduate scholarships (5 MSc, 1 MA, 1 PhD) awarded by GRÓ LRT to LRT alumni, three have been finalized with graduation (1 MSc, 1 MA, 1 PhD) while the other four are ongoing. Master's level scholarships are for two full years and whereas the PhD scholarship lasted three full years. They are awarded to GRÓ LRT alumni based on their motivation, potential, and performance exhibited during the 6-month LRT programme.⁸ All scholarships were for studies at the Agricultural University of Iceland, except for the MA scholarship which took place at the University of Iceland. The latest two MSc scholarships awarded in 2023 are for the new 2-year 120-ECTS MSc programme in restoration ecology offered by the Agricultural University of Iceland since 2023. It is likely that most future MSc scholarships in Iceland will be in the same MSc program.

All GRÓ LRT postgraduate scholarships are fully funded, including travel, accommodation, and sustenance. **A detailed evaluation of the postgraduate scholarship component of GRÓ was conducted in 2023 and found it received overwhelmingly positive feedback with regards to their effectiveness.**

The final university theses of the postgraduate scholarships are published on the GRÓ LRT website. Additionally, one paper from a PhD student has been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

In-country short courses

In-country short courses are developed and delivered in cooperation with partner institutions. Selected GRÓ LRT alumni regularly have been involved in the design and delivery of the short courses to gain additional experience, maintain their relationship with the programme, and create a sense of ownership of land restoration in their country. Each course usually targets a group of 25 participants from the respective partner country. Courses are usually held in a field setting in a specific area of the respective partner country and course content is accordingly tailored to the context of that area. While there may

⁸ In the past, GRÓ LRT has made two exceptions in hardship cases in which fellows were not able to return to their country of origin, but this is not in line with the GRÓ principles and objectives.

be some overlap, the target groups for the in-country short courses are different from the 6-month LRT programme.

Interview partners consulted for this evaluation indicated that the **short courses are of high value and effective in creating capacity in land restoration**. For example, in Uganda each of the annual short courses delivered between 2017 and 2019 targeted a group of 25 local government employees from a different region and covered the land restoration context and challenges of that region. Interview partners confirmed that the training participants were in a better position to identify and address issues related to land degradation and to promote land restoration at the district level because of the training. The short courses further sparked interest among the participants to continue their studies on land restoration, either locally or through the 6-month LRT programme.

From 2017 until 2019, the duration of the short courses offered in Uganda and Mongolia was typically between seven and nine days. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the delivery of short courses. Since 2021, one short course was offered in each of Mongolia, Ethiopia and Kyrgyzstan, but only over a duration ranging between two and five days. Altogether, it appears as if the **delivery of in-country short courses has not yet fully recovered since the disruption of the COVID pandemic**, but also struggle due to budget limitations and intensive efforts required for delivery of these courses for partner institutions. Yet, programme partners consulted in line with this evaluation clearly expressed the **continued demand for these courses**.

MOOCs

An impressive total of more than 20,000 participants have enrolled in the three MOOCs as of the end of 2023. Slightly less than 2,000 participants, are confirmed to have completed a MOOC (corresponding to an 11% completion rate).⁹ These completion rates are well within the normal range of completion rates for MOOCs in general. The actual value and impact of MOOCs beyond mere completion ratios is difficult to assess. According to statistics derived from users' IP addresses for the two business-related MOOCs, 5-10% of course participants were from Africa and 35-45% from Asia. This is a slightly higher representation of these world regions in these courses as compared to the overall Coursera average. However, none of the LRT target countries is represented in the top 10 list of countries from which course participants originate. Therefore, while the MOOCs may be able to target a relatively large number of people, only a small fraction of those are potentially from the LRT target countries. A notable difference to overall Coursera averages is the relatively high fraction of Master's degree holders among the course participants of close to 40% (average about 22%), suggesting that the topic addresses the interest of postgraduate level participants.

Positive online user feedback for all three MOOCs (4.6/5, 4.7/5 and 4.9/5, respectively) indicates that the three MOOCs co-produced by GRÓ LRT are of high quality. The online course website '[classcentral](#)' rated the MOOC 'Sheep in the land of fire and ice' was rated as 'one of the [235] best free online courses of all time'. A case study in the present evaluation on the GRÓ GEST MOOCs found that, in the context of GRÓ GEST, MOOCs are highly relevant to enhance the programme offer and outreach. A more in-depth assessment on whether this is also true in the context of GRÓ LRT is recommended to determine whether the impact justifies the production effort.

GRÓ LRT website

The GRÓ LRT website was launched in 2020 and provides plenty of information on the programme, alumni, and all sorts of LRT-related news articles, videos and publications. All news articles are further shared via GRÓ LRT's social media accounts on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and LinkedIn. The GRÓ LRT website offer is found to be **effective in disseminating rich information about the programme as well its alumni and publications**. A way to further enhance the offer could be to add to the alumni profiles i) their current position; ii) their publication record; and iii) notable impact they have achieved in

⁹ Completion rates for the MOOC "Sheep in the Land of Ice and Fire" are not available, thus the 11% completion rate only applies to the other two MOOCs.

land restoration. However, this would require regular (highly human resources intense) follow-up with all alumni but would enhance the programme's ability to systematically capture and report on impacts. Alternatively, or in addition, there could be profiles of the partner institutions which feature an overview of impacts generated at institutional level.

Effectiveness of the partnership with UNESCO to support the achievement of results

This evaluation finds that **the partnership with UNESCO has not (yet) brought any significant benefits or disadvantages with regards to the achievement of results.**

With the GRÓ Centre operating as a "C2C under the auspices of UNESCO", this partnership should support the achievement of results. **Minimal benefits for GRÓ LRT from this partnership could be identified.** In terms of funding, no benefits derive from the partnership with UNESCO, as core funding is provided by MFA, sporadically complemented by temporary project-/activity-bound funding arrangements with third-party donors. Instead, according to the UNESCO website¹⁰, C2C "are a privileged partner of the Organization with access to UNESCO's logo and international and intergovernmental bodies and networks and may leverage UNESCO's international reach and convening powers".

The extent of the partnership is more limited than that description. Two working professionals from UNESCO's MAB network have participated in the 6-month GRÓ LRT programme from 2022 (and two more are to participate in the 2025 programme). UNESCO, together with GRÓ and the Icelandic Embassy, did host the annual national GRÓ alumni meeting in early 2024 in Uganda and further offered to provide office space for the planned Ugandan GRÓ alumni association. Beyond this, **this evaluation could not find evidence for either any significant benefits or disadvantages brought about by the arrangement with UNESCO.**

Factors influencing the achievement of the expected results

The evaluation found the following factors influencing the achievement of the expected results:

1. Enabling factors

- a. Focus on few selected partner countries and partner institutions.** Given limited resources, this is an important factor to avoid dilution of benefits over too many partners. To avoid this also in future, it is recommended not to add more partners above this support capacity.
- b. Long-term commitment.** This is a crucial factor contributing to GRÓ's uniqueness compared to initiatives by other donors. Trust and reputation are built over time in open-ended long-term commitment. It allows alumni to be involved in programme delivery and develop during their professional careers.
- c. Regular partner visits.** Each partnership is different and requires flexibility and adaptation. The institutional partnerships strongly rely on individual relationships. Regular visits and exchanges with programme partners are key factors to maintain these partnerships as well as institutional memories.
- d. Careful selection process.** The involvement by partner institutions increases their sense of programme ownership. The applied principles are clear, plausible, and aligned with the programme objectives.
- e. Full funding for all participants.** This opens access to participants from poor backgrounds to be in the programme and allows the participants to fully focus on the programme.
- f. Regular self-evaluation and curriculum review.** This ensures that the programme remains relevant and effective. Feedback from all parties involved appears to be considered. A powerful

¹⁰ <https://www.unesco.org/en/partnerships/institutes?hub=953>

example is the 2022 introduction of the 30 ECTS credits for the 6-month LRT programme, which has been consistently requested by LRT alumni.

- g. Experience, expertise, and dedication of GRÓ LRT management and academic staff.** The high quality and effectiveness of the programme is possible because of the high level of experience, expertise and dedication of those involved. The result is a carefully crafted programme which offers a complete bundle of relevant experiences. The close exchange between staff and fellows and the ample supervision contribute to GRÓ's uniqueness compared to initiatives by other donors.
- h. Iceland.** The programme taking place in Iceland is a crucial factor contributing to GRÓ's uniqueness compared to initiatives by other donors in terms of exposure to the Icelandic land restoration practices and Icelandic society with its emphasis on democracy, human rights and gender equality. Participants are removed from daily stress factors and/or distractions and can fully focus on the programme.

2. Impeding factors

- a. COVID-19 pandemic.** Freedom to travel is key for the programme, so any development affecting this freedom impedes programme implementation. COVID-19 still affects the programme through long-term health impacts on staff members. This factor is hard to mitigate since the programme cannot be effectively delivered through online channels.
- b. Lack of financial security.** While the Iceland MFA has been reliably providing long-term funding, the actual programme-level budgets are approved late on an annual basis. This impedes the planning and implementation of additional activities and the response to possible unforeseen events. It is recommended that a multi-year programme-level rolling budget be considered. If the 2022 targets are to be achieved, funding for various activities (e.g. postgraduate scholarships in Iceland) needs to be allocated accordingly.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT (EFFICIENCY)

LRT Programme management arrangements, planning, monitoring and evaluation, oversight, steering, and risk management systems and the efficient and effective delivery of results

The evaluation finds that, **at GRÓ LRT Programme level, management arrangements are efficient, albeit the management team appears to be understaffed.**

With regards to the **programme reporting, oversight, and steering arrangement, there are perceived deficiencies which require further internal investigation for possible improvement.**

GRÓ LRT Programme-level management

During the evaluation period 2018-2023, the **GRÓ LRT Programme-level core management team has been fluctuating around four staff members.** Until 2020, these were usually full-time staff supported by an additional temporary staff member (therefore, rather 4.5 staff). Since 2020, only the LRT Director and Office Manager are full-time staff, whereas the Deputy Director and Project Manager are working in part-time as they have additional teaching obligations at Agricultural University of Iceland. Therefore, since 2020, the team consists of less than four full-time staff (currently only three staff members). GRÓ LRT is based on a service agreement between the MFA and the Agricultural University of Iceland, which is the primary host institution of GRÓ LRT. The staff are employed by the University. The University also provides other lecturers and supervisors that contribute to the programme implementation and delivery as well as access to its facilities, but these services are paid for separately by GRÓ LRT.

The **annual programme management cycle is determined by the 6-month LRT Programme implementation period.** During the 6-month LRT Programme implementation period between March and August, focus is on implementation and support to the fellows. Visits to partner countries for in-person candidate interviews and fostering partnerships usually fall outside of this period. Short courses are also offered during the other months but in some instances overlap with the 6-month LRT Programme implementation period.

Evaluation and feedback mechanisms are built into all activities. The 6-month LRT Programme curriculum is reviewed in regular intervals by an academic committee to ensure relevance and effectiveness of the programme. The latest review was done in 2021. Furthermore, feedback from programme fellows is collected on both a weekly basis and near the end of the 6-month LRT Programme. GRÓ LRT has demonstrated that it is responsive to such feedback, most notably by making the programme eligible for 30 ECTS credits.

Overall, the programme-level management appears to be efficient and based on proven and well-established approaches which have been refined over time. It further appears that **programme management is heavily reliant on institutional memory and partnerships built by long-serving staff**. This means that generous learning and handover periods need to be allocated in case of future new hires. The **management team appears to be understaffed**, particularly if recommendations of this evaluation regarding systematic impact monitoring are to be followed.

Programme reporting, oversight, and steering systems

GRÓ LRT reports to the GRÓ Centre on planning, progress, and finances. GRÓ provides steering and oversight but most importantly approves annual budgetary contributions to GRÓ LRT. Funding for LRT channelled from MFA through the GRÓ Centre. The evaluation has found indications of the following deficiencies in the management arrangement between the GRÓ Centre and GRÓ LRT:

1. **Annual budgets are usually approved very late** and at times even once the respective budget year has already started, restricting planning and compromising budgetary flexibility at programme level.
2. There is a reported **disconnect between the GRÓ LRT Programme and GRÓ Centre management** because GRÓ LRT staff are university employees (and not GRÓ employees) and reporting structures are unclear.
3. There is perception by GRÓ LRT management that the **GRÓ Centre's focus is heavily skewed towards maximizing cost efficiency** without sufficiently appreciating the immaterial value/benefits created by the programme.

The use of programme financial and human resources and the efficient and effective delivery of results

The evaluation finds that the **costs per trainee for the different GRÓ LRT interventions are plausible and commensurate with the respective outputs and outcomes.**

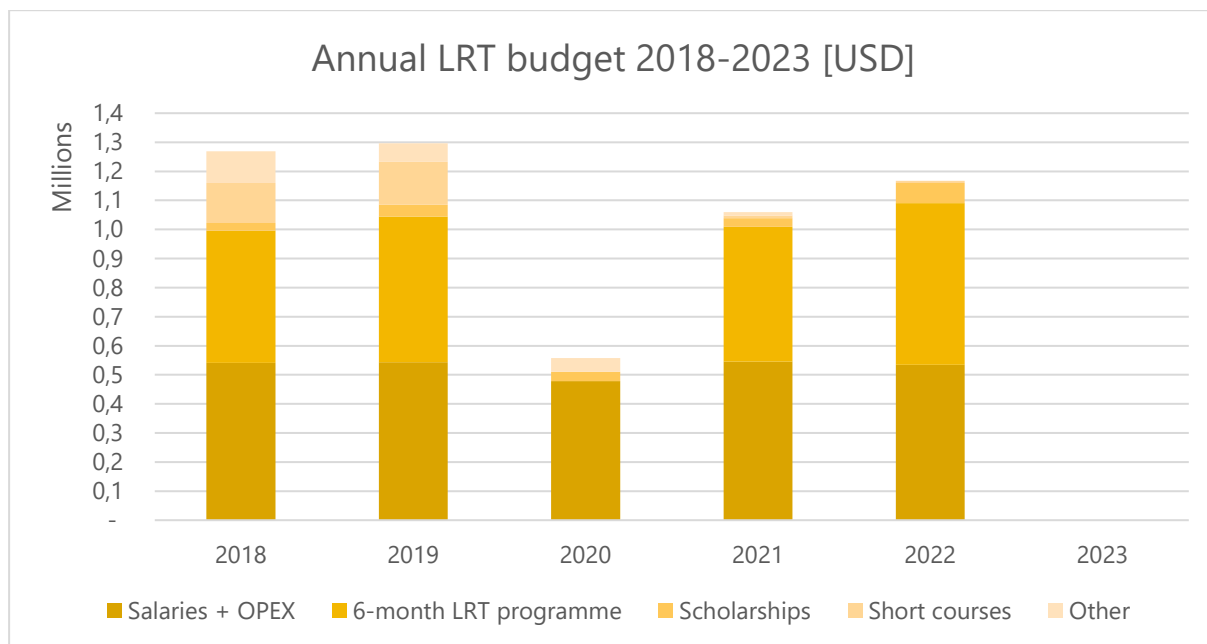
Going forward, the **MFA core funding may need to be increased to meet programme targets and implement envisaged activities.**

External funding has been almost insignificant during the evaluation reference period. This could be increased but likely at the cost of increased administrative burden and reduced sovereignty over programme funds and activities.

Financial statistics were derived from the GRÓ LRT annual financial reports from 2018 to 2022. At the time of the evaluation, the 2023 financial report was not yet available. Figure 65 provides the annual GRÓ LRT budget, estimated in USD¹¹ and disaggregated by activity category. **The annual total budget for GRÓ LRT ranged between 1 million and 1.3 million USD**, except for 2020, when virtually all core activities had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The resulting disruption has affected the following years through the lack of significant budgets for in-country short courses and other activities like conference grants for fellows. The annual cost for staff salaries and operations are relatively constant at about 540,000 USD. The same is true for the annual cost of the 6-month LRT Programme, which amount to about 500,000 USD on average to accommodate the usual 20 participants.

¹¹ Based on average annual USD:ISK exchange rates for the respective year.

Figure 65: Annual LRT budget estimated in USD during the evaluation reference period 2018-2023. At the time of the evaluation in 2024, the 2023 financial report was not yet available.



Between 2018 and 2022, **external funding contributions were minimal**, with only about 70,000 USD contributed from external sources chiefly through participation in the ENABLE consortium and the corresponding work on MOOCs, study cases and learning platform. These external contributions correspond to 1.3% of the total budget of 5.35 million USD between 2018 and 2022.

Table 45: Estimated cost per trainee for the different GRÓ LRT activities, based on GRÓ financial reports 2018-2022.

Activity	Est. direct cost per trainee (USD) total (per day)	Est. total cost per trainee incl. operational expenses (USD) total (per day)	Average annual output during evaluation reference period	
6-month LRT Programme in Iceland (180 days)	26,791 (149)	46,703 (259)	Number of trainees:	20/year;
			Formal outcome:	30 ECTS credits Postgrad. cert.
MSc/PhD scholarship in Iceland (365 days) ¹²	17,313 (47)	25,441 (70)	Number of trainees:	~ 1/year;
			Formal outcome:	MSc/PhD
In-country short course (avg. 8 days)	1,346 (198)	2,471 (275)	Number of trainees:	32/year;
			Formal outcome:	Certificate

For further comparison, Table 45 above provides the estimated average cost per fellow based on the GRÓ LRT financial reports 2018-2022. Note that, for the estimated total cost including operational expenses, the annual GRÓ LRT administrative costs were added to the direct cost of each activity according to the following assumed proportions: 70% for the 6-month LRT Programme, 15% for the in-country short courses, 5% for the postgraduate scholarships and 10% for other activities. In absolute

¹² Figures refer to annual cost over 365 days.

terms as well as relative to each other, **the estimated costs per trainee for the different GRÓ LRT interventions are plausible and appear commensurate with the respective outputs and outcomes.**

An approach to cost-efficiently increase output of GRÓ LRT scholarships could be to (partially) fund in-country postgraduate degrees offered in collaboration with partner universities (see the attached case study on the intended collaboration with Makerere University in Uganda). **It is recommended that a budget for corresponding additional activities be allocated for future years.** Regarding in-country short courses, it is important to note that both interviewed alumni and programme partners have expressed a high demand for their continuation or revival. The pre-COVID budget allocations for these courses of approximately USD 140,000 per year provide an indication of the necessary annual budget. Additionally, to meet the target of 25 fellows per year for the 6-month LRT Programme, the corresponding budget allocation will need to be increased compared to the 2018-2022 period.

Notably, Iceland committed to meet the UN target of allocating 0.7% of gross national income to development assistance by 2035. In the short-term, the **allocation is set to increase** from 0.35% in 2024 to 0.46% in 2028 with explicit **focus on LDCs**. Given this commitment, a respective **increase in the MFA core funding for GRÓ LRT appears reasonable and realistic**. Alternatively, efforts to attract external funding could be increased. However, these usually come at a cost of increased administrative and reporting requirements as well as reduced sovereignty over programme funds and activities.

PROSPECTS FOR THE MAINTENANCE / CONTINUATION OF THE PROGRAMME BENEFITS (SUSTAINABILITY)

Prospects for the sustainability of the LRT Programme results and benefits

The GRÓ LRT Programme design with its emphasis on long-term partnerships is found to be strongly aligned with the goal of sustainable capacity building within partner institutions and countries.

The evaluation finds that **prospects for sustainability of the programme results and benefits are high**, evidenced by high retention rates of GRÓ LRT alumni in their regions of origin and in the technical field of land restoration.

The **GRÓ LRT Programme design includes various elements meant to enhance the sustainability of results and benefits**. This is **particularly evident in the long-term partnership approach and the criteria of the participant selection process**. Potential fellows need proof of employment with a partner institution as well as their employer's guarantee that they can return to their job after the 6-month LRT Programme. Through these criteria, sustainability of benefits for both individual fellows and the partner institution is to be enhanced and subsequent brain drain from the partner country is to be avoided.

A systematic GRÓ alumni survey conducted in June 2024 revealed that 86% of all GRÓ LRT alumni until end of 2023 maintained their region of residence both before and after their participation in the 6-month LRT Programme. Among those, 87% of the fellows originating from African partner countries indicated that they still reside in Africa. For the fellows from Asia, the respective ratio is 84%. **These figures impressively demonstrate the programme's effectiveness in sustainably building capacity within the partner countries**, even more so when considering that some of the alumni who are currently not residing in their region of origin are only temporarily out of their home countries like those studying with a GRÓ LRT postgraduate scholarship.

87% of GRÓ LRT alumni indicated that they are still working in the technical field of land restoration as of June 2024 or have worked in that field until retirement. This is a high ratio both in absolute terms and relative to the 82% average of the other GRÓ training programmes. It illustrates **the programme's effectiveness in sustainably building capacity within the technical field of land restoration**.

Through long-term partnerships, GRÓ LRT aims to build capacity and foster a sense of ownership within partner institutions. These institutions are involved in candidate selection and the delivery of program

offerings, such as in-country short courses. This ownership is crucial for the sustainability of outcomes. Some partners, like Makerere University in Uganda and Samarkand State University in Uzbekistan, have requested collaboration to develop in-country postgraduate courses. This initiative came from the partner institutions, **showing their strong commitment to GRÓ LRT's objectives**. Not all partner institutions might show this level of engagement, but these examples highlight the value of GRÓ LRT's long-term approach, as both universities have been partners since the program's initial phase.

Enabling and impeding factors for the sustainability of the programme results and benefits

The evaluation found the following factors influencing the sustainability of programme results and benefits:

1. Enabling factors

- a. **Demand-driven approach.** The programme only works with partner countries and institutions who sustainably show interest and demand in the programme meeting a necessary condition for ownership and sustainability.
- b. **Long-term partnerships and commitment.** Through a long-term, indefinite commitment, the programme develops strong durable partnerships increasing the likelihood of significant benefits remaining even if the partnership eventually ends. Furthermore, these long-term partnerships enable GRÓ LRT to maintain relationships with programme alumni involve them in current programme activities.
- c. **Candidate selection process.** The candidate selection process is designed to maximize sustainability of programme results in land restoration within the partner institutions and countries.

2. Impeding factors

- a. **Need for longer-term support by some alumni.** Stakeholder interviews and the survey response rate of 78% among LRT fellows suggest that about one fourth of LRT alumni do not maintain a relationship with the programme. Around 48% of the 2018-2023 LRT survey participants indicated that they have participated in any GRÓ networking events/activities. This suggests that, for a considerable group of alumni, further support by the programme would be required to ensure their sustainable engagement in activities aligned with the programme objectives. Beyond the support to individuals to attend international conferences (which likely targets the more active alumni), such individual support appears to be beyond the scope of the programme. Instead, the programme could increase its activities in targeted support of alumni networking, see below.
- b. **Creation of sustainable alumni networks difficult.** Top-down creation of alumni networks is often unsuccessful. It is therefore recommended that the programme identifies any possibly bottom-up initiatives and provides targeted support to those. There are some promising initiatives such as efforts by GRÓ alumni in Uganda. These have been encouraged and supported by GRÓ. However, the evaluation finds that, to become fully functional and eventually self-sustaining, these networks likely require more support in terms of funding and technical assistance than currently offered by the GRÓ Centre or GRÓ LRT.
- c. **Lack of funds among partner institutions.** About half of the LRT alumni who completed the June 2024 alumni survey indicated that insufficient resources constitute a challenge in the application of the knowledge they acquired from GRÓ LRT. Unfortunately, this points towards a dilemma which is intrinsic to initiatives focusing on LDCs and LMICs.
- d. While the overall economic value is potentially substantial (albeit difficult to quantify), there is currently **not much money to be made in land restoration**, although this could change with the growing market for carbon and biodiversity credits. As a result, there is limited evidence that the skills acquired through GRÓ LRT can lead to monetary gains, such as consulting contracts or donor-funded projects, except for careers in academia. Only 3% of LRT alumni from the June 2024 survey found work in the private sector, and less than 2.5% started their own businesses. Stories of individuals becoming successful consultants or entrepreneurs in the field could provide additional motivation.

PROSPECTS FOR LONGER-TERM DEVELOPMENT EFFECTS (IMPACT)

The direct effects and longer-term prospects for impact of the programme on the micro, meso, and macro level

Long-term impact of the programme is defined at very high level and accordingly hard to measure and attribute. The alumni survey as well as anecdotal evidence suggest SDG-relevant impacts, but a more systematic approach by GRÓ (LRT) to measure impact is recommended.

The ability to measure long-term impact at meso- and macro level may be enhanced by more clearly defining the desired impacts and determining what constitutes a 'critical mass' at these levels.

The only definition of desired impact is formulated at GRÓ level as **'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.'** This is a rather vague and very high-level definition of expected programme impact. A clearer, programme-specific definition of desired long-term development effects at micro-, meso- and macro-level targets may help to better measure and quantify programme impact. In this regard, also refer to the textbox on 'Training a critical mass' below.

Judging impact at **the policy-, country- and even SDG-level**, is very challenging since the possible impacts of the intervention are confounded with a multitude of other relevant factors influencing a country's ability and success in achieving the respective SDGs. The alumni survey and anecdotal evidence from interviews suggests that **there are macro-level impacts**. Of the 2018-2023 LRT alumni completing the alumni survey, 78% indicated that they contributed towards any of the SDGs in some way. 70% indicated contributions towards SDG 13 (climate action), 64% towards SDG 15 (life on land), and 41% towards SDG 2 (zero hunger). Furthermore, there are individual examples of LRT alumni contributing to national policy-making processes or strengthening regulations related to land restoration. However, the available information does not allow for serious conclusions regarding the magnitude of these impacts. Therefore, establishing causal links between the programme and country-level advances towards SDGs is impossible.

An approach towards better quantifying impacts at all levels could be for GRÓ LRT to define desired impacts more clearly and to systematically follow the careers of all alumni to capture and document their relevant outputs and achievements. Alternatively, or in addition, the programme could conduct regular systematic surveys with the partner institutions to capture impacts at the institutional level. Self-reporting from alumni or institutions is unlikely to be sufficient, so this would probably require additional dedicated human resources within the GRÓ LRT management team.

Training a 'critical mass'

The GRÓ ToC 2022-2027, on p.6 refers to the concept of a **'critical mass' of professionals to be capacitated through the 6-month LRT programme to promote change** and thus translate programme outputs into meso- to macro-level impacts within each country or organization. This concept is central to the overall GRÓ approach. However, at least in the case of GRÓ LRT, it appears that the **definition of what actually constitutes a critical mass within each organization or country is missing** to date. **Such definition would allow GRÓ to set clear targets** at the level of each partner organization or country, i.e. to **draw a horizon for GRÓ support** and thus present a **possible future exit/scaling down strategy** for the programme towards the respective organization or country.

For example, in the case of Uganda with its decentralized administration, 6-month LRT programme candidates are mainly selected from local governments (others also from academia). Since Uganda has 135 districts and an average of three eligible officers per district involved in the local promotion and implementation of land restoration, the overall target group for the 6-month LRT programme in Uganda can be estimated at about 400 persons. Since 2007, 35 candidates (on average two fellows per year) from Uganda have been trained through the 6-month LRT programme. Assuming that roughly 20 of those are from local governments, this would constitute **about 5% of the overall estimated target group**. It is **unclear whether this constitutes a critical mass** to promote change and generate desired impacts beyond the individual and/or local level.

The example further illustrates that different intervention strategies could be applied to build the critical mass at different impact levels. At the localized level of Ugandan districts (meso-level), it is i) rather impossible and ii) not necessary to train every single relevant officer through the 6-month LRT programme. Instead, the in-country short courses, which have a much higher output rate, were found to be very useful at district level and could more easily cater for the high number of potential candidates. Furthermore, the number of postgraduate trainees could be increased through scholarships for postgraduate courses offered by universities in partner countries. The 6-month LRT programme, instead, could consider to (partially) shift focus to strategically target early-career central government officials and thus aim to build capacity specifically for impacts at the level of national policymaking.

While acknowledging that this may be a difficult task, it is recommended that the programme considers assessing and defining on a case-to-case basis, i.e. at the level of each partner organization and country, the critical mass of alumni required to likely achieve impacts at the meso and macro level. To reach a common understanding and agreement, such an assessment should be carried out together with the respective partner institutions.

It is important to note that **alternative activities by no means constitute an equivalent replacement of the 6-month LRT programme**, which offers a unique package of training and experiences. However, alternative activities **may help to find a better trade-off between quality and quantity of trained individuals**.

Enabling and impeding factors for the longer-term achievement of direct effects and impact

The evaluation found the following factors influencing the longer-term achievement of effects and impact:

1. Enabling factors

- a. **High relevance and quality of the programme**, which are necessary conditions for any long-term impacts. The evaluation findings leave no doubt that these conditions are met.
- b. **Long-term commitment and relationships**. Most donor-funded initiatives are very limited in terms of time and (funding) commitment. The decade-long commitments and partnerships set GRÓ apart from most other donors and are a key factor to stimulate impacts beyond the micro level.

2. Impeding factors

- a. **Unclear programme-level result targets.** Concrete desired results and impacts at the institutional and country level are not defined making it difficult to classify anecdotal achievements. Furthermore, the current approach does not define any target in terms of 'critical mass' and therefore does not offer an objectively justified exit strategy.
- b. **Dilution of benefits.** During the evaluation reference period, there were LRT fellows from 34 different partner institutions (see 0). Given the annual target of 25 6-month LRT Programme fellows, this means that each partner institution benefits from an average of 0.7 fellows per year. Depending on the size of the institution, this means that it can take extremely long time until meso-level impacts can be expected to materialize. At the same time, it is a conscious decision by GRÓ LRT to strongly limit the annual number of participants from one institution in order to encourage exchange between fellows and prevent the formation of professional bubbles.
- c. **Lack of resources within partner institutions and countries.** As already alluded to in section 0, about half of the LRT alumni who completed the June 2024 alumni survey indicated that insufficient resources constitute a challenge in the application of the knowledge they acquired from GRÓ LRT. This points towards a dilemma which is intrinsic to initiatives focusing on LDCs and LMICs.

HORIZONTAL THEMES/CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Contribution to gender equality

The evaluation finds that **the GRÓ LRT Programme contributes seriously and effectively to gender equality**. GRÓ LRT has been very successful in ensuring almost perfect gender parity among participants of all its training offers. Within its curriculum, the 6-month LRT Programme emphasizes the important role of gender in land restoration and involves this in corresponding lectures and exercises. These elements were much appreciated by programme participants. Finally, GRÓ LRT, in collaboration with GRÓ GEST, has piloted the delivery of joint short courses on gender, the environment, and sustainable land management. Continuation of this initiative is planned after the success of the 2023 pilot.

Contribution to human rights efforts by the GRÓ LRT Programme

The evaluation finds that **the GRÓ LRT Programme implicitly contributes to human rights awareness**. When asked to rate their skills improvement across various thematic areas through the 6-month LRT programme, LRT alumni rated their skills improvement in human rights at 4.6/5 on a 5-step scale. While there are no explicit programme elements on human rights, human rights awareness and respective considerations are implicit to numerous course elements. This was both confirmed and appreciated by LRT alumni interviewed for this evaluation.

Contribution to environmental sustainability by the GRÓ LRT Programme

Environmental sustainability is the primary goal of land restoration and sustainable land management. **Contribution to environmental sustainability is intrinsic to the GRÓ LRT Programme.**

Managing and countering the effects of external shocks and risks to the programme

During the evaluation reference period, **the COVID-19 pandemic was a massive external shock** which severely affected and disrupted the programme by cancelling all in-person activities in 2020. However, the 6-month LRT Programme resumed as early as 2021 avoiding accumulating a large backlog of fellows. However, delivery of the short courses and the scope of the programme budget have not yet reached pre-pandemic levels. COVID also still affects the programme through long-term health impacts on GRÓ LRT staff members. **Adequate support in terms of budget allocation for human resources and implementation of activities is, therefore, required by GRÓ management to fully overcome this massive shock.**

Another external risk to the programme is the **political stability in partner countries**. **The programme has demonstrated flexibility in this regard by phasing partner countries in or out according to whether local developments allow for a reliable and meaningful partnership**. Examples are Tunisia and Egypt which contributed fellows to the 2007 LRT pilot programme but not thereafter due to political conditions. Niger has been a programme partner country, but recent political instability may also jeopardize this partnership. Finally, the war in Ethiopia's Tigray Province also affected the partnership with Ethiopian partner institutions from Tigray. The losing or temporary pausing of country partnerships has been countered by forging new partnerships. In 2023, Kenya became the latest GRÓ LRT partner country by contributing two fellows of the 2024.

CONCLUSIONS

THE EXTENT TO WHICH GRÓ LRT PROGRAMME INTERVENTIONS HAVE MET THEIR INTENDED RESULTS

The evaluation finds that **overall, the GRÓ LRT Programme has successfully delivered the intended results** during the evaluation reference period 2018-2023 despite the massive external shock brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The **6-month LRT Programme provides a unique capacity-building package of high relevance and high quality**. In the systematic alumni survey conducted for with this evaluation, LRT consistently received the highest quality-related ratings among all four GRÓ training programmes. In terms of quantitative output, the 6-month LRT Programme has been **below the target formulated at GRÓ Centre level in 2022 but is steadily improving**. The 6-month LRT Programme is **perfectly compliant with country income status and gender balance priorities**.

LRT postgraduate scholarships are found to be effective. This finding is in line with the findings of a specific in-depth evaluation of the GRÓ scholarship component conducted in 2023. The number of postgraduate scholarships has been below the 2022 quantitative target and **could be increased through in-country scholarships**. The attached case study on LRT collaboration with partner universities provides more detailed information in this regard.

The **in-country short courses are effective in locally raising awareness and creating capacity in land restoration**. Programme partners consulted for this evaluation consistently expressed the **continued demand for these courses**. **LRT short course quantitative outputs have been significantly below the 2022 target figure and have not yet fully recovered from the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic** and struggle due to budgetary limitations and the high cost of preparation for these courses. Assuming that parity between the four training programmes is envisaged regarding the GRÓ-level target figure, the annual target of 25 short courses (6-7 annual short courses per programme) is considered highly ambitious, at least regarding in-country courses.

GRÓ LRT developed three MOOCs as partner of externally funded consortia. **Positive online user feedback indicates that these courses are of high quality**. **Enrolment figures are impressive and completion rates are in ranges normal for MOOCs in general**. However, the overlap between the GRÓ LRT target groups (i.e. participants from the GRÓ LRT partner countries) and actual course participants is potentially low. Regarding the future development of further MOOCs, it needs to be determined whether the expected benefits justify the cost in terms of production effort.

The programme **effectively supports the production and dissemination of knowledge by its trainees** through the well-designed and well-maintained website, annual seminars for fellows of the 6-month LRT Programme, and the opportunity-based support to alumni to participate in international conferences.

GRÓ LRT effectively engages and maintains relationships with former 6-month LRT Programme fellows through occasional in-country meetings and by involving them in training activities. **However, targeted support to alumni networking activities appears to happen more at GRÓ Centre level**.

THE PRIMARY SUCCESSES OF GRÓ LRT

The evaluation finds that the primary success of GRÓ LRT is to have **developed and consistently delivered a high-quality training programme on land restoration** which offers a **relevant and coherent package of academic and practical experiences** and constitutes a **unique capacity-building offer** which is consistently appreciated by participants and partners alike.

This success is found to be built on i) the high degree of dedication and experience of the involved Icelandic partners and staff; ii) the approach of providing long-term commitment (by MFA and GRÓ LRT) and building long-term reliable partnerships; iii) adhering to well-designed and clear partnership principles and selection criteria; and iv) the regular review and adjustment of the programme.

The **programme's impact at the individual level of direct beneficiaries is found to be very high**. The 6-month LRT Programme constitutes an important stepping stone in numerous successful professional careers in technical fields related to land restoration **creating potential agents of change towards the achievement of the SDGs**.

Various academic GRÓ LRT **partner institutions have begun initiatives towards replicating this success** in their respective countries by initiating the **development of in-country postgraduate training courses** and requesting corresponding support from GRÓ LRT. This constitutes a primary success and potential multiplier of GRÓ LRT results. A corresponding case study has been conducted along with this evaluation, and the resulting report is attached.

THE PRIMARY CONSTRAINTS FOR RESULT ACHIEVEMENT BY GRÓ LRT

1. Internal constraints

- a. **Programme quality vs. quantity.** An annual number of more than 25 participants would not be reasonable to ensure the high quality and manageability of the 6-month LRT Programme. However, both needs and demand for the programme are much higher. Therefore, the number of partner institutions that can be catered for at a time is, and should remain, limited. Alternative activities such as short courses and university collaboration can be expanded to increase quantitative outputs.
- b. **Budgetary limitations and lack of mid- to long-term budgetary planning security.** Core budget allocations to GRÓ LRT since the COVID-19 pandemic have been rather insufficient to meet the targets formulated in 2022. Furthermore, the recent short-notice budget approval process does not allow for medium to long-term planning and preparation of additional activities in collaboration with partner institutions.
- c. **Lack of programme-level targets.** Current GRÓ Centre level targets as formulated in 2022 cannot be analysed on the programme level; GRÓ LRT may currently be measured against indicators which are not appropriate for the programme. The lack of clear targets further impedes effective planning, preparation, and budgeting. Finally, the lack of targets related to the 'critical mass' alluded to in the GRÓ Theory of Change (ToC) prevents the programme from defining a temporal horizon for the support rendered to its respective partners.

2. External constraints

- a. **Lack of resources in partner institutions and countries.** About half of the LRT alumni who completed the June 2024 alumni survey indicated that insufficient resources constitute a challenge in the application of the knowledge they acquired from GRÓ LRT. Unfortunately, this points towards a dilemma which is common among capacity building initiatives focusing on LDCs and LMICs.
- b. **Lack of funds in land restoration sector.** There is not much money to be made in the field of land restoration and the corresponding job market is limited, particularly in the private sector. This situation could change with the growing market for carbon and biodiversity credits.
- c. **External shocks such as COVID-19 pandemic or political instability.** The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that external shocks can drastically impact the programme delivery. At the same time, GRÓ LRT management has demonstrated that it is able to respond effectively and adequately to these shocks.

THE SUITABILITY OF THE PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS TO EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY GENERATE THE PROGRAMME RESULTS

The evaluation finds that, **management arrangements are efficient at GRÓ LRT Programme level, albeit the size of the management team is small**, particularly if recommendations of this evaluation regarding systematic impact monitoring are to be followed.

With regards to the **programme reporting, oversight, and steering arrangement, there are perceived deficiencies which require further internal review for possible improvement**. These relate to the budget allocation and approval process, the management and reporting arrangements between the GRÓ Centre and GRÓ LRT, and the perception that top-down pressure towards maximizing cost-efficiency may compromise programme quality and benefits.

Finally, it is found that **the partnership with UNESCO has not (yet) brought any significant benefits or disadvantages with regards to the achievement of results**.

OVERALL EVALUATION CONCLUSION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF GRÓ LRT

On the five-step ordinal scale (1 – highly unsatisfactory to 5 – highly satisfactory) applied by this evaluation to rate programme performance¹³, the evaluation finds that **the overall performance of the GRÓ LRT Programme is satisfactory** (good). Table 46 below provides the performance rating per evaluation criterion.

Table 46: Evaluation performance rating

Evaluation criterion	Performance rating
Relevance	Satisfactory
Coherence	Satisfactory
Effectiveness	Satisfactory
Efficiency	Satisfactory
Sustainability	Satisfactory
Impact	Satisfactory

LESSONS LEARNED

Lesson 1: The evaluation consistently encountered evidence for the high quality and uniqueness of the 6-month LRT Programme. All parties involved can arguably be proud of this. Offering the programme as a fully funded course in Iceland creates numerous life- and career-transforming experiences for the alumni. **Pressure to reduce programme cost may adversely affect the quality and uniqueness of the programme.**

Lesson 2: The virtually open-ended long-term funding commitment by MFA and the resulting ability of GRÓ LRT to forge of long-term partnerships with institutions and countries is fundamental to the programme's success and sets the programme apart from most other donor-driven initiatives. At the same time, the approach **currently lacks any robust definition of accomplishment** and thus any temporal horizon for these partnerships.

Lesson 3: The high quality of the course logically limits its quantitative outputs. This means that, given the high number of partner institutions relative to the annual cohort size, the programme's high-level impact (progress towards achievement of SDGs enhanced by a 'critical mass' of capacitated individuals) is diluted and hard to reach within a given partner institution, unless the support is rendered over longer periods of time. To address this, the logical options are to either **reduce/ limit the number of simultaneous partners or to increase output through additional alternative activities**.

¹³ The exact definition of the ordinal scale applied for performance rating by this evaluation is provided in a separate annex to the overall evaluation report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To MFA/GRÓ Centre/GRÓ LRT:

- a. With the aim to enhance budgeting, planning, and performance measurement processes, **it is recommended programme level output targets be defined for all programme elements.**
- b. **A review of the budget allocation and budget approval processes is recommended** with the aim to ensure timely allocation of annual budgets commensurate with expected outputs¹⁴. A rolling budget over several years may further help to maximize financial planning security for the programme and its partners.

2. To GRÓ LRT:

- a. In order to achieve the desired programme outcomes at the level of individual partner institutions within reasonable time, **it is recommended to consider reducing the number of partners supported in parallel.** An attempt to define the desired 'critical mass' of trained individuals for each partner might allow for a more staggered approach, i.e. accomplishing capacity-building targets with one partner and then focusing on the next one. Such approach should not go against the successfully applied principle of each annual cohort ideally constituting a heterogeneous mix of individuals from different countries and institutions.
- b. In order to achieve the desired programme outcomes at the level of individual partner institutions within reasonable time, **it is recommended to increase quantitative output through alternative activities** such as in-country short courses or in-country postgraduate courses in collaboration with partner universities¹⁵. While these cannot be expected to have the same quality as the 6-month LRT Programme, they can contribute towards optimizing the programme's overall trade-off between quality and quantity.
- c. Maintaining the programme's institutional memory is critical for both programme quality partnerships. Given the strong reliance on long-serving staff members, lecturers and programme partners in this regard, **it is recommended to i) introduce measures to conserve institutional memory independently from individuals; and ii) enhance measures which ensure handover of knowledge and institutional memory between outgoing and incoming programme staff** (e.g. through extended learning and handover periods).
- d. To be able to better quantify programme impacts at all levels, **it is recommended to introduce/strengthen measures to systematically document relevant outputs and achievements at the individual alumni level and/or the partner institution level.** This would be labour-intensive and might require additional human resources at GRÓ LRT level.

¹⁴ Ideally to programme-level targets, see recommendation 1.

¹⁵ Detail information on the intended collaboration with partner universities is provided in the attached case study report.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Table 47: Summary of GRÓ LRT strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

<p>Strengths</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 High-quality programme based on comprehensive experience and expertise in land restoration. 2 Well-crafted course in Iceland offers a complete, in-depth, and unique package regarding technical, theoretical, practical, soft, social, and life skills and experiences. 3 Strong and reliable long-term partnerships are established. 4 Demand-driven, well-designed, and principled approach towards partnerships and candidate selection. 5 Further support of alumni through scholarships, attendance of conferences, and involvement in capacity building activities. 6 Fundamental stepping stone for numerous successful professional and academic careers in technical fields related to land restoration. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Programme-level targets are not defined. 2 Critical mass of capacitated change agents for a given partner institution or country not defined. Therefore, lack of temporal horizon for the programme support. 3 By design, annual cohort size in Iceland is strongly limited to ensure course quality, manageability, and individual experience. 4 Lack of systematic tracking and documentation of alumni contributions towards programme objectives.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Self-driven interest and initiatives from partner institutions to offer LRT-inspired postgraduate training. 2 Quantitative output can be increased through short courses and in-country postgraduate offerings/scholarships. 3 Relevance of land restoration is increasing globally. Growing markets for carbon and biodiversity credits for alumni to contribute to. 	<p>Threats</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Budgetary limitations and lack of financial planning security hamper implementation of activities and achievement of targets. 2 Top-down pressure to increase quantitative outputs may compromise quality and uniqueness of the programme. 3 Institutional memory and relationships with partner institutions strongly rely on long-serving staff members and may severely suffer when they are no longer with LRT.

POTENTIAL OPTIONS TO GUIDE FUTURE LRT ENDEAVOURS

Going forward, the option of collaborating with partner universities towards the development and delivery of in-country post-graduate courses in land restoration is a promising opportunity. The fact that LRT long-term partners such as Makerere University in Uganda and Samarkand State University in Uzbekistan have initiated such options and requested for corresponding support from GRÓ LRT is a remarkable impact of the programme with considerable multiplier potential. While the partner universities could benefit from such collaboration through experience, expertise, and funding support, GRÓ LRT could benefit by increasing the quantitative output of capacity building in LDCs and LMICs in the field of land restoration both indirectly through technical support to these courses and directly through in-country course scholarships.

With regards to current and future partnerships, the current approach appears to be opportunity-based (in the sense of finding interested and suitable partners) and more inclusive than exclusive. In 2023, Kenya joined the group of LRT partner countries and Sierra Leone, as Iceland's latest bilateral development cooperation partner country, will probably be added next. In order to avoid dilution of benefits, a potential option to be considered for the future is to focus on less partners more intensively.

For funding, the MFA has been a reliable and committed donor over decades with no other donor significantly funding the programme. This allowed the programme to forge long-term partnerships in line with Icelandic development priorities. Recently, the budget allocations have been on the lower end and appear insufficient to meet the current programme targets. Going forward, efforts could be made

towards attracting funding from alternative sources to be able to implement additional activities or reducing dependency on MFA. However, the option of increasing external funding should be considered carefully, since this would come at the cost of increased administrative and reporting requirements as well as reduced sovereignty over programme funds and activities.

ANNEX A: GRÓ LRT PARTNER INSTITUTIONS 2018-2023

Table 48: GRÓ LRT's 34 partner institutions in partner countries between 2018 and 2023.

COUNTRY	INSTITUTION	TYPE OF ORG
Ethiopia	Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development of Tigray	Government
Ethiopia	Mekelle University	Academia/research
Ghana	CSIR	Academia/research
Ghana	Environmental Protection Agency	Government
Ghana	University for Development Studies	Academia/research
Kyrgyzstan	CAMP Alattoo	NGO/Other
Kyrgyzstan	Institute of Sustainable Development Strategy	NGO/Other
Kyrgyzstan	Ministry of Agriculture, Food Industry and Land Reclamation	Government
Lesotho	Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation	Government
Malawi	Cooperation through the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme, Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust	NGO/Other
Malawi	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources	Academia/research
Malawi	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, Department of Land Resources Conservation	Government
Malawi	Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining, Department of Mines	Government
Mongolia	Agency for Land Administration and Management, Geodesy and Cartography	Government
Mongolia	Mongolian University of Life Sciences	Academia/research
Mongolia	Information and Research Institute of Meteorology, Hydrology and Environment	Academia/research
Mongolia	Institute of Geography and Geoecology	Academia/research
Mongolia	Research Institute of Animal Husbandry	Academia/research
Niger	Niger Institute of Agricultural Research (INRAN)	Academia/research
Nigeria	Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria	Academia/research
Tajikistan	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development	NGO/Other
Tajikistan	CAMP Tabiat	NGO/Other
Tajikistan	Mountain Societies Development Support Programme	NGO/Other
Tajikistan	Pamir Biological Institute	Academia/research
Tajikistan	Public Organisation "Bargi Sabz"	NGO/Other
Uganda	Kyambogo University, Kampala	Academia/research
Uganda	National Environmental Management Authority	Government
Uganda	Local Governments	Government
Uganda	Makerere University	Academia/research
Uzbekistan	Samarkand State University	Academia/research
Uzbekistan	Tashkent State Agrarian University	Academia/research
Uzbekistan	Institute of Botany	Academia/research
Uzbekistan	National University of Uzbekistan	Academia/research
Uzbekistan	Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers	Academia/research

GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMME RESULTS DELIVERY & ACHIEVEMENT – GRÓ LRT

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
Outcome: GRÓ fellows, trainees and respective organisations promote and implement changes needed to achieve SDGs relevant to their field of work									
P1. Management in partner organisations assess the training to be valuable for the organisation	% of survey respondents (organisations) assess the training to be valuable for the organisation (3-years after)	57.1%	100%	100%	N/A	78.6%	88.2%*	95.0%*	91.4% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)
P2. Graduates have used the training to advance their contribution in their field/sector of work	% of survey respondents (fellows) report the training has advanced their contribution in their field/sector (3-years after)	71.4%	100%	100%	N/A	92.9%	100%*	95.0%*	97.1% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)
P3. Graduates have used their training to share with colleagues and other experts in their respective field of expertise	% of survey respondents (fellows) report the training has advanced their contribution in their field/sector (3-years after)	87.5%	90.9%	90.9%	N/A	82.4%	94.1%*	81.8%*	87.2% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)
P4. Graduates have advanced professionally (e.g. promotion or received scholarship for further studies)	% of survey respondents (fellows) report the training has advanced their contribution in their field/sector (3-years after)	85.7%	100%	80.0%	N/A	71.4%	88.2%*	85.0%*	84.3% (2018-2023 cohort) (GOPA 2024 alumni survey data)

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
<p><i>*The GRÓ Results Framework suggest measuring outcome level results 3 years after programme graduation. Therefore, the indicator value for the graduation year 2022 and 2023 should be interpreted with caution. Generally, the survey findings suggest that it might take some time for outcome level results to materialise after programme completion. Therefore, the measurement 3 years after programme completion seems reasonable.</i></p>									
<p>Output N°1: Increased capability of individuals and expertise of GRÓ partner organisations to design and implement programme activities in respective professional fields</p>									
P1. Number of experts trained in the GRÓ 5-6-month training programmes	Annual # of fellows Gender ratio M/F (%) Country Income level LDC and LMI (%)	14 4 F (29%) 10 M (71%) 43% LDC 57% LMIC	17 10 F (59%) 7 M (41%) 53% LDC 47% LMIC	21 11 F (52%) 10 M (48%) 57% LDC 43% LMIC	0 (COVID)	17 8 F (47%) 9 M (53%) 59% LDC 41% LMIC	19 7 F (37%) 12 M (63%) 53% LDC 47% LMIC	23 12 F (52%) 11 M (48%) 48% LDC 52% LMIC	111 52 F (47%) 59 M (53%) 58 LDC (52%) 53 LMIC (48%)
P2. Quality of the 5-6 month training	Self-assessment survey of fellows at the start and end of training on knowledge, skills and mindset (on a scale from 1 low – 5 high)	100% = 5/5	88% = 5/5 6% = 4/5 0% = 3/5 0% = 2/5 6% = 1/5	95% = 5/5 0% = 4/5 0% = 3/5 0% = 2/5 5% = 1/5	Not applicable	76% = 5/5 18% = 4/5 6% = 3/5 0% = 2/5 0% = 1/5	100% = 5/5	82% = 5/5 18% = 4/5 0% = 3/5 0% = 2/5 0% = 1/5	86.5% = 5/5 10.5% = 4/5 1.5% = 3/5 0% = 2/5 1.5% = 1/5
P3. Number of graduates eligible for 30 ECTS credits/ Diploma degree at completion of 5-6 month training (ratio from enrolled fellows). Only applicable GEST & LRT fellows	Annual # of diploma certificates issued Graduation ratio (% of total cohort of fellows eligible)	Diploma = 14 30 ECTS only applicable from 2022	Diploma = 17	Diploma = 21	Not applicable	Diploma = 17	Diploma = 19 30 ECTS = 17 (89.5%)	Diploma = 23 30 ECTS = 21 (91.5%)	All fellows (111) awarded diploma ECTS graduation ratio 90.5% (2022-2023)

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
P4. Number of short courses (5-7 days) in partner countries	Annual # of weeks of on-site training # of participants short courses Gender ratio M/F (%)	1 week 25 people 6 F (24%) 19 M (76%)	2 weeks 49 people 24 F (49%) 25 M (51%)	2 weeks 50 people 25 F (50%) 25 M (50%)	0	0.3 weeks 25 people 10 F (40%) 15 M (60%)	0.7 weeks 20 people 1 F (5%) 19 M (95%)	0.5 weeks 16 people 6 F (37%) 10 M (63%)	6.5 weeks 185 people 72 F (39%) 113 M (61%)
P5. Quality of short course training	% of participants assess the course to be useful for enhancing skills & knowledge (relevant and helpful for my job) (on scale from 1 – 5)	Self-assessment survey results not available. LRT's own evaluation report very positive	Self-assessment surveys available, but not corresponding to indicator definition. Overall very positive	65% = 5/5 31% = 4/5 4% = 3/5	Not applicable	Self-assessment survey available, but not corresponding to indicator definition. Overall very positive	Evaluation report not available	Evaluation report not available	Overall very positive
P6. Number of live streaming training courses	Annual # # of participants	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P7. Quality live streaming training courses	% of participants assess the course to be useful for enhancing skills & knowledge (relevant and helpful for my job) (on scale from 1 – 5)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
P8. Number of online courses and number of participants in the online courses	Annual # # of participants newly enrolled	1 MOOC # enrolled per year not available	1 MOOC # enrolled per year not available	3 MOOCs # enrolled per year not available	3 MOOCs # enrolled per year not available	3 MOOCs # enrolled per year not available	3 MOOCs # enrolled per year not available	3 MOOCs # enrolled per year not available	3 MOOCs 20,026 enrolled in total

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
P9. Quality of online training	Average online rating of MOOCs	MOOC 1 = 4.6/5	MOOC 1 = 4.6/5	MOOC 1 = 4.6/5 MOOC 2 = 4.7/5 MOOC 3 = 4.9/5	MOOC 1 = 4.6/5 MOOC 2 = 4.7/5 MOOC 3 = 4.9/5	MOOC 1 = 4.6/5 MOOC 2 = 4.7/5 MOOC 3 = 4.9/5	MOOC 1 = 4.6/5 MOOC 2 = 4.7/5 MOOC 3 = 4.9/5	MOOC 1 = 4.6/5 MOOC 2 = 4.7/5 MOOC 3 = 4.9/5	MOOC 1 = 4.6/5 MOOC 2 = 4.7/5 MOOC 3 = 4.9/5
P10. Number of GRÓ graduate studies scholarships provided annually	Annual # Master's and PhD (by gender) Gender ratio M/F (%)	M.Sc. = 1 1 M (100%)	0	M.A. = 1 1 F (100%) PhD = 1 1 F (100%)	0	M.Sc. = 2 2 M (100%)	0	M.Sc. = 2 1 F (50%) 1 M (50%)	Master's = 6 2 F (33%) 4 M (67%) PhD = 1 1 F (100%)
Output N°2: Production and dissemination of new knowledge by GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipient									
P1. Number of research outputs (research project reports) annually by GRÓ fellows	Annual # of research project papers confirmed on GRÓ website	14	17	21	0	17	19	23	All fellows completed a paper. 87 were published on the LRT website
P2. Number of master's thesis published annually by GRÓ scholarship recipients (research output)	Annual # of published master's thesis at universities' websites	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2 published
P3. Number of PhD papers published annually by GRÓ scholarship recipients (research outputs)	Annual # of publications in research journals	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1 paper published

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SPECIFIC INDICATORS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	SUMMARY
Output N°3: Professional empowerment of GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipients is increased through GRÓ community building and networking									
P1. Number of alumni events organised by GRÓ annually	Annual #	Data not available	1	2	Data not available	Data not available	1	Data not available	2 as side event at conferences 2 in country meetings
P2. Number of GRÓ funded alumni participating in regional and international conferences	Annual #	0	34	15	0	0	5	0	54 alumni
P3. % of GRÓ short courses involving alumni in teaching/organisation of short courses	Annual # (% of GRÓ short courses involving alumni)	100% (1 of 1 event)	100% (2 of 2 events)	100% (2 of 2 events)	No courses delivered	100% (1 of 1 event)	0% (0 of 1 event)	0% (0 of 1 event)	75% (6 of 8 events)

ANNEX 12 GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMME CASE STUDY REPORTS

INTRODUCTION

As noted in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this evaluation, one of the core evaluation questions is as follows: **What lessons can be drawn from previous interventions by the GRÓ programmes, which can be used as a frame of reference in future endeavours?**

In addition to the overall evaluation of the GRÓ centre, and the evaluation of each of the four Training Programmes (TPs), the evaluators conducted **four evaluative case studies of specific initiatives and approaches** as applied by the individual TP, to generate lessons learned for the future. The ToR defines the specific scope of each case study for this evaluation. For each of the TPs one case study has been prepared. They address specific initiatives and approaches of the Training Programme under review.

The **case study reports provide:**

- An overview of the specific data-collection process and evaluation methodology applied,
- A brief introduction to the initiatives and approaches directly under review,
- Specific evaluation findings linked to the interventions, operational delivery and results achieved,
- Conclusions,
- Lessons learned, and
- Prospects for scaling-up or replication of the intervention in future endeavours of the GRÓ.

A summary of the **specific scope of the individual case studies** is below:

GRÓ FTP	<p>Regional collaboration in the Caribbean</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partnership and cooperation of the FTP with regional and country institutions to promote local capacity development of individuals and organizations - The development and delivery of in-country and regional training courses, and the promotion of local capacity to support and maintain the development and delivery of the training offer
GRÓ GEST	<p>Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), innovative online content to promote digital learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The potential role of MOOCs as a tool to enhance the range and quality of the overall GEST offer and to achieve outreach in the provision of transnational knowledge transmission and exchange <p>March 8 Fund (seed fund for GEST Alumni projects)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The achievements and lessons learned linked to the Fund and the projects of supported alumni - The feasibility to scale-up or replicate a seed money fund across the GRÓ for projects of alumni
GRÓ GTP	<p>Collaboration efforts in El Salvador</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The development and delivery of in-country and regional training courses, and the promotion of local capacity to support and maintain the development and delivery of the training offer - The potential role of Centres of Excellence in-country for the scaling-up the GTP offer regionally
GRÓ LRT	<p>Collaboration with universities (with a focus on Makerere University in Uganda)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partnership and cooperation of the LRT with universities in-country to promote and support the integration of the LRT offer within the wider context of existing university programmes/offer - The development and delivery of in-country and regional training courses, and the promotion of local capacity to support and maintain the development and delivery of the training offer

ANNEX 12.1: GRÓ FTP CASE STUDY REPORT

Introduction

Case Study specific programme description and context

Findings

Conclusions

Lessons learned

Prospects of the scaling-up or replication of the intervention in future endeavours of GRÓ

INTRODUCTION

As per the Terms of Reference (ToR), an **evaluative case study** was carried out regarding the **collaboration of GRÓ Fisheries Training Programme (GRÓ FTP) with countries of the Caribbean region**. For this case study, information was collected from programme documentation, document reviews, key informants, data bases, and onsite observation.

The purpose of the case study is to draw lessons that enhance the effectiveness of the interventions of GRÓ FTP in the Caribbean region. Specifically, the case study looks at the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency of the intervention, as well as the prospects for the sustainability of its effects and their impacts (long-term effects). The case study also analyses cross-cutting issues in terms of gender equality, environmental sustainability and human rights.

1. CASE STUDY SPECIFIC PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 PROGRAMME CONTEXT

GRÓ FTP in the Caribbean originated in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), which encompasses **17 countries**¹⁵², and the then United Nations University-Fisheries Training Programme (UNU FTP) in 2008.

The **Caribbean nations faced the challenge of the sustainable use of their fisheries resources and needed to enhance their institutional capacities to address that challenge**. In this context, the CRFM serves as a platform for collaborative efforts to tackle common challenges related to fisheries and aquatic resources in the Caribbean region. With its mandate to promote the sustainable use, development, management, and conservation of fisheries and aquaculture resources among its member states, CRFM works in partnership with stakeholders to benefit the people of the region. At a time when the Government of Iceland (GOI) was looking to strengthen diplomatic relations with Caribbean countries, the CRFM approached the Icelandic MFA to seek assistance in enhancing the capabilities of the countries in the region. Those actions resulted in a **MOU, under the assumption that the UNU FTP had the competence, experience, and expertise to support, reinforce, and facilitate the CRFM's mandate of capacity building in the field of fisheries**.

The MOU recognizes that the combined and complementary efforts of the CRFM and the UNU FTP can contribute more effectively to the sustainable fisheries development in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) region in areas of cooperation such as i) the **institutional strengthening and capacity building** in the areas offered by the UNU FTP consistent with the priorities of the Caribbean countries for the purpose of skills development in the area of sustainable development of fisheries; ii) the provision of **technical assistance** in support of CRFM's mandate; iii) **Training under the UNU FTP 6-month fellowship programme** and the scholarship programme for graduate studies at Icelandic universities as well as the development and delivery of **short courses** in fisheries and related areas; and iv) any other related area of cooperation or expertise of mutual benefit. Funding for the capacity building activities is set to be sourced by either or both parties. The MOU is implemented by Letters of Agreement specifying

¹⁵² Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

the activities to be undertaken, the expected contributions of each party, the nature and timing of expected outputs, the reporting protocols, the treatment of intellectual property, and any other conditions agreed upon by the parties.

The programme has a **special focus in countries that qualify for Official Development Assistance (ODA)** in accordance with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) classification, **including SIDS**, as fisheries are an important sector to those countries in terms of both economic opportunities and food security and nutrition. To contribute to addressing the challenges to the fisheries sector in the Caribbean, GRÓ FTP has an array of interventions that include the following training interventions.

The 6-month postgraduate training programme.

GRÓ FTP's 6-month training is at the core of the training efforts in the Caribbean. It **has the purpose of enhancing institutional capacities in the CARICOM countries** by helping the partner institutions to build a critical mass able to promote development change in the fisheries sectors in the Caribbean partner countries. Partner institutions are generally the fisheries divisions/institutions of the ministries that have the responsibility to promote and regulate the fisheries sector, but these also include private companies related to the fishing sector. Offered once a year in Iceland, the 6-month training programme targets young and mid-career professionals from the partner institutions.

The programme offers four lines of specialisation: i) Fisheries Policy and Management, ii) Aquatic Resource Assessment and Monitoring, iii) Quality Management of Fish Handling and Processing, and iv) Sustainable Aquaculture. So far 37 fellows from the Caribbean region (38% male and 62% female) have graduated from this postgraduate training programme. Jamaica has sent the most fellows of any country with nine attending the programme, followed by St. Vincent and the Grenadines with five, and Saint Lucia with four.

The M.Sc. and Ph.D. scholarship programme.

GRÓ FTP provides scholarships for **qualifying fellows from the Caribbean region who want to continue their training in a Master's or PhD programme** at an Icelandic academic institution. The purpose of this scholarship programme is to further enhance human capital in the Caribbean region to contribute to development change in the fisheries sector. Since the inception of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Fisheries Training Program and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, five fellows have been granted a scholarship for M.Sc. and four of them have already graduated from the University of Iceland in areas of environmental and natural resources, food science, and fisheries biology.

In-country/regional training.

This modality of training takes the form of **tailored short courses or workshops to address pressing issues in the fisheries sector of the Caribbean region**. The target audience of these training events is the directors and deputy directors of fisheries, fisheries officers of all ranks, technical staff, and personnel from private companies related to the fishing industry. Depending on audience and course content, these training events run from three days to up to two weeks. In the past, these courses have equipped attendees with hard skills in data analysis (e.g., assessing the status of the commercial stocks in their countries), value chain promotion (e.g., to unlock the potential of the fisheries sector in the Caribbean by assessing key constraints along the value chains and identifying opportunities for investment and interventions to generate higher returns), and fishery leadership (e.g., heads of the Fisheries divisions / institutions were trained in leadership skills linked to managing fisheries departments in their organisations). These courses aimed at enhancing the profitability, sustainability, and management of the fisheries sector in the Caribbean in times of rapid environmental and social changes.

Since the inception of the MOU, **seven short courses and three workshops** have been delivered in the Caribbean region. So far, only regional short courses / workshops have taken place.

The CRFM is involved in the **selection of candidates for the training programmes in Iceland** and actively participates in planning, preparation, and delivery of the short courses/workshops, of which the **University of the West Indies** and the **University of Belize** are regular partners. Collaboration has also

taken place with the Caribbean Fisheries Training and Development Institute in Trinidad and Tobago, which was involved in the design and delivery of a workshop on value chain.

2. FINDINGS

2.1. PROGRAMME GOALS, STRATEGY, AND APPROACH (RELEVANCE)

The fisheries sector in the Caribbean faces numerous challenges in ensuring efficient and sustainable fisheries management. One of the main challenges is overfishing, which not only raises ecological concerns, but also has social and economic implications, especially in the artisanal fishing segment. Increased fishing undermines the livelihoods of fisherfolks, who often operate in areas with limited fish stocks, thereby resulting in overfishing that threatens the depletion of the fisheries stock the fisherfolks rely on for their food security. Given the challenges in the fisheries sector of the Caribbean, the CARICOM countries agreed to a Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy (CCCFP) with the goals of i) the conservation, management, sustainable utilisation, and development of fisheries resources and related ecosystems; ii) the building of capacity amongst fishers and the optimisation of the social and economic returns from their fisheries; and iii) the promotion of competitive trade and stable market conditions. Specific objectives of the Common Policy include to achieve this includes:

- The promotion of the sustainable management and development of fishing and aquaculture in the Caribbean region.
- The protection of food and nutrition security and the improvement of income and employment opportunities through the sustainable development of fisheries.
- The development of harmonised operating procedures for post-harvest practices.
- The improvement of welfare and the livelihoods of fishers and fishing communities.
- The prevention, deterrence, and elimination of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.
- The enhancement of institutional capacities of the CARICOM member States to conduct research, collect and analyse data, and formulate and implement policies and make decisions.
- Facilitate the establishment of a regime for sanitary and phytosanitary standards for the fisheries sector.

The **objectives of the Common Policy directly relate to all ten targets of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) Life Below Water** and indirectly to some targets of SDG 1 *No poverty*, SDG 2 *Zero Hunger*, SDG 3 *Good Health and Wellbeing*, SDG 8 *Decent work and Economic Growth*, SDG 12 *Responsible consumption and production*, and SDG 13 *Climate Action*.

Collaboration of GRÓ in the Caribbean region through **FTP directly contributes to the enhancement of individual and institutional capacities for the achievement of the CCCFP objectives** and the implementation of those SDGs.

The **programme interventions are relevant for the objectives of the CCCFP**. Through the contribution to capacity building by the postgraduate training programme, individual and organisational capacities in Caribbean countries are strengthened in the areas of fisheries policy and planning, stock assessment, sustainable aquaculture, and post-harvest management and processing of fish through the various lines of specialisation that GRÓ FTP offers. Furthermore, human capital has been enhanced through the FTP Scholarship programme by increasing knowledge in environmental and natural resources, fisheries biology, and food science, thereby strengthening capacities in the Caribbean region to deal with the challenges in the fisheries sector of that region.

The in-country **short courses and workshops** in the region also **directly contribute to building the capacities needed for the achievement of the CCCFP goals**. Professionals and fisheries officials gain insights about leadership in fisheries, value chain analysis and management, stock assessment, fisheries statistics and data modelling, and sanitary and phytosanitary protocols from the short courses.

The **programme aligns with GRÓ's overarching vision** of achieving the SDGs. It focuses on the sustainable use natural resources, resilience of natural and human systems, equality, human rights, and human well-being. By promoting progress in partner countries towards these SDGs, the programme aims to foster capable individuals and organisations that can sustainably manage natural resources.

Output (1) of increased capability of individuals and expertise of GRÓ partner organisations to design and implement programme activities in their respective professional fields **is relevant**, as GRÓ aims to train fellows in fisheries, to grant scholarships to qualifying fellows for graduate studies in fisheries related fields at Icelandic universities, and to participate in the preparation and delivery of short courses / workshops in partner Caribbean countries through FTP.

Output (2) of production and dissemination of new knowledge by GRÓ trainees, fellows, and scholarship recipients **is relevant** to the overall goal of GRÓ and is accomplished with the publication of the academic work of fellows and scholarship recipients in the GRÓ website as well as the CRFM website for Caribbean FTP projects. This research is openly available for stakeholders in the Caribbean to be used in further research and learning or to inform policy making decisions.

Output (3) of professional empowerment of GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipients is increased through GRÓ community building and networking **is also relevant** as the engagement of former fellows as organizers and/or lecturers in short courses/workshops in partner Caribbean countries contributes to their professional development, as is the case of short courses in stock assessment where a Jamaican former fellow participates as an instructor. In addition, the group that attended the Fisheries Assessment and Data Modelling workshop held in Barbados in 2023 has set up a network that meets online and they learn from each other on this subject, thereby contributing to their empowerment to bring change in their field of work in the Caribbean region. This sort of alumni participation also reinforces Output 1 by keeping alumni engaged with new insights and developments in the fisheries sector.

Therefore, the evaluator assesses that the **GRÓ FTP interventions are relevant** as they address the needs of the partner countries in the Caribbean region and directly advance the goal of GRÓ in terms of enhancing the capacities of individuals and organisations in partner countries to advance the achievement of SDG 14 by promoting the sustainable use of natural resources.

2.2. PROMOTION OF SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE PROGRAMME AND OTHER LOCAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS (COHERENCE)

Internal Synergies. Among the GRÓ training programmes, there is synergy in the Caribbean with the GRÓ Geothermal Training Programme (GRÓ GTP), as the capacities built in the region for the use of geothermal energy have the potential for the reduction of CO² emissions that cause ocean acidification. 13 fellows from five Caribbean have graduated from the 6-month GTP training, and one former fellow received a master's degree from the University of Iceland. GRÓ FTP is also in discussions with GRÓ GTP and MATÍS for collaboration in bringing geothermal energy to fish processing, which would further enhance synergies between these two GRÓ TP. There is also potential synergy with the GRÓ Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme (GRÓ GEST) as gender equality is a pressing issue in the fisheries sector in the Caribbean region.

External synergies. There are also synergies with interventions funded by other donors in the Caribbean region. The programme for **Strengthening Fisheries Management in African, Caribbean, and Pacific Countries** (ACP Programme Fish II) funded by the European Union (EU) aims to contribute to the sustainable and equitable management of fisheries in the region by improving institutional capacity for fisheries and aquatic resources management. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) implements several projects in the Caribbean through the CRFM related sustainable fisheries and coastal resources, one of which is COASTFISH¹⁵³, which entails, among other areas of support, data collection and monitoring, community-based resource management, and policy development and implementation, areas in which the capacities developed by GRÓ FTP can play a complementary role.

¹⁵³ Strengthening Sustainable Use and Management of Coastal Fisheries Resources in CARICOM Countries. While COASTFISH also addresses capacity building and training, there is no evidence that efforts by GRO-FTP and those of JICA overlap, given the substantial needs in the Caribbean region and the actual assistance provided by both initiatives.

In addition, the CRFM maintains Memorandums of Understanding with several institutions. These include the **Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission** (sub-commission for the Caribbean and adjacent regions) for capacity building in sustainable fisheries and the University of Belize and University of the West Indies for strengthening institutional capacity in sustainable coastal and marine resource development. The cooperation with the University of the West Indies includes mutual support in the design, implementation, and evaluation of training courses in fisheries. Official partnerships also exist with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science at William and Mary College, the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security of the University of Wollongong, and the University of Florida for capacity building and faculty and student exchanges.

As part of its **bilateral development cooperation**, Iceland supports the CARICE Project in Saint Lucia, Dominica, and Jamaica to implement a fisheries information system called Fisheries Manager. This system would facilitate data collection, data retention, and dissemination of information, which in turn will increase the effectiveness of fisheries management and the value of fish goods based on proof of origin. If successful, Fisheries Manager will be introduced to the rest of the member States of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, and its use would then be integrated with the FTP's curriculum in the region.

Also in the Caribbean, though not through the **CRFM**, there is the Caribbean Fisheries Training and Development Institute (CFTDI) located in Trinidad and Tobago. This is an agency of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries of Trinidad and Tobago with a focus on food security, and as such, it offers maritime courses as well as courses on seafood technology and fisheries training in the region. FTP has previously partnered with this Institute in the design and delivery of a workshop in the Caribbean, and these types of synergies can be further enhanced by pursuing further collaboration with CFTDI, specifically in the area of management, where there seems to be the greatest potential for synergies.

GRÓ FTP interventions in the region, **coexist with many other initiatives** and capacity building efforts for individuals and organisations from other donors to promote changes aimed at achieving SDG 14. There is great potential for close collaboration between these efforts. However, **there is little evidence of the promotion of synergies between internal or external initiatives** to increase efficiency and effectiveness of efforts for general development in the Caribbean from the Iceland MFA or with other donors in the promotion of the Caribbean fishing sector. Thus far, **GRÓ FTP has relied on CRFM to manage synergies, and thus coherence, of training efforts** as FTP has not been part of such coordination process, which opens the opportunity for improvement in this regard with the aim of enhancing external synergies. **FTP does, however, monitor the training in ocean governance offered by other donors** such as that of the International Ocean Institute (IOI-Canada) and the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS) of the University of Wollongong, both of whom have a MOU with CRFM.

2.3. PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS (EFFECTIVENESS)

As planned, the programme has delivered the following Outputs:

The first output is the increased capability of individuals and expertise of partner organisation to design and implement programme activities in their respective professional fields. Since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, 37 Caribbean fellows (Table 49) have received training from the 6-month FTP fellowship in Company Management (two), Policy and Planning (seven), Stock Assessment and Gear Analysis (four), Stock Assessment (seven), Aquatic Resources Assessment and Monitoring (four), Quality Management of Fish Handling and Processing (seven), and Sustainable Aquaculture (six).

Table 49: Caribbean recipients of GRÓ FTP support for postgraduate training

Country	Post-graduate training		
	Male	Female	Total
Antigua and Barbuda	1	1	2
Bahamas	0	1	1
Barbados	1	1	2
Belize	1	1	2
Dominica	3	0	3
Grenada	1	0	1
Guyana	1	1	2
Haiti	0	1	1
Jamaica	3	7	10
St. Kitts and Nevis	0	1	1
St. Lucia	1	3	4
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	1	4	5
Suriname	0	2	2
Trinidad and Tobago	1	0	1
TOTAL	14	23	37

For acquired knowledge, **fellows can transition** from highly specific, technical backgrounds such as marine biology, environmental science, fisheries biology, or zoology **into a comprehensive approach to fisheries**, which allows them to be more functional in the fisheries sector. Fellows also enhance their analytical and research skills as a result of the training programme.

Additionally, **four fellows** (two males and two females) **have obtained a M.Sc. degree** – two in Environment and Natural Resources and one in Fisheries Biology and one in Food Science. Also, one fellow (female) is **finishing her M.Sc. degree** in Aquatic Biology at Hólar University.

The Caribbean region has also benefited from **short courses and workshops** held regionally and organized in partnership with the CRFM to **contribute to the enhancement of capacities in the region** (Tables 50 and 51). These events are an important part of the capacity building endeavour because these are means to keep former fellows updated and engaged in learning. Additionally, high-level fisheries officials attend these events, which helps to advance the notion of capacity building and gain resources to be used in policy making and implementation.

Table 50: Short courses by country

Year	Country	Short Course	Male	Female	Total
2010	Barbados	Fisheries Statistics and Stock Assessment, part one	14	6	20
2010	Belize	Leadership in Fisheries	12	3	15
2011	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Fisheries Statistics and Stock Assessment-part two	11	6	17
2012	Saint Lucia	Project Cycle Management	15	6	21
2013	Saint Lucia	Leadership in Fisheries	11	6	17
2016	Iceland (Reykjavik)*	Management of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Procedures	10	8	18
2016	Suriname	Value Chain Analysis in the Caribbean Fisheries	16	3	19
TOTAL			89	38	127

*Attended by professionals from the Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM)

Table 51: Workshops by country

Year	Country	Workshop	Male	Female	Total
2014	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Data collection and management of CRFM member states	8	8	16
2018	Trinidad and Tobago	Fisheries Value Chain Management Workshop	17	12	29
2023	Barbados	Fisheries Assessment and Data Modelling	10	10	20
TOTAL			35	30	65

Responses from attendees to **short courses and workshops** reveal that many consider **training events to be useful**. They have expressed satisfaction with the quality and relevance of the content, noting that the skills and knowledge gained are directly applicable to their work. For example, 100% of those who evaluated the workshop *Fisheries Assessment and Data Modelling* held in Barbados in 2023 say they will use the analytical framework in their jobs as a result of taking the course and four out of eleven who answered the evaluation, mentioned that they would like to be part of a fisheries data science community in the Caribbean region. In fact, the group that attended this workshop holds regular online meetings through which they learn from each other, with the support of a longstanding FTP lecturer and supervisor, who was one of the workshop's organisers and lecturers, Dr. Einar Hjörleifsson, thereby continuing to develop the skills acquired at the workshop. This group has developed a structure and has presented some of their work at the Fisheries Directors' Forum in the Caribbean region. For the course on *Leadership in Fisheries*, held on Belize in 2010, about 60% of participants evaluated the course as good and near 40% as very good; in terms of public administration content, close to 75% of the group rated it as good and about 20% as very good; for motivation empowerment content, slightly above 60% of the group rated it as good and slightly below 40% as very good; and for leadership style content around 55% rated it good and about 45% very good¹⁵⁴. The course *Project Cycle Management* held in Saint Lucia in 2012 was rated as very good and good by 45% and 55%, respectively, by the attendees; 95% said they will use their learning in their jobs and 85% mentioned that what they learned will be helpful in accessing donor funds for projects at their institutions. From a sample of the evaluations by the attendees to the course *Value Chain Analysis in the Caribbean Fisheries* held in Suriname in 2016, 86% mentioned that after the workshop they felt competent in constructing a value chain in their

¹⁵⁴ The evaluation report is presented in graphs that indicate the percentage scale but not the exact percentage.

industry while 14% were not sure about it; 57% mentioned that after the workshop they felt competent in preparing a business plan in relation to value chain management, and 43% indicated not being sure about it.

GRÓ FTP has also launched an initiative to provide a **series of free informative YouTube videos about fisheries and SDG 14**. These videos aim to enhance capacities by broadly covering topics such as the significant impact of small projects in fisheries, the value of fish preservation, the importance of data for sustainable fisheries management, and the definition and defence of small-scale fisheries. While not specifically targeted at the Caribbean fisheries community, these videos are accessible to a global audience, including potential viewers from the Caribbean. The content addresses key targets of SDG 14, such as sustainable fishing practices and the economic benefits of sustainable fisheries.

A **second output** of the GRÓ FTP postgraduate training is the **production and dissemination of knowledge by GRÓ training participants** through the publication of **30 research papers and four M.Sc. theses**.

The **third output of professional empowerment through community building and networking** by the GRÓ FTP seems to be effective based on former fellows' testimonies on the effect of the programme. Specifically, fellows report their training experience in Iceland to be highly **valuable, transformative, and empowering**. Fellows go back to their home countries with more knowledge and a new perspective about fisheries and cultural competency. By participating in the training programme, **fellows also can expand their professional network**.

With the delivery of these results, **FTP demonstrates its effectiveness** and, through it, GRÓ fellows, trainees, and respective organisations are equipped to act as agents of change in achieving the SDGs relevant to their field of work in the Caribbean region.

2.4. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT (EFFICIENCY)

The **delivery of short courses and workshops in the Caribbean region** for the purpose of strengthening institutional capacities is planned and developed with great care to ensure relevance and quality of training content. The process begins with the **identification of areas that need to be strengthened** in the Caribbean region through an internal consultation within the CRFM, in which the Ministers of Fisheries of member States participate through their regular ministerial meetings, which takes place at least twice a year; the courses and workshop on specific topics are then requested from GRÓ FTP by the CRFM.

Once the training need has been identified, **GRÓ FTP recruits experts from its pool of long-standing Icelandic partner institutions** including the University of Iceland, the University of Akureyri, and the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute. **The CRFM recruits counterpart experts** within its network of partners in the region, which usually include the University of the West Indies and the University of Belize.

The assembled team, led by GRÓ FTP and CRFM staff hold several rounds of consultations, both onsite and online, to discuss the current scene of the Caribbean fisheries sector with occasional participation of high-ranking officials from the country's Fisheries Divisions to identify the target group and the main topics of the short courses. **Course materials are then tailored to the context of the target countries fisheries**. It is often the case that the local lecturers/experts do not have the expertise in the specific issue of the course. This is important because these courses are also intended to train trainers, so that these can replicate such courses locally. An interactive approach involving local expertise is taken to develop course materials.

The interactive process of course preparation takes long and may seem inefficient compared to hiring experts with readily available courses. However, the longer-term benefits are not the same because the courses can later be replicated locally at a minimum cost. The cost of these workshops or short courses is high because of the planning, logistics, and preparation they involve. However, **the benefit-cost ratio is high as well** (in terms of value for money) because of the **high quality of courses tailored to specific contexts** and their multiplier effect since the material **can be later reused in other courses or by local**

instructors (see *sustainability for further details*); however, there is no evidence that course materials have been used by local instructors at their own academic institutions.

The CRFM plays a leading role in the preparation and delivery of these short courses/workshops. It manages the logistics of the event including travel and accommodation, and CRFM staff always remains attentive during the events to quickly solve any unforeseen problems.

Feedback is gathered at the end of each short course or workshop from attendees on the quality of course content (relevance, usefulness, applicability) and lecturers. The evaluation results are intended to be used for further course improvement.

Financially, the delivery of **training programmes across the spectrum of FTP** is competitive (Table 52), and thus it **is efficient**.

Table 52. Estimated cost per training type, based on 2024 budget

FTP Training and Scholarship	Per fellow - ISK	Per fellow – USD*	
6-month training programme	5,300,000	38,500	
M.Sc. scholarship for 16 months	6,420,000	46,600	
Short Courses and Workshops	Per event - ISK	Per event -USD*	Per grantee – USD*
Ten-day in-country course for 15 local participants	8,050,000	58,500	3,900
Ten-day in-country course for 15 regional participants	11,000,000	80,000	5,333

* It varies depending on the exchange rate.

Using the Master's degree in in fisheries management from the University of Florida (UF) as a benchmark, ranked among the best in fisheries in the United States and with which the CRFM has a cooperative agreement, an academic year (nine months) for a master's degree costs \$53,234¹⁵⁵; substantially above the cost per fellow at an Icelandic university. The **6-month training programme** would be considered a graduate programme at UF, so the cost for a six-month period in the United States would be slightly lower than the cost per fellow in Iceland, but the 6-month programme in Iceland is still competitive considering the uniqueness of the programme and the value it offers to participants.

2.5. PROSPECTS FOR THE MAINTENANCE / CONTINUATION OF THE PROGRAMME BENEFITS (SUSTAINABILITY)

6-month training programme.

The prospects for the **sustainability** of the effects of the programme **can be enhanced** if the programme's interventions are scaled up and focused so that the effort of the FTP does not dilute across the region. Those prospects also depend on the legal framework and financial environment of partner countries as they are important enablers and drivers of change, respectively.

Sustainability here also depends on staff turnover. In Jamaica, for instance, the country with more fellows trained, nine out of 37, in the Caribbean, the benefits have shown to be mostly sustainable so far. All fellows trained in Iceland have come back to their home country and to the organisation, the National Fisheries Authority (NFA) that nominated them after graduation. However, currently only seven of the nine¹⁵⁶ fellows work for the organisation, where they can apply their knowledge. One fellow, who also was a M.Sc. scholar at the University of Iceland and later pursued a Ph.D. degree at the Universidad

¹⁵⁵ Office of financial aid and scholarships of the University of Florida. It includes tuition and fees, school materials, transportation, living expenses, and miscellaneous personal expenses. It does not include air transportation from and to the home country.

¹⁵⁶ The first fellow that attended the GRÓ FTP postgraduate training, although a Jamaican national, was selected as CRFM staff and, as such she is stationed in St. Vincent and the Grenadines as she continues to be part of CRFM staff.

Marista in Mexico, left his position from the NFA in search of better professional opportunities in Jamaica, and while his skills are not lost to the country, the capacities built at the NFA are undermined. This fellow is currently looking for a position at the University of the West Indies at MONA, where, if granted, he will be able to advance the sustainability of the programme by further creating and disseminating knowledge in the fisheries sector. A third fellow left Jamaica in hopes for a better life and professional opportunities in Europe.

One of the **factors that hinder the long run sustainability** of the programme's results and benefits is **the high turnover of staff in government agencies related to fisheries**. To fulfil the outcome of training local experts to become agents of change in achieving the SDGs, alumni fellows need stability to apply their knowledge in their home nominating organisations. Push factors such as low compensation and poor working conditions cause many to seek employment in other sectors or regions. These conditions constitute an important risk factor for the sustainability of the programme's benefits as former fellows look for other opportunities for professional development and better incomes. These **constraints on sustainability are external to FTP** and are therefore beyond its control. In this regard, it is fair to say that while partnering with the Caribbean countries has many advantages, it is also true that the relationship with partner institutions in partner countries is not as close as it should be, as the CRFM mediates in the selection process and, as a result, GRÓ FTP does not have all the necessary access to partner institutions to better understand their needs and sustainability constraints; In Jamaica, for instance, the selection process with the National Fisheries Authorities (NFA) is based on seniority, rather than needs, but GRÓ FTP does not have direct access to assist the NFA in assessing their training needs.

Short courses and workshops.

After each short course or workshop is delivered, in some cases a thorough report is prepared in which the results and analysis of the evaluation of the course are presented, discussing areas of strength and for improvement. The courses have mostly been regarded as **useful** by attendees, and they report planning to apply the acquired knowledge to their work promoting their sustainability. For example, 100% of those who evaluated the workshop Fisheries Assessment and Data Modelling say they will use the analytical framework in their jobs because of taking the course. 86% of the attendees to the course Value Chain Analysis in the Caribbean Fisheries indicated the course enabled them to construct a value chain in their industry and 57% mentioned that after the workshop they felt competent in preparing a business plan.

The **lack of political will** to implement changes or apply regulations poses **risks to the sustainability** of the programme's results. Regional short courses in the Caribbean, for instance, have focused on fisheries statistics, stock assessment, and data modelling. Capacities enhanced through these workshops generate a wealth of information on the sustainability of fish stocks. However, as some key informants reported, licensing and enforcement of fishing protections often do not follow indicators or data, but rather political wills influenced by confounding social and economic pressures that fisherfolks face with maintaining the sustainability of fish stocks. This constraint to sustainability of results is beyond FTP's control.

Course impact and sustainability is also dependent on the replication of courses and, as such, it requires involving partners who plan to use the content in the future. This also ensures that the Programme's efforts extend beyond the delivery of courses and continue to contribute to the development of fisheries in the Caribbean region. The course on *Leadership in Fisheries* has been delivered twice, in Suriname and in Trinidad and Tobago, and the workshop on Fisheries Assessment and Data Modelling has its precedent in two previous versions of a Fisheries Statistics and Stock Assessment workshop delivered in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 2011 and in Barbados in 2010.

2.6. PROSPECTS FOR LONGER-TERM DEVELOPMENT EFFECTS (IMPACT)

Micro-level

The prospects for longer-term development effects are **excellent and primarily at the micro-level** since the acquired learning by individuals will stay with them for the rest of their productive lives, whether within their organisations or outside of them. The individual's enhanced capacities have the potential to prompt new learnings, either through more training or new research as well as knowledge exchange.

The exact long-term outcomes of the empowerment of fisheries professionals, however, are difficult to predict.

Meso-level

At the meso-level, the **prospects** for long-term effects are **good** as they depend on the political, legal, and financial environment of the Caribbean region.

For example, two former fellows in Jamaica work in an active data collection programme for the country's major fisheries, which includes comprehensive catch data and biological data reported quarterly. In this effort, one former fellow is a Statistician / Data Manager, and another fellow contributes to the sustainable management of lobster fisheries. The data collected and processed is expected to be inputted by the National Fisheries Authority for fishing licensing purposes and thus the restoration of fish stocks because of some of the work done by FTP-trained fellows. However, the meso-level impact of these efforts is dependent on just licensing and enforcement to ensure fish stock recovery.

Innovations by former fellows in the Caribbean, namely in Jamaica, such as those related to cost-effective and environmentally friendly fish feed, aquaculture effluents to prevent the degradation of land, and fish preservation of salted redfish, depend on societal factors to have a meso-level impact. The adoption of new technologies, enforcement of regulations, and supported implementation of projects are crucial for these innovations to realize their potential benefits at the community or national level.

Macro-level

At the macro-level, impacts are made depending on the achievement of the targeted SDG, which in turn depends on the implementation of policies or international standards. Impacts at the macro-level also rely on having the adequate legal framework for fisheries. In Jamaica, for instance, the fisheries policy is still a draft that dates to 2008 and the regulatory framework is not sufficient for good corporate and fisheries governance. Currently, the Jamaican National Fisheries Authority is working on providing guidelines to improve regulation, including updating the Fisheries Act of 2018.

So, while the potential is there, the **realization of impacts is beyond FTP's control**. Thus, it is difficult to predict whether impacts can be seen in the short, medium, or long run. However, the impact of capacity building on the micro-level of the individual allows larger impacts on the meso- and macro-levels when the setting allows.

2.7. HORIZONTAL THEMES/ CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Gender

Since the inception of the MOU with the CRFM, the overall gender ratio of fellows has been **38% male and 62% female**. This reverse gender gap reflects the trend in Caribbean countries where men are less likely to access tertiary education, resulting in a predominantly female candidate pool. However, from 2018-2023, the gender balance in the 6-month postgraduate training converged to 56% male and 44% female. For FTP post-graduate scholarships, the ratio is slightly female dominated at 3:2. In short courses, male participation is 70%, while female participation is 30%. Workshops have a more balanced gender participation, with 54% male and 46% female.

In the fisheries sector, women's participation remains low. For example, **in Jamaica, only 10% of licensed fishers are female**. However, there is potential for increased female participation in aquaculture and postharvest handling of fish as more knowledge is produced and applied.

Human rights

Fisheries, both capture and aquaculture, play an important role in terms of **food security**, which is particularly relevant for artisanal fisherfolks as their livelihoods are in a state of precarity due to low and uncertain seasonal income. As knowledge is created, disseminated, and applied through the GRÓ FTP interventions, the prospects for more harvest and production of fish on a sustainable basis improve as does **the right to adequate food**.

GRÓ FTP also contributes to the realization of **the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment** as FTP interventions are environmental by nature and aim to facilitate healthy and sustainably produced food, healthy ecosystems, and biodiversity.

The environment

The capacities built in stock assessment and sustainable aquaculture inherent to GRÓ FTP interventions have the potential to **directly contribute to the environmental conservation of marine resources**.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Relevance

Both the 6-month training programme in Iceland and the regional short courses or workshops in the Caribbean are **relevant to address the capacity gaps present in Caribbean countries** to achieve their common policy objectives in terms of the sustainable use of fisheries for the benefit of the region. These capacity building efforts are **also in line with the goal of GRÓ** to enhance the capacities of individuals and organisations in partner countries to advance the achievement of the SDGs, in particular SDG 14 as targeted by GRÓ FTP, by promoting the sustainable use of natural resources.

Coherence

GRÓ FTP **interventions**, both the 6-month training programme and the short courses or workshops in the region **do not happen in isolation**; they coexist with other capacity building efforts, from GRÓ itself, like GRÓ GTP, and other donors, like the EU and the Japan International Cooperation Agency, to enhance the capacities of individuals and organisations to promote and implement changes aimed at achieving the sustainable use of fisheries resources and, thus, the implementation of SDG 14. However, these efforts are not coordinated with GRÓ FTP as it relies on CRFM to manage the synergy of training efforts.

Effectiveness

The results delivered by GRÓ FTP are expected to trigger development changes in the fisheries sector of the Caribbean region as they influence the achievement of the objectives set forth in the CCCFP, which translate into the achievement of SDG 14 directly, and some targets of SDGs 1, 2, 3, 8, 12, and 13 indirectly. This is possible through enhanced capacities of individuals and partner organisations in the design and implementation initiatives in the fisheries sector, the production and dissemination of new knowledge related to fisheries, and the professional development through community building and networking that empowers alumni. Thus, **the programme is effective**.

Efficiency

The programme's **interventions are efficient**. The monetary cost of the scholarship per person is substantially lower than its equivalent in a U.S. university, for example. The unitary monetary cost of the 6-month training in Iceland is slightly higher than a similar programme in a U.S. university; however, the difference is overcome by the quality and uniqueness of the Icelandic option. As for the short courses or workshops, the value for money is well worth it as these courses or workshops are intended to be replicated and their materials reused by lecturers in their own training activities, all of which adds to the sustainability of the benefits.

Sustainability

(1.) The sustainability of the effects and benefits of the programme's interventions are **enhanced by virtue of the partnership with CRFM**. This is because many of the activities necessary for a sustainable fisheries sector require collective action, especially in capture fisheries, and the CRFM, as a platform for joint efforts to address common challenges related to fisheries and aquatic resources in the Caribbean, offers a favourable setting for that as it comprises the Ministerial Council; hence, the CRFM has the reach to promote collective actions that otherwise seem unlikely to be achieved by the small island States alone. In addition, the long-term partnership with CRFM and the enrolment of fellows from the region on a continuous basis has allowed for a better mutual understanding of potential opportunities in the region and specific countries, which increases the prospects for sustainability as specific needs can be addressed.

(2.) At the country level, there is a **risk to the sustainability** of the impact of GRÓ FTP's capacity building efforts through the 6-month training programme in Iceland as these efforts are diluted since the **participants are scattered across the region**, which in turn it is due to country size and the insufficient qualifications of candidates, as a region; however, the risk is ameliorated as former fellows collaborate regionally through a host of scientific committees.

(3) Linked to the dilution effect is the fact that, as **Caribbean countries graduate from the DAC list of ODA recipients**, such as is the case of Bahamas, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, to mention a few, the pool of candidates for the fellowship programme is continuously reduced; however, **this interpretation of country development is inaccurate as national income is highly concentrated** and the sector that drives national income increases is mostly tourism¹⁵⁷, **leaving behind impoverished sectors, such as fisheries**. That situation also has implications for the sustainability of the effects of the programme's intervention, as it implies leaving the job unfinished and a likely waste of resources.

(4.) The **sustainability** of the effects of the short courses or workshops **can be enhanced if their replication is increased**, preferably at the country level to be more cost effective.

Impacts

Impacts are **high at the micro level** in the short-term. The enhanced human capital vested in the trainees is an impact and the subsequent continued fostering of that knowledge add to the impact on that level in the long-term. **At the meso-level, the impacts are likely** but depend on retention of talented fellows at their local organisations (like Fisheries Divisions) to effect change. As for the long-term impacts, **at the macro level, these are difficult to predict** and largely rely on the existence of fisheries policies and an adequate legal framework that enables the formulation of policies and regulations. The same applies to **long-term effects resulting from capacity build up through the meso- and macro-levels over a long time**.

Cross-cutting issues

The **programme strives to have a gender balanced participation**; however, there is a reverse gender gap in the Caribbean that affects this effort. Since fewer males attend tertiary education, the pool of candidates for the 6-month training programme in Iceland is female dominated. The opposite happens when it comes to the short courses, where attendance is male dominated likely because of male dominance in the positions of leadership. **Human rights are positively impacted** by the programme's interventions, as fisheries play an important role in food security and nutrition, enhancing the prospects for the **right to adequate food** and the **right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment**. FTP interventions are environmental by nature and aim to facilitate healthy and sustainably produced food as well as healthy ecosystems and biodiversity.

In conclusion, **GRÓ FTP interventions** in the Caribbean **effectively contribute to achieving the policy goals of the Caribbean region** in terms of sustainable use of fisheries resources, **and they are aligned with the achievement of GRÓ's goal** of promoting the sustainable use of natural resources.

4. LESSONS LEARNED

- The **CRFM is an instrumental focal point** in reaching the 17 Caribbean nations and enhances the efficiency of GRÓ FTP training efforts. Even more valuable is the **CRFM's ability to influence regional policies and decision-making within the CARICOM area** through its Ministerial Council. This CRFM capacity has the potential to make the GRÓ FTP interventions more fruitful.
- The CRFM has a host of partnerships with international and national institutions who also cooperate in capacity building, both for individuals and organisations. **The Caribbean region would benefit more if these efforts were coordinated and driven by clearly structured needs in a way that makes coherence clear.**

¹⁵⁷ Oil in the case of Trinidad and Tobago.

- The success of the 6-month training programme in the Caribbean region depends on FTP taking on the **critical mass needed to trigger developmental change in partner countries**, specifically in the **implementation of the targeted SDGs and others SDGs** that are also relevant. **On average, only two fellows from the Caribbean** are sent to Iceland for postgraduate training per year, which, due to a dilution effect, would seem to hinder the sustainability of the results and the efficacy of this type of training in the region especially given that, as already mentioned, GRÓ FTP selects fellows through the mediation of CRFM, without having a close relationship with partner countries and institutions in the region to better assess country and institutional needs. In that regard, a closer working relationship with partner countries, one that allows **a more focused approach, could prove more successful**, targeting not only specific countries but also the specific capacity gaps those countries present. So far, 40% of fellows have received training in stock assessment and 19% in quality management of fish handling and processing. This emphasis is in tandem with the needs in the region, as reliable data on stocks is a precondition for the sustainable management of fisheries. However, since the Caribbean nations have noticeable policy gaps, **more trainees are needed in Fisheries Policy and Management**.
- **The selection process** for the 6-month fellowship **is key to the success of the efforts by GRÓ FTP**. Although it is clearly established that the Fisheries Divisions of the Caribbean countries nominate candidates according to institutional needs and directed by policy, that is not always the case.
- The **short courses or workshops have been useful to enhance the capacities of fisheries officials and technical staff**. While the replication of these courses and workshops depends on available financing, the cost for delivery can be substantially reduced if they are replicated locally, instead of regionally, as the cost for accommodation and transportation would be substantially reduced. The prospects for results are also enhanced as these locally delivered courses substantially expand the trainee's base.
- It is not clear whether the benefits that would come from the **reuse of course materials** by local instructors at their own academic institutions have been realized. Thus, it is recommended to **follow up on this to monitor the subsequent benefits of knowledge dissemination** through these means.
- **Tracking the results of the short courses is an area of improvement**. Another short follow-up survey, using Google forms or other free available means, of course attendees could provide data on whether participants have used or disseminated their learnings.

5. PROSPECTS FOR THE SCALING-UP OR REPLICATION OF THE INTERVENTION IN FUTURE ENDEAVOURS OF GRÓ

Scaling up the capacity building efforts in the Caribbean region **has the potential to diminish the risk for the sustainability** of the interventions' effects **and enhance the effectiveness** of the programme in the region.

On the one hand, scaling up training efforts in the region, as much as GRÓ FTP can manage, involves **training more fellows from the Caribbean region**. However, it is advisable to strategically **focus these efforts on specific countries**. For instance, prioritize countries like Jamaica that have already received many fellowships to complete the ongoing work there. Alternatively, **target countries where needs can be met quickly** to avoid scattering resources over time and space and diluting the potential impact. Additionally, since achieving the targeted SDGs is linked to policy implementation, **training should emphasize enhancing capacities in fisheries policy and management**. This is particularly relevant for countries like Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, which face significant policy gaps in this area.

On the other hand, scaling up training efforts also involves **replicating some of the regional short courses and workshops** at the country level. Topics such as value chain management, project management, marketing, and technical management of fisheries and food losses would all significantly enhance regional capacities. Participants could be accepted across the fisheries industry, including government, academia, research institutes, and seafood companies. **There is a strong demand for local training**. For instance, in Jamaica, the National Fisheries Authority plans to hire 62 new staff for fisheries compliance, licensing, and statistics, 56 new staff for capture fisheries, and 59 new staff for aquaculture

by 2027, according to its strategic business plan. These new hires, who typically have technical degrees in environmental biology, marine biology, or environmental science, **will require specialized training in fisheries** as they currently lack specific knowledge in this field.

The establishment of a **Centre of Excellence in the Caribbean is appealing considering the close ties between regional institutions such as the CRFM and the University of the West Indies**. A Centre of Excellence in the region **would serve as a basic and applied knowledge resource** for Caribbean nations. While such a centre would require substantial initial investment in human capital, this could be resolved by scaling up the scholarship programme. A Centre of Excellence in the Caribbean would also add to the sustainability of the programme's effects as it would offer opportunities in the region for those in search of enhancing their professional capacities, and eventually it could be home to the 6-month training programme in the Caribbean, with the effect of boosting fellows' training in the region. Hence, while initially a Centre of Excellence like this would complement the training offer carried out in Iceland, it would eventually replace the training programme in Iceland, thereby corroborating the development of institutional capacities in the Caribbean region. The training offered by a Centre of Excellence could also include a Diploma degree on Aquaculture and on Food Quality, as aquaculture is posited to expand in the region as capture fisheries decline. However, a substantial amount of assistance would be required for an endeavour like this. The University of the West Indies at Trinidad and Tobago campus and Barbados campus seem fit to host a Centre of Excellence based on their past activity in supporting the capacity development efforts of GRÓ FTP.

In addition to **scaling up opportunities**, one of the key initiatives of the University of the West Indies as part of its Global Online Initiative, through its Office of Online Learning, is **offering MOOC**. As online learning is on the rise worldwide, this is an opportunity that could be harnessed by the programme to substantially expand the training efforts in the Caribbean region and beyond by GRÓ FTP.

ANNEX 12.2: GRÓ GEST CASE STUDY REPORT

Case study collection and evaluation methodology

Massive pen Online Courses (MOOCs, innovative online content)

March 8 Alumni Fund (Seed Fund for projects of GEST Alumni)

Conclusions

Lessons learned

Prospects for the scaling-up or replication of the intervention in future endeavors of the GRÓ

CASE STUDY DATA-COLLECTION AND EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The case study draws on a range of data sources and quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, including (1) the review of strategic and operational programme documentation, (2) key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) in Iceland and with partner countries, and (3) a survey of March 8 Fund recipients.

A brief summary of the **specific scope of the case study** is below.

GRÓ GEST	<p><u>Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs): innovative online content to promote digital learning:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The potential role of MOOCs as a tool to enhance the range and quality of the overall GEST offer and to increase outreach in the provision of transnational knowledge transmission and exchange • The potential for MOOCs to enhance other GRÓ programme intervention strategies either as full stand-alone courses or using remote teaching methods in other contexts such as joint teaching with universities and training institutions, or supplementing on-site training and follow-up <p><u>March 8 Fund: seed fund for GEST Alumni projects promoting gender equality and social justice:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The achievements and lessons learned from the Fund and the projects of supported alumni • The feasibility to scale-up or replicate a seed money fund across the GRÓ for projects of alumni
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The case study addresses the two specific interventions separately.

Concretely, the case study investigates the following issues linked to the specific GEST interventions:

- How the intervention is expected to contribute to the GRÓ programme results
- How the intervention is expected to complement or enhance other GRÓ intervention strategies
- The extent of the results achieved by the intervention and in contribution to the GRÓ results
- The management and operation of the intervention by the GEST and with its partners
- Contribution to the priorities of Iceland's International Development Cooperation policy
- Lessons learned linked to the specific intervention strategy, approach, and context
- Prospects for the scaling-up or replication of the intervention in future endeavours of the GRÓ

MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSES (MOOCs), INNOVATIVE ONLINE CONTENT

INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIFIC GEST INTERVENTIONS AND APPROACH

Since 2019, the GEST programme has developed a series of MOOCs in the field of gender equality. **GEST has released four MOOCs to date**, with a fifth presently in the earlier stages of development by GEST. The University of Iceland, as host Institution for the programme, is the key partner supporting GEST to develop and promote the overall series of MOOCs. Open access to the GEST MOOCs¹⁵⁸ is available online **via the edX Website**, a leading online education and MOOC platform.¹⁵⁹ GEST developed two MOOCs in collaboration with partners from the London School of Economics, Peace Research Institute Oslo, University of Cape Town, and the University of Oslo through an ERASMUS+ co-funded project grant of which the University of Iceland was the designated project coordinator.¹⁶⁰

Table 53: GEST programme MOOCs, launch date

GRÓ GEST MOOC title	Launched	Main collaborating partners
Gender and Intersectionality	May 2020	GEST and University of Iceland
Gender Violence and Post-Conflict States	August 2022	GEST and University of Iceland London School of Economics, Peace Research Institute Oslo, University of Cape Town, and the University of Oslo
Gender and Development: Critical Theories and Approaches	February 2023	As above
Men, Boys and Masculinities	February 2024	GEST and University of Iceland Hanken School of Economics, Finland, University College London, Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of the Western Cape, and Stellenbosch University
Gender and Decolonisation: Climate Change and Science (working title)	(2025)	GEST and University of Iceland

For GEST, the **development of a MOOC offers** and integration into edX supports its efforts **to improve the quality and the outreach of its transnational knowledge transmission and exchange efforts** and adapt to changing technological environments in higher education. MOOCs offer unlimited participation and open access to online education for dispersed audiences worldwide while allowing learners to arrange their studies during their own time. GEST produces the MOOCs following very strict quality standards within the quality assurance framework of both the University of Iceland and edX. The goal of the GEST MOOCs is to provide aspiring development workers, young gender equality professionals, and policymakers around the world with a knowledge base that they can use for the promotion of change.¹⁶¹

In addition to its development of the MOOCs as full stand-alone courses, GEST utilizes **podcasts** and **webinars** as tools for innovative online content creation to promote digital learning on gender equality.

¹⁵⁸ GRÓ GEST Webpage, [Online education | GRÓ GEST \(grocentre.is\)](https://www.grogest.org)

¹⁵⁹ Founded by Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University in 2012, the University of Iceland was part of the original edX consortium of 40 founding partners. Today the consortium has over 250 partner universities. www.edx.org

¹⁶⁰ Project identifier: 2019-1-IS01-KA203-051163. Project title: Transnational MOOCs on Gender, Development and Post-Conflict States: Innovating Digital Gender Education through International Partnerships.

¹⁶¹ Extracts from the ToR for this evaluation.

Other GRÓ Training Programmes – MOOCs and other innovative online content creation

A summary of the key innovative online content actions of the other GRÓ programmes is below.

FTP	SDG 14 Videos are four videos addressing four specific SDG 14 targets developed in 2020 and launched in 2021, with an outreach of almost 3,000 learners/viewers. FTP also used the videos as a learning tool in the context of the Aquatic Resources and Blue Economy Conference (ARBEC) in Kenya in late 2022.
GTP	GTP has not yet established significant use of online content for distance learning purposes.
LRT	LRT launched its first innovative online content, MOOC, in 2017, followed by its second in 2019. Together these two MOOCs make up the “ Bridging the gap between Ecology and Economy ” series: “ <i>A Business Approach to Sustainable Landscape Restoration</i> ”, and “ <i>A Business Model Innovation for Sustainable Landscape Restoration</i> ”. LRT launched a third, stand-alone MOOC in 2019, “ Sheep in the Land of Fire and Ice ”. By the end of 2023, the three LRT MOOCs had an outreach of 20,026 learners/viewers.

CASE STUDY EVALUATION FINDINGS

Programme goals, strategy, and approach (Relevance)

The **GRÓ Theory of Change (ToC)** identifies **innovative online content creation**, such as MOOCs, as a valuable intervention strategy for delivering training/learning. **Through the creation of online courses and digital material disseminated online, the GRÓ can broaden its impact in its partner countries** and around the world. GRÓ programmes have created MOOCs distributed through a variety of online platforms, as well as the creation of supplemental training materials designed to promote digital learning, which have the **potential to enhance other intervention strategies**.¹⁶² MOOCs contribute to GRÓ Output 1, the increased capability/expertise of individuals and partner organisations.

GRÓ GEST has been on the frontlines of developing accessible online education on gender issues and international development since 2019. It produced and launched one of the first ever MOOC on gender on the edX platform, and the first ever MOOC specifically on gender and international development, filling a gap in online education. MOOCs have evolved over the past decade to become a steady part of a higher education offer. MOOCs make first class higher education accessible to large numbers of people who would otherwise often not be able to further their education, especially those in low and middle-income countries. While there is a rich selection of MOOCs offered on topics in the humanities and social sciences, very few of these address questions of gender. Those MOOCs that do are primarily from a Global North perspective. GEST’s ambition is to develop a full online educational programme available to gender equality practitioners from anywhere in the world, with a special focus on low and middle-income countries and a Global South perspective. The edX platform is a leading international online learning platform free to the user. Learners can pay a low fee (approx. USD 30) to pursue a verified study path resulting in an online certificate after an individual passes the course final exam.

¹⁶² GRÓ Theory of Change 2022-2027.

Table 54: GEST programme MOOCs, brief course description

GRÓ GEST MOOC	Brief course description
Gender and Intersectionality	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.
Gender Violence and Post-Conflict States	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 different types of violence, restorative justice, peacekeeping, and international policy frameworks on sexual and GBV.
Gender and Development: Critical Theories and Approaches	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.
Men, Boys and Masculinities	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.

GRÓ GEST's strategy 2023-2027 and its **approach to the development of a MOOC offer** within the context of its programme maintain a **long-term view and serve a number of purposes**. The overall goal is to strengthen the GEST programme offer, enhance its internal synergies, and to augment its outreach.

- MOOCs are a means by which selected components of the overall GEST training/education academic programme can be introduced to **larger audiences** and reach a transnational audience of learners interested to engage in knowledge acquisition and exchange on gender issues. *The main GEST programme offer, the 5-month postgraduate fellowship in Iceland, has an in-person capacity of 25 young gender equality professionals per annum. Since 2009, 241 people have graduated from the fellowship. GEST commonly receives minimally 170 nominations annually for the fellowship from qualified candidates via the open call. Clear demand for the GEST training offer exists. The GEST offer of short courses in partner countries reached 564 people in total during 2012-2023. MOOCs are a tool for GEST to increase its supply of learning resources and its open accessibility.*
- GEST has developed the **individual MOOCs building on the existing framework of the programme's expertise and training offer** in the fellowship and short courses.¹⁶³ GEST undertakes needs identification and detailed development of the MOOCs and content in dialogue with its key partners (primarily universities) in countries where GEST is active. Each MOOC is intended to require **approx. 30-40 hours of online engagement to complete** at the learner's own pace, indicatively proposed as a course that can be completed across six weeks. Individuals seeking certification as suitably completing a MOOC must register on the verification stream and to pay a small registration fee to edX.
- In addition to reaching broad audiences of learners interested to engage in knowledge acquisition and exchange on gender equality, the **MOOCs can also serve as useful tools to provide prospective candidates for the fellowship with an initial grounding** on subject matters and

¹⁶³ For instance, linkage between the MOOC on Gender Violence with the fellowship module, and between the MOOC on Gender and Climate Change with the fellowship module and with the short course that has been delivered in Malawi and in Uganda.

approaches addressed in detail by fellows. The individual MOOCs could also serve **to provide trainees with an initial grounding and/or a refresher on subject matters and approaches addressed in the GEST offer of short courses**. The MOOCs can also be integrated with the learning agenda of specific training courses offered by training organizations and civil society or community-based organizations in partner countries.¹⁶⁴

- Whereas the individual MOOCs exist as full stand-alone courses to promote open access to and unlimited participation in knowledge transmission and exchange on gender equality, the GEST programme has designed and developed the series of MOOCs as a holistic package.
- GEST intends to offer an integrated package of the five MOOCs as an **Online Programme in International Gender Studies**. This could be eligible for possibly becoming an edX MicroMasters programme - an online graduate level course offered by a university through the edX platform that individuals take to develop standalone skills for career advancement or earn graduate level credentials. This is a strategic priority for GEST. It intends to launch the online programme by 2026. At minimum, it will require that the University of Iceland, on behalf of GEST, offer to run the programme, via the edX platform, and that the awarding of certification to learners for verified completion of the programme is issued by the University as host institution of the MicroMasters.
- In the medium-term, GEST also intends to investigate whether the individual MOOCs or the Online Programme in International Gender Studies can be **integrated into the curricula offer of its key partner universities** (for example in Ghana, Malawi, Uganda, Lebanon, and Palestine), as a credited graduate level course in the context of universities' respective Master's programmes.
- GEST also intends to investigate whether the online courses can be actionable and suitably tailored to specific local circumstances by developing **short courses and local training initiatives led by GEST alumni** to engage local development professionals and decision-makers in-country.

The evaluator judges that the development of **the MOOC offer is highly relevant to the expansion and enhancement of the GRÓ GEST programme offer and its outreach**. As highlighted above, GEST has established a clear strategy for the development of its MOOC package by building a series of individual MOOCs that establish an integrated Online Programme in International Gender Studies and international development with a special focus on partner countries and Global South perspective. **MOOCs are an important tool to bring quality studies online to those with limited access to higher education** by providing them with instruction and a curriculum constructed by leading scholars in the field of gender equality. While the focus of GEST is on promoting the MOOCs in partner countries through its network of university and training organization partners, the courses already have a global reach via the edX platform. In addition to learners in low- and middle-income countries, learners in high-income countries can also benefit from the MOOCs and learn about issues of gender equality and international development. Additionally, **GEST has a clear and ambitious plan to ensure the online courses can be actionable going forward to enhance other GEST programme intervention strategies** (fellowship, short courses, cooperation with partner universities). The innovative approach allows GEST to reach a broader audience with its training curricula and further utilization of its MOOCs across a range of training/learning settings.

Promotion of synergies between the programme and other development efforts (Coherence)

GRÓ GEST's development of **the MOOC offer** on gender equality and international development is clearly **coherent within the framework of Icelandic international development cooperation policy** and cross-cutting priorities. The MOOC offer correlates with Iceland's policy and cooperation focus on Africa, and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. But there is **no evidence that synergy and linkages**

¹⁶⁴ GEST reports that In August 2024, WILPF (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) and Men Engage Alliance are hosting a 5-day Men Engage Africa Training Institute (MATI) in Nairobi, Kenya on masculinity and the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and gender and militarization. The GRÓ GEST MOOCs will be tailored to fit into the learning agenda of the MATI, and used as preparatory material before the institute commences.

has been established to date between the MOOCs **with other specific international development cooperation efforts undertaken by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Iceland.**

The MOOCs are clearly **complementary to the interventions of GEST partner universities and training organizations** in partner countries. There is clear potential to integrate the online courses within the framework of the partners' academic and/or shorter-term training offers. For instance, Makerere University in Uganda offers a diverse range of e-learning resources, including MOOCs, applicable to its postgraduate diploma in gender and local economic development.

There is also potential to engage further with its alumni in developing and conducting **short courses and trainings** in partner countries. This is a priority for GEST and its efforts to promote the professional empowerment of its alumni and the capability of individuals and expertise of partner organisations to design and implement programme activities in their respective professional fields.

The MOOCs are also clearly complementary to the efforts of the University of Iceland to promote open access to transnational knowledge transmission and exchange as a founding partner of edX.

Progress towards results (Effectiveness)

Learners on the verification stream for MOOCs are **to study and complete the MOOC across a period of six weeks**. Each MOOC contains a set of specific curriculum modules, one per week, with an indicative online study engagement of about five hours per week.¹⁶⁵ Progressively the modules provide learners with an understanding of **core theories and topics** relevant to the MOOC subject area, an understanding of **real-world case study examples** that explore the theories and topics in practice, and an understanding of the international **normative and policy framework** relevant to the subject area. By the end of the MOOC, the learners should understand the interplay between gender and the MOOC subject area, for example gender and violence, or gender and development.

(example of the MOOC programme structure) **Gender Violence and Post-Conflict States - Main syllabus**

Week 1: Types of Violence – Cultivating an Empathetic Outlook

Week 2: Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Armed Conflict – Uncovering past wrongs and the road to justice

Week 3: Restorative and Transitional Justice – Healing the past, building the future

Week 4: The Case of Apartheid: One country's violent past and road to peace

Week 5: Peacekeeping: Gendered Interplays between Peacekeepers and peace kept

Week 6: Policy Frameworks – Guiding political decision-making

The weekly curriculum modules provide **a mix of online learning resources and learning methods**, such as reading material, literature, and articles, recorded lectures provided by the specific module instructor, audio and visual examples, websites, and others that explore gender in many different contexts. The modules include exercises to assist participants in learning how to analyse complex issues through a gender lens. Each module of the respective MOOCs are linked to discussion forums to help participants apply the material of the course, express their thoughts, develop ideas, and engage with fellow learners. For learners on the verification stream there is a **final online exam consisting of 30-40 multiple-choice questions** on the content of the course. To pass the exam, the learner must correctly answer at least 50% of the questions. The final grade awarded (on a ranking from A to D for pass, F for non-pass) depends on the total number of correct answers.

Since their launch, **over 17,000 people** originating from 170 countries **have enrolled in a GRÓ GEST MOOC**.¹⁶⁶ Approximately 75% of those enrolling are female, 21% male, 4% other gender identity. During

¹⁶⁵ Each MOOC provides specific guidance on the actual number of hours indicatively estimated required for detailed learning.

¹⁶⁶ Data on MOOC enrolment provided to the evaluator by the GEST programme.

2020-2023, 1,088 people enrolled on the edX verification track offered for the MOOCs. The University of Iceland and edX issued 689 learners online certificates confirming their passing the final exam.

Table 55: Enrolment in the GEST programme MOOCs (as of March 2024)

GRÓ GEST MOOC	First launched	Total enrolment	Enrolment by gender	edX verified / diploma issued
Gender and Intersectionality	2020	14,723	77% F, 16% M, 6% Other	581
Gender and Violence	2022	961	74% F, 23% M, 3% Other	80
Gender and Development	2023	1,165	81% F, 16% M, 3% Other	28
Men, Boys and Masculinities	2024	517	68% F, 29% M, 3% Other	0

Due to the open learning accessibility modality of the MOOCs and ease of their availability via the edX platform, the MOOCs are a useful tool for GEST to significantly enlarge its audience of potential learners. **In 2023, more than 3,000 people enrolled** in one of the available GEST MOOCs. The **MOOC Gender and Intersectionality** is an introduction to gender studies for learners largely not exposed to the subject, or for those already in the field who wish to refresh their basic understanding of gender through a more visual experience¹⁶⁷. It **has been notably successful in achieving the enrolment of potential learners** (individuals actively choosing to enrol on edX to participate in the MOOC). During 2020-2021, 58% of enrolled learners were from developing countries. In 2021, the MOOC had a 5/5 star rating on Class Central where it ranked number three in the topics of Sociology and Gender Studies.¹⁶⁸

In assessing the effectiveness of the MOOCs, the evaluator recognizes that, by their nature, MOOCs are not set up to obtain detailed feedback from learners as to the benefits obtained.¹⁶⁹ MOOCs are not comparable to in-person training with clear time-bounds for learning. The benefit is that the learner proceeds at self-pace or can focus only on particular issues of interest. While more than 17,000 learners have actively chosen to enrol on the GEST MOOCs, edX is not set-up to collect information on the extent of their participation including those who complete the entire MOOC.¹⁷⁰ **Completion information is only available for learners that enrol on the verification track.** As such, the principal means to assess effectiveness of the MOOCs is via the verification track. While the percentage of learners that have enrolled on the verification track (7%) is a minority,¹⁷¹ **the percentage of those on the track that have successfully passed the academically graded final exam (63.3%) is reasonable.** Reflecting that the final exam follows an academic grading policy, 63.3% is a low grade B pass rate.

The evaluator judges that provision of **the MOOC offer is an effective intervention modality for the programme to increase its learning outreach and audience** of people interested to know more about gender equality issues. The MOOCs provide perspectives on the role of gender equality and challenges for its realization in the context of achieving global and sustainable, equitable and just development. **Per MOOC, the offer is substantive**, providing a detailed theoretical overview, analytical skills and tools, and practical case examples in the subject area. They are not short, summary overviews of issues completed in one-day. Such, basic introductory MOOCs are offered by other donors.

¹⁶⁷ GRÓ GEST Annual Report 2020.

¹⁶⁸ GRÓ Centre Annual Report 2020 and 2021.

¹⁶⁹ GRÓ GEST does have a formal mechanism to gather feedback from enrolled learners, but the response rate hovers at a mere 1%.

¹⁷⁰ The edX platform is not responsible to assess whether learners successfully complete MOOCs provided by consortium partners.

¹⁷¹ Given that the MOOCs are available free to the user and that enrolment and participation is optional, a number of users primarily seek to sample the overall course offer rather than undertake dedicated study of the full course as an active learner. In addition, not all active learners specifically seek formal certification for successful completion or do not wish to pay the fee.

Development of the GEST MOOC offer is still on-going - the fifth and final stand-alone MOOC will be developed over 2024-2025 to be followed by the full GEST **Online Programme in International Gender Studies** in 2026. The latter will significantly enhance the GEST programme's offer and its potential to reach gender equality practitioners and professionals that seek to undertake a detailed learning course dedicated to gender equality. The potential for this programme to become an **edX MicroMasters** will further enhance the effectiveness of the MOOCs as a learning package and incentivize learners to formally enrol in the verification track. As highlighted above, beyond its development of the full online programme, GEST also has a clear strategy as to how it can integrate use of its MOOCs within the context of its other programme interventions, such as short training courses in partner countries or in partnership with universities. This will also enhance the effective use of its MOOCs.

Programme implementation and adaptive management (Efficiency)

GEST highlights that it has good expertise in the development, design, and operation of MOOCs, and that it is **significantly assisted** in this process due to the expertise, facilities, and extensive experience it can access **from the University of Iceland** - its Host Institution and long-term edX consortium member. Because the GRÓ GEST MOOCs are substantive, indicatively requiring 30-40 hours of online engagement by the learners,¹⁷² the overall **timeframe required for development and formal launch of each MOOC** by GEST (in collaboration with its partners) **is approximately 15-months**.¹⁷³

The **process for MOOC development** involves undertaking the following:

- Initial positioning and scoping of the MOOC, i.e. how it fits within the overall framework of training offer, expertise, and focus of GEST and its partners
- Defining the detailed course overview, content curation, learning resources, and learning methods
- Preparation of individual course content components, i.e. the formulation of the MOOC manuscript and terminology use, the preparation of the recorded lectures from individual module instructors
- The editing of content and its preparation for inclusion within an online learning course context
- Establishing the course on edX and integrating the course learning sequences and tabs
- Performing operational testing of the online functionality of the MOOC offer
- Formally launching the MOOC for open online access after final testing with partner organizations

GEST indicates that its **cooperation with partners in the development of the MOOCs** has generally **operated efficiently**. GEST led and coordinated the overall development process of specific MOOCs for the two MOOCs developed with partners from the London School of Economics, Peace Research Institute Oslo, University of Cape Town, and University of Oslo. Each partner, including GEST, led on the development of specific MOOC modules. Content creators and facilitators of the fourth MOOC came from different partner universities in Europe and in Africa including Hanken School of Economics - Finland, University College London, Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of the Western Cape, and Stellenbosch University, all of whom had all been involved with GEST's activities prior to the production of the course.

In 2024, **GEST opened online enrolment** for its established MOOC offer (those launched 2020-2023) in March, with the courses available online during the year. The fourth MOOC, being offered for the first time, opened enrolment in late-February and ran online for six weeks until April 2024. The purpose of the short period was so that GEST could review the first online operation of the MOOC, the level of engagement of learners on the course modules, and any feedback provided on the course. This enabled

¹⁷² Shorter scale MOOCs, in terms of the anticipated hours of learning, are provided by other donors and development partners,

¹⁷³ The first MOOC, developed in partnership between GEST and the University of Iceland, took approximately 12-months to fully develop and launch. The fourth MOOC, initially planned in partnership with UNESCO, was more demanding. UNESCO and GEST collaborated closely in the first months of the planning stages on the concept for the MOOC as well as its basic structure and overall themes (i.e. Education, Culture, etc.). However, the contract for the formal collaboration was eventually cancelled by GEST, due to different interpretations on the approach to the use of terminology such as LGBTIQ+.

GEST to perform any necessary modifications of the MOOC prior to re-opening the offer. GEST reviews each MOOC annually to adapt the course content (e.g. audio and visual examples).

Development of each MOOC costs approximately ISK 10,000,000 (EUR 67,000). In 2023, **annual operational costs** (including staff) for running the MOOCs was **approximately ISK 1,000,000** (EUR 6,700). With more than 3,000 people enrolled on the GEST MOOCs in 2023, the annual operational costs for the MOOCs equates to **approximately ISK 325 (just over EUR 2) per enrolled learner**.

Prospects for the maintenance and continuation of the programme benefits (Sustainability)

Prospects for sustainability of the benefits delivered by the MOOCs are good.

GEST has a clear strategy for the continuation and further development of the MOOC package and offer. Its strategic plan foresees the completion and launch of the final MOOC early 2026 and preparation and marketing of the full Online Programme in International Gender Studies in 2026. The strategic action plan also foresees cooperation over the period with alumni, university, and training organization partners to develop locally tailored training courses based on the online course curriculum. These actions shall ensure continued delivery of the benefits of the MOOCs through multiple means: as stand-alone courses, a comprehensive Online Programme, and in courses in partner countries.

The enrolled learners, as the **direct beneficiaries of the MOOCs**, receive **sustainable benefits** through their acquisition of new knowledge, insights, and understanding on gender issues. However, it is not feasible to confirm the extent of learning for beneficiaries or to know how the benefits contribute to the individuals. The only means to assess if learners have received the knowledge learning benefits is the final exam, which is an incomplete picture of acquired knowledges. Most learners obtain knowledge only to suit their needs. Learners can also access the MOOCs on edX platform now and in the future, to refresh knowledge.

Prospects for longer-term development effects (Impact)

Prospects for longer-term development effects of the MOOCs are primarily on the **micro-level** (i.e. at the individual beneficiary level) and meso-level (i.e. within partner organizations).

On the **micro-level**, the individual and future learners have acquired or refreshed knowledge and understanding on gender issues and development. This has the potential to inform their own decision-making and engagement on advancing gender equality, be it at the household, local, national, or international level. It is not feasible to confirm this or what the **longer-term impacts** are or will be.

On the **meso-level**, GEST plans to cooperate with its partners in key countries to develop local training courses based on the MOOC curriculum that the organizations can incorporate into their training offer. This will ensure wider application and utilization of the course content within the delivery of local training actions in partner countries as well as the number of people that benefit from training and knowledge on gender equality issues. GEST's Online Programme in International Gender Studies has particularly strong potential to **enhance the impact**.

Cross-cutting priorities of Icelandic International Development Cooperation policy

The MOOCs contribute to the Icelandic policy cross-cutting priority of advancing **gender equality** and the empowerment of women and girls through the provision of learning resources on issues of gender equality. The range of issues addressed by the MOOCs cover all policy focus areas of Iceland's gender equality strategy for international development cooperation policy, namely: (i) combatting gender-based violence (GBV), (ii) health of women and girls, (iii) empowerment of women, (iv) education with an emphasis on girls, and (v) engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality. The MOOCs promote knowledge and understanding on the nexus of gender and development policy including the role of women in the promotion of sustainable and just development.

The MOOCs contribute to the cross-cutting Icelandic policy priority of **human rights** through the promotion of knowledge and understanding to the strategic focus of the promotion and protection of

the rights of the most marginalized and vulnerable populations as well as the focus of policy on democracy building, good governance, and a strong civil society.

The fifth standalone GEST MOOC - currently under development - will address the cross-cutting policy priority of **climate change and the environment**. It will contribute to an improved understanding on climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience measures, and the focus on sustainable use of natural resources with respect to gender.

CONCLUSIONS

GRÓ GEST's package of MOOCs has **significantly enhanced the audience of learners reached by the programme**. Since the GEST MOOCs launched, over 17,000 people have enrolled on one of the courses (75% female). More than 3,000 learners enrolled in one of the three MOOCs GEST offered in 2023. Most learners are from partner countries, on the DAC list of ODA recipients. The percentage of those on the verification track that successfully passed the academically graded final exam (63%) is reasonable.

Each MOOC provides learners with knowledge, insights, and understanding on gender issues and the interplay between gender and socio-economic development and social justice issues. Each MOOC provides a coherent presentation of core theories and topics, real-world case studies, and an understanding of the international normative and policy framework relevant to the MOOC subject area. **Each MOOC is a substantive offer**, indicatively requiring 30-40 hours online engagement to complete.

GEST will package the final set of five individual MOOCs into a collective **Online Programme in International Gender Studies**. This could be eligible for possibly becoming an edX MicroMasters programme as an online graduate level course offered by the University of Iceland/GEST through edX. Additionally, GEST has detailed goals and plan of action to use the courses to develop **local training course** curriculum and provision in cooperation with alumni, university, and training partners.

Provision of **the MOOCs is highly relevant to enhance the programme offer and outreach**. Operational costs linked to running the MOOCs are relatively modest. They are value-for-money. The prospects for sustainability of the benefits delivered, longer-term outreach achieved, and impact is good.

To date there is **no evidence to suggest** that the **MFA has sought to build any linkages or synergies with the MOOCs** in the context of its other international development cooperation efforts. The MOOC offer correlates with Iceland's policy focus on Africa, and the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

LESSONS LEARNED

MOOCs are an important tool to bring high-quality courses online to those with limited access to formal higher education by offering basic instruction and a curriculum constructed by leading scholars in the field. MOOCs offer unlimited participation and open access via the internet to education for dispersed audiences worldwide. Learners can arrange their studies during their own time. The GEST MOOCs ensure a specific focus on understanding of gender issues from a Global South perspective.

GEST has specifically sought to develop a comprehensive package of MOOCs, each is a substantive training and learning course, and collectively will form an online graduate level programme. This is fully appropriate in the context of the GEST programme's academic and learning goals, and strategy. Other development partners and MOOC providers exist that offer significantly shorter online courses for knowledge and skills transmission. These primarily focus on introductory learning rather than academic learning. Development of a MOOC offer is guided by the specific goals and ambition of the providers.

GEST has also specifically sought to develop synergies from its MOOCs to its other intervention offers. This enhances the overall coherence of the GEST programme offer, its outreach, and value-for-money.

PROSPECTS FOR THE SCALING-UP OR REPLICATION OF THE INTERVENTION IN FUTURE ENDEAVOURS OF THE GRÓ

The GRÓ GEST programme has clear goals and ambitions to scale-up and replicate its MOOC offer and to utilize its innovative online content as a training intervention going forward. The GRÓ LRT programme developed a MOOC online learning offer over the period 2017 to 2019. The GRÓ FTP programme

developed a series of videos as its online learning offer over the period 2020 to 2021. The GRÓ GTP programme has not yet established a specific online learning presence offer.

MOOCs or other online learning content are clearly useful tools for consideration within the context of the GRÓ programmes. They offer clear potential to reach a larger audience of people in terms of core knowledge transmission and exchange and build internal synergies and value with other programme interventions. However, development of a MOOC or other online offer should be guided by clear specific goals and the ambition of individual GRÓ programmes as to its scope and level of learners' engagement.

MARCH 8 ALUMNI FUND (SEED FUND FOR PROJECTS OF GEST ALUMNI)

INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIFIC GEST INTERVENTIONS AND APPROACH

GEST began establishing a **small seed money fund for projects proposed and led by GEST alumni** in 2019. The primary focus of projects is on advancing gender equality and promoting gender transformative approaches to achieve social change. GEST **awarded three grants from the Fund from 2020-2023**. The deadline of the most recent open call for proposals under the Fund closed on 29 April 2024.

The University of Iceland, Host Institution for the GEST, is the key partner supporting GEST to operate the Fund named the March 8 Fund since 2022. The University of Iceland also has a role as the provider of financial sources.

Table 56: GEST programme March 8 Alumni Fund grant awards, alumni projects supported

GEST Alumna	Organization	Project Title	Duration	Funding
Chinenye Anekwe (2018 alumni)	Solar Sister, Nigeria	Business Booster Program for 100 rural women energy entrepreneurs – Solar Sister Entrepreneurs	01/2021 - 10/2021 (10 months)	GEST: EUR 10,000 Co-funding: EUR 30,200
Claudia Pamela Chavarría Machado (2021 alumni)	Iniciativa Ciudadana y Desarrollo Social (INCIDE Social), Mexico	Community response to access to the right of women to live free from violence in Mexico City	08/2022 - 12/2023 (16 months)	GEST: USD 9,200 Co-funding: USD 6,700
Sonal Dhanani (2022 alumni)	Parindey Training and Counselling, Pakistan	The Women's Digital Financial Inclusion Advocacy Hub	07/2023 - 02/2024 (8 months)	GEST: EUR 9,703 Co-funding: EUR 3,233

For GEST, the aim of the Fund is to support alumni in disseminating their knowledge and expertise, obtained during their participation in the post-graduate fellowship in Iceland by encouraging **alumni to develop and implement projects focused on advancing gender equality in their communities**.¹⁷⁴

To be eligible for funding, the project proposed by the GEST alumni must:¹⁷⁵

- Be initiated and managed by alumni of the GEST programme, who must function as main applicants and those ultimately responsible for implementing the project.
- Be carried out in a country on the last updated DAC List of ODA Recipients. Priority is given to projects carried out in least developed, LIC and LMIC.
- Have a primary focus on advancing gender equality and promoting gender transformative approaches to achieve social change with priorities clearly reflected in its activities and strategies.
- Be initiated at the latest in the latter half of the year of grant call/award.

¹⁷⁴ Extracts from the ToR for this evaluation.

¹⁷⁵ GRÓ GEST Webpage, [About the fund | GRÓ GEST \(grocentre.is\)](#)

- Be co-funded by the applicant's home organisation or partner organisation by at least 30%.

The call comprises maximum of around EUR 10,000 by the Fund.

In addition to the Fund, GEST sustains support of its alumni through online Alumni seminars, ad hoc meetings in partner countries (often as part of ERASMUS+ university staff exchange collaboration), Newsletters, Podcasts, Webinars, social media platforms, and promoting alumni engagement in local training actions.

Other GRÓ Training Programmes – Alumni professional empowerment support actions

The modality of a small seed fund for local development projects proposed and led by its alumni is unique to the GEST programme. Operation of the March 8 Fund is currently dependent on the University of Iceland for its provision of the financial contribution to the GEST programme initiative. Among the priorities of GRÓ until 2027 is to study the feasibility of setting up an alumni fund to support alumni across all GRÓ programmes in implementing projects at home.

The principal modality utilized by the other three GRÓ training programmes to support the professional empowerment of their alumni is to support their attendance at international conferences. The provision of support, usually through the covering of travel and registration costs, is conditional on the prior acceptance by the conference organizer of an original research paper or presentation submitted by an individual alumnus for inclusion within the context of the conference proceedings and considerations.

CASE STUDY EVALUATION FINDINGS

Programme goals, strategy and approach (Relevance)

The **GRÓ ToC** identifies **alumni networking actions** as a valuable intervention strategy. The GRÓ training programmes are geared towards building the competencies and skills of future change agents. Apart from exchanging ideas and news, alumni networks can serve to advocate, organise training events, brief 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.¹⁷⁶ The GEST Fund contributes to the professional empowerment of GRÓ training participants under GRÓ Output 3.

GEST started work on the technical design and operational processes of the Alumni Fund in 2019 for launch in 2020. After the pilot, GEST reviewed the mechanism in terms of its operation, with no call and did not submit a call for proposals in 2021. Renamed the March 8 Fund, GEST has conducted an annual call since 2022.

For GEST, the Fund is a small-scale action **to incentivise its alumni to develop and undertake projects in their home country to advance gender equality and achieve social change in local communities**. In addition to the direct and longer-term results of the individual projects supported to promote change, the grant is also a means to **professionally empower the individual alumni** that develop, lead, manage, and take overall responsibility for the implementation and delivery of funded projects. Such skills are clearly transferrable for alumni seeking to access other forms of external funding for projects.

The Fund is also a logical response to the fact that a significant share of the GEST alumni is professionally engaged in **civil society organizations, social enterprises, or community-based organizations**. Often the final assignment chosen by such fellows during the 5-month training in Iceland is the development of a detailed project proposal for an action to promote gender equality and societal change that they seek to implement in their home communities on their return. While final assignment proposals consider aspects of potential financing modalities, it is an exercise of scoping options and not meant as a guarantee of secured funding for the project proposal. Securing access to funding for implementing

¹⁷⁶ GRÓ Theory of Change 2022-2027.

innovative gender equality projects is a common constraint of such civil organizations. As such, the GEST March 8 Alumni Fund is an additional potential source of funding for its alumni to consider.

The Fund fits within the wider framework of actions GEST deploys to empower and harness its alumni as change agents to advance gender equality and deliver development solutions in their local settings.

The **Fund is open to all GEST alumni** that wish to submit a current project proposal to advance gender equality and promote gender transformative approaches to achieve social change in their home country. The requirement for proposals to be co-funded at least 30% by the applicant's home/partner organisation ensures that proposals are relevant to needs and designed within an existing organizational set-up.

GEST structures its assessment of submitted proposals based on how well a proposal:¹⁷⁷

- Describes the problems of gender inequality that the applicants have identified, and the project intends to respond to,
- Shows how well the applicants understand these problems based on theoretical knowledge and tried and tested experience,
- Demonstrates an awareness of previous work, knowledge, and/or research concerning the problems that the cooperating parties intend to respond to and based on this awareness, describes how the project will contribute to change, and
- Demonstrates feasibility and a realistic timeline.

Under the first three calls, GEST received 23 proposals from its alumni. In 2024, it received ten.

Table 57: GEST March 8 Alumni Fund project proposals submitted, short-listed, awarded

GEST Alumni Fund/ March 8 Fund	2020	2022	2023
Proposals received by GEST	16	3	4
Proposals short-listed	8	3	4
Grants awarded	1	1	1

Table 58: Overview of the projects supported under the GEST March 8 Alumni Fund

Business Booster Program for 100 rural women energy entrepreneurs – Solar Sister Entrepreneurs

The project aims to promote women's economic empowerment by supporting 100 Solar Sister Entrepreneurs (SSEs) in the 25 states where Solar Sister operates in Nigeria. The aim of the project is to double the customer base of the local clean energy business enterprises of the SSEs through targeted activities to improve the business and marketing capacity of SSEs, expand their customer base, and increase their market visibility. The SSEs will be empowered to create additional impact by funding community-based market awareness and sensitization campaigns. They will also provide marketing materials to promote gender-inclusive businesses and increase the adoption of clean energy solutions in local communities. This will not only enhance economic opportunities and empower women entrepreneurs but also result in reduced carbon emissions as an indirect benefit.

Community response to access to the right of women to live free from violence in Mexico City

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), one of Mexico's most prevalent types of violence, saw an increase in incidence reporting during the first two years of the COVID-19. The response from the justice system and the services and programs for victims and survivors of IPV has failed to provide safe and efficient solutions. The project places victims' needs in the centre of focus and on building a community-based response to IPV while advocating for structural changes. The goal is to not only provide options for women to exit violent relationships but also to be a part of a transformative process where communities engage and participate in working together to change the reality of normalized IPV. The

¹⁷⁷ GRÓ GEST Webpage, [About the fund | GRÓ GEST \(grocentre.is\)](#)

project builds on innovative work to introduce a comprehensive overhaul of Mexico City's response to IPV which both supports victims and addresses the root causes of violence.

The Women's Digital Financial Inclusion Advocacy Hub

The project works directly with 60 women workers and women-owned businesses in the District of Thar, Sindh, Pakistan, to mobilise and form functioning business groups. This connects women with a range of services and resources such as access to finance, markets, skills, and enterprise development. The project also provides capacity-building training and technological tools to promote financial mobility that establishes links with relevant service providers and the private sector. The women will also be connected to micro-finance institutions and state-led social protection initiatives. The close linkage between women's economic empowerment and ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG) is of strategic importance. Training, sensitisation, and orientation sessions on EVAWG for all stakeholder partners will be incorporated as a cross-cutting project action.

The evaluator judges that the GEST March 8 Alumni Fund **is relevant to supporting the professional empowerment of GEST alumni as leaders of change**. As highlighted above, the alumnus develops the project, taking overall leadership and responsibility for its implementation and delivery in collaboration with and co-financed by their home / partner organisation. The Fund is a clear **statement and symbol of the trust that GEST has in its alumni** and their capacity to deliver solutions to advance gender equality and development benefits. The Fund is open exclusively to the GEST alumni and provides a unique opportunity to access small-scale external funding for implementing projects to promote change. **The supported projects are all relevant to advancing gender equality and promoting gender transformative approaches to achieve real social change.**

Promotion of synergies between the programme and other development efforts (Coherence)

GEST's March 8 Alumni Fund is clearly **coherent within the framework of Icelandic international development cooperation policy** and cross-cutting priorities. The projects supported to date have a clear focus on promoting women's economic and social empowerment and combatting GBV. The Fund provides small-scale, seed money support for specific gender equality projects led by GEST alumni, but the MFA of Iceland does not expect Fund projects to have direct or operational synergies with their other specific international development cooperation efforts.

The supported projects are clearly **complementary to the purpose and interventions of the home / partner organizations**. **Solar Sister** (an international NGO) works to recruit, train, and support women become SSEs in rural Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, and skeletally in Uganda. The women build sustainable businesses by selling solar lamps, solar home systems, fuel-efficient cook stoves, and other clean energy solutions. They provide an effective distribution channel for these products to rural, hard-to-reach, off-grid, and last-mile communities. The Business Booster Program was designed to provide existing SSEs in Nigeria with additional skills and tools to enhance their outreach.

Citizen Initiative and Social Development INCIDE Social, a non-profit civil association, works in Mexico to promote democracy, justice, social responsibility of the state, and citizen political participation. Its objective is to contribute to the improvement of the country's social development and foster a democratic culture. This is achieved through the promotion, dissemination, and implementation of citizen initiatives, strengthening the management of state institutions, and the promotion of research, education, and training. Its specialty topics are human rights, democracy, citizenship, social dialogue, gender, and violence. The supported project was an initiative to test community-based responses to IPV as part of a process to introduce a comprehensive overhaul of Mexico City's response to IPV.

Parindey Training and Counselling, a social enterprise, works in rural Sindh province, Pakistan, to improve the livelihoods and wellbeing of female homebased workers in the informal economic sector. Parindey supports vulnerable and marginalized women, including survivors of sexual and GBV, acquire training and skills to empower them both economically and socially, as well as assists the women to connect with existing government and community-based services and support networks. The project was designed to target one of the most undernourished, poverty-stricken districts within Sindh province.

 Progress towards results (Effectiveness)

The **effectiveness of the GEST Fund is strongly evident in the achieved results** including the professional empowerment of the alumni and the individual supported projects to advance gender equality and social justice and to achieve change in their local communities.

The **alumni that led the projects report strengthening their project management skills** in approaching stakeholder management and engaging with communities. They also appreciate the opportunity to apply the technical skills and knowledge from the fellowship as well as demonstrate their capability to be leaders in promoting and implementing changes needed to advancing gender equality and socio-economic progress as young professionals. The alumni also strengthened their networks of local and donor contacts in their field of operation during the implementation of the projects which can help in building future partnerships.

The way in which the alumni have used the grant under the Fund to advance their contribution in their field/sector of work **strengthen the outcomes of the GRÓ training programmes.**¹⁷⁸ The table below details the immediate gender equality and socio-economic results from the supported projects. The alumni have exchanged insights and shared their knowledge about the project with colleagues and other experts in their respective field and within the GEST alumni network. The alumni supported under the Fund report that they have advanced professionally through promotion and recognition amongst development actors. They also report that the project partner organisations assess the grant as valuable to advancing the policy agenda and operational focus of the organisation.

The immediate direct and indirect effects of the GEST Fund supported projects are summarized below.

Table 59: Results delivered via the projects supported under the GEST March 8 Alumni Fund

Project	Results achieved
Business Booster Program for 100 rural women energy entrepreneurs – Solar Sister Entrepreneurs (Nigeria)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 SSEs were supported as primary beneficiaries and closely involved in project planning. • Product fairs, community mobilization and awareness raising on clean energy products was conducted in 30 communities, which is five more than originally planned as nearby community leaders requested that the women come to introduce the products. • 70% of the participating SSEs organized mini sensitization campaigns in their communities. Their agency and confidence have increased through the product fair and their marketing skills and materials, resulting in some SSEs upgrading their businesses to new locations. • SSEs scaled up their product portfolio from majorly pico systems and phone charging lamps to solar home systems, which most community members adopted. • The women-owned businesses have already grown their business capital from an average of \$1000 to an average of \$1500 and continue to grow after the end of the project. • The fairs and grassroots campaigns reached over 7,000 users with clean energy products - the original number of users was forecast as 3,000 new users taking-up clean energy products. • The sensitization campaigns to promote gender-inclusive businesses and the importance of clean energy indirectly reached citizens across all 30 communities. • The project also saw the recruitment of at least 10 new women entrepreneurs inspired by the example of the activities and increased prestige of fellow women.

¹⁷⁸ The GRÓ Results Framework defines four performance indicators linked to the Outcome that *GRÓ fellows, trainees and respective organisations promote and implement changes needed to achieve SDGs relevant to their field of work.*

Project	Results achieved
Community response to access to the right of women to live free from violence in Mexico City (Mexico)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A safe learning space was established in one municipality of Miguel Hidalgo in Mexico City to test and further develop a range of community-based mechanisms and tools to promote local engagement in and dialogue on issues of IPV and GBV. The centre promotes local knowledge and experience in finding solutions to address GBV by responding to the needs of victims and survivors. • The support services and tools offered by the project build on shared experiences on how victims and survivors' access and are treated by local public support or legal services. The support seeks to guide individuals to access and navigate services sensitive to their needs. Most people using the resources created by the project were previously not able find suitable public social, legal and/or psychological support services. • The learning space provided a safe environment for victims and survivors, as well as concerned family members or friends, to discuss their circumstances and explore alternative assistance options. It also facilitated awareness-raising and public advocacy on issues of IPV. • In addition to the safe learning space in Miguel Hidalgo, where face-to-face consultation occurred, the project also developed a range of online digital tools to support individuals to discuss their experiences and find access to social services, financial, legal, and non-legal services to protect themselves and/or to get out of violent relationships. • In December 2023 the project saw the establishment of La Colectiva, a collective organization that currently performs digital support services. A network of community support was developed due to the project's awareness raising and advocacy building.
The Women's Digital Financial Inclusion Advocacy Hub (Pakistan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 skilled female homebased workers received extensive training and capacity building of the women entrepreneurs, over the course of six months on business principles, product development, marketing, and digital and financial literacy. • Additional training on mental health awareness and menstrual health, including donations of hygiene kits, were provided as well. • The 60 women were organized into five groups based on their skills or products to set up small businesses together. Each group established an online business presence and a WhatsApp business account to offer their products. Support was provided to streamline the online ordering process, promoting their crafts digitally. • The women entrepreneurs opened bank accounts for local mobile payment systems - only one participant had an account at the start of the project. • Gender sensitisation sessions focusing on enhancing gender equity were provided for both women and men in the community of Tharparkar. These included sessions for girls to learn digital tools and creating an enabling environment for women to pursue their livelihoods after training. As a result, families have become more accepting of women using phones and running businesses. The women entrepreneurs operate their own business and cooperative networks and collectively cooperate to promote their businesses through a local women innovation lab. • Feedback from the women highlighted an enhanced ability to manage finances, understanding of loans and sources, and the usage of digital platforms as key learning points. • Two women also started working at a private school for through a digital job application.

The evaluator judges that the GEST March 8 Alumni Fund is **an effective mechanism for supporting the professional empowerment of GEST alumni as leaders of change**. It is **also highly effective in advancing gender equality by promoting and implementing changes at the local level needed to**

achieve progress on the SDGs relevant to the respective field of work. As highlighted above, the direct effect of two projects is the economic empowerment of the women (the direct beneficiaries of the projects), which most closely aligns with SDG 5.5.¹⁷⁹ The project in Pakistan also aligns with SDG 5.b,¹⁸⁰ while the one in Nigeria aligns with SDG 7.1.¹⁸¹ The direct effect of the project in Mexico most closely aligns with SDG 5.2 and SDG 16.1.¹⁸²

Programme implementation and adaptive management (Efficiency)

GRÓ GEST is responsible for overall management and oversight of the March 8 Alumni Fund through a clearly established management and operational process and timeline for operations.

GEST is responsible for planning the annual budget and its authorization within the **University of Iceland as the funding source** to proceed with the annual call for proposals. **GEST launches the annual call on March 8 (International Women's Day)** along with pertinent information to alumni through e-mail and the GEST Facebook group. The **deadline for submission of proposals by alumni is approximately six-to-seven weeks later.** Detailed information about the Fund, its goal, and priorities, and application forms are on the GRÓ GEST Webpage for the alumni to access. The annual grant can amount to EUR 10,000 from GEST given a minimum co-financing of at least 30% from the partner organization. GEST selects a short-list of promising applications after the first round of submissions and then holds interviews with short-listed candidates to discuss the proposal, organization, feasibility issues etc. If appropriate, applicants may be awarded limited time to modify or clarify their proposal. The final decision on grant award (for one applicant per year) is subject to rigorous assessment, review, and negotiation by GEST. The **award of the grant by GEST occurs in June or July**, as a Project Agreement with the home / partner organization, for which the GEST alumni is acting as the official representative for the project.

The **alumnus is responsible to lead on the implementation, management, and delivery of the project**, including performing financial and technical oversight as well as monitoring and reporting duties in collaboration with their home / partner organization. The alumnus also submits an **interim progress report** and a **final report** to GEST half-way and one month after the completion of the project, respectively. For both reports, GEST requests examples of visual products (videos, photographs, posters, etc.) from the project to promote the results of the projects among the GEST networks. During the implementation of the project, GRÓ GEST can provide guidance to the alumnus primarily on management of the grant, reporting, and budgeting when needed. GEST is not in a position to offer operational or technical guidance to steer implementation. Otherwise, GEST and the alumnus engage and stay in contact with periodic e-mails and social media. For two projects, the alumnus successfully requested one to two months extensions of the implementation period from GEST granted in part due to delays from political or civil instability, seasonal factors, and cultural events in both cases.

Alumni grant recipients report their high level of satisfaction with the overall goals and scope of the Fund and the extent of GEST finances available. They also express a high level of satisfaction with the administrative operation of the Fund - its announcement, the time to prepare submissions prior to the deadline, the availability of standardized templates and guidance, and the formal level of requirements for progress and final reporting. Nevertheless, the alumni feedback also highlights areas where they feel the operation of the Fund could be enhanced.

¹⁷⁹ SDG target 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life (including women's economic empowerment / business management).

¹⁸⁰ SDG target 5.b: Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

¹⁸¹ SDG target 7.1: Ensure universal access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy services.

¹⁸² SDG target 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking, and sexual and other types of exploitation.

SDG target 16.1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

Specifically, the recipients of grant under the Fund indicate they would have appreciated a greater extent of support from GEST to disseminate the final knowledge and information on the projects both in-country and amongst donors and more broadly within the GEST network. Certain information of the projects is disseminated to the GEST alumni network, but the process for this is not yet formalized¹⁸³ The evaluator also notes that data on the GEST Webpage and in Alumni Newsletters about the projects only provides information on the projects' intent, not about the actual results achieved or lessons learned under the projects. Additionally, some of the Fund recipients indicate they would have appreciated a more periodic and structured process for engagement and informal reporting to GEST about the progress of the project, especially during the initial implementation quarter.

Overall, the evaluator judges that **the GEST March 8 Alumni Fund is efficiently operated by GEST**. Because the Fund supports projects in diverse countries and development contexts and it is a small-scale, seed fund mechanism for which GEST has only awarded three grants to date, it is not practical to derive findings through a comparative analysis of unit costs and value for money of projects.

Prospects for the maintenance and continuation of the programme benefits (sustainability)

The prospects for the sustainability of benefits delivered by the projects under the Fund are good.

The immediate benefits of the **women's economic empowerment** projects are sustained by the women entrepreneurs as the **direct beneficiaries** through their continued operation and scaling-up of their businesses, product offer, and marketing outreach. The women have good prospects to achieve increasing business turnover and income-generation because of the projects. The networks formed by entrepreneurs can sustain the benefits of the projects by providing a space for collective cooperation, support and encouragement of business operations going forward. These networks are the Solar Sister network of SSEs supported by Business Development Associates and the women innovation lab in the community of Tharparkar. Seven of the supported SSEs from the Solar Sisters project have since also received training on international, national, and grassroots advocacy through partnership with other donor organizations.

At the **institutional level**, the home / partner organizations (Solar Sister, and Parindey Training and Counselling) consider the actions / approach of the project as valid, and each organization has now incorporated its project approach within its core business and offer. The actions / approach can thereby be replicated by the organizations going forward as their financial means allow. Linked to the Solar Sister Business Booster Program, many potential donors indicated by the alumnus project leader can support scaling-up of the model of the Solar Sisters Business Booster Program including the Wallace Global Fund, Energia, CISCO, UNDP, or UNEP. The alumnus leader of the Parindey Training and Counselling Women's Digital Financial Inclusion Advocacy Hub notes the potential for donors such as the L'Oréal Fund or the WIDF Fund to replicate the project model.

La Colectiva sustains the immediate benefits of the project in the establishment of **a community-based response to address issues of IPV** at an **institutional and operational level**. It was formalized as a collective organization to provide support services to victims and survivors of IPV and GBV, raise awareness on the issues in the community, and implement advocacy actions to promote the right of women to live free of violence in Mexico City. The 2024 work agenda for La Colectiva plans the consolidation of the organization and support network as well as its outreach goals following completion of the GEST Alumni Fund project. The actions / approach can be scaled-up by the organization going forward as financial sources allow. La Colectiva has already received requests to replicate its workshops in other municipalities. For the **direct beneficiaries**, the immediate benefits are the continued support they receive to guide them in accessing suitable local public services and the digital safe space for women to exchange experiences.

¹⁸³ The GEST programme indicates that promoting visibility of the successes is somewhat challenging, as there has at times been strong resistance from the GRÓ regarding the Fund, even if it has been a very successful modality funded to date by the University.

Prospects for longer-term development effects (Impact)

Prospects for longer-term development effects of the Fund projects are strongest on the micro-level (i.e. at the individual beneficiary or community level) and meso-level (i.e. within partner organizations).

On the **micro-level**, the supported women entrepreneurs have increased opportunities to improve their economic wellbeing and independence as well as enhanced standing within their communities as economic actors and income generators. The projects have successfully advanced community acceptance of women pursuing entrepreneurial goals and education for women and girls to achieve them. The Solar Sister project led to the recruitment of at least 10 new women entrepreneurs, inspired by the achievements and prestige of their fellow women, climate change advocates, and clean energy champions. The Parindey project enabled other women and girls in the community to access education and skills relevant to their needs. This success was a direct result of engaging men as allies to promote gender inclusion and acceptance within families and community by recognizing the economic and social agency of women and girls. The women entrepreneurs also become social role models for other women and girls. The longer-term effect of the Solar Sister project also contributes to reduced carbon emissions at household and community level through the adoption of clean energy sources. A few tons of CO₂ are mitigated as candles, kerosene lanterns and open fire cooking methods are replaced with clean lights and cooking stoves. Parindey also installed a solar water pump system in the community of Tharparkar in collaboration with other donors in addition to the direct actions of the Alumni Fund project.

Multiple municipalities have approached La Colectiva with interest in community-based responses to establish support networks addressing IPV similar to that of Miguel Hidalgo. The secure digital safe space is accessible online and can be reached by women across Mexico City. In early 2024, La Colectiva will finalize an interactive map identifying the central services of Mexico City that support victims of IPV. La Colectiva has consolidated itself as a platform for discussing alternatives and solutions to combat the violence experienced by women. It also facilitates dialogue on issues such as gender violence, intimate partner violence, human rights, and other challenges faced by women in Mexico City.

On the **meso-level**, as indicated above, the home / partner organizations have incorporated the approach of the projects into their action plan to be replicated as their financial resources allow. This will depend on their ability to raise awareness of the approach and secure external funding.

On the **macro-level** (i.e. at policy level or related state/governmental processes), the project addressing violence against women has the potential, along with other initiatives, to generate significant reform of policy and approaches to addressing IPV and the right of women to live free of violence in Mexico City. However, this will require long-term commitment of authorities to transform institutional cultures.

Cross-cutting priorities of Icelandic International Development Cooperation policy

The projects under the Fund have concretely contributed to the Icelandic policy cross-cutting priority of advancing **gender equality** and the empowerment of women and girls. Specific cross-cutting priority focus areas addressed via the projects are (i) combatting GBV, (ii) women's economic empowerment, and (iii) engaging men and boys (as allies) for gender equality.

On the cross-cutting priority of **human rights**, the projects collectively contribute to the focus on the promotion and protection of the rights of the most marginalized and vulnerable populations.

On the cross-cutting priority of **climate and the environment**, the Solar Sister project contributes to the priority focus of climate mitigation and adaptation and the promotion of sustainable energy use.

CONCLUSIONS

GEST's Alumni Fund provides **small seed financing for specific development projects proposed and led by GEST alumni** to advance gender equality at the local level in their home countries. Projects are co-financed at a minimum 30% of project costs by the home/partner organization with which the alumnus is associated. **GEST provides maximum grant of EUR 10.000 as its project contribution.**

The Fund is a relevant and effective modality to support the **professional empowerment of its alumni as leaders of change** in applying the knowledge and expertise they obtained via the fellowship. The Fund is a clear **statement and symbol of the trust GEST has in its alumni** and their capacity to lead on delivering solutions to advance gender equality and development benefits. The Fund is only open to the alumni and is therefore a unique pathway for them to access small-scale external funding for the implementation of projects to promote change. The **alumni that led the projects testify to their strengthened project management skills** in stakeholder management and engaging with communities. The alumni also testify to their high level of satisfaction with the overall goals and scope of the Fund including the extent of GEST finances that are available.

Supported projects are all relevant to advancing gender equality and promoting gender transformative approaches to achieve meaningful social and economic change in partner countries and communities. **Gender equality and development results achieved through the individual projects are strongly evident.** Two of the projects have contributed to advance women's economic empowerment and one has contributed to address issues of IPV and GBV with community-based responses and support networks. The projects supported 160 direct beneficiaries in the form of women entrepreneurs and victims and survivors of IPV. Additionally, projects have reached significant numbers of local community members with their gender-inclusive and gender equality advocacy through the sensitization and promotion campaigns. The direct effects of the projects align with a range of SDGs and targets, especially SDGs 5,7, and 16.

LESSONS LEARNED

The GEST Alumni Fund has proven to be a valuable mechanism to empower alumni as change agents. In addition to their personal empowerment and professional progress, the supported projects have directly promoted gender equality, socio-economic development, and the empowerment of women.

PROSPECTS FOR THE SCALING-UP OR REPLICATION OF THE INTERVENTION IN FUTURE ENDEAVOURS OF THE GRÓ

The GRÓ GEST programme has clear goals to replicate the Fund offer of holding annual calls for proposals. As of now the mechanism is unique to the GEST programme. The other GRÓ programmes have supported the professional empowerment of their alumni (in addition to standard alumni events) largely by means of support for alumni attendance at international conferences by covering registration and travel costs.

An Alumni Fund mechanism is a useful tool for consideration within the context of the individual GRÓ programmes. It offers opportunity to generate development change alongside the empowerment of the alumni. As a small-scale seed fund - a GRÓ Fund programme grant of up to EUR 10,000, with projects supported by home/partner organization co-funding - it would be necessary for GRÓ and the individual programmes to consider whether they can implement projects that achieve development change in their field of expertise with modest funding. The mechanism and the current level of seed financing offered by GEST may not be practical in the context of all the GRÓ programmes.

In addition to potentially including an Alumni Fund mechanism under the GRÓ Centre's financial contribution for each of the four individual programmes, each GRÓ programme should be encouraged to support the professional empowerment of a wider body of its alumni by sponsoring alumni attendance at relevant international conferences in their field.

ANNEX 12.3: GRÓ GTP CASE STUDY REPORT

Case study data collection and evaluation methodology

Case study-specific programme description and context

Findings

Conclusions

CASE STUDY DATA-COLLECTION AND EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The case study draws on a range of quantitative and qualitative data sources and collection methods, including (1) the review of strategic and operational programme documentation, (2) key informant interviews (KIIs) in El Salvador and remotely, (3) a focus group discussion (FGD) with alumni of the 5-month diploma held in El Salvador, and (4) direct observations of the short course held in February 2024 in El Salvador.

The specific objectives of the case study are:

- Assessing the results of the training efforts in El Salvador
- Assessing feasibility of GRÓ and their programmes to expand the training partnerships with partners in various partner countries to augment development impacts.

Concretely, the case study assesses the following issues on the specific GTP interventions:

- The goals, strategy, and approach of training interventions
- The interventions' coherence with other development efforts
- The interventions' progress towards results
- The programme implementation and adaptive management
- Prospects for the continuation of the programme benefits
- Prospects for long-term development impacts

1. CASE STUDY-SPECIFIC PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

As specified in the ToR, the GTP efforts in El Salvador are the subject of one of the evaluative case studies.

Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries have significant geothermal potential along the volcanic range from Mexico to Patagonia. Most of these countries are developing geothermal projects **to reduce dependency on high-cost fossil fuels and contribute to GHG emissions reduction**. The LAC region includes eight of the 32 countries with geothermal installed capacity.¹⁸⁴

Geothermal training began in El Salvador with date back to 2006 and to 2007. The first workshop for decision makers was held in 2006, which was attended by various experts from Central America and from Iceland. During that workshop it was decided to organize a series of short training courses. The first of those training courses was held in 2007. Since then, **there have been 13 short courses in El Salvador over the 2006-2023 period, reaching 682 participants**¹⁸⁵. In addition to short courses, GTP has also organised specialised, longer **geothermal diploma courses** in cooperation with local partners in the country, the first of which was organised in 2010 by the University of El Salvador with support from Italian ODA. The diploma programme was then repeated in 2012 with remaining funds from the first course. The Nordic Development Fund (NDF) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) provided additional funds to support the diploma programme from 2013-2015, with technical assistance from Salvadoran entities like the **Consejo Nacional de Energía (CNE)** and the state-owned geothermal company **LaGeo**. GTP evaluated the programme's effectiveness in its initial two years and continued offering advice by participating in the Academic Committee through 2013-2015. During this time, **each diploma session reserved 10 scholarships for Salvadorans, 10 for Latin American attendees from**

¹⁸⁴ IRENA (2024) Renewable capacity statistics 2024. International Renewable Energy Agency, Abu Dhabi.

¹⁸⁵ Including the mentioned workshop, tailored short courses paid by the Organization of America States and courses paid by GTP

other countries, and up to 10 spots for those without sponsorship. This distribution continued until the diploma's last edition in 2022.

In early 2016, the NDF committed additional funds to continue the diploma course for 2016-2017 with the **Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) acting as the implementing agency.** GTP also became a direct implementing partner alongside LaGeo and the University of El Salvador. Due to changes in programme management, including increased responsibilities taken on by LaGeo, the programme was renamed the **Geothermal Diploma Course for Latin America.** Since then, **LaGeo has been the primary local technical partner.**

Following the changes implemented in 2016, **the annual GTP/ LaGeo short course was incorporated into the curriculum of the diploma course.** This allowed both participants specifically invited from the LAC region for the short course and diploma course students to learn about specific topics and opened the opportunity to interact with international lecturers and participants. This integration was maintained in subsequent editions of the diploma. **While the diploma course is primarily conducted in Spanish, short courses are offered in both English and Spanish with simultaneous interpretation.** This bilingual approach caters to a broader audience including the English-speaking nations of the LAC region.

In 2019, the MFA took primary funding responsibility for the diploma course with in-kind contributions coming from LaGeo and the University of El Salvador. A two-year agreement involving MFA, GTP, and LaGeo was established. The diploma course proceeded in 2019 like previous years with plans to repeat it in 2020, but **the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the 2020 session by two years.** The diploma course resumed in 2022 with 27 participants but was not offered in 2023 due to financial constraints. In total, **the diploma trained 230 experts** in geothermal energy since GTP's involvement in 2013 (first with an advisory role until 2015 and then as an implementing partner).

2. FINDINGS

2.1. Programme goals, strategy and approach (Relevance)

The main challenge in the energy sector in LAC is meeting the rising demand for electricity accessing new clean energy sources. Geothermal energy could be a key component in broadening the region's power generation options and addressing growing demand for higher generation capacity. As a reliable and clean energy source, **geothermal energy can supply 24/7 base-load power,** unlike many other intermittent renewable technologies.

There are 25 countries in the LAC region with potential geothermal resources, yet only eight have developed geothermal power facilities. Less than 15% of LAC countries' estimated geothermal resource potential is utilised for electricity generation. It is estimated that there is potential of between 11 and 55 gigawatts of geothermal resources in LAC to be used for power generation, but the region's current installed geothermal capacity is only 1.67 gigawatts.¹⁸⁶ If further explored and developed in a sustainable fashion, geothermal resources could provide a significant share of the base-load power needs of the region at a competitive cost, creating direct economic, environmental, and energy security benefits to many LAC countries.

The GRÓ objective is to strengthen individual and institutional capacities in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) to deliver development results in line with the SDGs. The short-training courses and the diploma course conducted in El Salvador contribute to training experts, who are expected to promote geothermal development in LAC. Thus, **the training activities in El Salvador indirectly contribute to SDG 7.**¹⁸⁷ This view assumes that the lack of appropriate skills is a major

¹⁸⁶ WB (2018) Opportunities and Challenges for Scaling Up Geothermal Development in LAC. The World Bank - ESMAP

¹⁸⁷ Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

constraint for geothermal development in the region. In El Salvador and Mexico¹⁸⁸ the exploration of geothermal resources began in the '60s, and the power production started in the 70s.¹⁸⁹ Nicaragua¹⁹⁰ began exploiting geothermal resources in 1983. **But besides these standalone cases, the use of geothermal resources in the rest of the LAC region is much more recent and limited.** Limited skills and knowledge on geothermal development were a recurring topic reported by FGDs and interviews with the diploma alumni and participants of the 2024 short training.

The DAC list of ODA recipients for 2022 and 2023 included El Salvador among lower- and middle-income countries (LMIC), but El Salvador has moved to the Upper- and Middle-Income Countries (UMIC) classification in 2024. As a result, **while training activities conducted until 2023 were in line with the GRÓ objective of strengthening capacities in LMIC, the GRÓ-funded training activities in El Salvador from 2024 onward will no longer be formally aligned with the GRÓ focus on LMIC.** An analysis of the nationalities of participants in the training activities in El Salvador from 2018 to 2023 reveals that the rate of participants from LMICs in the short trainings and diploma course were 60% and 78% respectively (see data included in Appendix I). However, Salvadorian trainees accounted for 39% of the total number of short course participants and 63% of the total number of diploma participants. Therefore, **if this same proportion of Salvadorian participants is retained in the future, the GRÓ focus on LMIC countries could be diminished.**

The training content focus in El Salvador on geothermal resources in volcanic areas is particularly relevant for the region. The training offer of the diploma programme has remained unchanged since GTP assumed the role of primary implementing partner (IP). It consists of eleven modules¹⁹¹ which cover all relevant topics for the development of geothermal projects. The topics of the short courses are chosen by GTP and LaGeo after consulting relevant institutions **to ensure that the short trainings are relevant to the training needs of targeted institutions.**

The supported training programmes are also relevant to the needs of LaGeo. Specifically, the short courses and diploma offer LaGeo the ability to train its personnel in the latest developments in geothermal energy. The training not only strengthens LaGeo's workforce but also serves as a showcase of its expertise in the region, positioning the company as a highly respected leader in the utilisation of geothermal resources.

2.2. Promotion of synergies between the programme and other local development efforts (Coherence)

No synergies could be identified by this evaluation **with other MFA-funded interventions** because the MFA has no bilateral cooperation in the LAC region.

However, **the supported training activities are complementary to interventions funded by other donors** including a project funded by the German government and implemented by the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR). The project provides technical assistance and capacity building to national partners of the Central America Integration System (SICA) for exploration activities for geothermal resources and assessing their potential to be included in local development planning. **The development of technical knowledge that GTP is promoting through training is particularly**

¹⁸⁸ Quijano-León, J. L. and Gutiérrez-Negrín, L. C.A. (2003). 30 Years of Geothermal-electric Generation in Mexico. Mexican Geothermal Development GRC bulleting

¹⁸⁹ Guidos, J. and Burgos, J. (2012) Geothermal activity and development in El Salvador: producing and developing. Paper presented at the Short Course on Geothermal Development and Geothermal Wells, organised by the UNU GTP and LaGeo in El Salvador on March 11-17, 2012

¹⁹⁰ Porras, E. A, Tanaka, T., Fujii, H and Itoi, R. (2007) Numerical modelling of the Momotombo Geothermal System. Geothermics. Vol 36 (4), pp. 304-329

¹⁹¹ 1) general concepts, 2) geothermal geology, 3) geothermal geochemistry, 4) geothermal geophysics, 5) integrated conceptual models, 6) drilling, 7) geothermal reservoir engineering, 8) geothermal plants and low and medium enthalpy applications, 9) environmental and social management of geothermal projects, 10) energy policy and management of geothermal projects, and 11) the final project

relevant for the BGR project. In fact, the project has nominated two trainees - one from Honduras and one from Nicaragua - who were accepted for training in the diploma in El Salvador.

Improvements in skills and knowledge are also crucial for the success of grants and loans provided by international organisations for the development of geothermal projects. The Inter-American Development Bank's (IADB) recent analysis on geothermal potential in LAC¹⁹² shows that grants and concessional funding programmes will continue to play a key role in enhancing the viability of geothermal projects. As the IADB explains, one crucial barrier to successful geothermal development in the LAC region is the geological exploration process. This necessary and time-consuming process costs close to US\$4 million per megawatt¹⁹³ and can last up to three years with only a 60% success rate. Different concessional funding and grant programmes in the region are currently provided by **the World Bank, the IADB, JICA, KfW, and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB).**

2.3. Progress towards results (Effectiveness)

From 2018 to 2023, GTP organised two one-week courses¹⁹⁴ with a total of 122 participants, 40% of whom were women. In February 2024, GTP organised another two-week short course with 32 participants, 38% of whom were women. During the same period, GTP also organised three editions of the 5-month diploma, one in 2018, one in 2019, and one in 2022.¹⁹⁵ **There were 86 total participants for the diploma of whom 43% are women.** Details on the number of participants by nationality are reported in the appendix.

Through the diploma course, **students attend eleven modules that provide a general coverage of all main aspects of the design and management of geothermal projects.** Unlike the 6-month training in Iceland, where students specialise in a certain area after a 5-week introductory period, all students of the diploma course attend all modules. This approach in El Salvador is more efficient in terms of costs, logistics, and organisational reasons according to LaGeo. Offering students the possibility to choose from different specialisation fields would require more lecturers conducting lessons in different classrooms simultaneously. A FGD with LaGeo employees who attended previous editions of the diploma in El Salvador **revealed that the unified comprehensive approach was largely appreciated.** The approach allowed experts with different backgrounds to gain insights into their colleagues' fields, leading to easier understanding of each other's expectations and needs when working together on the same geothermal development project. Participants of the FGD emphasised that the diploma course helped them understand the entire process of geothermal development, as well as the importance of phases with which they were not familiar before attending the programme.

A LaGeo manager explained that the diploma course should address all relevant topics for geothermal development so that **students become associated with the jargon, methodologies, and tools used in the different aspects of a geothermal development project.** The general curriculum is particularly helpful for people with limited experience in the sector. For example, an interviewed diploma alumnus from Argentina mentioned that when he attended the diploma years ago, he had just started working in the geothermal area for the State Agency of Investment of Neuquén. At that time, he had very limited knowledge of geothermal development and needed a much deeper understanding of general geothermal sector elements to initiate and supervise geothermal exploratory research activities funded by the Investment Agency he works for.

Another interviewee had a different opinion and shared with the evaluation team that such **a general curriculum limits specialisation.** A GTP evaluation conducted for the 2014 edition of the diploma recommended that the diploma organisers¹⁹⁶ consider adding lines of specialisation. Additionally, some

¹⁹² Gischler, G. et al (2020) Harnessing geothermal potential in LAC: A perspective on the road ahead. IADB

¹⁹³ Costs are mainly driven by drilling.

¹⁹⁴ A short course was also organised in 2017, but it is not included here since the evaluation period specified in the ToR is 2018-2023.

¹⁹⁵ The diploma was also organised in 2016, but it is not included here since the evaluation period specified in the ToR is 2018-2023.

¹⁹⁶ At that time GTP was not involved as an implementing partner.

students may not be positioned to understand the technical aspects of topics outside of their experiential knowledge causing lecturers to refrain from offering specialised technical lectures. **The main specialisation opportunity offered by the diploma course is the final project**, which is individually conducted by groups or, in a few cases, individually, for one month with the supervision of a seasoned geothermal expert from LaGeo.

While the diploma programme comprehensively addresses all essential aspects of geothermal development, **the one-week short courses are focused on specialised topics**. For example, the 2017 short course taught the feasibility studies of geothermal projects, the 2018 course covered geothermal reservoir characterisation, and the 2022 course explored geothermal energy utilisation in Latin America. The exception to this specialised approach was the two-week training course offered in 2024; it covered different general aspects of geothermal development like the diploma course since the diploma course had not been held since 2022.

Although a short course training does not make students experts, **one unanimously reported advantage of short courses is the opportunity to exchange ideas with lecturers and fellow trainees who have faced similar problems**. For example, an employee of the Federal Commission for Electricity in Mexico attended the short training in 2024 and learned from Costa Rican colleagues how to address scaling deposits problems in geothermal production more cost-effectively than his organisation in Mexico. Additionally, he discovered that similar institutions in Nicaragua and Costa Rica use a different business model for managing drilling costs, which he plans to propose to his superiors in Mexico. A trainee from Colombia reported that, after attending a lecture on drilling risks, she immediately contacted her colleagues back home to incorporate the new, proper drilling risks into their procedures. Her team has limited experience in geothermal drilling since they primarily drill for oil in different types of rock, which involves different risks.

In both the diploma and short courses, former students from the diploma programme or training in Iceland (including the 6-month supported MSc training) give lectures to present their work. This approach fosters networking opportunities for alumni.

2.4. Programme implementation and adaptive management (efficiency)

GRÓ GTP is responsible for the overall oversight of both the diploma programme and the short courses. LaGeo is in charge of local management for both training activities. The University of El Salvador (UES) contributes to the diploma to ensure that it meets certain academic quality standards.

An academic committee of representatives from GTP, LaGeo, and UES was established to steer the diploma programme. Its main role is to make decisions on the diploma programme, the recruitment of lecturers, and the selection of students. Balancing students' backgrounds, gender, and country of origin is a main criterion in the selection process. Until 2014, there was a technical committee in addition to the academic committee. The technical committee made decisions on the duration of the different lectures and modules. Since 2016, these aspects have not been changed, and consequently, the technical committee is no longer needed for the diploma. Short courses are managed jointly by LaGeo and GTP, similar to the diploma. The main difference is that **UES is not involved in short courses**.

Regular surveys collect students' feedback about many different aspects of both the short courses and the diploma. These cover topics such as general satisfaction, relevance of the trainings to the students' interests and work, quality of lectures, quality of the field trips, the final project work for the diploma, general organisation of the trainings, quality of facilities, food provided, interpretation services, and accommodation. Provisions are made so that trainees can also provide detailed and qualitative comments.

The diploma also includes a student assessment system managed by UES. Students' performance is assessed for each of the eleven modules, and the final grade is determined through a weighted score with different values assigned to the modules and the final project. LaGeo and GTP provide a final report that includes students' scores, the results of the surveys, and a description of all activities conducted. The final report also contains a logical framework of the diploma programme **and relevant and measurable monitored indicators**.

GTP strongly relies on LaGeo for the organisation of both the short courses and the diploma course. **Training and laboratory facilities are provided by LaGeo.** Previous editions of the diploma included some lectures and activities at UES facilities, but diploma programme organisers decided to use only the training and laboratory facilities provided by LaGeo to avoid wasting time in transport and because the UES labs lacked the necessary reagents and staff to manage the laboratory.

The 2022 diploma report shows that **37 of the 41 lecturers were employees from LaGeo.** LaGeo has the required technical expertise to lecture on geothermal energy being a leading expert in the sector. During the last four editions of the diploma, UES has provided only three to four lecturers. A key informant from UES in El Salvador explains **that earth sciences are not prioritised at the university explaining the limited expertise UES can provide.** This fact was widely confirmed by informants. Short courses have a much higher variety of lecturers coming from regional and Icelandic geothermal development institutions such as ÍSOR and GTP in addition to LaGeo.

Direct costs for trainings have been largely funded by GTP. In addition, GTP has paid for the costs of one or two Icelandic lecturers, who contribute to all editions of trainings. LaGeo's contribution was mainly in-kind, as it provided facilities for the training and most of the lecturers. An analysis of the annual reports provided by LaGeo shows that **in 2018 LaGeo substantially contributed to the cost of the diploma course** when its contribution amounted to 45% of the total budgeted costs of the diploma and the short course.

Table 60 includes cost information for the 2022 short course and the diploma in El Salvador.

Table 60: Cost data per training activities in El Salvador in 2022

	DIPLOMA	SHORT COURSE
Total expenditures (USD)	209,763	66,632
Number of students	27	46 ^φ
Cost per student (USD)	7,769	1,453
Cost per student per day (USD) [†]	51	264

* WB average exchange rate in 2022: 135.3 ISK/USD

φ: It also includes the 27 students who attended the diploma

† The diploma lasted 151 days and the short course lasted 5.5 days

The table shows that **the daily cost per student per day of the diploma programme is extremely low when compared to the short course** due to several reasons: only ten scholarships for non-Salvadoran students were provided, travel costs are the same but spread over many days for the diploma programme, and the long-term housing accommodations for the diploma programme cost less per day than the hotels used for the short courses. The cost of the diploma per student (7,769 USD) is also much lower than the cost of the 6-month training in Iceland – which, as reported in the notes shared by GRÓ for the 2024 budget proposal, cost 4,280,000 ISK (31,000 USD) per 6-month training fellow. Overall, this suggests **a very high value for money of the diploma.**

In addition, both training activities are used by GTP to properly observe (and interview) students who are applying for the 6-month training in Iceland. This way, GTP ensures that nominated candidates¹⁹⁷ who can make the most of a more expensive training in Iceland are selected for.

Only public institutions are eligible to nominate candidates for the scholarships. While private institutions may nominate experts for the short courses, they must bear all associated costs. However, no additional fees are charged in such cases. The diploma programme does not accommodate international students whose expenses are covered by their employers. This possibility was discussed

¹⁹⁷ As explained in the GTP evaluation report, candidates for the 6-month training in Iceland are nominated by companies and institutions.

when the first editions of the diploma, but it was concluded that willingness to companies to cover relevant costs was very low.

2.5. Prospects for the maintenance/ continuation of the programme benefits (Sustainability)

The sustainability of the training programmes in El Salvador depends on a continued partnership with LaGeo. LaGeo has demonstrated ownership and commitment to the programme by providing its facilities and staff for the implementation of the GTP-funded training programmes. Overall, **LaGeo has proven to have the necessary human and technical capacity for a continued provision of geothermal trainings.**

While up to this point GTP has paid the majority of costs to cover training activities in El Salvador, **LaGeo will fund the diploma through its own resources in 2024.** More precisely, at the time of writing, a new diploma has been planned to be held in August 2024. This edition will have a shorter duration (three months), but it will almost entirely be funded by LaGeo, while GTP will provide minor funds and will contribute by covering the costs of two Icelandic experts lecturing for one week. This would mean that LaGeo it would fund scholarships, accommodations, and international travel for students in addition to its duties providing staff time, training, and laboratory facilities. **No major responsibility changes are expected for short courses.** The greatest burden of financial costs of short courses will continue to be paid by GTP.

The diploma programme has gained considerable recognition in the region making LaGeo a reference institution for geothermal energy. Increasingly, more countries are proposing candidates for both the short training courses and the diploma programme. This trend indicates a sustained demand for geothermal training.

2.6. Prospects for longer-term development effects (Impact)

While impacts at the macro level are more difficult to assess, various results at the individual and organisational level were reported in interviews with alumni of the diploma. These benefits include one alumnus reporting having changed the self-protection equipment used for certain operations within the company he was working for. Another convinced the Instituto de Electricidad de Guatemala (INDE) to buy new equipment for its lab to measure fluid inclusion. Another civil servant from Argentina was granted additional responsibilities and became the chief of the geothermal area in the institutions he works for.

Also, one main reported advantage of the training programmes in El Salvador is that they are held in Spanish, key to reaching trainees in the region that do not speak English.

The training activities funded by GTP in El Salvador drive the development of geothermal energy in LAC. Training activities raise interest among relevant actors on the potential of geothermal energy in the home countries of programme alumni. This becomes the main impact of GTP-funded training activities in El Salvador.

2.7. Horizontal themes/ cross-cutting issues

The training organisers aim to achieve gender balance in both the diploma and short courses. The gender ratio calculated across all training participants in El Salvador from 2018 to 2023 is 41%. **An analysis of the participants by training type reveals steady improvement of the gender ratio in the diploma programme.** In 2018, the gender ratio was 33%, and in the last two editions, it was 52% (in 2019) and 44% (in 2022). **However, while there has been quite a high variability in the number of women attending training in El Salvador¹⁹⁸, the gender ratio of short training participants showed a declining trend in most recent years.** The gender ratio 48% in 2017, then decreased to 41%

¹⁹⁸ Haraldsson, G.I, Georgsson, L. S. and Ómarsdóttir, M. (2021), United Nations University Geothermal Training Programme in Iceland: Training Activities Abroad. *Proceedings World Geothermal Congress 2020+1*. Reykjavik, Iceland, April - October 2021

in 2018 and 42% in 2022¹⁹⁹. By 2024, the percentage of female participants in the short course fell to 38%. Despite this decline, **the gender ratios achieved by the training programme in El Salvador are relatively good considering that men are generally vastly overrepresented as geothermal experts.**

One advantage of **the diploma course** is that it is **very accessible for Salvadoran women**. One female alumnus stated how going to Iceland for the 6-month training was impossible due to family obligations largely assigned to women, such as childcare. Gender balance is far from being achieved when calculated among lecturers, again due to the historical overrepresentation of men in the wider geothermal field.

It is worth mentioning that the participation of trainees in Women in Geothermal (WING) is actively encouraged among trainees in El Salvador. WING is an organisation dedicated to promoting the education, professional development, and advancement of women in the geothermal community.

Environmental aspects are adequately covered in the training offerings in El Salvador. Environmental and social management of geothermal projects is one of the eleven modules of the diploma. Environmental aspects and risks of geothermal development were also included in the 2017, 2022, and 2024 editions of the short courses.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Despite the substantial geothermal potential in LAC, only a small fraction has been harnessed for power generation. **The short courses and diploma courses in El Salvador have played a crucial role in filling the skills gap, which is needed to access geothermal resources.** The training activities in El Salvador have strongly contributed to creating a relatively large mass of experts in LAC.

The GRÓ objective of strengthening capacities in LMICs is fulfilled through the high participation rates of individuals from these countries in the training programmes. However, the reclassification of El Salvador to an UMIC poses a challenge to aligning future GRÓ-funded activities with the objective of focusing on LMICs. Given that a significant proportion of participants have been Salvadoran, the ongoing alignment of these programmes with GRÓ objectives will require careful consideration and potential adjustments in participant selection.

Since 2018, GTP has organised multiple short courses and diploma programmes reaching a total of 122 participants in short courses and 86 participants in diploma courses. **The geothermal training in El Salvador to which GTP has contributed has thus addressed a critical need for skilled professionals in geothermal energy.** Geothermal energy is a resource with substantial untapped potential in the region. The comprehensive diploma curriculum consists of eleven modules detailing all main aspects of geothermal project design and management. This curriculum has been particularly well-received by participants as their feedback indicates that the programme's broad approach has facilitated a deeper understanding of the scope of the geothermal development process. **While this comprehensive combination of topics in the diploma curriculum has proven beneficial for those with limited experience in the sector, such general coverage approach does not allow for the specialisation needed to drive sector development.** If offering many different specialisation fields (as done for the 6-month training in Iceland) is not an option due to cost and logistical considerations, a possible alternative could be to offer **two broad specialisation areas**: one for the earth sciences (including geothermal geology, geochemistry, and geophysics) and another for plant development and drilling.

Efficiency in programme implementation has been ensured through strong partnerships with local institutions like LaGeo and the UES. **The cost-effectiveness of the diploma programme, especially when compared to similar programmes offered in Iceland, highlights the value for money achieved through these local partnerships.**

Sustainability of the training programmes appears promising, particularly with LaGeo's increased sense of ownership and potential to fund future editions of the diploma course independently. The

¹⁹⁹ For these calculations short training participants who also attended the diploma were included in the short training only.

programmes have also gained regional recognition causing more countries to nominate candidates to both training lines and signalling a continued demand for geothermal training.

Interviews and FGDs revealed that the training programmes have had a positive impact on both individual and organisational levels. Alumni have reported career advancements and improvements in operational practices within their respective organisations.

Finally, the training programmes have made notable efforts to address gender balance and cross-cutting issues. **While achieving gender parity among participants has had mixed results, the overall progress is commendable given the traditionally male-dominated nature of the geothermal sector.** The emphasis on environmental and social management within the curriculum further strengthens the relevance and comprehensiveness of the training offered to cross-cutting issues.

4. Lessons learned and prospects for the expansion or replication of the intervention in future endeavours of the GRÓ

The approach used by GTP in El Salvador, which involves repeated sequences of training with the same partner organisation in the same country, has been effective in building a skilled workforce capable of advancing geothermal energy development in the LAC region. This method has proven to be a feasible option if GRÓ intends to expand the training programmes with other partners to enhance their impact. **Continued support and adaptation to changing circumstances will be crucial for maintaining and enhancing the impact of these valuable programmes.**

The GTP's experience in El Salvador suggests that extended collaboration with partner organisations to deliver repeated trainings are a feasible modality to expand trainings in partner countries. The success of the GRÓ GTP (previously UNU GTP) in El Salvador requires the active engagement of a well-established state-owned geothermal company. This company has a long history of geothermal development and a strategic vision and incentive to contribute to the growth of the geothermal sector in the region. Companies like LaGeo are well-equipped to provide specialised professional expertise with the necessary skills for acquiring geothermal development. **To replicate the training in other countries, it will be crucial to identify partner organisations that have strong expertise in geothermal development, a strong commitment to the advancement of the geothermal community, and a long-term vision to promote the utilisation of geothermal resources.**

APPENDIX I

Table 61: Total number of participants by nationality for short training and the diploma in El Salvador

	Short courses			Diploma			
	2018	2022	Total	2018	2019	2022	Total
High income							
Chile	1		1		1		1
St Kitts & Nevis	1	1	2				0
Total	2	1	3	0	1	0	1
UMI							
Argentina	2	2	4	1	1	1	3
Colombia	6	5	11	1	2	2	5
Costa Rica	3	1	4				0
Dominica	1	1	2				0
Dominican Rep.		1	1			1	1
Ecuador	1	2	3		2		2
Guatemala	1	1	2				0
Jamaica	1		1				0
Mexico	6	3	9	3	1	2	6
Montserrat	1	1	2				0
Peru	1	1	2		1		1
St Lucia	1	1	2				0
St Vincent & the Grenadine	1	1	2				0
Total	25	20	45	5	7	6	18
LMI							
Bolivia	3	2	5	1		1	2
EL Salvador	33	14	47	18	19	17	54
Honduras	2	3	5	1		1	2
Nicaragua	11	5	16	5	2	2	9
Total	49	24	73	25	21	21	67
International organisations)							
		1	1				0
Total	76	46	122	30	29	27	86

Annex 12.4: GRÓ LRT Case Study Report

Background and methodology

Existing GRÓ LRT interventions with/in Uganda

Envisaged interventions

Findings

Conclusions

Lessons learned and recommendations

Annexes: list of interviews and Photos taken during data collection

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

As per the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the External Evaluation of the GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability, and Societal Change commissioned by the Ministry of International Affairs (MFA) of Iceland in 2023, an **evaluative case study** was carried out regarding the **intended collaboration between the GRÓ Land Restoration Training (LRT) programme and universities in partner countries** to establish in-country study programmes in restoration ecology. The main objective of the case study is to generate lessons for the future which can guide such initiatives in line with the GRÓ LRT programme specifically and possibly by extension all GRÓ programmes.

The present case study considers the **envisaged collaboration between GRÓ and Makerere University in Uganda**. In 2022, the LRT partners from Makerere University expressed their interest towards GRÓ in developing a **postgraduate course in land restoration** and requested corresponding support from GRÓ. This request, together with similar requests from other partner universities elsewhere, made GRÓ consider a revised growth model of integrating capacity building within existing partner universities.

Since this initiative is still in an **early conceptual stage**, no corresponding written documentation existed at the time of the evaluation. Therefore, this case study is mainly based on insights interviews conducted with relevant stakeholders between March and May 2024, including GRÓ LRT staff, professors and lecturers from Makerere University, LRT alumni, and others. A list of relevant interviews conducted is provided in Annex 0.

According to the ToR, the evaluation shall be conducted **in accordance with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) Quality Standards** for Development Evaluation by evaluating the intervention according to the corresponding six evaluation criteria. As the intervention under consideration, however, has not yet happened and is only in conceptual stage, the present case study cannot evaluate its past performance against the OECD DAC criteria²⁰⁰. Instead, the case study i) evaluates the concept as described by the partners involved and analyses how this is **expected to perform against those criteria** and ii) where applicable, provides recommendations on how to **maximize the alignment of the intended intervention with those criteria**.

EXISTING GRÓ LRT INTERVENTIONS WITH/IN UGANDA

Existing GRÓ LRT interventions with Uganda include the 6-month postgraduate-level LRT programme (referred to as '6-month LRT programme' throughout this report) in Iceland, MSc and PhD scholarships in Iceland, in-country short courses, the support for attendance of conferences by LRT alumni, and support for alumni networking activities in Uganda.

- **6-month LRT programme:** Between 2007 and 2023, a total of 35 fellows from Uganda were trained in the programme with an average of two Ugandan participants per annual cohort. Fellows are usually

²⁰⁰ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

environmental or natural resource officers employed by one of the 135 local governments and selected with the assistance of the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA).

- **MSc / PhD scholarships in Iceland:** To date, one Ugandan alumnus received a scholarship in 2017 to do his MSc in Iceland.
- **In-country short courses:** The following three short courses on sustainable land management, land restoration and linkages to climate change were delivered in Uganda, with a total of 75 participants:
 - ◆ 2017: 9-day course in Kasese, 25 participants
 - ◆ 2018: 8-day course in Masindi, 25 participants
 - ◆ 2019: 8-day course in Soroti, 25 participants

Each course was tailored towards the land restoration issues specific to the respective region and required extensive preparation with partners from Makerere University. The participants of these courses are from the same pool of candidates as the LRT postgraduate training participants of environmental and natural resource officers of the local governments.

The annual delivery of in-country short courses was disrupted in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic and has not resumed since. Beside the extensive preparatory efforts required, the MFA and GRÓ cite the main reason for this to be budgetary constraints and a relatively high cost-benefit ratio of the short courses.

- **Alumni networking support:** Two alumni meetings were organised in Uganda for alumni from all four postgraduate programmes with support from GRÓ management, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Icelandic Embassy in Uganda.
 - ◆ March 2023: The first meeting took place at the Embassy of Iceland. About 30 of the 109 Ugandan alumni at the time from all four training programmes were present.
 - ◆ February 2024: The second meeting was funded by GRÓ, hosted by UNESCO, and supported by the Icelandic Embassy in Uganda. Between 60-70 alumni (of a total of 117 Ugandan alumni as of end of 2023) from all four training programmes were present.

With support from the GRÓ Centre, the alumni are in the process of registering a formal entity under the indicative name "**GRÓ Centre Alumni Uganda Ltd.**", with the purpose not only of networking and knowledge exchange, but also to be able to offer expertise and technical services with the possible participation in consultancies or donor-funded projects.

In line with the delivery of the above activities, a **strong relationship between GRÓ LRT and Makerere University** has developed over time, especially with key staff from the Department of Forestry, Biodiversity and Tourism (DFBT) of the **School of Forestry, Environmental and Geographical Sciences (SFECS)**, which is part of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. The DFBT at Makerere University is an important partner to GRÓ LRT in the following ways:

- Several academic staff from the DFBT served as guest lecturers at the LRT postgraduate training programme
- Short courses in Uganda were designed, organized, and delivered with support from the DFBT
- DFBT maintains academic ties with LRT alumni
- The staff of DFBT who have attended the LRT postgraduate training programme are creating a multiplier effect of the knowledge and skills acquired through training Makerere University and other students.

ENVISAGED INTERVENTION

The envisaged new intervention to be developed and examined in this case study is an **MSc degree programme in Land Restoration offered by the DFBT of Makerere University in Uganda** over two years / four semesters. In 2022, the idea about the development of an in-country postgraduate programme in land restoration was raised by partners from Makerere University, with the request for corresponding support from GRÓ LRT. The rationale for such a course derived from

- the **high demand by participants of short courses** on land restoration delivered by GRÓ LRT for further in-depth training in this field;
- the **demand by Ugandan BSc graduates** from courses in Forestry, Environment, and others for a specialized postgraduate degree in land restoration;

- the recognition that the average intake of **two Ugandan fellows per year** in the LRT postgraduate training programme is **not sufficient** to meet this demand; and
- the recognition by lecturers and LRT alumni alike that **no tailored postgraduate course on land restoration** exists in Uganda.

Land restoration ecology is a **new field in the Ugandan academic landscape**, with no specialised postgraduate course for it in the country. Candidates interested in land restoration typically enrol in the existing MSc in Environment and Natural Resources at Makerere University. Although this programme covers some aspects of land restoration ecology through its scientific and theoretical content, it falls short in several key areas. Notably, it lacks essential components such as governance and planning and does not emphasize practical, field-oriented training as strongly as the LRT postgraduate training programme.

The new course is, therefore, envisaged to cater for those students who seek to i) be **trained specifically in land restoration with a strong practical focus**; ii) be trained within Uganda in a course **tailored to the Ugandan/regional land restoration context**; and iii) be able to conduct their **MSc studies in parallel to their work obligations**. The course is further intended to be open for graduates in the social sciences (BA degree holders) who are interested in land restoration.

According to the Makerere University staff leading this initiative, the envisaged course would be **strongly inspired by the curriculum of the 6-month LRT programme** by including a blend of theoretical and practical teaching methods, field visits, and an applied research project. The program is designed to be completed over two years, featuring 2-3 semesters of coursework followed by 1-2 semesters dedicated to a research project. This structure accommodates employed students to allow them to work while studying. The targeted annual intake is between 10 and 30 students. The tuition fee for the entire two-year course is anticipated to be approximately USD 3,000 per student. Including expenses for field trips and field research, the total cost per student is estimated to be up to USD 5,000.

The course would be **open to foreign students**. According to estimates by DFBT lecturers, currently about 5-10% of postgraduate students at the DFBT are foreign students, most of them from neighbouring countries such as Kenya, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The following possible activities were cited as areas of **collaboration with and support from GRÓ LRT**:

- **Initial technical support to course development**
 - ◆ Curriculum and content development
 - ◆ Proposal development
 - ◆ Development of tailored materials
- **Funding support for scholarships** (see section 0 for more detail)
- **Guest lecturers** (Icelandic GRÓ LRT lecturers + from international GRÓ LRT network)
- **Regular review** of curriculum and materials in line with formal review cycle

It is important to note that the DFBT of Makerere University is currently undergoing a restructuring process that will split it into two departments: one "Department of Forestry and Nature Conservation" and one "Department of Tourism and Parks Management" (final names to be confirmed). The envisaged MSc in Land Restoration is an important element of the restructuring process and is intended to be offered by the new Department of Forestry and Nature Conservation. If the corresponding proposal including course curriculum is submitted for Makerere University's approval process by the end of 2024, the **first intake of students would realistically be possible in August 2026**.

Importantly, the DFBT is determined to go ahead with this process irrespective of GRÓ LRT support. However, collaboration with GRÓ LRT in this process could make a valuable contribution to i) increase the chance of the course being approved by Makerere University²⁰¹; ii) ensure a high quality of the

²⁰¹ Approval is already very likely according to all DFBT staff interviewed.

course; and ii) significantly increase the chance of success of the course in terms of uptake and sustainability.

According to Makerere University staff, neither alternative course models, such as part of an Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters through Erasmus+²⁰², nor donors/support organizations other than GRÓ LRT have been investigated so far in the context of the envisaged course.

FINDINGS

Programme goals, strategy and approach (Relevance)

Land restoration is of high relevance at both the **national and local level in the partner country of Uganda**. Virtually every district faces land degradation challenges in the form of deforestation, wetland degradation, soil erosion, or soil exhaustion. Land degradation is primarily driven by the high population growth and sprawl (on average about 3% per annum over the last 50 years²⁰³), a dependency on wood-based fuels, and extractive industries.

The intended intervention aims to build and strengthen regional, national, and local expertise on land restoration and **is therefore highly relevant to addressing the above challenges in Uganda** and its surrounding region. The intended intervention is of direct relevance with regards to Uganda's capacity to fulfil its role in line with the following international agreements and corresponding commitments:

- **SDGs:** Directly SDG 15 and virtually all its targets, but indirectly also various other SDGs
- **UNCCD:** Uganda ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in 1997. Uganda's national voluntary land degradation neutrality targets include land degradation neutrality in 2030 compared to the 2015 baseline.
- **CDB:** Uganda ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1993. At the 15th COP in 2022, all parties adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in which land restoration is of crucial importance.
- **UNFCCC:** Uganda ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2016. In Uganda's updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) from 2022, the sectors of agriculture, water, and ecosystems are rated as the ones with the highest vulnerability and are subsequently priority sectors for climate change adaptation measures. The forestry and agriculture sectors dominate Uganda's intended mitigation contribution.

With regards to **GRÓ's strategic priorities 2022-2027** (GRÓ, a), the intended intervention would be directly aligned with the following items:

- "Priority shall be given to least developed and lower-middle income countries". Having been classified as a least developed country (LDC) for many years, Uganda has met the criteria for graduation from LDC status for the first time in 2024. Despite this progress, Uganda is still classified as a lower-middle-income country in terms of income per capita. According to the OECD DAC list of overseas development assistance recipients, Uganda remains listed as a "LDC." Consequently, Uganda is among the countries prioritized by GRÓ.
- Output 1 - Increased capability of individuals and expertise of GRÓ partner organisations to design and implement programme activities in their respective professional fields: The aim to "grant 20 new postgraduate scholarships to GRÓ fellows per year in Icelandic or partner universities" could be directly addressed through the intended intervention if GRÓ provides scholarship support.
- Output 2 - **Production and dissemination of new knowledge by GRÓ training participants, fellows, and scholarship recipients:** The aim to "engage former fellows in short courses and training in partner countries" could be directly addressed through the intended intervention as LRT

²⁰² https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/opportunities-for-organisations/cooperation-among-organisations-and-institutions/erasmus-mundus-joint-masters?facets_field_eac_tags=186

²⁰³ Uganda's population has grown from roughly 10 million in 1970 to 46 million in 2021.

postgraduate training programme alumni are now active lecturers at Makerere University and could be involved in teaching the proposed MSc course.

- As an external outcome, the strategic priorities explicitly state that “**GRÓ will continue to explore ways to strengthen cooperation with other partners** such as [...] universities and research institutions in partner countries.”

Summarizing, the intended intervention is found to be of **high relevance** both in terms of responding to needs of the partner country as well as fitting in with GRÓ’s strategic priorities. It is **directly related to GRÓ’s overall objective** to strengthen individual and institutional capacities in low and middle income countries to deliver development results in line with the SDGs.

Promotion of synergies between the programme and other local development efforts (Coherence)

The coherence of the intended intervention **with other GRÓ activities** is as follows:

- **Coherent with 6-month LRT programme:** The envisaged course shares its objective with the 6-month LRT programme by aiming to provide high-quality postgraduate training in land restoration. However, it would lack the element of exposure to and exchange with Iceland’s society and environment making it incomparable to the unique experience offered by the 6-month LRT programme. While there may be an overlap of those who wish to participate in both, the 6-month LRT programme and the envisaged course, the activities are designed to **complement each other**. Specifically, the annual intake of the 6-month LRT programme cannot meet the full demand, and not everyone interested can afford to leave the country for six months. The intended intervention could thus be an alternative offer to the 6-month LRT programme and accommodate a higher number of interested candidates. Furthermore, both activities are **not mutually exclusive**. In fact, alumni of the 6-month LRT programme could still benefit from the intended intervention (and possibly receive credits for certain modules already taught in Iceland).
- **Coherent with LRT MSc and PhD scholarships:** MSc scholarships could be given by GRÓ LRT (among other donors) for this new degree programme. This could be in addition to MSc scholarships in Iceland or serve as a less costly alternative to partially replace those. Scholarships for PhD in Iceland could be granted to students of the envisaged course upon their completion of the MSc.
- The GRÓ ToC (GRÓ, b) states that “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**”. It is evident that increased output of postgraduate land restoration experts through the intended intervention would increase the supply of capable professionals in the nation.
- **Coherent with in-country short courses:** Both lecturers and alumni interviewed reiterated that the **intended intervention shall not replace the in-country short courses**. Short courses are tailored to the needs of target groups and are of high value to build capacities in land restoration at the local level. The short courses may also serve as a basis for current local government staff to further engage in land restoration and possibly enrol in the intended MSc course.

With regards to other Icelandic bilateral aid in Uganda, the intended intervention is **coherent with Iceland’s development cooperation strategy** (MFA, 2023). Icelandic bilateral aid in Uganda currently amounts to roughly USD 8 million per year and focuses on support to a small number of selected districts at a time, with a particular focus on districts with fishing communities. Strategic priority areas include capacity building of local governments and the sustainable use of natural resources. There is potential for synergies in that local government officials are among the potential target group for the intended intervention and Iceland’s bilateral development efforts in the districts **may benefit from enhanced capacity of local counterparts**²⁰⁴. In turn, interested and qualified local government employees in target districts could be supported by Iceland’s bilateral development cooperation in form of scholarships.

²⁰⁴ This is already happening in that LRT alumni work as local government officials in one of the two current target districts of Iceland’s bilateral development cooperation.

No information could be found about similar initiatives in training in land restoration by other donors in Uganda. However, there are donor-funded initiatives promoting land restoration²⁰⁵ by training farmers in sustainable and climate-resilient farming practices. These initiatives could benefit from a large base of local land restoration experts to best deliver their services.

Progress towards results (Effectiveness)

The intended result of the envisaged course is an **annual output of 10-15 MSc graduates in land restoration**. Quantitatively, this constitutes at least a **5-fold output of the 6-month LRT programme in Iceland** and may contribute directly to GRÓ's overall objective.

Key conditions for the achievement of this result were identified as the **high quality** and **affordability of the course**. GRÓ LRT could play a crucial role in ensuring that those key conditions are met and draw from its experience from the development of the new MSc programme in Restoration Ecology offered by the Agricultural University of Iceland since 2023.

Before launch, the envisaged course will have to undergo Makerere University's formal approval and quality assurance process and receive corresponding national accreditation by *the National Council for Higher Education of Uganda*. This process and the overall **course quality** could be supported significantly through technical support by GRÓ LRT in terms of **joint curriculum development** and **quality control of the course materials**. GRÓ LRT can also support in the **training of Ugandan lecturers** and the provision of **Icelandic (and other foreign) guest lecturers**.

Affordability of the degree could be supported through the provision of **scholarships** to students from Uganda and other partner countries from GRÓ LRT and other donors and support organizations. Partial scholarships may be sufficient in most cases; according to Ugandan stakeholders of the envisaged course, a significant target group are students who pursue the course beside work and thus have a regular income to cover their cost of living.

A significant risk towards effectiveness is that **initial enrolment** in the envisaged degree course would be slow. A cautionary example is a 6-month certificate course in land restoration introduced by Kyambogo University in Uganda in 2022. According to LRT alumni associated with Kyambogo University, this programme has not succeeded due to lack of enrolment, possibly due to a lack of advertising for the course.

Summarizing, to enhance the chances of success and ensure both quality of the intervention and quantity in terms of uptake and output, there is a **clear need for**

- *Technical support from GRÓ LRT in terms of curriculum development, course materials, etc.;*
- *Student scholarships (from GRÓ LRT and possibly others); and*
- *Broad advertisement of the course to potential candidates, across national and international platforms.*

Programme implementation and adaptive management (Efficiency)

The envisaged course would be offered by the **School of Forestry, Environmental and Geographical Sciences of Makerere University**. Individual course modules would largely be delivered by Makerere's **current academic staff** who have a strong partnership with GRÓ LRT by training in LRT programmes, serving as guest lecturers, and developing and implementing in-county short courses. The course curriculum would be reviewed and adjusted in regular intervals **according to the course accreditation cycles**. **Technical support from GRÓ LRT could be a crucial element** to contribute to the quality of the course through curriculum development and review.

According to Makerere University academic staff, the estimated cost for the full course per student amounts to **USD 5,000**. This includes all registration and tuition fees as well as costs of field trips and a research project. This amount was assumed as the cost per trainee in the context of potential

²⁰⁵ E.g. the Restore Africa Programme, which works through local NGOs such as Ecotrust.

scholarships provided by GRÓ LRT in order to assess the expected cost-benefit ratio of the intended course in comparison to other GRÓ LRT activities.

The comparison between different GRÓ LRT activities is provided in Table 62 below. The estimated cost per trainee for all other GRÓ LRT activities are derived from the average figures from the GRÓ financial reports 2018-2022 (GRÓ LRT, 2018-2022). Note that, for the total cost including operational expenses, the annual administrative costs and staff salaries were added to the direct cost of each activity as per assumed proportions²⁰⁶.

Table 62: Estimated cost per trainee for the different GRÓ LRT activities, based on GRÓ financial reports 2018-2022.

ACTIVITY	EST. DIRECT COST PER TRAINEE (USD) TOTAL (PER DAY)	EST. TOTAL COST INCL. OPERATIONAL EXPENSES PER TRAINEE (USD) TOTAL (PER DAY)	OUTCOMES (UGANDA ONLY)
6-month LRT programme in Iceland	26,791 (149)	43,846 (244)	Number of trainees: 2/year; Formal outcome: 30 ECTS credits
LRT MSc/PhD scholarship in Iceland ²⁰⁷	17,312 (47)	45,773 (125)	Number of trainees: < 1/year; Formal outcome: MSc/PhD
LRT in-country short course	1,346 (198)	2,471 (275)	Number of trainees: 25/year; Formal outcome: Certificate
Envisaged MSc Land Restoration at Makerere University ²⁰⁸	5,000 (7)	7,643 (10)	Number of trainees: 10-20 / year Formal outcome: MSc

Based on the financial figures from 2018 to 2022 and the assumptions applied, the envisaged intervention would be **highly efficient in terms of monetary cost** compared to the other GRÓ LRT activities.

Prospects for the maintenance/ continuation of the programme benefits (Sustainability)

The primary requirement for sustainability—the **complete acceptance of the proposed intervention by the beneficiary or partner institution**—seems to be strongly fulfilled. This is because the intervention was suggested and is being led by the SFEGS staff at Makerere University. Furthermore, SFEGS staff have stated that the intervention will be carried out even without support from GRÓ LRT.

For the envisaged course to be sustainable, there needs to be **sustained demand**. The main target groups within Uganda are environmental and natural resource officers of the local governments seeking postgraduate training and Ugandan bachelor graduates in relevant fields. These fields offer a wide selection of potential candidates to fulfil demand in the programme. In total, there are an estimated 400 environmental and natural resource officers of local governments²⁰⁹. Assuming that one quarter of those

²⁰⁶ 60% LRT postgraduate training programme; 15% in-country short courses; 15% MSc/PhD scholarships; 5% Makerere University MSc scholarships; 5% for other activities.

²⁰⁷ Figures refer to annual cost.

²⁰⁸ Note that this figure excludes other possible support activities by GRO LRT to the envisaged intervention, e.g. in line with course development and review.

²⁰⁹ There are 135 districts/local governments in Uganda, with an estimated average of three officers per district with mandates directly related to land restoration (natural resource officer, environmental officer, forest officer).

would be interested in the course, this would correspond to a supply of 10 candidates per year over 10 years. In terms of interest, this appears to be a reasonable assumption based on feedback from LRT short course participants. In addition, assuming that 50 candidates earn a bachelor's degree in a relevant discipline per year and one quarter of those would be interested in the course, this would correspond to another 12 candidates, bringing the assumed total to 22 and suggesting that there is **sufficient demand for a viable period**. This figure can be considered conservative, as it omits possible demand from national ministry level and from neighbouring countries. However, it can be assumed that only a minority of interested candidates would be able to actually afford the cost of studying in Kampala for two years. Makerere University SFECS staff consider 10 students per year as the minimum viable intake.

Yet, as indicated in section 0, a **key factor** towards the successful establishment and sustainability is **quality and affordability of the course** for the target groups. Therefore, the following two elements are considered as key contributions by GRÓ LRT in order to maximize prospects of sustainability:

- **Long-term commitment by GRÓ LRT to provide technical support** in terms of curriculum development, course materials, etc.;
- **Funding scholarship support** from GRÓ LRT and others. For example, GRÓ LRT could commit to a certain minimum number of annual scholarships²¹⁰ to establish and consolidate the course for a certain period (e.g. first course accreditation period). Other potential donors/sponsors²¹¹ could increase the number of funding origins.

Based on the necessities for sustainability, a cooperation model in which GRÓ LRT commits to provide both technical and scholarship **support over a fixed period**, preferably synchronized with the **course accreditation cycle**, would ensure sustainability in the future. Depending on experiences during the support period, the intended intervention could even serve as a scaling-down/exit strategy for sending Ugandan fellows to the 6-month LRT programme in Iceland so LRT could concentrate its focus on different countries with that intervention.

Prospects for longer-term development effects (Impact)

For the implementation of Uganda's development agenda and the commitments and goals in line with the international agreements listed in section 0, the local and international **demand for expertise in the field of land restoration will be increasing**. According to key informants consulted, there is a **job market for experts in land restoration** in Uganda with donor-funded research and development projects in relevant fields and the enforcement of national laws and regulations with regards to land restoration and rehabilitation in industrial activities. **Possible employers include local governments, central government ministries, NGOs, and academia**. Possible **career opportunities in the private sector are less clear** but may include the consulting sector and emerging sectors such as market-based carbon and biodiversity credits. If delivered effectively, the intended intervention is expected to result in an increased high-quality workforce in land restoration, both improving the careers of individuals and contributing to a healthier natural environment in Uganda.

At the institutional level, the creation of the course would be a major impact of GRÓ LRT. Based on the Ugandan key informants consulted, the interest and capacity for the development of such a course in the field of land restoration in Uganda can be directly attributed to the work of GRÓ LRT since 2007. Alumni of the 6-month LRT programme are among the academic staff at Makerere University SFECS and would be involved in the development and delivery of the course.

²¹⁰ Makerere University SFECS staff consider 10 students per year as the minimum viable intake.

²¹¹ Possible other donors mentioned are

UN agencies such as UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, etc.;

IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development); and

African Union, e.g. through GMES (*Global Monitoring for Environment and Security and Africa*)

Impacts at the macro level are difficult to predict and attribute, but enhanced land restoration expertise in the country through the envisaged course can be expected to increase the likelihood of **positions with relevant decision-making and policy-making power being filled by individuals well-trained in land restoration.**

Horizontal themes/ cross-cutting issues

Policies are in place at Makerere University regarding the cross-cutting issues of **human rights and gender equality**. According to Makerere University staff consulted, there is roughly gender parity among the students at the relevant department.

Yet, these issues need to be considered further during course development. As these issues are **highly relevant for both the planning and implementation of land restoration activities**, lectures on these issues should be included in the curriculum. The 6-month LRT programme curriculum can serve as a blueprint here and be further adjusted to the local context. Lectures on human rights and gender equality as included in the 6-month LRT programme curriculum were consistently regarded as highly interesting and valuable by both Makerere University staff and GRÓ LRT alumni.

Given the existing partnership between GRÓ GEST and Makerere University, there **is potential for synergies by involving Makerere University academic staff and/or Ugandan GRÓ GEST alumni** in the development and/or delivery of lectures related to gender equality.

The other cross-cutting issue of **environmental sustainability** is the overall aim of land restoration and sustainable land management and thus **intrinsic to the intended intervention**. No significant environmental risks could be identified in line with the intended intervention.

CONCLUSIONS

The MSc course in land restoration envisaged by Makerere University SFECS as described by the key informants appears to be **well aligned with the evaluation criteria**. This case study found it to be

- Relevant in terms of both the country context and needs and GRÓ LRT's objectives.
- Coherent with other GRÓ LRT activities in Uganda as well as Icelandic bilateral aid and activities by other donors. The envisaged course is complementary to other GRÓ LRT activities and offers potential synergies within GRÓ LRT and with other GRÓ programmes (primarily GEST).
- Effective as long as the key conditions of course quality and affordability are met. GRÓ LRT can play a crucial role in meeting those conditions.
- Highly efficient in terms of monetary cost compared to other GRÓ LRT activities. Course quality would be key for ensuring this efficiency is harnessed, in which GRÓ LRT can play a crucial role.
- Sustainable, if assumptions regarding demand are correct and if the key conditions of course quality and affordability are met. GRÓ LRT can support this through advertisement and scholarship funding.
- Impactful, very likely in the short- to mid-term at the individual and the institutional level – over a longer timeframe at the macro/policy-making level.
- Addressing cross-cutting issues of human rights and gender equality, if these issues are thoroughly integrated into the curriculum. GRÓ LRT experience and possible collaboration with GRÓ GEST offer promising opportunities in this regard.

The envisaged course is directly inspired by the GRÓ 6-month LRT programme, and its creation can itself be considered a **direct outcome of the GRÓ LRT partnership with Uganda**.

The present case study finds it **highly beneficial for GRÓ LRT to pilot the delivery of land restoration training through partnerships and collaboration with in-country academic institutions**. The following recommendations aim to maximize the success of the corresponding intervention.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Makerere University SFEGS is determined to develop the envisaged course irrespective of support from GRÓ LRT. However, **GRÓ LRT support is needed** to significantly increase the chance of success of the course in terms of quality, initiation, and sustainability.
2. GRÓ LRT can **ensure effectiveness and sustainability** of the envisaged intervention through
 - 2.1 **Technical support** in the development and regular review of the course curriculum and course materials. This will be crucial particularly during the course development phase and towards the end of each course accreditation cycle. Yet, possible continued support would be valuable in quality assurance, supervision of selected research projects, and guest lecturing by Icelandic academic staff.
 - 2.2 **Scholarship support** by fully or partially funding an agreed number of students per year for a set period. This will provide stability of enrolment during the course's establishment and consolidated and allow all parties to safely plan ahead.
3. The above implies a need for a **commitment of support by GRÓ LRT over a set period** of time for all parties to have planning security during the initial implementation of the programme. A possible approach would be for GRÓ LRT to commit to support the course development and provide 10 scholarships per year during the first 5-year accreditation cycle. This means that corresponding **budget allocations need to be made in advance at least for the next 5 years** on the part of GRÓ LRT. Currently, budget allocations from GRÓ LRT are made only on a year-to-year basis.
4. In addition to GRÓ LRT funding, it is recommended that possible additional funding sources for scholarships (and/or other course elements such as materials, equipment, guest lectures, etc.) be explored. Furthermore, the model of (partially) integrating the course with offerings by other universities (e.g. through Erasmus Mundus / Erasmus+) should be explored.
5. Attention must be directed in a way that the envisaged intervention does **not come at the expense of other existing GRÓ LRT activities**.
 - 5.1 Ugandan stakeholders interviewed made clear that **the intended intervention should not replace in-country short courses** and/or other existing GRÓ LRT activities. The objectives and target groups of the in-country short courses and the intended intervention are complementary to each other. The short courses have their specific benefits and justification, and Ugandan stakeholders expressed their desire for these to be revived. In the context of limited funding, it is therefore **recommended to investigate whether the delivery of short courses could be integrated in the curriculum of the envisaged course**.
 - 5.2 As the set of GRÓ LRT partner countries is changing over time, **the envisaged intervention may constitute an exit/scaling-down strategy for other GRÓ LRT support activities in Uganda**. If and when the envisaged course has proven to result in a significant increase of land restoration expertise in Uganda, it may allow GRÓ LRT to allocate more resources to new/other partner countries.

ANNEX 13 EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY OF THE GRÓ ALUMNI

Introduction

Survey respondents

Effectiveness in Terms of outputs

Effectiveness in terms of outcomes

Impact

Sustainability

Conclusion

1. INTRODUCTION

This survey report outlines the results of the online survey conducted with former fellows of the postgraduate training programme in Iceland. The online survey targeted all former fellows of the programmes Gender Equality Studies Training (GEST), Land Restoration Training (LRT), Fisheries Training Programme (FTP), and Geothermal Training Programme (GTP) between the years 1979 to 2023. The evaluation team administered this survey as part of the “External Evaluation of GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change” on behalf of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Iceland. The survey evaluated fellows’ perspective on the training programme in terms of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, sustainability and impact.

Content and structure of the survey

The survey was designed in close collaboration with the MFA and the four training programmes to ensure alignment with previous evaluation designs and GRÓ’s results framework. It included the following sections:

Informed consent: fellows were explicitly informed about the survey’s purpose and asked if they would like to participate in the data collection.

Basic information: this section included questions on basic characteristics such as graduation year, technical programme, and gender.

Capacity and expertise in the technical field: this section focused on the programmes’ perceived quality and coherence and assessed transferred skills.

Production and dissemination of knowledge: this section included questions on the type of knowledge outputs produced by the fellows and how these were disseminated.

Community building and networking: this section focused on the fellows’ networking activities and the type of exchange they engage in after programme graduation.

Activities and projects in the technical field: this section included questions on individual career advancement as well as contributions to the technical field and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The mixed methods survey combined quantitative and qualitative question types to gather comprehensive data. Most of the questions were quantitative in the form of **multiple-choice questions** and **5-point Likert scales** to capture fellows’ perspectives in an aggregable way. Some **open-ended questions** were included to obtain in-depth **qualitative insights**, allowing for a richer understanding of the respondents’ experiences and opinions. The answer categories for the quantitative questions were developed jointly by the evaluation team and the four technical programmes. Several fellows then pre-tested these to ensure relevance, clarity, and accuracy; this pretesting phase was crucial in refining the survey instrument to enhance its validity and reliability.

Online survey design

The online survey was composed and administered using **LimeSurvey**, a high-quality, open-source survey tool known for its flexibility and robust features. To ensure the survey was user friendly, accessible, and conducive to achieving a high response rate, several key aspects were considered during the survey design and implementation phases:

- **Anonymity:** The survey was designed to be completely anonymous, ensuring that respondents felt comfortable providing candid feedback. This approach was crucial for maintaining data privacy and encouraging honest responses.
- **Response management:** Fellows' contact information was securely uploaded to LimeSurvey to enable the use of personalized bulk email invitations. Additionally, LimeSurvey's automated features facilitated tracking bounced emails, monitoring response rates, and sending reminders to fellows who had not yet responded.
- **Validation rules:** These rules ensured that respondents' entries complied with the required formats, reducing the likelihood of data entry errors, and improving the reliability of the collected data.
- **Conditional logic:** The survey utilized conditional logic to ensure that questions were relevant to each respondent based on their previous answers. This dynamic approach made the survey more engaging and minimized respondent burden.

Survey targeting and administration

The survey aimed to reach all 1,696 former fellows of the postgraduate programmes conducted in Iceland completed the training between 1979 and 2023. The directors of the FTP, GEST, GTP, and LRT programmes provided the evaluation team with contact information for 1,505 fellows. In some instances, multiple email addresses were provided for individual fellows. Before the official survey launch, the programme directors informed the fellows about the upcoming survey and its purpose, encouraging their participation. The survey was administered online through LimeSurvey and was open for responses for four weeks from May 21st to June 17th. To maximize participation and ensure data quality, several strategies were implemented:

- **Presurvey communication:** Fellows were informed about the survey in advance to foster engagement.
- **Periodic reminders:** Automated reminders were sent to non-respondents throughout the survey period.
- **Bounce tracking system:** The validity of email addresses was monitored, and invalid addresses were identified using a bounce tracking system.
- **Alternate contact:** Fellows who could not be reached through their primary email address received survey invitations to their secondary or tertiary email addresses, if available.

Out of the 1,505 fellows for whom contact information was provided, 123 could not be reached due to invalid contact details. Consequently, the survey was successfully sent to 1,382 fellows with valid contact information, achieving an 81% contact rate for all former fellows¹.

¹ The bounce tracking system indicated delivery failures for 123 fellows. Based on this, it is assumed that in total 1,382 fellows received the survey invite through a valid email address. It might be that the bounce tracking system did not detect all delivery failures such that fewer fellows successfully received the survey link.

Data privacy and security

The evaluation team implemented several measures to ensure full compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The following steps were taken:

- **Survey data policy:** All information about data privacy and security was comprehensively outlined in a survey data policy included in the online survey. This policy ensured that participants were fully informed about how their data would be handled.
- **Informed consent:** Fellows were thoroughly informed about the purpose of the survey, the data being collected, and how it would be used. Explicit consent was obtained from each fellow before they participated in the survey. Only those who provided informed consent were able to proceed with the survey.
- **Anonymity:** The survey was conducted anonymously to minimize the collection of personal data. The online survey tool, LimeSurvey, was configured to ensure that submitted responses could not be traced back to individual fellows, further protecting their anonymity.
- **Data security:** The contact details used to track the response rate were stored securely and separately from the survey responses to prevent any potential identification of participants. All data was encrypted during transmission and stored on secure servers located in Germany to prevent unauthorized access.
- **Right to withdraw:** Fellows had the right to interrupt the survey at any time before submission without any consequences. They could also opt-out from receiving further survey reminders via email.
- **Data access and deletion:** Fellows were informed that due to the anonymity of responses, it would not be possible for them to access or delete their data after submission.

Data processing and analysis

The survey data was downloaded from LimeSurvey in Excel format and subsequently cleaned and analysed using Stata and Excel with a rigorous and systematic approach to data handling. During data cleaning, the data was reviewed to identify and correct any inconsistencies or errors. Moreover, instances of missing data were addressed appropriately to maintain the integrity of the analysis. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics, such as mean and percentages, to identify common trends and patterns among the responses. The qualitative data from open-ended questions underwent a thematic content analysis. This method involved the identification of recurring themes and patterns. The insights from the qualitative analysis were integrated with the quantitative findings **to offer a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the survey results.**

1.2 SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Survey responses and representation

Of the 1,382 fellows with valid contact information, 936 submitted survey responses. Among these, 431 out of 471 fellows who graduated within the evaluation period of 2018-2023 participated in the survey. **The overall response rate for fellows within this evaluation period is 91.9%.** Table 63 presents the number of postgraduate programme fellows, the number of survey respondents, the calculated required sample size², and the response rate per technical programme for the evaluation period of 2018-2023. The survey **sample is well balanced and representative** for the evaluation period. The required sample size to ensure statistically significant results has been achieved for each technical programme. The

² The required sample sizes were calculated based on the total number of fellow (N) per technical programme between 2018-2023 using a confidence level of 95%, statistical power of 80% and a two-sided t-test for comparing means of two groups. The minimum effect that can be significantly measured is a difference of 0.25 in the mean of the 5-point Likert scales assuming a maximum standard deviation of 1.

percentage of survey respondents by programme are aligned with the actual distribution of fellows across the technical programmes, and the response rates are notably high.

Table 63: Postgraduate fellows and survey respondents 2018-2023

TECHNICAL PROGRAMME	FELLOWS 2018-2023		REQUIRED SAMPLE SIZE	SURVEY RESPONDENTS		RESPONSE RATE
	Number	%	Number	Number	%	%
FTP	121	25.5%	56	127	29.5%	105.8% ³
GEST	133	28.3%	63	104	24.1%	78.8%
GTP	120	25.5%	67	120	27.8%	100%
LRT	97	20.6%	63	80	18.6%	82.5%
Total	471	100%	249	431	100%	91.9%

The survey sample seems equally well balanced for all fellows of the postgraduate programme, including those who attended outside of the evaluation period. The share of survey respondents per technical programme aligns with the actual distribution of fellows across the four programmes. Table 64 shows that the overall response rate is at 55.2%, and thus lower than the response rate for fellows within the evaluation period. Specifically, the response rate is below 50% for GTP and FTP fellows, but the fact that these programmes began in 1979 and 1997, respectively, may explain their lower response rates compared to GEST and LRT fellows.

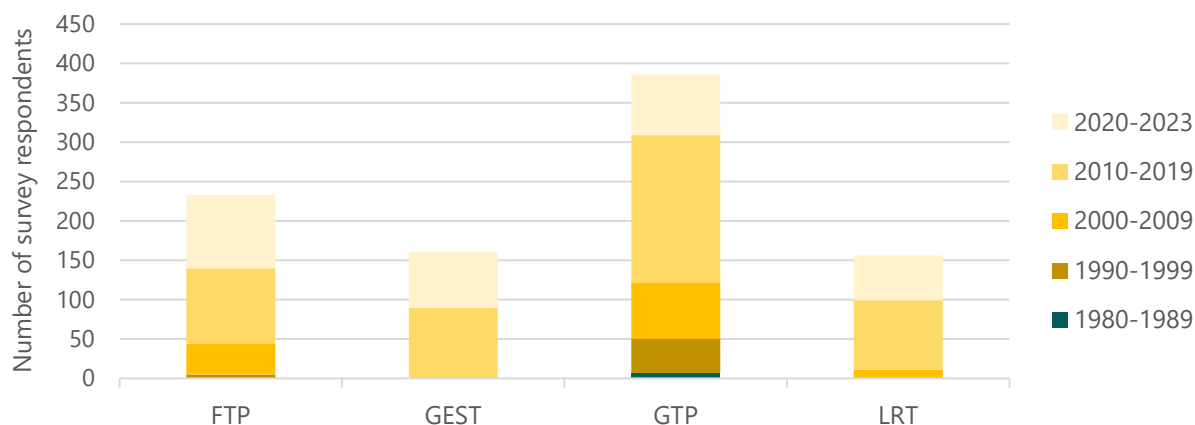
Table 64: Postgraduate fellows and survey respondents 1979-2023

TECHNICAL PROGRAMME	FELLOWS 1979-2023		SURVEY RESPONDENTS		RESPONSE RATE
	Number	%	Number	%	%
FTP	489	28.8%	233	24.9%	47.7%
GEST	218	12.9%	161	17.2%	73.9%
GTP	790	46.6%	386	41.2%	48.8%
LRT	198	11.7%	156	16.7%	78.4%
Total	1,698	100%	936	100%	55.2%

The distribution of survey respondents by graduation period also corresponds to the establishment year of the programmes. Figure 66 indicates that most survey respondents graduated between 2010-2019, after LRT and GEST were established in 2007 and 2009, respectively. It also shows that the survey successfully reached GTP fellows who graduated more than 30 years ago and FTP fellows who graduated more than 20 years ago.

³ A small number of FTP fellows, who graduated in 2024 have accidentally participated in the survey and indicated that they graduated in 2023. Due to the anonymity of the responses, we cannot exclude these fellows. This is why the response rate is larger than 100%.

Figure 66: Survey respondents by graduation period and year



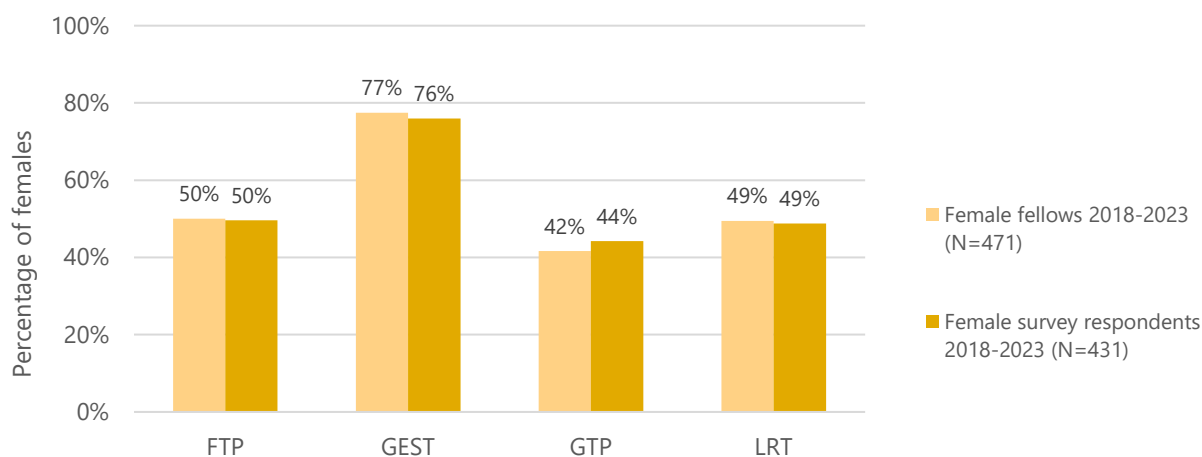
While the survey sample appears balanced in terms of technical programmes and graduation years, and the response rate is notably high for the evaluation reference period and relatively high for fellows who graduated before 2018, it is important to acknowledge the **potential for survey participation bias**. Specifically, fellows with a very positive perception of the programme and/or those actively engaged in networking activities may be more inclined to respond to the survey compared to those with less favourable views. This bias is likely less severe for the 2018-2023 cohorts due to the high response rate, but it may be more pertinent for older cohorts. Furthermore, the survey results reflect only the individual perceptions of the fellows regarding programme quality, their personal achievements, and their contributions to sustainable development, and do not capture the perspectives of partner institutions. Since fellows completed the survey independently, all questions were subject to their individual understanding and interpretation.

Gender

Of the 431 respondents within the evaluation period, 54.3% identify as female, 45.5% as male and 0.3% as non-binary. Figure 67 compares the percentages of females among all fellows in this period to the percentages of female survey respondents. Overall, the **survey sample is well balanced in terms of gender** as the ratio of female participation between programme enrolment and survey responses are balanced. The figure also illustrates that the share of female fellows is highest for GEST (77.4%) and lowest for GTP (41.7%). The 2017 "Evaluation of UNU Programmes in Iceland" indicated that only around 20% of GTP fellows and 40% of LRT fellows up until 2017 were female⁴. These figures indicate an **increase of 20 percentage points in female GTP fellows** and **10 percentage points in female LRT fellows** within the past six years.

⁴ See "Evaluation of UNU Programmes in Iceland", September 2017, NIRAS indevelop, Annex 4, p. 37.

Figure 67: Percentage of all female fellows and percentage of female survey respondents per programme



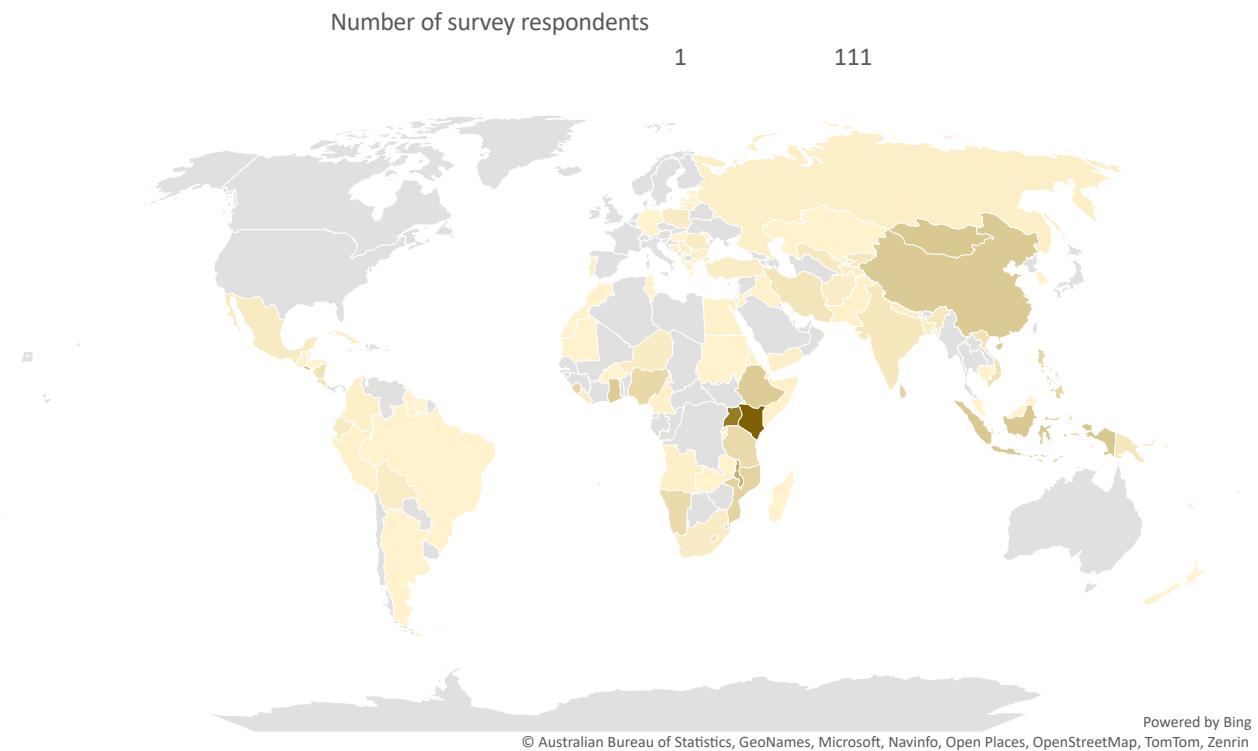
Geographical distribution

Fellows from 107 different countries have responded to the survey. Overall, **most survey participants are from African countries (52.7%)** followed by Asia (26.3%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) (14.8%). This trend is consistent across all four programmes. The share of survey respondents from African countries is specifically high among LRT (67.9%) and GEST (65.6%) fellows while the share of respondents from LAC countries is higher for GTP (24.0%).

Figure 68 illustrates the number of survey respondents by country. **Most survey respondents resided in Kenya (11.9%)** before they participated in the postgraduate training programme in Iceland, **followed by Uganda (9.8%)**, Malawi (5.4%), and El Salvador (4.0%). The geographical distribution of survey participants reflects the actual distribution of fellows' origins. The most prominent countries of residence before training participation by the technical programme are:

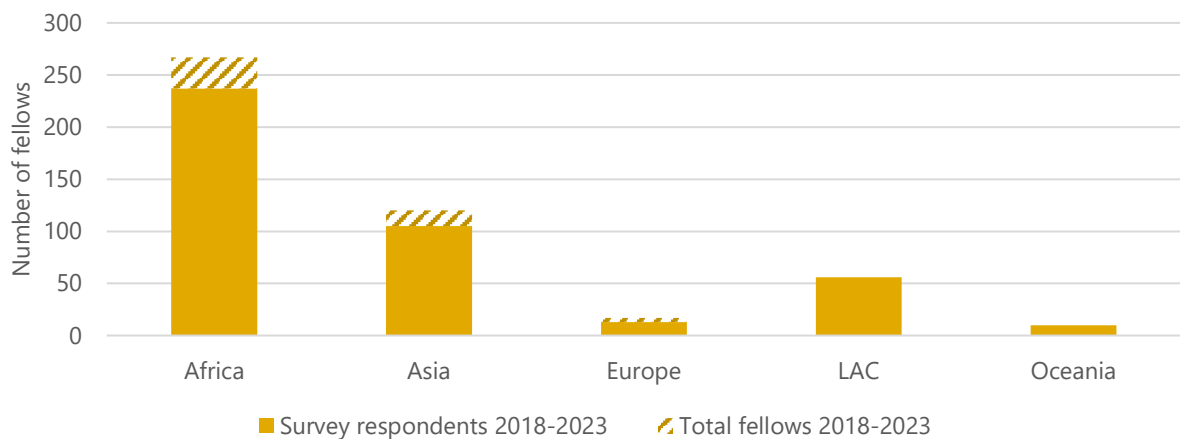
- **FTP:** Sierra Leone (8.7%), Uganda (6.9%), Kenya (5.6%), and Sri Lanka (5.6%)
- **GEST:** Uganda (19.4%), Malawi (14.4%), Mozambique (10.6%), and Palestine (7.5%)
- **GTP:** Kenya (24.3%), El Salvador (9.1%), China (6.8%), and Indonesia (5.7%)
- **LRT:** Uganda (21.2%), Mongolia (17.3%), Ghana (12.8%), and Malawi (10.3%)

Figure 68: Number of survey respondents 1979-2023 by country of residence before participation



On the distribution of survey respondents per region, figure 69 illustrates the number of total fellows per region and the number of survey respondents per region for the evaluation period of 2018-2023. For each geographic region, between 76.5% (Europe) and 100% (LAC and Oceania) of all fellows responded to the survey. This indicates that all geographic areas are adequately represented in the survey sample for this evaluation period.

Figure 69: Total fellows and survey respondents between 2018-2023 by region



1.3 EFFECTIVENESS IN TERMS OF OUTPUTS

Through its different activities, the GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change **aims to produce output level results in three different output areas**: 1. Increased capability of individuals and expertise of GRÓ partner organisations to design and implement programme activities in respective professional fields; 2. Production and dissemination of new knowledge by GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipients; 3. Professional empowerment of GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipients is increased through GRÓ community building and networking. As the postgraduate level training programme conducted in Iceland is one of the key activities contributing to the achievement of the three output level results, it is critical to assess these

Output 1

Increased capability of individuals and expertise of GRÓ partner organisations to design and implement programme activities in respective professional fields

- Usefulness of training components
- Quality and coherence of the programme
- Improvement of (technical) skills

Output 2

Production and dissemination of new knowledge by GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipients

- Produced research and knowledge outputs
- Dissemination channels used
- Participation in regional and international conferences

Output 3

Professional empowerment of GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipients is increased through GRÓ community building and networking

- Engagement in community building and networking
- Type of networking activities
- Networking benefits

based on the fellows' experiences with the postgraduate training programme. Specifically, the survey enables an assessment of the following aspects with concern to each output area:

1.3.1 OUTPUT 1: INCREASED CAPABILITY OF INDIVIDUALS

The GRÓ International Centre aims to increase individual capacities in the technical fields. The survey results indicate that the postgraduate level training programme offered by the **GRÓ International Centre is very effective in increasing the capability of individuals in the technical fields**. Overall, the programme components are perceived very positively by the fellows. Survey participants report large improvements in relevant (technical) skills thanks to the training participation. The output level assumption that "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" is confirmed. The survey results find that:

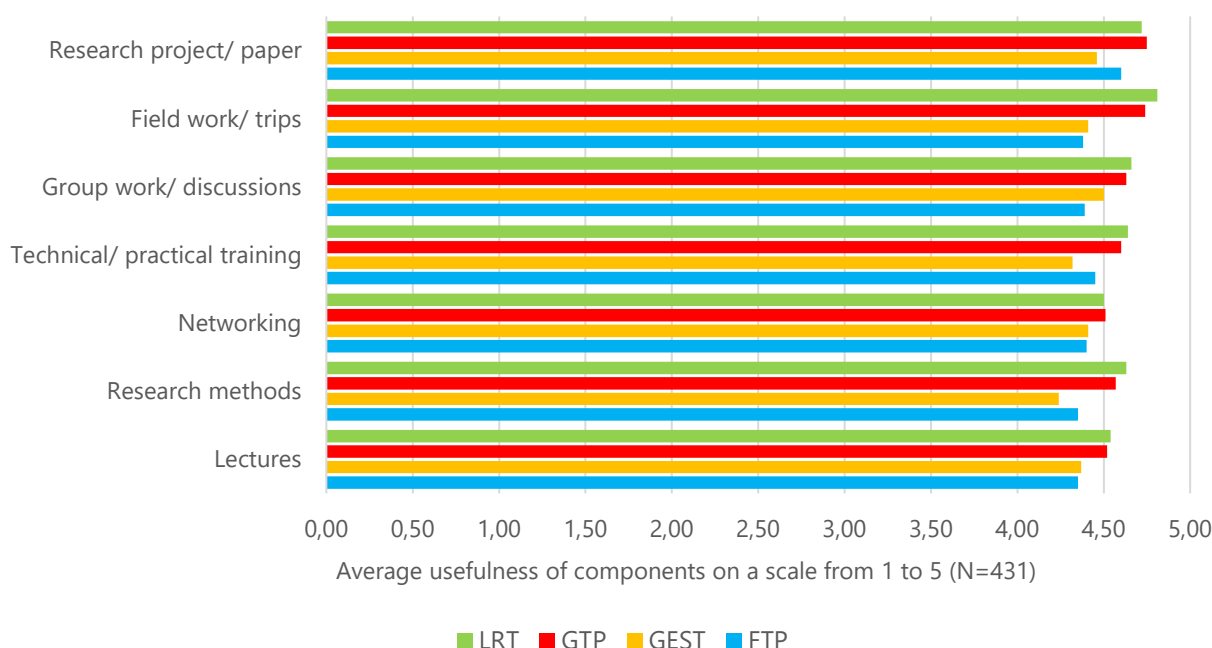
- More than **90% of all 2018-2023 fellows rated the components as very or extremely useful** (4 or 5 on the 5-point Likert scale), while GTP and LRT fellows of 2018-2023 rated the usefulness of the components higher than GEST and FTP fellows.
- The survey participants rated **the quality and coherence very highly** (>4.5 on the 5-point Likert scale). There is no statistically significant difference in quality and coherence between programmes and between cohorts.
- More than **75% of all survey respondents experienced substantial or large skills improvements** (4 or 5 on the 5-point Likert scale). LRT fellows rated their skills improvement higher than FTP fellows and 2018-2023 GTP fellows rated their skills improvement higher than previous GTP cohorts.
- Fellows appreciate the high level of expertise of the lecturers, the integration of theoretical and practical training, and the relevance of the curriculum. In the future, more advanced technical training, practical experiences, and global issues such as climate change could be integrated into the programmes according to the fellows' feedback.

Assessment of the training components

One of the goals of the postgraduate training programme is to improve individuals' skills. A prerequisite for increasing individual's capabilities in their respective technical fields is the usefulness and quality of the training programme and its components. Survey respondents rated the usefulness of seven different components of the training on a scale from 1 (not useful) to 5 (extremely useful). Figure 68 demonstrates the average rating of the usefulness of each component per technical programme for fellows from the evaluation reference period. Overall, more than **90% of all 2018-2023 fellows rated the components as very (4/5 on the scale) or extremely useful (5/5 on the scale)**, indicating that the training content meets fellows' needs. The **research project/paper is considered the most useful component** across all technical programmes, followed by fieldwork/trips and group work/discussions. The lectures are rated least useful, although the rating is still high (very useful). Some similarities and differences in the data arise when compared to the findings from the 2017 "Evaluation of UNU Programmes in Iceland". Fellows who graduated before 2017 did also rate the usefulness of the research project and the fieldwork the highest of all components, but they rated the usefulness of the group work/discussions lower. Also, cohorts before 2017 perceived lectures more useful and group work/discussions less useful than recent graduates.

Comparing the average rating between fellows of different programmes, figure 70 shows that, on average, **GTP and LRT fellows of 2018-2023 rated the usefulness of all components higher than GEST and FTP fellows** to a statistically significant degree (0.20 to 0.25 scale points on average). Fellows also had the opportunity to name additional useful components of their training. Overall, the fellows mentioned that the **academic and research support** (e.g. access to libraries and research supervision) was useful and that **practical skills training** (e.g. presentation and communication skills workshop) was helpful.

Figure 70: Average usefulness of programme components per technical programme by fellows 2018-2023



The survey respondents also had the opportunity to list up to three **subjects, topics, or components they felt were missing** in their training. Across all training programmes, fellows who graduated between 2018-2023 were interested in more **advanced technical training** in areas such as statistical analysis and specialized software related to their technical field. Moreover, a desire for more **fieldwork and practical experiences** to enhance real world application was underscored. In addition, fellows expressed an interest in covering more **global cross-cutting issues** such as climate change and sustainability.

Looking at programme specific topics, the 2018-2023 fellows mentioned the following topics they would like to see integrated in the future:

FTP

- **Advanced Statistical Training:** more comprehensive training in statistics, including specific tools like R and Python for data analysis and statistical modelling.
- **Aquaculture Specific Studies:** more in-depth coverage of topics related to aquaculture, including economics, policy management, environmental interactions, and engineering aspects.
- **Policy and Management Training:** more structured learning on policy development processes, including international laws such as the Law of the Sea, and management strategies in both fisheries and aquaculture.
- **Safety and Environmental Concerns:** training on safety measures to avoid accidents at sea and broader environmental issues like plastic pollution monitoring and the impact of climate change on marine environments.

GEST

- **Expanded Coverage on intersectional and diverse perspectives:** broader discussions on intersectionality, including specific topics like LGBTQI+ awareness, neurodivergence, disability, and incorporating various cultural perspectives such as African feminism and South Asian contexts.
- **Advanced Research and Analytical Skills:** enhanced training in research methods, data analysis, and gender mainstreaming, with a specific focus on applying these skills in gender analysis practices.
- **Policy Development and Analysis:** more in-depth training in policy analysis, advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and designing policies around gender inclusion.
- **Specialized Topics in Gender Studies:** more diverse and specialized topics such as gender and technology, gender responsive financing, and gender in the context of climate change and health.

GTP

- **Advanced Technical Training:** more extensive training in specialized software usage, numerical modelling, and practical sessions involving geophysical data processing.
- **Financial and Project Management:** deeper insights into financial models, economic aspects of geothermal projects (CAPEX & OPEX), and project management, including claim negotiation and simulation.
- **Regulatory and Environmental Understanding:** more content on environmental regulations, social risk mitigation for geothermal projects, and environmental social governance in the geothermal sector.
- **Interdisciplinary and Soft Skills:** cross cultural orientation, leadership, public speaking, and other soft skills to enhance personal development and team management capabilities.

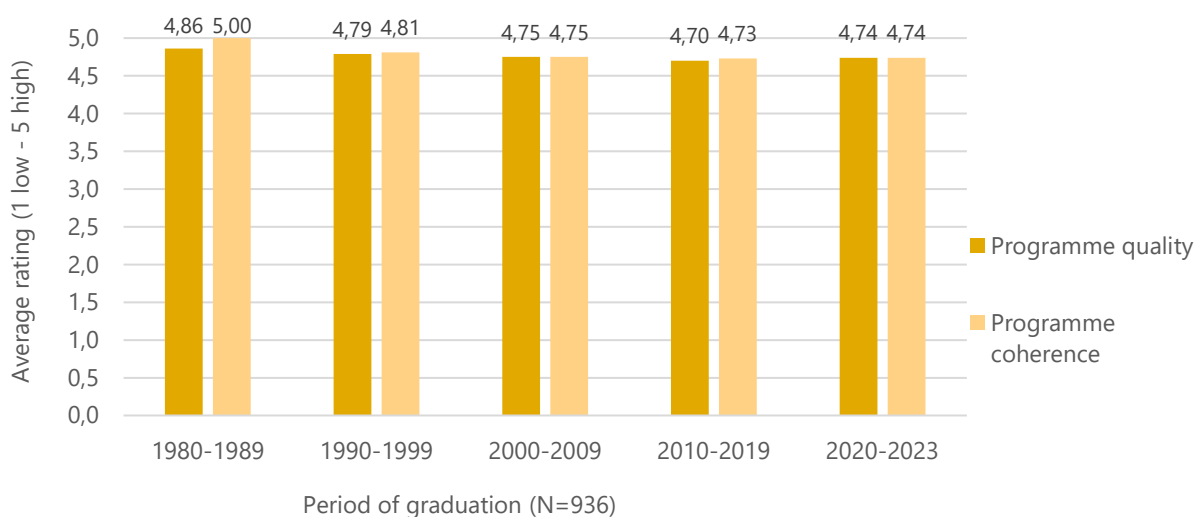
LRT

- **Advanced GIS and Remote Sensing Training:** more comprehensive and practical GIS and remote sensing training, emphasizing hands on application and extended time for these topics.
- **Climate Change and Environmental Studies:** climate change, including its relationship with gender and agriculture, as well as specialized topics like climate finance and adaptation strategies.
- **Economic and Policy Understanding:** more content on the economics of land degradation, environmental economics, public policy, and risk management related to land restoration.
- **Specialized Environmental Topic:** incorporating more specific subjects such as wetlands, soil microbiology, carbon trade, and environmental impact assessment.

Programme quality and coherence

Survey participants rated the postgraduate programme's quality and coherence on a scale from 1 (low quality/very incoherent) to 5 (high quality/very coherent). As figure 71 shows, **survey participants on average rated the quality (4.72/5) and the coherence (4.74) very high**. There is no statistical difference between fellows of different graduation periods, which indicates that the programmes sustained high quality and coherence over time. Moreover, there is no statistically significant difference of ratings between fellows of the different technical programmes, which indicates that the quality and coherence are equally highly perceived across different programmes.

Figure 71: Average rating of programme quality and coherence by graduation period



Survey participants highlighted that all programmes **effectively integrated theoretical and practical learning** into curriculum to help them both understand complex concepts and apply them in real world settings. Moreover, the **interrelated modules** in all programmes were also noted by respondents for providing a comprehensive learning experience. Fellows also appreciated the high **level of expertise** among the lecturers and the relevance of the curriculum to current industry practices and global challenges.

Skills improvement

One of the goals of the postgraduate training programme is to improve individuals' skills to implement programmes and projects within their technical field. The survey participants rated to what extent the postgraduate programme has improved their skills in 15 different relevant areas on a scale from 1 (no improvement) to 5 (large improvement). Around **75% of all 2018-2023 survey respondents experienced substantial (4/4 on the scale) or large (5/5 of the scale) improvements across all skill areas**, which indicates that the programme is successful in improving individuals' skills.

Figure 72 depicts the average skills improvement for the 15 skill areas for fellows who graduated within the evaluation period. Fellows report that their **personal development skills have improved most** because of their training participation, followed by research skills, technical skills, and intercultural skills. In contrast, IT/ software, environment and climate affairs, and policy analysis skills improved the least. The area of environment and climate affairs, which is a cross-cutting issue in Iceland's evaluation policy, does not seem to be very relevant, as around 25% of the fellows indicated it was "not applicable" to their skill development. The observed tendencies in skills improvements are similar to previous cohorts when compared with the 2017 "Evaluation of UNU Programmes in Iceland"⁵. Until 2017, fellows reported their strongest improvements in technical skills followed by personal development, while the smallest

⁵ See "Evaluation of UNU Programmes in Iceland", September 2017, NIRAS indevelop, Annex 4, p. 42.

improvement was reported for policy analysis skills and IT skills. The comparison indicates that the topic of personal development might be more the focus of recent cohorts.

Figure 72: Average skills improvement per skill area of fellows between 2018-2023

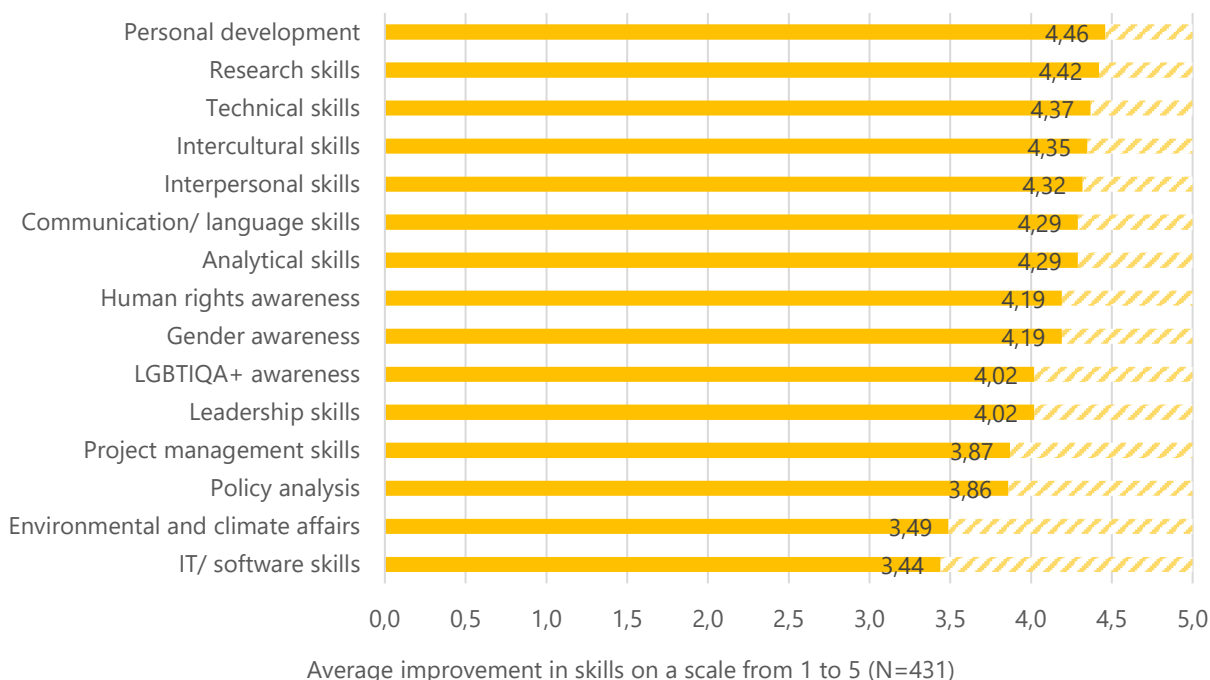


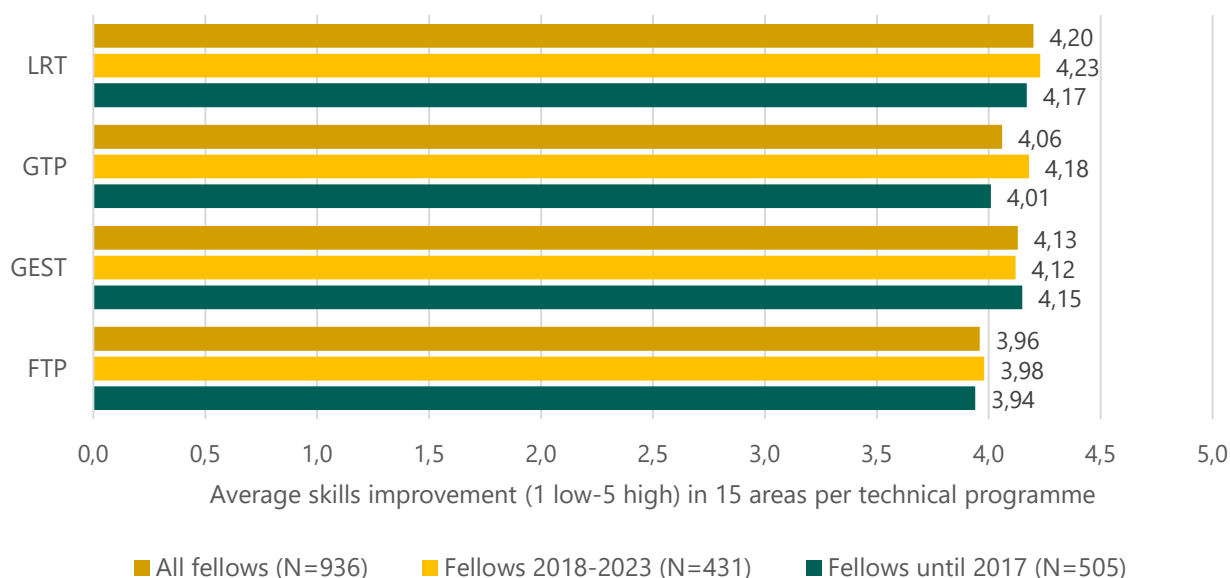
Figure 73 lists the three skills in which the fellows from 2018-2023 reported the largest average improvement per technical programme. It shows that personal development is among the top three skills that improved most, while research skills have also highly improved for all programmes except GEST, where topic related skills such as gender and LGBTIQA+ awareness have improved more. In addition, survey respondents had the opportunity to name additional skills which improved as a result of the programme. Many fellows mentioned that their ability to **apply research findings to practical scenarios** improved and that they improved their **financial and resource management** skills as well as **presentation and public speaking** skills. Fellows also mentioned improvements in specific technical skills.

Figure 73: Top three improved skills per technical programme for 2018-2023 fellows

FTP	GEST	GTP	LRT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research skills • Personal development • Technical skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender awareness • Personal development • LGBTIQA+ awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research skills • Personal development • Technical skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research skills • Human rights • Personal development

Figure 74 shows how fellows rated their average skills improvement (on a scale of 1 to 5) across 15 different skill areas. The ratings are displayed for all fellows grouped by their respective technical programme and disaggregated by time of graduation for comparison across programme and time. Looking at the average ratings of skills improvement, LRT fellows rated their skills improvement higher compared to fellows from other programmes. Specifically, the difference in average skills improvement between LRT fellows and FTP fellows is statistically significant. This means that, on average, **LRT fellows rated their skills improvement 0.23 points higher on the 1 to 5 scale than FTP fellows**. The different time periods also saw statistically significant differences in outcomes for GTP fellows as **GTP fellows who graduated between 2018-2023 rated their skills improvement 0.17 points higher on average compared to GTP fellows who graduated before 2018**.

Figure 74: Average rating of skills improvement across 15 different areas by cohort and programme



1.3.2 OUTPUT 2: KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND DISSEMINATION

The GRÓ International Centre aims to contribute to knowledge production and dissemination through their fellows. The survey results indicate that the **fellows of the postgraduate training programme actively contribute to the production and dissemination of knowledge in their technical fields**. They produce a wide variety of research and knowledge outputs, including master's theses, conference papers, blog posts, and podcasts. Their engagement spans both academic knowledge production (such as journal articles) and applied knowledge production (such as developing institutional gender guidelines), with variations across technical programmes. The output level assumption that "GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipients undertake applied research that is relevant to addressing challenges in their home countries" seems to hold validity. Fellows are active in knowledge production in their technical field, and they **disseminate it to colleagues, local communities, and policymakers showing the research is relevant and applicable**. The survey results indicate that:

- The most common knowledge outputs are **final research papers** (93.5%), **master's theses linked to the programme** (59.2%) and conference papers and proceedings (22.5%). The produced knowledge is mainly disseminated through **presentations to colleagues** (69.1%), followed by presentations at GRÓ events (59.5%) and presentations to supervisors (51.6%). On average, **fellows use more than three different channels to disseminate their knowledge**.
- **FTP** fellows produce more **policy reports** on average.
- **GEST** fellows are less likely to produce conference papers, but they produce more unconventional knowledge products, such as podcasts, compared to other fellows. GEST fellows use fewer types of dissemination channels but are more active in presenting their knowledge to **professional networks and local communities**.
- On average, **GTP** fellows are more likely to produce conference papers compared to other fellows. They engage more in **presentations at GRÓ events and conferences** on average than fellows from other programmes. GTP fellows also use **more types of dissemination channels than other fellows**.
- **LRT** fellows produce more **journal articles and PhD dissertations** on their topic than other programme. Moreover, they are more likely to present their findings to colleagues, publish on the GRÓ website, and present to local communities.

- **18.2% of the survey participants have been supported by GRÓ/UNU to participate in regional and international conferences.** The share of fellows who received support to participate in conferences is **highest among GTP and FTP fellows.** GTP fellows commonly participated in World Geothermal Congresses in Japan, Turkey, Indonesia, and China, and FTP fellows participated in International Institute of Fisheries Economics & Trade (IIFET) Conferences in Spain, Tanzania, and the USA.

Type of research and knowledge outputs

One of the goals of the GRÓ International Centre is to contribute to **knowledge production and dissemination.** The fellows of the postgraduate training programme are key actors in achieving this goal, as they produce and disseminate knowledge both during and after their training. Figures 75 and 76 illustrate the types of knowledge outputs produced by fellows in relation to the postgraduate programme by cohort. Among the 2018-2023 fellows, almost all survey participants (93.5%) **produced a final project paper** upon programme completion. Moreover, most fellows (59.2%) produced a **master’s thesis** either based on their research during the postgraduate programme or during their studies funded by GRÓ. Other common knowledge products among the survey participants are **conference papers and proceedings** (22.5%), policy reports (14.6%), and journal articles (12.5%). Few fellows from the 2018-2023 cohort produced a PhD thesis based on their research from the programme or during GRÓ-funded studies (4.4%). The percentage of fellows who developed knowledge output related to the programme is **higher among the 1979-2017 group** for all output types except final project papers. This disparity may be due to pre-2018 fellows having more time to produce knowledge since their graduation from the programme.

Figure 75: Research and knowledge outputs by 2018-2023 fellows based on frequencies

Figure 76: Research and knowledge outputs by 1979-2017 fellows based on frequencies

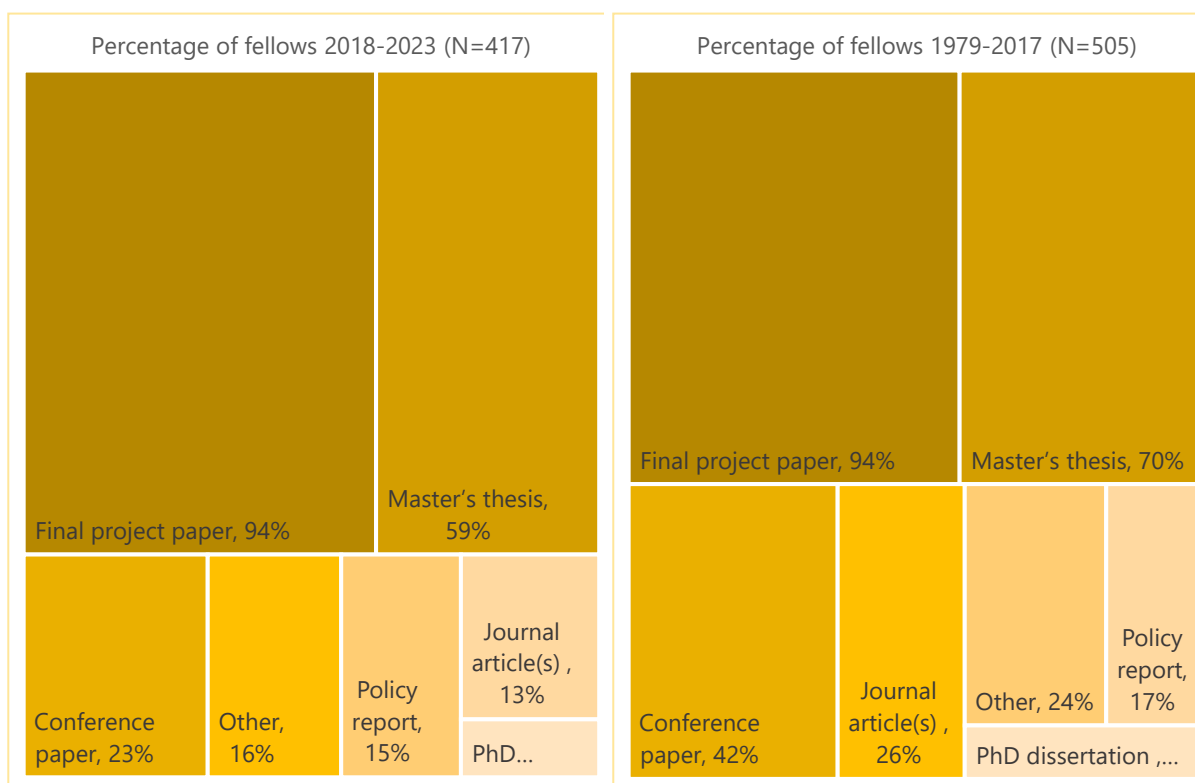
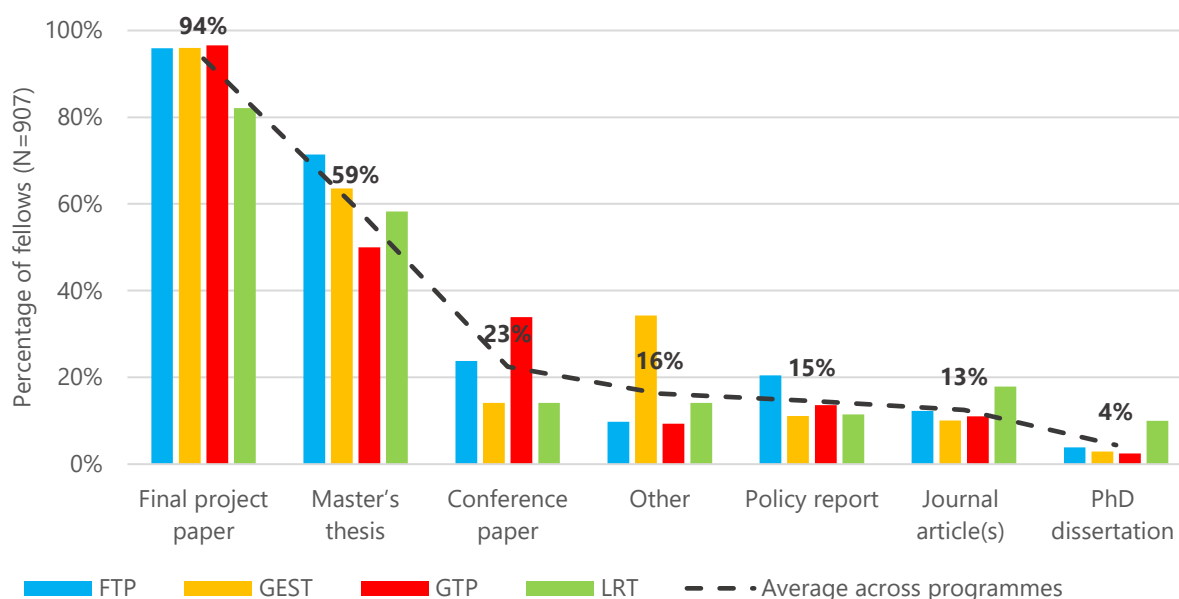


Figure 77 indicates some differences in the kind of knowledge outputs produced by fellows from different programmes for those who graduated between 2018 and 2023. The percentage of **GTP fellows** who **produce conference papers and proceedings** is higher than the average of all programmes, and **FTP fellows are more active in the production of policy papers and master’s theses.** GEST fellows produce fewer conference papers and proceedings and fewer journal articles than other programmes.

However, **GEST fellows seem to produce knowledge outputs in less conventional ways** such as a podcast on gender, a gender related online blog, a gender training toolkit, and other knowledge outputs that fall into the “other” category of the survey response.

Figure 77: Types of research and knowledge outputs produced by fellows 2018-2023 per programme



Dissemination of knowledge

Survey participants also indicated the channels through which they disseminated the knowledge produced during or concerning the postgraduate training programme or their studies funded by GRÓ. The survey respondents were given twelve different options of dissemination channels. Figure 78 shows the average number of dissemination channels used per individual fellow. On average, fellows use 3.47 different ways of disseminating knowledge. When comparing the different technical programmes, on average **GTP fellows use most different channels to disseminate knowledge while GEST fellows use the least amount of different dissemination channels**. The difference is statistically significant as GTP fellows on average use 1.14 more channels to disseminate knowledge than GEST fellows. This difference is also significant when excluding GTP fellows who graduated before 2009, considering that they have had more time to disseminate knowledge compared to GEST fellows. On average, fellows who graduated before the evaluation period of 2018-2023 have used more dissemination channels. Although this difference is statistically significant, the additional time since graduation should be considered as a confounding factor affecting this indicator. Recent graduates had less time to disseminate knowledge after graduation, while older cohorts have been disseminating knowledge for a longer time and incorporating different ways to disseminate their knowledge.

Figure 78: Average number of different knowledge dissemination channels used per fellow (max. 12 channels)

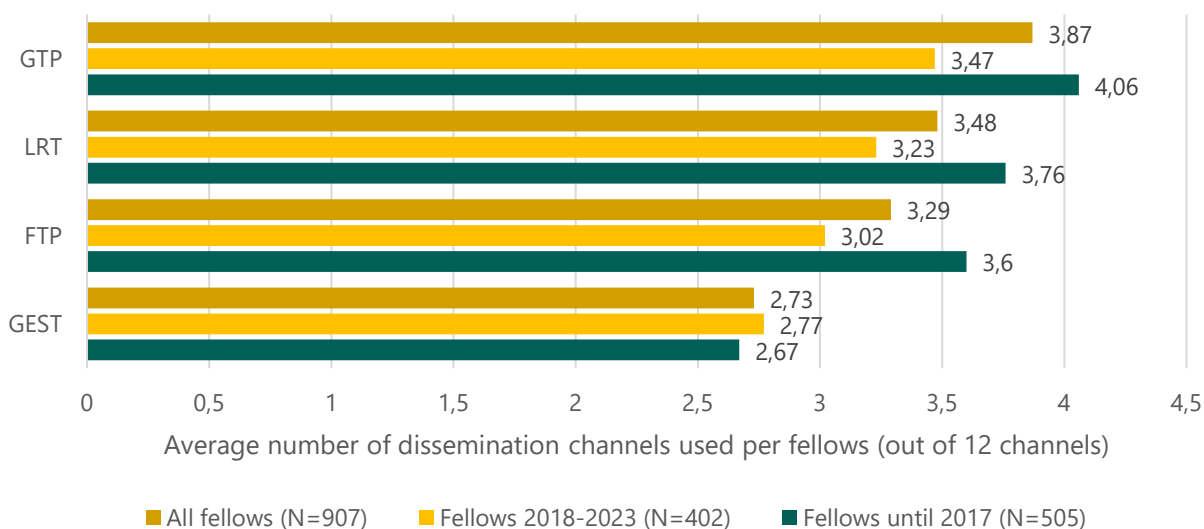
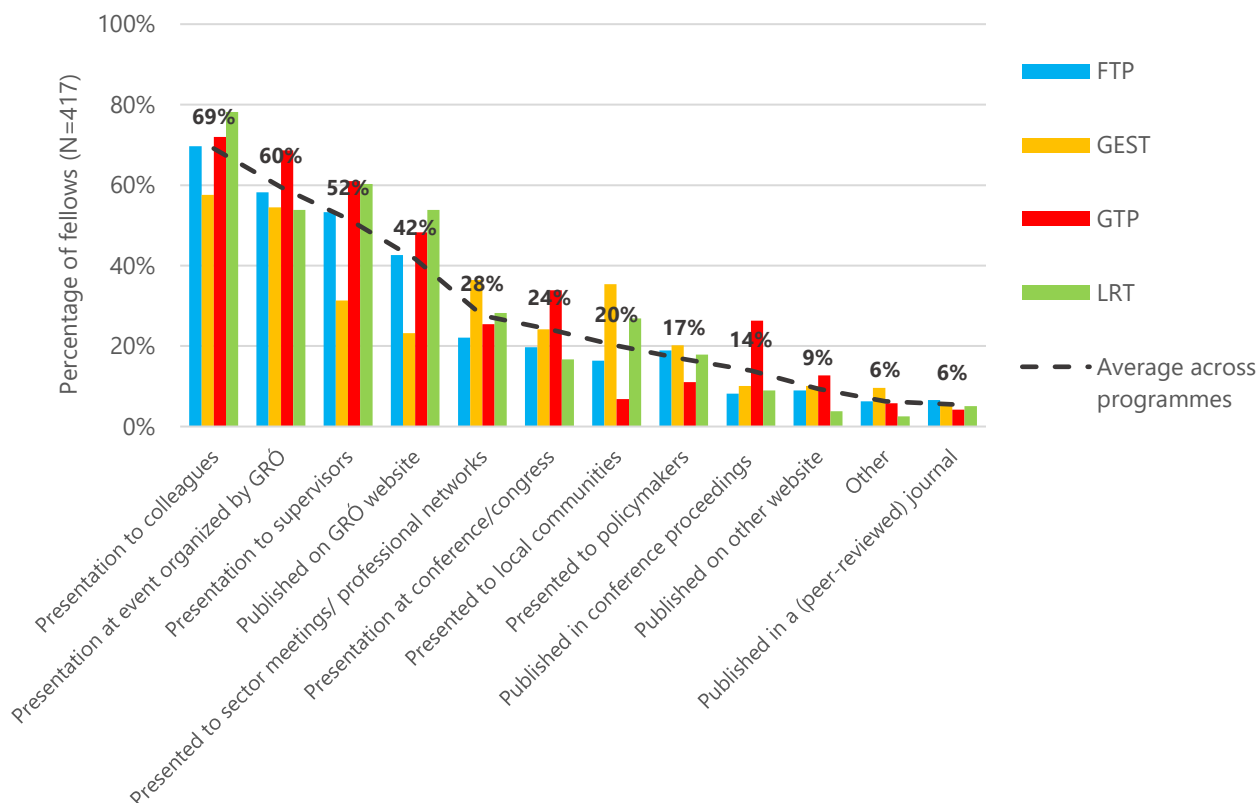


Figure 79 shows the percentage of fellows who reported using the twelve different channels by technical programme for those who graduated between 2018 and 2023. The **most common way to disseminate the knowledge is through presentations to colleagues (69.1%)**, followed by presentations at GRÓ events (59.5%), and presentations to supervisors (51.6%). Only a few fellows publish their research in journals (5.5%). When comparing the different programmes, it becomes apparent that each line of training uses preferred channels to disseminate knowledge. On average, GTP fellows are more likely to present their findings at GRÓ events and conferences (including conference proceedings). GEST fellows are less likely to present their knowledge to their supervisor or at the GRÓ website, but they are more active in sharing knowledge within professional networks and local communities. LRT fellows commonly share their knowledge with colleagues and supervisors, local communities, and on the GRÓ website.

Figure 79: Types of dissemination channels used based on the percentage of fellows 2018-2023



Participation in regional and international conferences

Overall, **18.2% of all survey participants (158 out of 870) participated in regional and international conferences with GRÓ/UNU funding.** The share of fellows who participated in conferences with the support of GRÓ/UNU is highest among GTP fellows (26.7%), followed by those from FTP (16.4%), LRT (8.8%), and GEST (8.2%). Survey participants commonly mentioned their participation in the following conferences:

- **GTP:** World Geothermal Congresses in Japan, Turkey, Indonesia, and China
- **FTP:** International Institute of Fisheries Economics & Trade (IIFET) Conferences in Spain, Tanzania, and the USA and Blue Economy Conferences in Kenya and the USA
- **LRT:** Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) World Conferences in Iceland, South Africa, and England
- **GEST:** smaller individual formats like “The Imagine Forum: Women for Peace” organized by the University of Iceland as well as the United Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women

1.3.3 OUTPUT 3: COMMUNITY BUILDING AND NETWORKING

The GRÓ International Centre aims to empower fellows professionally through networking and community building activities. The survey results indicate that **only 55% of the fellows engage in networking activities** after their graduation, despite a high interest and enthusiasm for networking. The lack of financial resources and individual availability as well as the lack of awareness around networking opportunities are the main reasons for fellows not engaging in networking and community building. The perceived benefit of networking among those who have been actively doing so is high (98%). The assumption that “GRÓ alumni interact and collaborate within their home countries, regions and beyond. As such, GRÓ alumni networks serve as mechanisms for south/south cooperation” is partially confirmed by the survey results. While there seems to be a relatively strong online exchange between fellows, in person networking activities seem to concentrate on Uganda. The survey results indicate the following:

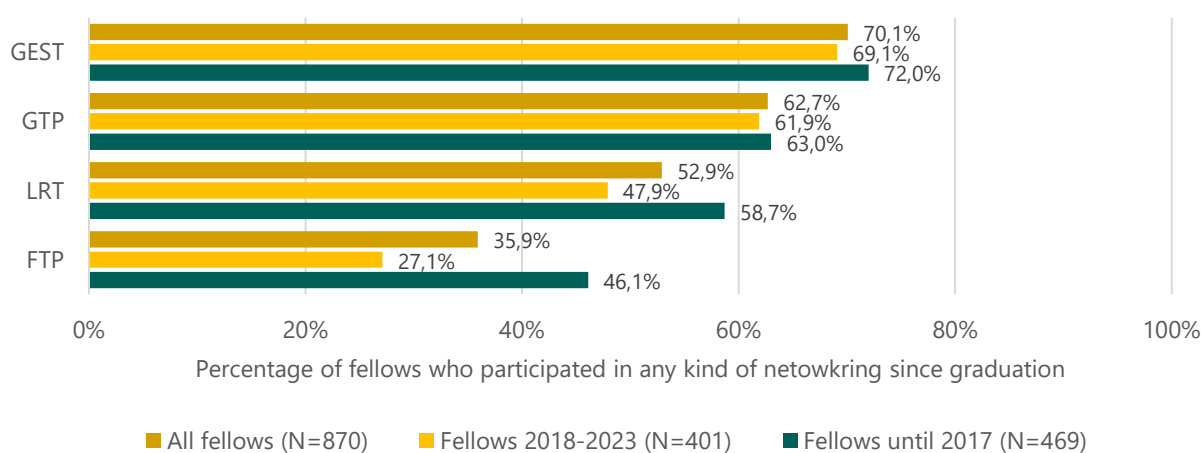
- Overall, **55.6% of the survey respondents report that they have been involved in any formal or informal networking activity.** The percentage of fellows who are involved in these activities is highest for GEST (70.1%) and lowest for FTP (35.9%). The involvement in networking activities is slightly higher for fellows who graduated before 2018. The involvement rate among 2018-2023 fellows is 51.5%.
- The percentage of fellows who participated in any kind of networking since their graduation is highest for fellows living in Europe, Asia, and Africa after their graduation. **Fellows living in Oceania are less likely to be involved in networking.**
- **The lack of financial resources and time is the main reason** for fellows not to participate in networking (56.1%). The lack of interest was very rarely mentioned, indicating that there is a demand for networking opportunities.
- **53.3% of the survey respondents are active in alumni forums** (mainly email lists, WhatsApp and Facebook), and **36.2% participated in formal exchange** (e.g. GRÓ alumni events and short courses).
- Most fellows among the 2018-2023 cohort participated in a GRÓ/UNU networking/alumni event (80.0%) followed by a GRÓ/UNU-funded participation in an international/regional conference (33.9%) and the involvement in a GRÓ/UNU short course (13.0%).
- **GEST and LRT fellows** are more involved in **networking/alumni events**, while **FTP and GTP fellows** are more likely to be involved in **international and regional conferences.** Moreover, the percentage of fellows who are involved in the short courses is highest among GTP fellows while GEST fellows do not seem to be involved in the delivery of short courses.
- More than **98% of fellows who were involved in networking perceive this exchange as beneficial.** The main perceived benefit of networking and community building are personal matters (77.2%). Moreover, fellows frequently mentioned that networking helped them in finding technical solutions for problems in their field (69.0%) and for increasing their personal motivation (66.9%).

Participation in community building and networking

Survey respondents were asked if they had participated in any kind of formal (e.g. GRÓ alumni event) or informal (e.g. informal exchange between fellows) networking or community building activity since their graduation from the postgraduate training. Figure 80 shows the percentage of fellows who participated in any kind of networking activity after graduation by technical programme and for the different cohorts.

Overall, 55.6% (484 out of 870) of the survey respondents report that they have been involved in any formal or informal networking activity. Generally, the percentage of fellows who are involved in these activities is highest for GEST (70.1%) and lowest for FTP (35.9%). This difference is statistically significant for all cohorts, meaning that FTP fellows are significantly less likely to engage in networking compared to GEST fellows⁶. The percentage of fellows who have been involved in networking is higher among older cohorts. This difference between cohorts is only significant for FTP fellows and is mainly due to the fellows who recently graduated before taking the survey and might not have yet had the chance to get involved in networking activities.

Figure 80: Participation in any kind of networking after graduation by programme



Figures 81 and 82 display a regional comparison in terms of networking activities for different cohorts. Among the 2018-2023 fellows, the percentage of fellows who participated in any kind of networking since their graduation is highest for fellows from Europe (69.2%) followed by Asia (58.8%), Africa (49.8%), and LAC (44.8%). The difference is significant for Asia compared to Oceania, suggesting that fellows from Oceania are less likely to be involved in networking. Among older cohorts who graduated before 2018, the percentage of fellows who participated in networking is highest among fellows from Africa (65.2%) followed by Europe (63.0%).

⁶ Since a small number of 2024 FTP graduates participated in the survey, the percentages were also compared excluding fellows who report a graduation year of 2023. Excluding the most recent graduates, the percentage of GEST fellows who were involved in networking is 70.3% and the percentage of FTP fellows is 40.1%. The difference is still statistically significant.

Figure 81: Participation in any kind of networking by region of residence after programme participation for fellows between 2018-2023

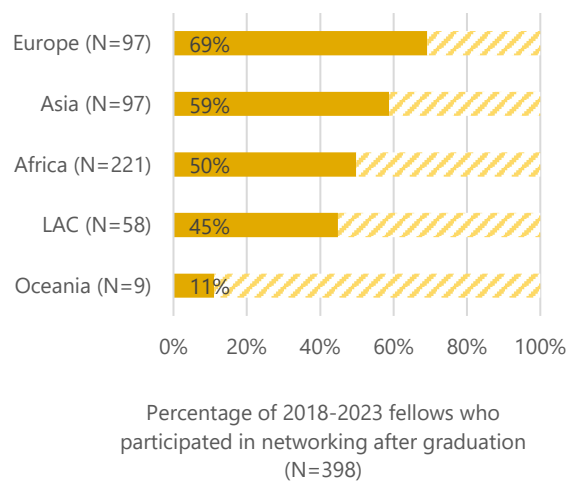


Figure 82: Participation in any kind of networking by region of residence after programme participation for fellows between 1979-2017

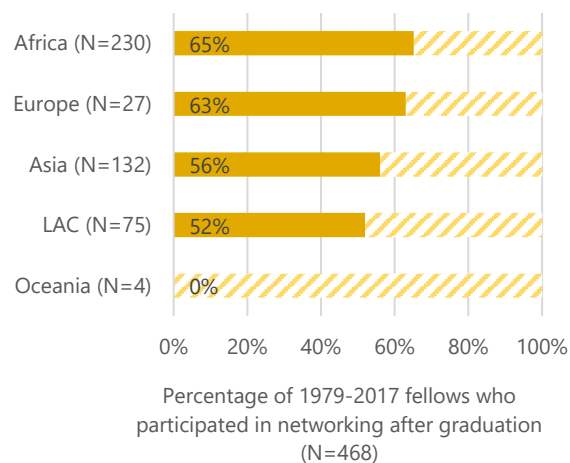
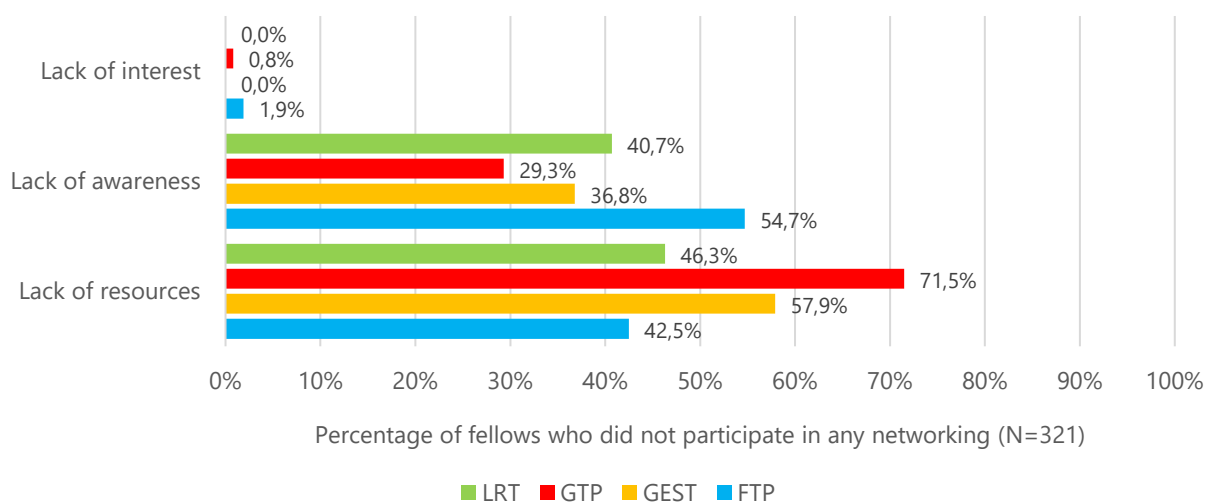


Figure 83 illustrates the reasons for fellows not to participate in networking. It includes all fellows who have not participated in any kind of networking activity since their graduation and excludes the most recent cohort since they have not had the chance to engage in networking yet. The **lack of resources (financial and timewise) is the main reason for fellows not to participate in networking (56.1%)**. More than 70% of GTP fellows who did not take part in networking indicated this reason. Moreover, the lack of awareness of networking opportunities was frequently mentioned by 40.5% of the fellows, and it was specifically pronounced for FTP fellows. The lack of interest was very rarely mentioned, indicating that there is a demand for networking opportunities among former fellows.

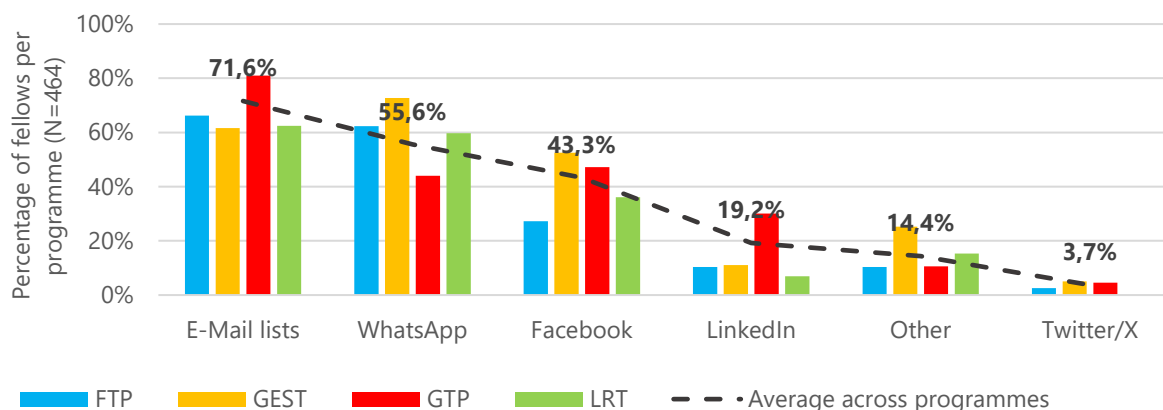
Figure 83: Reasons for lack of networking participation per programme



Type of community building and networking

Concerning the type of networking activities, **53.3% (464 out of 870) of the survey respondents are active in alumni forums**. Figure 84 illustrates the percentage of fellows who use a particular alumni forum for networking. **The most common alumni forums used by all programmes are email lists (71.6%), WhatsApp (55.6%) and Facebook (43.3%)**. GTP fellows use email lists and LinkedIn more than average while GEST fellows use WhatsApp and other channels such as Instagram and Zoom more than the other programmes.

Figure 84: Percentage of fellows per programme using different alumni forums



In total, **36.2% (315 out of 870) of the survey participants participated in formal networking activities.** Among the 115 fellows from the 2018-2023 cohort, most participated in a GRÓ/UNU networking/alumni event (80.0%) followed by a GRÓ/UNU-funded participation in an international/regional conference (33.9%) and involvement in a GRÓ/UNU short course (13.0%). The survey results indicate that among the 2018-2023 fellows who participated in formal networking, **GEST and LRT fellows are more involved in networking/alumni events, while GTP and FTP fellows are more involved in international and regional conferences.** Moreover, the percentage of fellows who are involved in the short courses is highest among GTP fellows while GEST fellows do not seem to be involved in the short courses. The percentage of fellows involved in GRÓ alumni events is lower for the 1979-2017 fellows (60.0%), but their involvement in GRÓ-funded conferences (59.5%) and short-courses (37.0%) is higher than the younger cohorts. Moreover, among the 1979-2017 cohorts, most GEST fellows participated in a GRÓ alumni event, most FTP fellows in a conference, and more than half of the GTP fellows were involved in short-courses through organizational matters or teaching.

Figure 85: Percentage of 2018-2023 fellows who participated in formal networking per programme

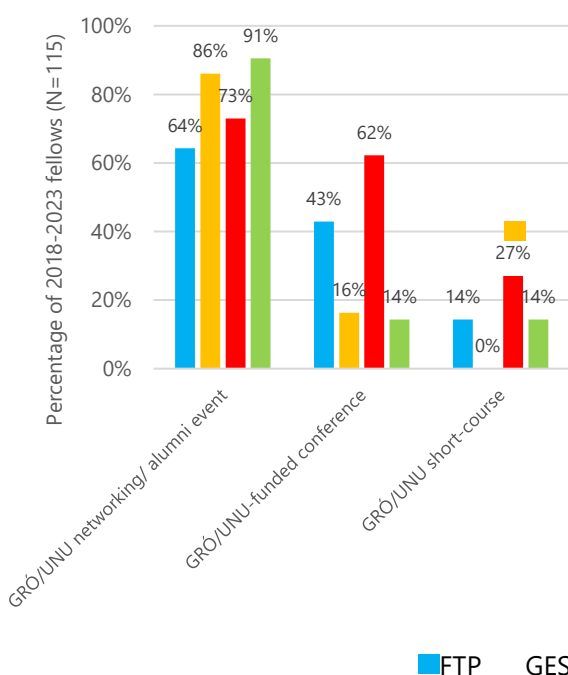
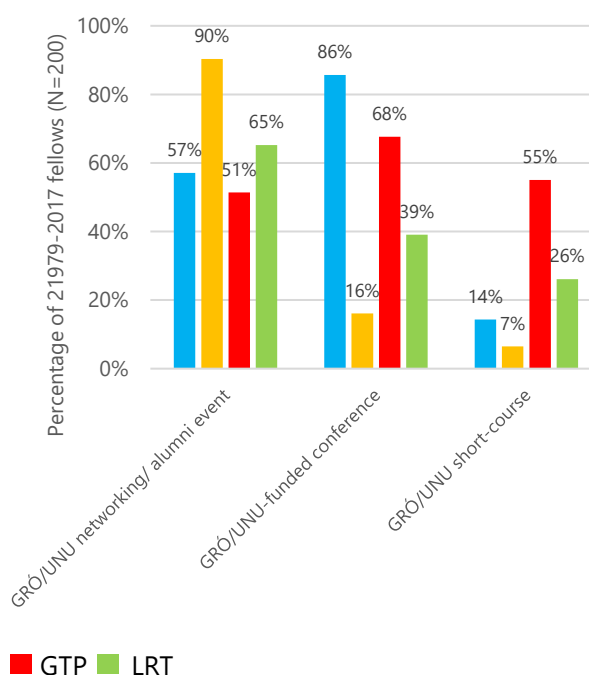


Figure 86: Percentage of 1979-2017 fellows who participated in formal networking per programme



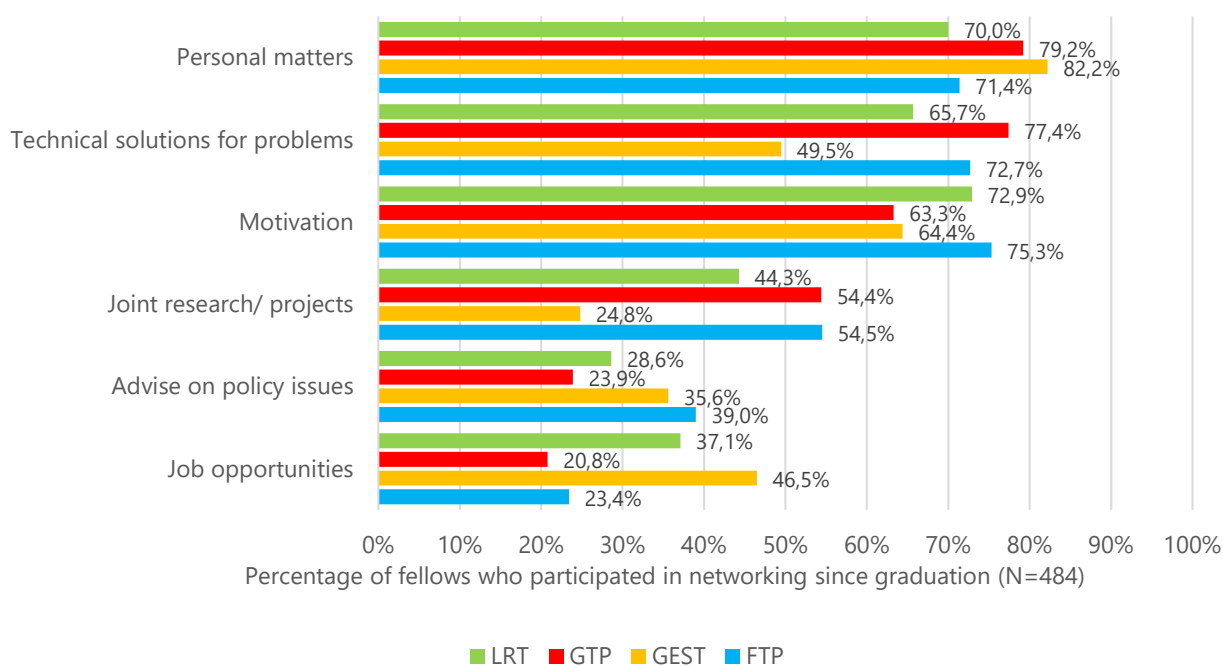
Survey participants also had the chance to name the formal activities they participated in. The **following networking activities were frequently mentioned:**

FTP	GEST	GTP	LRT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •GRÓ alumni events in Uganda and Indonesia •Icelandic Government events in Sierra Leone and Malawi •IIFET and BLue Economy conferences •GRÓ/UNU short courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •GRÓ GEST alumni online meetings •GRÓ alumni events in Uganda and Kenya •Icelandic Government events in Malawi •Social media (WhatsApp, Facebook) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •GRÓ alumni events in Uganda •WhatsApp Group •World Geothermal Congresses •Short course involvements (e.g. geothermal exploration Kenya) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •GRÓ alumni events in Uganda and Lesotho •Informal alumni meeting in Mongolia •SER World conferences •GRÓ/UNU short-courses and guest lecturers at GRÓ

Benefits of networking

Of all fellows who participated in networking events since their graduation, around 98% indicated that it benefitted them in some way. Figure 87 shows that the **main perceived benefit of networking and community building are personal matters (77.2%)**. Moreover, fellows frequently mentioned that networking helped them in finding technical solutions for problems in their field (69.0%) and for increasing their personal motivation (66.9%).

Figure 87: perceived networking benefits among fellows active in networking activities



These findings are in line with the findings from the 2017 “Evaluation of UNU Programmes in Iceland”, which indicated that GEST fellows are most active in networking (using social media and remote means) and that personal matters and friendship as well as discussing technical solutions are the most common benefits related to networking⁷.

⁷ See “Evaluation of UNU Programmes in Iceland”, September 2017, NIRAS indevelop, Annex 4, p. 46.

1.4 EFFECTIVENESS IN TERMS OF OUTCOMES

Through its three different outputs of technical capacity improvements, professional empowerment, and production of knowledge, the GRÓ International Centre aims to **empower GRÓ fellows to promote and implement changes needed to achieve SDGs** relevant to their field of work. Thereby, **outcomes at the micro, meso, and macro level** should be achieved. Micro level results focus on individual career advancements due to participation in the postgraduate programme. Meso level results refer to changes at the institutional and sector level. Macro level results focus on broader national and/or policy changes.

Micro level Individual achievements

- Individual career advancement

Meso level Institutional and sectoral advancements

- Contribution to institutional changes
- Contribution to the technical field
- Contribution to changes at the local level

Macro level Broader societal and policy influence

- Contribution to changes at national level
- Contribution to policy changes

1.4.1. MICRO LEVEL OUTCOMES

At the outcome level, the GRÓ International Centre aims to empower fellows in their individual career advancements which ultimately enables them to spread their knowledge and drive sustainable change. The survey findings suggest that **postgraduate training is successful in fostering individual professional development**. Many fellows reported substantial career promotions by either moving into higher roles, leading departments, and taking on greater responsibilities within their organizations. The outcome level assumption is that “GRÓ fellows become leaders in their field of expertise. They use the increased capacity gained through the GRÓ training to promote sustainability within their sphere of influence in their organisations and home countries” which seems to be confirmed by these findings. The survey results find that:

- Before training most fellows either worked in the governmental/ public administration sector (47%) or in the academic/ research sector (25%). The sectors become more diverse after training participation, suggesting that **the training equips fellows with skills and opportunities that enable them to transition into a wider variety of sectors**.
- Overall, most fellows indicated that they have substantially (4/5 on the scale) or extremely (5/5 on the scale) advanced their career because of the postgraduate programme training. In total, **44.02% of the fellows indicate substantial career advancement and 34.9% indicate extreme career advancement**.
- The most common type of career advancement relates to more **responsibility in their job** after programme completion (75.8%), followed by **promotions** (46.7%) and **salary increases** (38.0%).
- The rating of career advancement does not differ across programmes but is significantly **higher for fellows who graduated before the evaluation period of 2018-2023**. This could be because positive career effects may require more time to materialize. While **all cohorts take on more responsibility** directly after programme completion, that does not immediately lead to promotions or salary increases.
- When asked about their most important career advancement due to the postgraduate programme, numerous fellows reported **substantial career promotions**, moving into higher roles, leading departments, and taking on greater responsibilities within their institutions.

Sector of the workplace before and after participation

Figures 88 and 89 illustrate the percentage of fellows who work in a specific sector by programme before and after postgraduate training participation. Before training participation, most fellows either worked **in the governmental/ public administration sector (47%) or in the academic/ research sector (25%)**. While more than 80% of all FTP and LRT fellows worked in these sectors before completing the training programme, a substantial portion of GEST fellows also worked for national civil society organisations (27%), and GTP fellows worked for public sector enterprises (20%). The sectors become more diverse after training participation. The percentage of fellows working in the **governmental/public administration sector reduces to 38% of the fellows after training participation** while the percentage of fellows working in other fields like international NGOs (from 3% to 8%) and private sector enterprises (4% to 7%) increases. the percentage of fellows employed in academia remains unchanged after training, suggesting a stable interest and involvement in the academic/research sector. Overall, **the postgraduate training programmes appear to equip fellows with skills and opportunities that enable them to transition into a wider variety of sectors**, thus reflecting a broader distribution of employment across different fields.

Figure 88: Sector before programme participation

Figure 89: Sector after programme participation

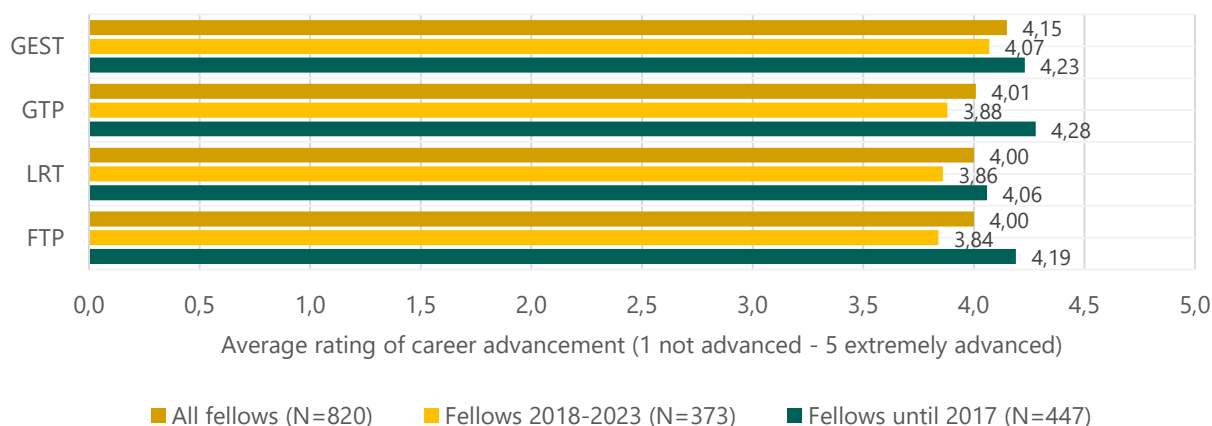


Professional career advancement

Survey participants were asked to what degree they had advanced professionally due to their participation in the postgraduate programme on a scale from 1 (not advanced) to 5 (extremely advanced). Figure 90 illustrates the average rating by programme and cohort. Overall, the rating is very high with **most fellows indicating that they have substantially (4/5) or extremely (5/5) advanced**. 44.0% of the fellows indicate substantial advancement and 34.9% indicate extreme advancement. GEST fellows rated their advancement highest on average, although only to a statistically insignificant degree.

However, fellows who graduated before the evaluation reference period rated their career advancement on average 0.16 points higher on the scale compared to fellows who graduated after 2017. This might be because more time has passed for new career opportunities to develop for the older cohorts.

Figure 90: Professional career advancement after postgraduate programme participation

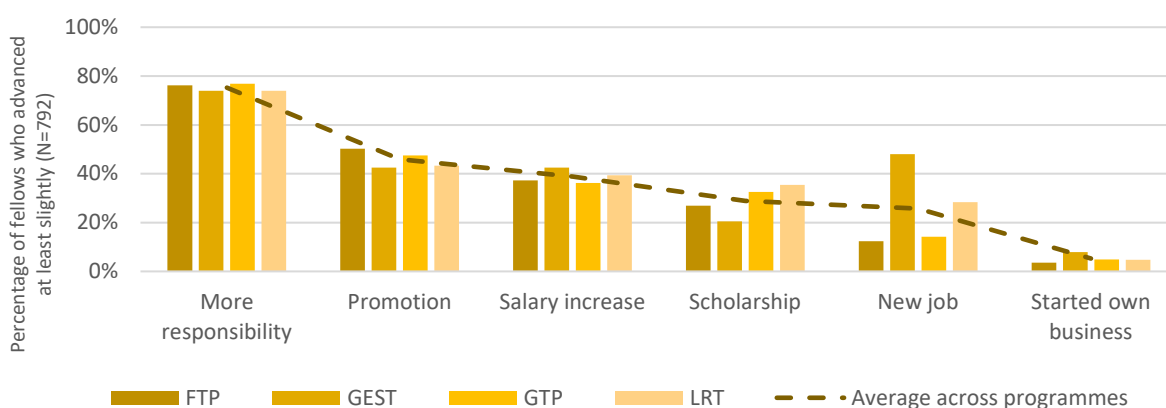


In addition to the significant difference between the career advancement of the different cohorts, there is a significant difference between regions. **On average, fellows living in African countries rated their career advancement after graduation 0.42 points higher compared to fellows living in LAC.**

Types of advancement

Figure 91 indicates that the most common type of career advancement among fellows who advanced at least slightly due to the postgraduate programme relates to **more responsibility in their job after programme completion (75.8%)**, followed by **promotions (46.7%)** and **salary increases (38.0%)**. While GEST fellows are less likely to advance through receiving scholarships after programme completion, a larger proportion of GEST fellows began a new job after the postgraduate programme.

Figure 91: Types of career advancement of fellows who advanced at least slightly due to postgraduate programme



When asked about their most important career advancement due to the postgraduate programme, numerous **fellows reported substantial career promotions, moving into higher roles, leading departments, and taking on greater responsibilities** within their institutions. According to the fellows' perspective, the enhancement of specific professional skills, including research, technical expertise, project management, and analytical skills improved fellows' qualifications for higher positions. For example, one LRT fellow mentioned that he/she referenced the knowledge gained from the programme during a job interview and consequently was promoted to a Senior Land Resources Conservation Officer. Furthermore, the programmes have expanded fellows' professional networks internationally, enabling them to **engage with global experts and peers** to enhance their career opportunities and foster valuable collaborations. Notably, many fellows have **transitioned into leadership roles** where they

influence policy and lead significant projects. For example, a **GEST fellows became the first female executive director in her organization**, reporting the programme had equipped her to take this role.

Figures 92 and 93 compare the types of career advancements for fellows before and within the evaluation period of 2018–2023. While the percentage of fellows assuming more responsibilities is equal in both groups (around 75%), the **percentage of fellows who received a promotion or a salary increase after programme completion is significantly higher among fellows who graduated before 2018** (around 25 percentage points for promotions and 15 percentage points for salary increases). It seems that while fellows immediately take on more responsibilities after programme completion, it takes more time for fellows to receive subsequent benefits such as promotions and/or salary increases. The findings are in line with the 2017 “Evaluation of UNU Programmes in Iceland”, which found that on average, more than 60% of the fellows who graduated before 2018 report that they have been promoted as a result of participating in the postgraduate training programme⁸.

Figure 92: Career advancement fellows 1979–2017 Figure 93: Career advancement fellows 2018–2023

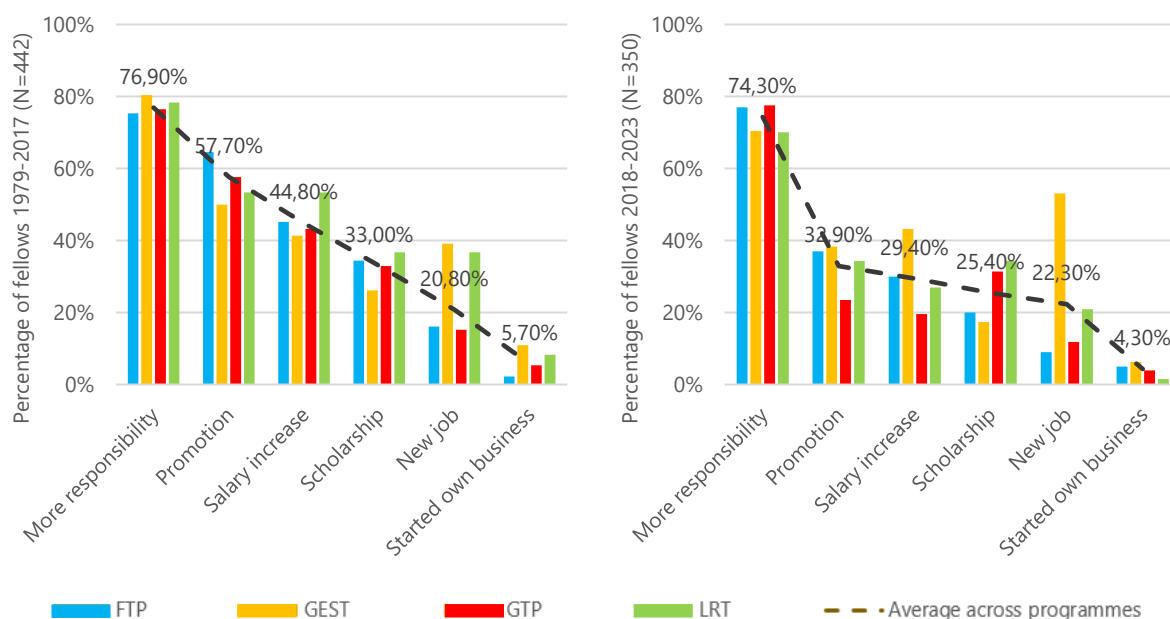
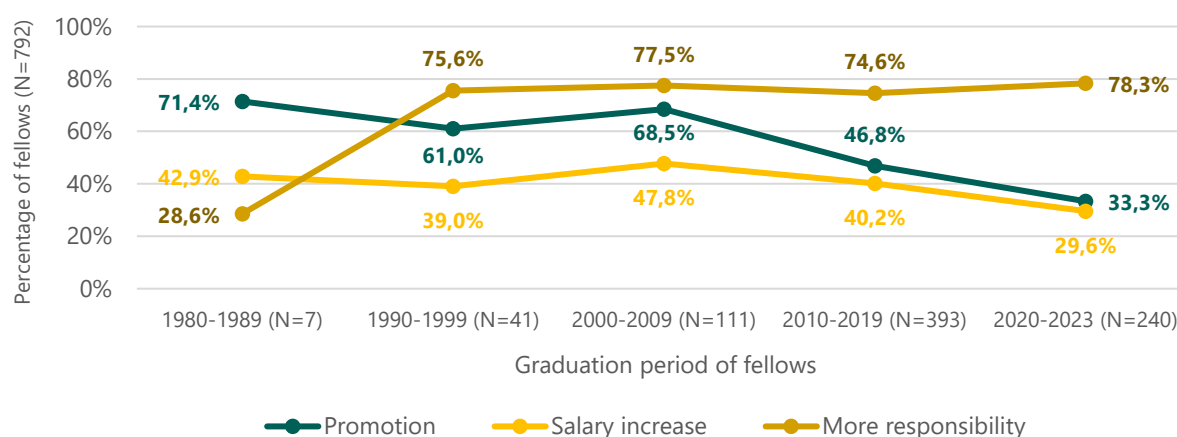


Figure 94 illustrates the percentage of fellows who received promotions and/or salary increases due to programme completion across the entire period from 1979 to 2023. It shows a decreasing percentage of fellows benefiting from these career advancements among more recent graduates. This reinforces the observation that **immediate responsibility uptake after programme completion do not immediately correlate with promotions or salary increases, suggesting a lag period before such advancements are realized.**

⁸ See “Evaluation of UNU Programmes in Iceland”, September 2017, NIRAS indevelop, Annex 4, pp. 39-40.

Figure 94: Fellows receiving promotions and/or salary increases after programme completion by graduation period



1.4.2. MESO LEVEL OUTCOMES

The GRÓ International Centre aims to create outcomes at the meso level such as institutional changes, contributions to the technical fields/sectors, and results at the local/regional level. While meso level changes cannot be measured robustly, the survey results find that **GRÓ fellows actively contribute to all meso level outcome areas using the skills and knowledge they have gained through the postgraduate programme**. The contributions vary by technical programme. While GTP, FTP and LRT fellows actively share the gained knowledge within their institutions, GEST fellows seem to face more resistance to change at the institutional level. However, they can be **change agents driving more gender equitable institutional changes** (e.g. policies, practices, norms). Almost all fellows confirm that **the programme enabled them to advance their technical contributions**, primarily through training and mentoring of others. **GTP fellows** actively contribute to their technical field through **continued research**, while **other fellows** (especially LRT) **advise local communities** after programme completion. The results framework assumption that “partner organizations recognize the new knowledge, skills and competencies acquired by GRÓ fellows and other GRÓ trainees” seems to be verified based on the fellows’ perception, although less so for GEST fellows. The assumption that “partner institutions will encourage returning staff members to practice what they have learned in the programme” is partially verified as only 45% of the respondents feel supported in knowledge application by their institution. The survey results find that:

Institutional level:

- More than **80% of the fellows feel confident that the management in their institution appreciates and values the skills** they have gained from the training programme participation. This percentage is significantly higher among LRT fellows compared to GEST and GTP fellows.
- **25.4%** of the fellows have used their skills from the postgraduate training programme **to introduce new initiatives, projects, programs, or approaches within their institution**.
- Around **45% of the fellows feel supported by their institution** in applying their knowledge **while 25% think that the lack of institutional support is hindering them** from applying their knowledge.
- Despite the lower institutional support and **unfavourable institutional power dynamics** faced by GEST fellows, they can be **major drivers of institutional change** when it comes to implementing gender responsive institutional policies. Fellows from the other three programmes are comparatively more involved in knowledge sharing.

Technical field/ sectoral level:

- **91.6% of the fellows** agree or strongly agree with the statement that they were able to **advance their contribution to their technical field/subject area** due to the training programme. In addition, 82.2% of the fellows agree or strongly agree that they have contributed to other areas outside of their postgraduate programme focus.

- Fellows contribute to their technical field/subject area through the **training and mentoring of others** (80.6%), conducting **further research** (65.4%) and implementing **projects or initiatives** in the technical field (61%)
- Fellows report that they have applied their training and expertise to **make meaningful contributions** to their respective technical fields in many ways (e.g. publication in international journals, application of specific expertise to design fishing gear, dedicated research team to contribute to rangeland monitoring system).

Local/ regional level:

- Fellows have contributed to meso level changes by **advising local communities** (48.4%), **advising private entities/ institutions** (29.0%), and contributing to **regional policy changes** (22.2%).
- On average, **LRT fellows have been very engaged in advising local communities**, while GTP fellows were less involved in that capacity.
- Reported examples of meso level results illustrate the fellows' commitment to fostering sustainable development at the local/regional level, **enhancing community capacity**, and promoting inclusive and equitable practices.

Institutional change

The GRÓ International Centre aims to create results on the outcome level leading to changes on the partner institutions' level. An important prerequisite for achieving institutional level results is that the management of the institutions recognized and values the postgraduate training and the newly acquired skills by the fellows. Figure 95 shows that **84.5% of the fellows agree or strongly agree with the statement that their management appreciates their skills and knowledge from the postgraduate training**. This high percentage underscores the relevance and value of the programme to partner institutions based on the fellows' perception. The results find differences between the programmes. On average **LRT fellows are more convinced that their management appreciates their acquired skills compared to GTP fellows and GEST fellows**. There is no significant difference between different cohorts suggesting that the perceived management appreciation does not depend on the time that has passed since graduation. These findings are mostly in line with the 2017 "Evaluation of UNU Programmes in Iceland", which found that the percentage of fellows who agree with this statement is highest among LRT fellows.

Figure 95: Percentage of fellows who think that their management appreciates the skills gained from the postgraduate training programme

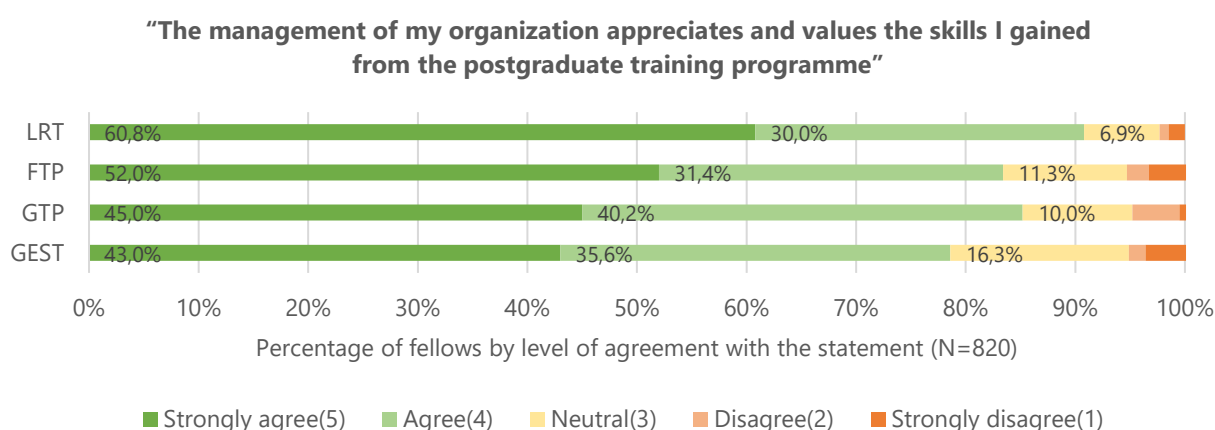
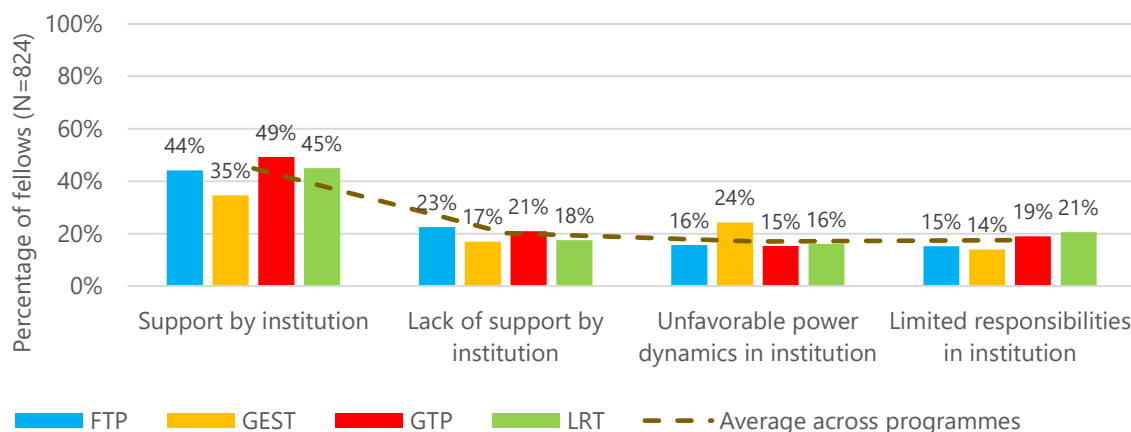


Figure 96 illustrates several other supporting or discouraging factors for knowledge and skills application in the partner institutions. Overall, **46.9% of the fellows report that they received support from their institution in applying the gained knowledge and skills after programme completion** while 25.3% of the fellows reported that the lack of institutional support hindered them in applying the knowledge. Generally, it seems that **GEST fellows feel less supported by their institutions** after completing programme, especially compared to GTP fellows. One of the reasons for GEST fellows to receive less support compared to other fellows might be unfavourable power dynamics related to gender norms as

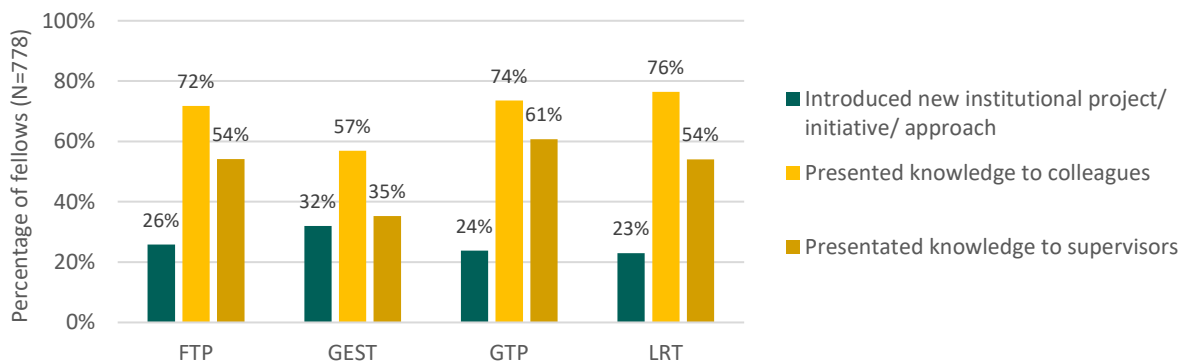
GEST fellows indicate this as a limiting factor around 10 percentage points more frequently than fellows from other training programs.

Figure 96: Institutional factors influencing knowledge application after programme completion



Moreover, figure 97 shows that **25.4% of the** fellows have used their skills from the postgraduate training programme to **introduce new initiatives, projects, programs, or approaches within their institution**. The share is highest among GEST fellows (32%) as many of them report to have **introduced institution policies supporting gender equality**. For example, one GEST fellow has ensured that a phrase on sexual harassment at work was included in their institutional policy. While GEST fellows are less active in disseminating their knowledge from the programme within their institution, fellows from the other programmes report **sharing their acquired knowledge with colleagues and supervisors** as a common approach of institutional knowledge diffusion.

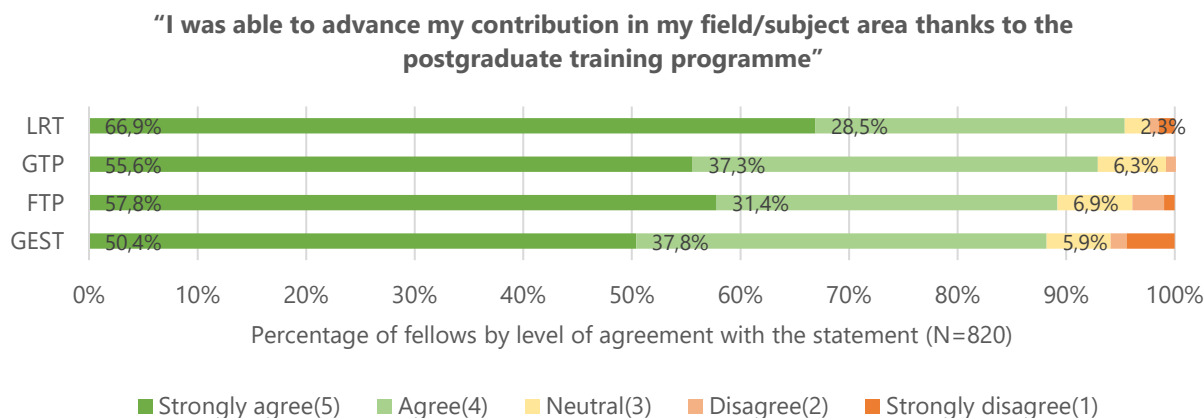
Figure 97: Institutional changes and results achieved by fellows



Technical field

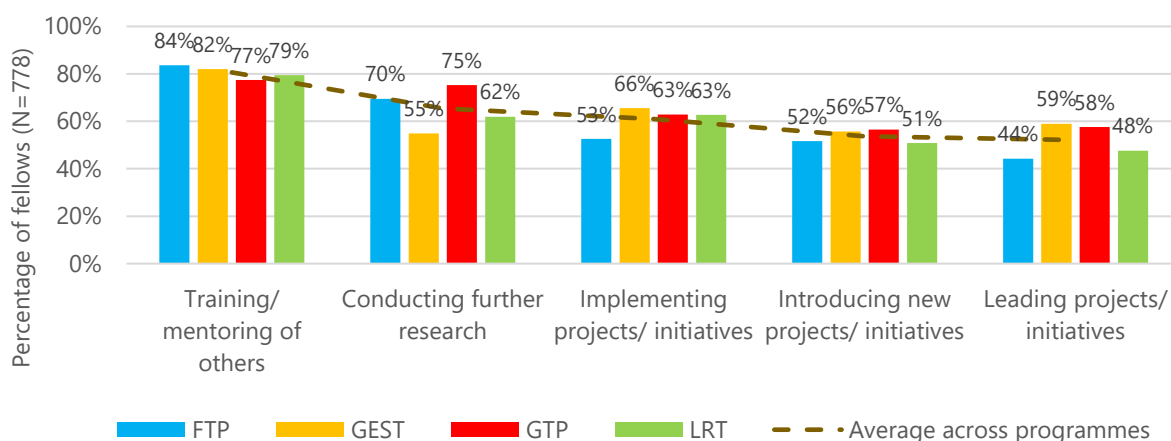
In addition to institutional level changes, the GRÓ International Centre aims to empower fellows to contribute to their technical field/subject area after programme completion. Figure 98 shows that on average **91.6% of the fellows** agree or strongly agree with the statement that they were able to **advance their contribution to their technical field/ subject** area due to the training programme. On average, the level of agreement is significantly higher among LRT fellows compared to GEST fellows (around 0.3 points on the 5-point Likert scale). Additionally, **82.2% of the fellows** agree or strongly agree that they have **contributed to other areas** besides their postgraduate programme focus. This percentage is relatively high across all programmes and cohorts, indicating that fellows contribute to their technical field irrespective of their graduation year.

Figure 98: Fellows' contribution to their field/ subject area due to the training programme



After programme completion, fellows mainly contribute to their technical field/subject area through **training and mentoring others** (80.6%), conducting further research (65.4%) and implementing projects or initiatives in the technical field (61%) as figure 99 illustrates. **GTP fellows are on average more engaged in further research** compared to GEST fellows. Around 50% of the fellows lead projects or initiatives after programme completion, although this share is lower for FTP fellows.

Figure 99: Types of contributions to the technical field

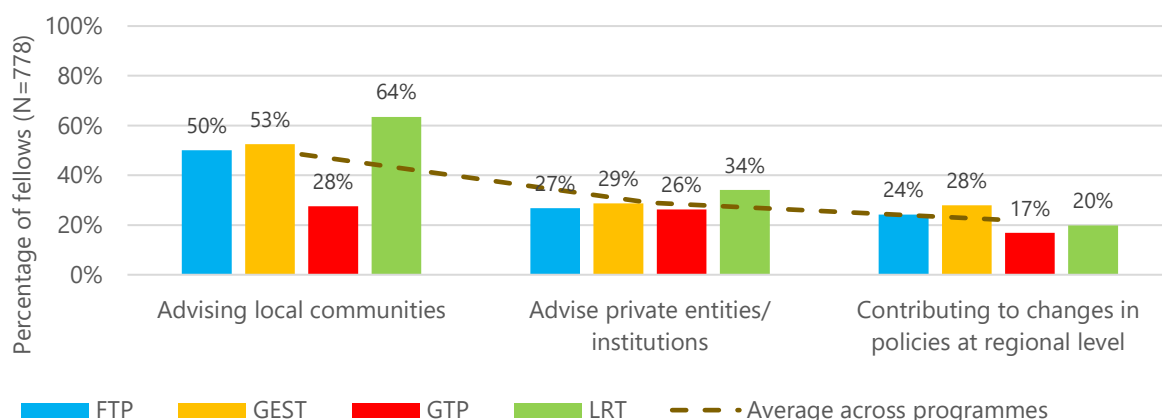


Survey respondents provided compelling examples of their contributions, showcasing the diverse ways in which fellows have applied their training and expertise to make **meaningful contributions to their respective technical fields**. One GTP fellow mentioned the engagement in institutional research and **publishing three papers in international journals**. An LRT fellow described building a **research team** in rangeland ecology and management which contributed to a nationwide **rangeland health monitoring system**. Another FTP fellow highlighted learning fishing gear design during the training in Iceland which led to **applying this specialised knowledge in constructing floating cages for fish farming** after programme completion.

Local/ regional level

In addition to technical and institutional contributions, fellows contribute to meso level results on the community and regional levels within their countries. Figure 100 below shows that fellows have **contributed to meso level results by advising local communities** (48.4%), advising private entities/ institutions (29.0%) and contributing to regional policy changes (22.2%). On average, **LRT fellows have been very engaged** in advising local communities, while GTP fellows were less involved.

Figure 100: Types of contributions at the local/ regional level after programme participation



Reported examples of meso level results demonstrate the fellows' commitment to fostering sustainable development, enhancing community capacity, and promoting inclusive and equitable practices. For example, an LRT fellow **established a multi stakeholder platform** for integrated planning, harmonization, and coordination of sustainable development efforts **at the district level**. A GEST fellow is contributing to local development by conducting **training for a local organization on gender responsive budgeting**. Some FTP fellows have also provided training for coastal communities on **sustainable conservation of the coastal and marine resources**.

1.4.3. MACRO LEVEL OUTCOMES

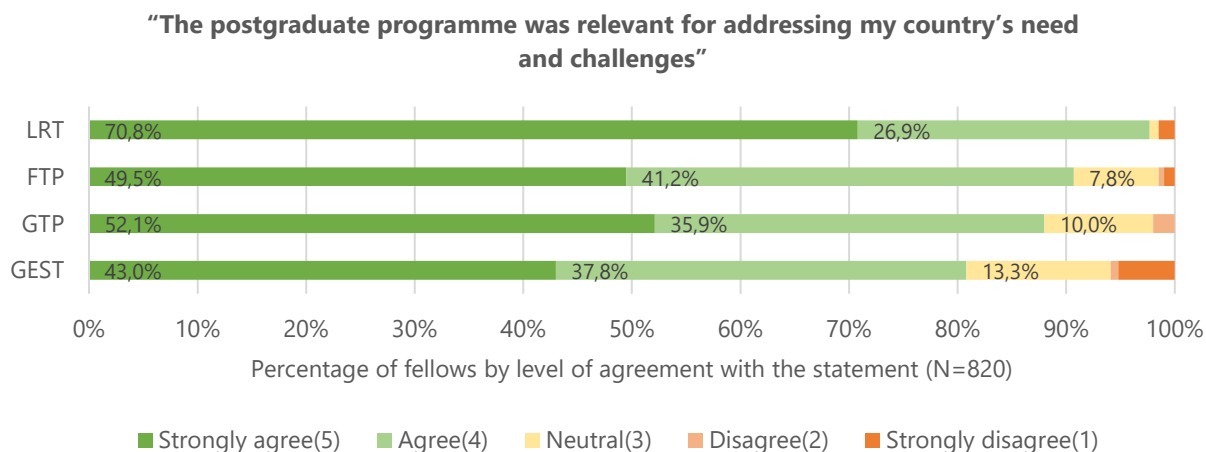
In addition to micro and meso level outcomes, the GRÓ International Centre aims to create macro level outcomes through capacitated fellows and institutions. While it is difficult to robustly measure macro level results attributed to GRÓ's activities, the survey results suggest that fellows contribute to this level to some extent. Overall, the fellows report that the **postgraduate training programme is relevant to the challenges and needs of the respective partner countries**, which is an important prerequisite for macro level results. However, many fellows perceive the political will to change within their country as not supportive, which might externally limit potential changes at this level. It becomes evident that **through high-level positions within their countries, many fellows contribute to changes on a national or international level**. The survey findings suggest that:

- **89.3% of the fellows agree** to the statement that the programme was **relevant for national needs and challenges**, which indicates that the training programmes are tailored to national contexts. The percentage of fellows who agree or strongly agree is **highest among fellows who resided in African countries** before training participation (92.7%).
- Only around **10% of the fellows indicate that there is a political will to change** that supports them to apply their knowledge from the programme.
- 39.6% of the fellows contributed to national or international debates and 36.9% advised policymakers or high-level decision makers. **GEST and FTP fellows were especially active advising policymakers or high-level decision makers**.

Country specific needs and challenges

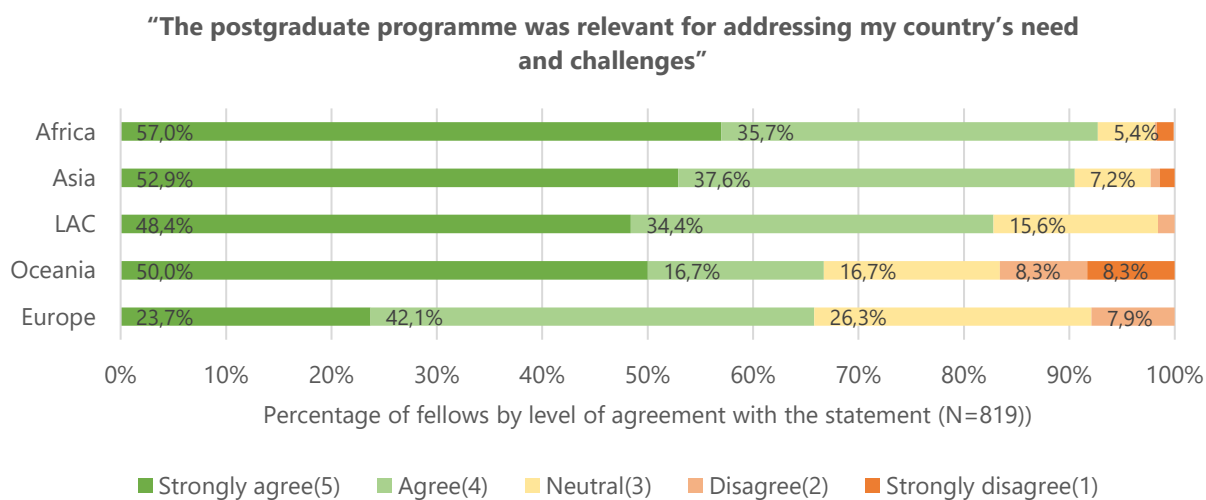
Macro level results depend on the extent to which the programme is relevant for national needs and challenges. Figure 101 illustrates that **89.3% of the fellows agree to the statement that the programme was relevant for national needs and challenges**, which indicates that the training programmes are tailored to national contexts based on the fellows' perception. Comparing the level of agreements between the different programmes, several statistically significant differences become apparent. The **percentage of fellows who agree or strongly agree is the largest among LRT fellows (97.7%)** followed by FTP (90.7%), GTP (88.0%) and lastly GEST (80.8%). There is no difference for the various cohorts, suggesting that the extent to which the fellows agree with the statement is irrespective of their graduation year.

Figure 101: Relevance of training programme for national needs and challenges by programme



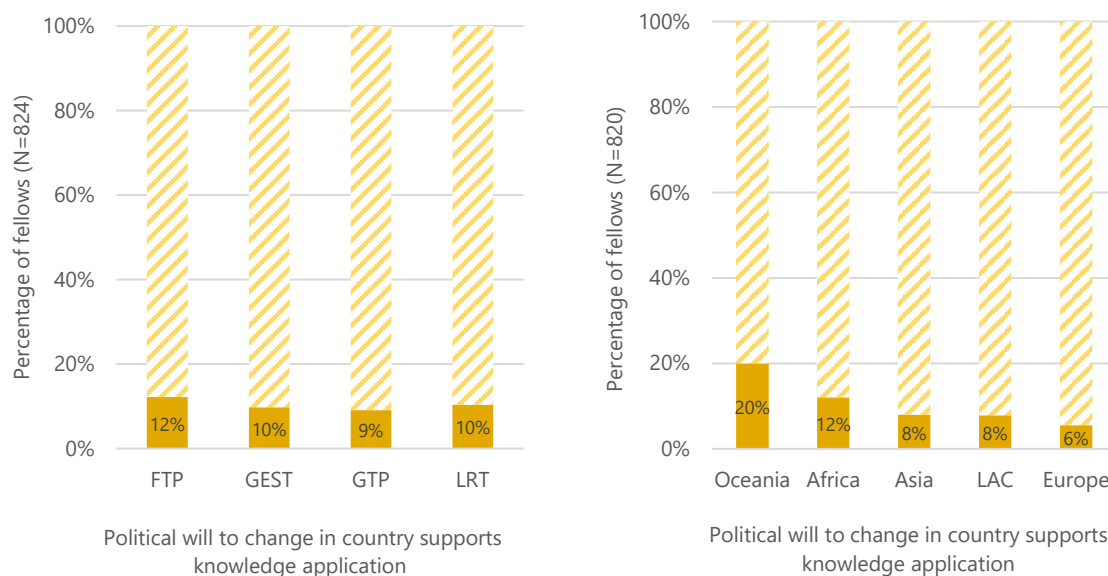
Comparing the extent to which fellows agree to this statement by the different regions of residence before programme participation, figure 102 shows that the percentage of fellows who agree or strongly agree is highest among fellows who resided in **African countries before training participation (92.7%), followed by Asian countries (90.5%) and countries from LAC (82.8%)**. The differences between Africa, Asia, and LAC compared to Europe are statistically significant, indicating that the training programme content is perceived as **less relevant for challenges in European countries** by the fellows.

Figure 102: Relevance of training programme for national needs and challenges by region of residence before training participation



Another **external success factor** for achieving macro level results is **the political will to change within partner countries**. Survey respondents were asked if the political will to change enabled them to apply their knowledge after programme completion. Figures 103 and 104 show the percentages of fellows who confirm that the political will in their country is a supporting factor, categorized by both programme and by residence region after programme completion. Results indicate there seems to be an **overall lack of political will to change** within the countries as **only around 10% of the fellows indicate that there is political will to change** which supports fellows to apply their knowledge from the programme. This is an overarching challenge as no statistically significant difference in political will to change can be observed between programmes or between regions.

Figure 103: Political will to change by programme Figure 104: Political will to change by region of residence after programme completion

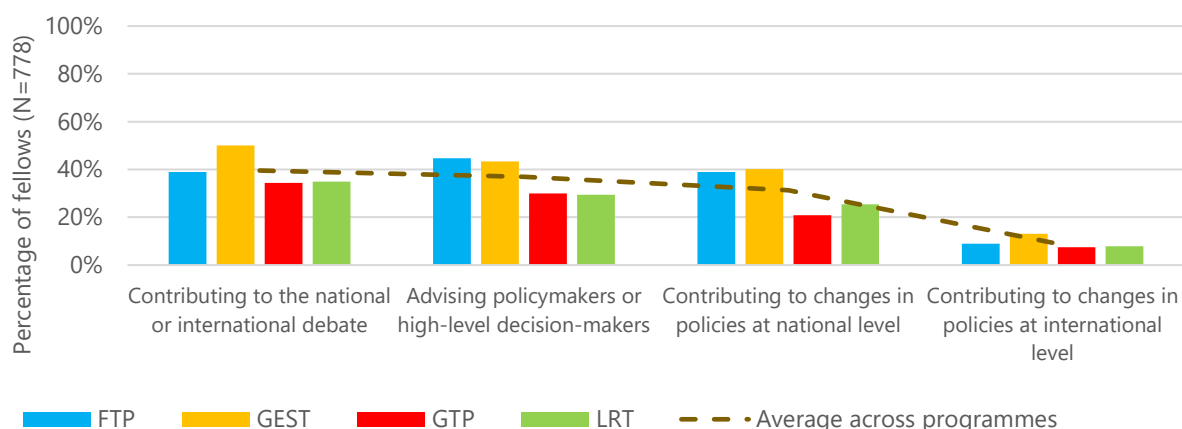


Policy contributions

Figure 105 shows that on average **39.6% of the fellows contributed to national or international debates, and 36.9% advised policymakers or high-level decision makers**. Furthermore, 31.4% of fellows contributed to changes in policies at the national level. These findings indicate that the GRÓ International Centre has the potential to contribute to outcome level results at the macro level through its fellows who are driving change after completing their training. **GEST fellows most often contribute to important debates, advise policymakers, and contribute to changes at national level and international level compared to the average fellow**. Also, **FTP fellows contribute relatively more often to policy advice and policy changes at the national level compared to other fellows**⁹. There are no significant differences in contributions across cohorts, indicating that fellows contribute to macro level changes irrespective of their graduation year. The 2017 "Evaluation of UNU Programmes in Iceland" also found that FTP fellows have been more active in advising policymakers while GTP fellows are less active in that regard.

⁹ The following differences are statistically significant at a 95% confidence level: GEST fellows are on average more likely to contribute to debates compared to GTP fellows, GEST and FTP fellows are on average more likely to advise policy makers/ high-level decision makers compared to GTP fellows, GEST and FTP fellows are more likely to contribute to policy changes at national level compared to LRT and GTP fellows.

Figure 105: Types of contributions at the policy level after programme participation



Reported examples of contributions at the macro level show that **many fellows hold influential positions within their countries** where they can potentially leverage their expertise to drive impactful contributions. For example, a GEST fellow developed a Gender and Equity handbook for the human capital development programme commissioned by **the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development in Uganda**. An LRT fellow is currently engaged in transboundary initiatives transferring water to the Republic of South Africa from the vast reserves of Lesotho. Furthermore, many fellows hold influential positions within their country that allow them to make impactful contributions at the macro level. These positions include for example: Technical assistant to the **Director of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Nigeria** (FTP); Senior Exploration Geologist at the **Geological Survey of Papua New Guinea** (GTP); and Development Cooperation Advisor for Water, Environment and Climate to the **Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Addis Ababa** (LRT).

1.5 IMPACT

Ultimately, the GRÓ International Centre aims to achieve **progress towards the SDGs through capable individuals and organisations** on the impact level. While it is not possible to robustly measure the impact of GRÓ's activities on national SDG progress, the survey captured the fellows' perspective on their individual SDG contribution through projects or initiatives. Fellows of the postgraduate training programme are crucial in initiating projects and programmes that contribute, according to the fellows' perception, to sustainable development in their home countries. The survey findings indicate that the **fellows are very active in implementing projects or initiatives that are linked to the SDGs**. Whether these SDG-related projects contribute to SDG progress cannot be assessed. Their contributions span policy advocacy, community engagement, research, and practical interventions, all demonstrating their commitment to sustainable development. The survey results find that:

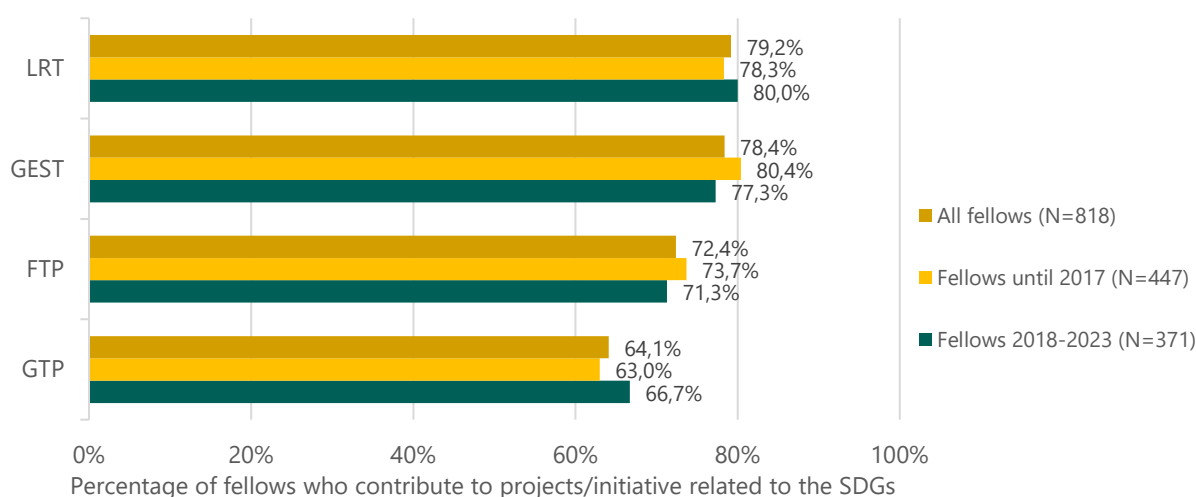
- **Overall, 70.9% of all survey respondents** report to have implemented projects, programmes and/or initiatives that are **linked to the SDGs**. The percentage is slightly higher for the 2018-2023 cohort, from which 73.1% report involvement in projects linked to the SDGs. The percentage of LRT and GEST fellows contributing to the SDGs through projects is significantly higher than the percentage of GTP fellows. Moreover, fellows living in African countries after programme completion have been found to be more likely to work in projects and initiatives related to the SDGs.
- Fellows mostly engage in initiatives and projects related to **SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy**, **SDG 13 Climate Action**, and **SDG 5 Gender Equality**. Among the **2018-2023 alumni**, contributions to **SDG 5, SDG 13, and SDG 2** were most common.
- Fellows report contributing to SDG advancement in their countries through **policy and advocacy** (e.g. developing gender responsive policies), specific **initiatives on renewable energy**, further **research on climate change impact**, and **community engagement** (e.g. training of women on clean water usage).

- The **technical focus of each training programme is reflected by the most frequently mentioned SDGs** addressed by programme fellows. For the 2018-2023 cohort, LRT fellows have made strides in progress towards SDGs on sustainability such as 13, 15, and 2, while GEST fellows have made significant contributions to inclusive equity through SDGs 5, 4, and 10. FTP fellows are engaged in initiatives linked to the sustainable blue economy in SDGs 14, 2, and 1, and GTP fellows are active in achieving climate resilience through SDGs 7, 13, and 5.
- Overall, most of the survey respondents **apply their training to advancing sustainable development** and addressing global challenges.

Projects and initiatives contributing to SDG progress

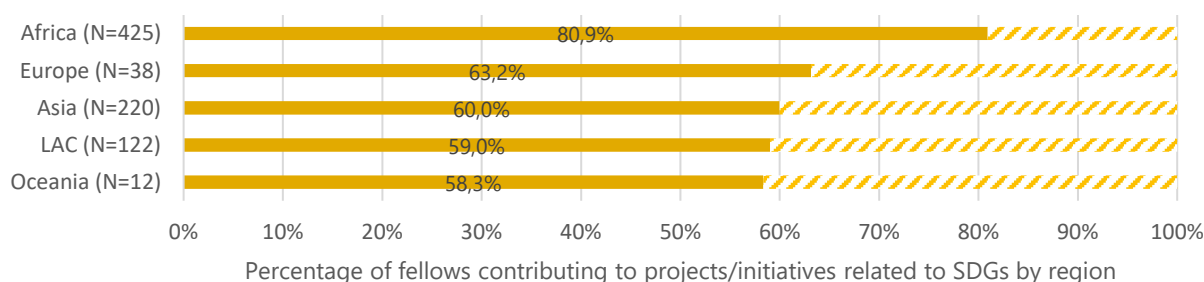
The survey results indicate that overall, **70.9% of all survey respondents report to have implemented projects, programmes and/or initiatives that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs**. Figure 106 shows the percentage of fellows who have contributed to the SDGs through initiatives and projects. Overall, the percentage of **fellows who contributed to the SDGs is highest among LRT fellows (79.2%) and GEST fellows (78.4%)** while it is statistically significantly lower for GTP fellows (64.1%). This means that the percentage of GTP fellows contributing to SDGs is up to 15 percentage points lower than for LRT and GEST fellows. The percentage of 2018-2023 fellows who contributed to the SDGs is 73.1%.

Figure 106: Percentage of fellows contributing to SDG achievement per programme and cohort



The comparison of contributions to achievement of the SDGs by region in Figure 107 indicates that the **percentage of fellows who report contributing to SDGs through projects is highest among those who are from African countries (80.9%)**. The difference is statistically significant for Asia and LAC, meaning that, on average, fellows from African countries contribute more to the SDGs than those from these two regions.

Figure 107: Percentage of fellows contributing to projects/initiatives related to SDGs by region of residence after programme completion



Areas of SDG contributions

Survey respondents were able to choose the five most important SDGs, which are linked to their projects and initiatives. Figure 108 visualizes which SDGs the 2018-2023 fellows most frequently indicated contributing to. Among the 271 fellows who contributed to the SDGs, 42.4% of fellows implemented activities related to **SDG 5 Gender Equality**, 37.3% implemented activities related to **SDG 13 Climate Action**, 30.3% to **SDG 2 Zero Hunger**, 27.7% **SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy**, and 24.0% **SDG 4 Quality Education**.

Figure 108: Projects and initiatives related to the SDGs based on frequencies of 2018-2023 fellows (N=271)



Figure 109 visualizes SDG contributions by all cohorts including those before the evaluation period. Among the 580 fellows who contributed to the SDGs, 39.1% of the fellows implemented activities related to **SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy**, 38.6% to **SDG 13 Climate Action**, 36.9% to **SDG 5 Gender Equality**, and 28.8% to **SDG 2 Zero Hunger**.

Figure 109: Projects and initiatives related to the SDGs based on frequencies (N=580)



Although the actual SDG progress through the fellows' initiatives is not measurable, survey participants had the opportunity to describe the ways they have contributed to the SDGs through relevant projects and initiatives. The **reported individual contributions of the fellows to SDG 7** range from technical projects like geothermal energy development and biogas production to policy advocacy and community training initiatives. For example, a fellow contributed to the expansion of geothermal power generation in Kenya through a project drilling geothermal wells. Another fellow supported the review and revision of Kenya's energy policy towards a sustainable energy policy. Fellows reported to **contribute to SDG 13** through advanced research and policy development as well as practical interventions and community engagement. Many fellows conduct research on the effects of climate change in their country such as one on the development of a scientific basis for the ecological condition, protection, and restoration of crisis foothill rangelands in Uzbekistan. Other fellows engage by serving as a youth delegate in the Africa Climate Mobility Programme focusing on the intersection of climate mobility and gender. The reported **contributions of the fellows to SDG 5** include policy advocacy, community empowerment, and research in cross-cutting sectors like water supply, sanitation, and environmental conservation. For example, GEST fellows were involved in the implementation of WASH programs through UNICEF in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Zimbabwe with attention to gender impacts.

Programme specific contributions to the SDGs

Due to the technical topics addressed in each training programme, fellows from each programme contribute to SDG achievement in many different ways. Figure 110 illustrates the five most important SDGs per programme for the 2018-2023 fellows, based on the percentage of fellows who report that they contribute to them.

LRT fellows report contributions to SDGs 13, 15, and 2 through a variety of projects and initiatives. 79.2% of all LRT survey participants engaged in projects/initiatives aimed at achieving the SDGs. Their efforts in climate mitigation and adaptation, research, and community training directly support SDG 13 by addressing the impacts of climate change and promoting resilience. Engagement by fellows in sustainable land management, ecosystem restoration, and conservation projects contribute to SDG 15 by protecting and restoring terrestrial ecosystems. Additionally, their work in promoting climate-smart agriculture, improving food production, and supporting food security initiatives aligns with SDG 2 in ensuring sustainable food systems.

Figure 110: Projects and initiatives related to the SDGs based on frequencies (N=271) by programme for



2018-2023 fellows

78.4% of all GEST survey participants were involved in projects directly addressing the SDGs. **GEST fellows mention contributions to SDGs 5, 4, and 10.** The fellows directly support the achievement of SDG 5 of promoting gender equality and empowerment through designing gender responsive policies, conducting research, and engaging in community-based education. They contribute to SDG 4 by ensuring equitable education through advocating for inclusive education policies, developing educational resources, and implementing community-based education initiatives. Additionally, their work in reducing inequalities, supporting marginalized groups, and enhancing inclusion aligns with SDG 10 to create equitable opportunities and reduce disparities.

FTP fellows report contributions to SDGs 14, 2, and 1 through a variety of projects and initiatives. 72.4% of the FTP survey participants report to have contributed to the SDGs through their initiatives. Their efforts in sustainable fisheries management, marine conservation, and aquaculture development directly support SDG 14 by promoting the sustainable use of marine resources. They promote food security and the corresponding achievement of SDG 2 through enhancing fish production, improving fish processing methods, and supporting community-based aquaculture. Additionally, their work in improving the livelihoods of fish farmers, designing alternative income projects, and building capacity in fishery communities aligns with SDG 1 as it helps to alleviate poverty and create sustainable economic opportunities for rural and coastal populations.

64.1% of the GTP survey participants were involved in initiatives related to the SDGs. **GTP fellows mention contributions to SDGs 7, 13, and 5** through efforts in geothermal energy development, policy advocacy, and community engagement. Their efforts chiefly supported SDG 7 by promoting affordable and clean energy solutions. They contribute to SDG 13 and address climate change through implementing climate mitigation and adaptation projects, conducting research, and participating in environmental conservation campaigns. Additionally, their work in inclusive hiring practices, mentoring and empowering women and girls, and forming gender-focused networks aligns with SDG 5 to enhance gender equality.

1.6 SUSTAINABILITY

The previous chapters outline that the fellows of the postgraduate training programme contribute to outcome level results and impact after programme completion, but the sustainability of these results is also critical. The **survey reached many fellows who graduated more than 20-40 years ago** which allows a more detailed analysis of long-term effects. Specifically, the sustainability assessment focuses on graduates who graduated ten or more years ago (cohorts before 2014) including 324 survey respondents in total. In addition, the sustainability assessment identifies factors that drive micro, meso, and macro level changes through linear multivariate regression models. The findings suggest the following:

- **81.8% of fellows are still working in the same technical field in 2024** or have worked in that field until retirement. This indicates that, even after at least decades, fellows continue to contribute to the same technical area in which they have been trained in Iceland.
- In 2024, **86.4% of the fellows who graduated before 2014 are still residing in the same region** of residency before training programme participation. This indicates that most fellows are contributing to changes within their home country and region rather than migrating to others.
- The analysis of influencing factors indicates that **fellows who feel that their skills are being appreciated by their management have a higher chance of contributing to the SDGs**, advising policymakers and local communities, and rating their professional career advancement higher.

Long-term retention in the trained technical fields

One key factor in sustained results refers to the technical field/subject area of fellows. Figure 111 illustrates that among fellows who graduated before 2014, 81.8% are still working in the same technical field/subject area in 2024 (or have worked in that field until retirement). This indicates that **even after decades, fellows continue to contribute to the same technical area in which they have been trained in Iceland**. This indicates that the training programme is sustainable in fellows continuing to cultivate and utilize their expertise after training.

Figure 111: Technical field of fellows who graduated before 2014

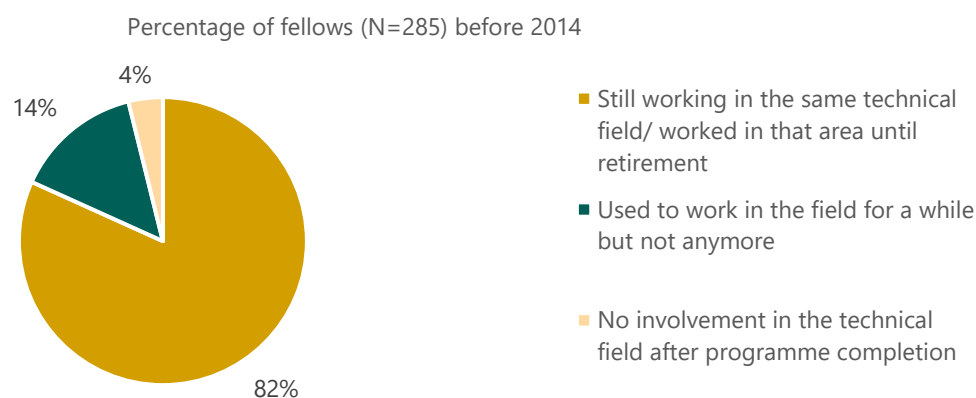
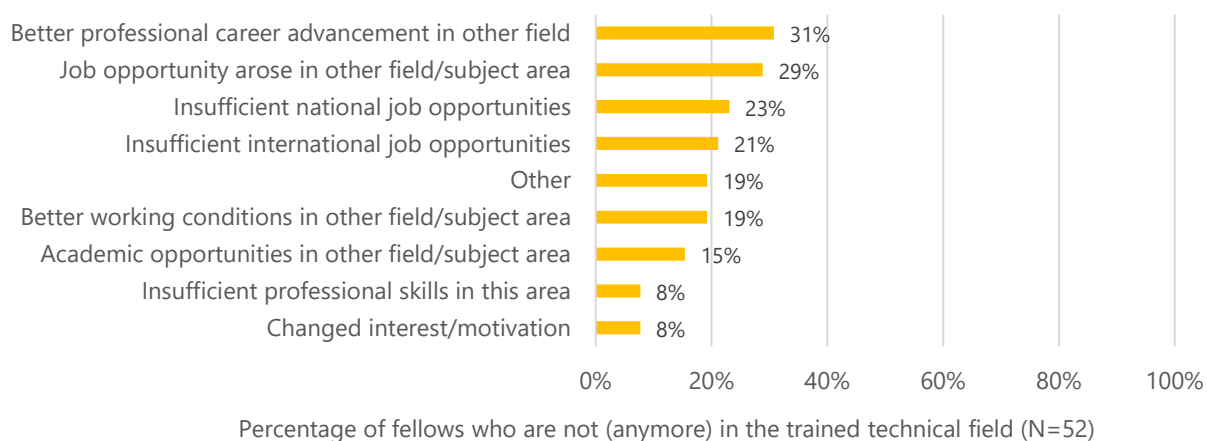


Figure 112 illustrates the reasons for fellows who left their technical field or have not been worked in that field after graduation. The main reason for fellows to not work in their field of training are **better professional career advancement options in other technical fields (30.8%) followed by job opportunities in other fields (28.9%)** and a lack of national or international job opportunities in that field (around 20%). Very few fellows change their interest in the field or report not having sufficient skills to match job requirements in that field.

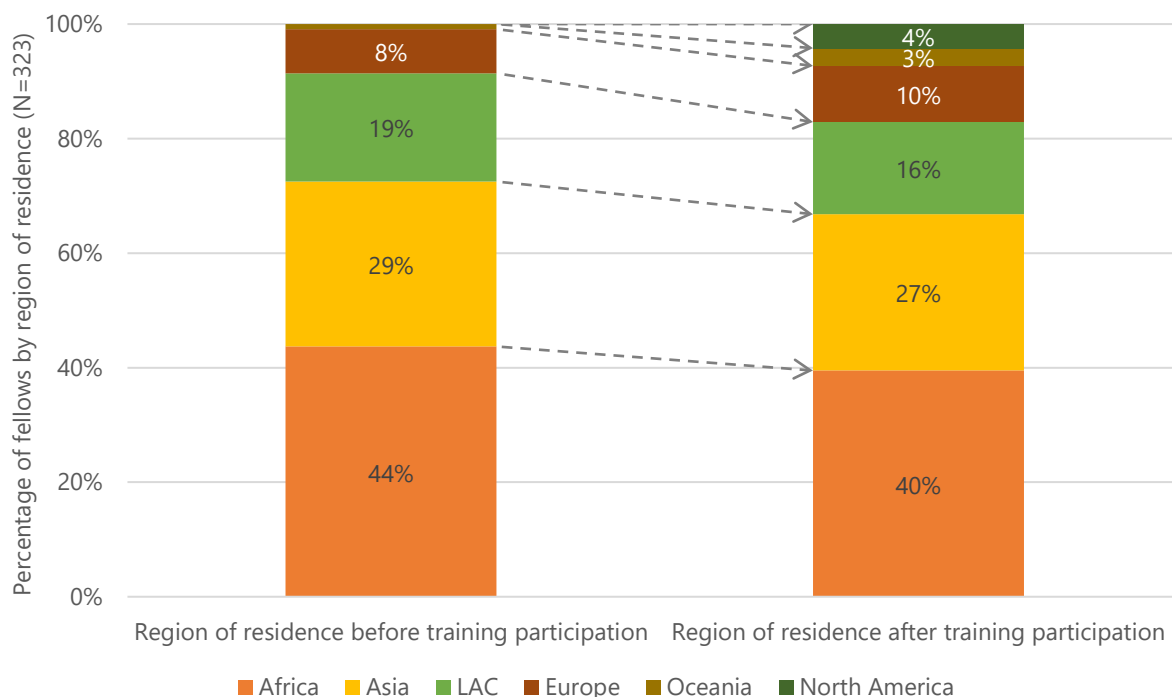
Figure 112: Reasons for leaving or not working in the technical training field for fellows who graduated before 2014



Long-term retention in the geographical region

The GRÓ International Centre aims to empower individuals and institutions in their partner countries to contribute to positive changes within these countries. The extent to which fellows remain within their country and region thus is a critical sustainability factor. Most fellows who graduated before 2014 are still living in the same country contributing to changes there. **In 2024, 86.4% of the fellows who graduate before 2014 are still residing in the same region compared to their residency before training programme participation.** This indicated that most fellows are contributing to changes within their initial region rather than migrating to others. Figure 113 illustrates the percentage of fellows who graduated before 2014 by region of residence before training participation and now. It shows that **the geographical distribution has not changed a lot after programme completion.** The percentage of fellows living in African countries (-4 percentage points), LAC countries (-3 percentage points) and Asian countries (-2 percentage points) has slightly decreased while the percentage of fellows living in North America (+ 4 percentage points), Oceania and Europe (both +2 percentage points) slightly increased. The most common destination countries among fellows who graduated before 2014 and changed their region of residence are the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Iceland, and Canada.

Figure 113: Region of residence before training programme participation and now for cohorts before 2014



Factors influencing outcomes and impact

To investigate the factors influencing outcome level and impact level results, a multivariate linear regression analysis was conducted including all former fellows. Multivariate regression is a statistical technique used to **understand the relationship between one outcome variable and several independent variables**. It helps in examining how multiple factors simultaneously influence an outcome of interest. In total, four multivariate linear regression analyses are conducted to assess the 1.) Impact level, 2.) Outcome macro level, 3.) Outcome meso level and 4.) Outcome micro level. Table 65 shows which outcome variables were used and which independent influencing factors were included.

Table 65: Outcome variables and influencing factors used in the statistical analysis

RESULTS LEVEL	OUTCOME VARIABLE	INFLUENCING FACOTRS
Impact	SDG contribution (yes/no)	The technical programme, residence region after graduation, scholarship recipient, gender, graduation year, rating of skills improvement, rating of programme quality, sector of work after programme completion, perceived programme relevance for country needs, perceived management appreciation of skills, the political will to change, unfavourable power dynamics in institution
Macro level outcomes	Advising policy/ high-level decision makers (yes/no)	
Meso level outcomes	Advising local communities (yes/no)	
Micro level outcomes	Career advancement (1-5 Likert-scale)	

The multivariate linear regression analysis suggests that there are **statistically significant correlations between the outcome variables and several of the influencing factors**. It is important to note that this analysis is suitable to identify statistically significant correlations between an outcome and influencing variables, but it is not suitable to identify causalities. For the different outcome variables, the regression analysis suggests that:

Impact: Contribution to SDGs

- The **region of residence** has a statistically significant correlation with contribution to the SDGs, suggesting that the region in which a fellow resides after the programme correlated with the chance that a fellow contributes to the SDGs.
- Being a **GTP fellow** is negatively associated with the probability of reporting contribution to the SDGs, which indicates that these fellows are less likely to report contributing to the SDGs.
- Participation in any **networking activity** is positively correlated with contribution to the SDGs, which indicates that fellows who engage in networking are also more likely to contribute to the SDGs.
- The **political will** to change in a country is positively associated with contribution to the SDGs, which indicates that fellows who reside in countries in which they think the political will to change is supportive are more likely to contribute to the SDGs.

Macro level outcomes: Advising policy/high-level decision makers

- Being a **GTP or LRT** fellow is negatively associated with advice to policy/high-level decision makers suggesting that these fellows are less likely to give advice at this level.
- The **graduation year** is negatively associated with giving advice to policy/high-level decision makers which indicates that younger cohorts are less likely to give that advice.
- A **fellow's gender** has a statistically significant correlation with the likelihood of giving policy advice suggesting that male fellows are more likely to give that advice.
- The **perceived appreciation of skills by the institution management** is positively correlated with policy advice, which suggests that fellows who experience higher appreciation by their management are more likely to give advice to policy/high-level decision makers.
- **Insufficient resources** for project implementation are negatively correlated with giving advice to policymakers, which suggests that fellows who indicate a lack of resources are also less likely to give policy advice.

Meso level outcomes: Advising local communities

- Being a **GTP fellow** is negatively associated with giving community advice, which indicates that these fellows are less likely to give advice at this level.
- A **fellow's gender** has a statistically significant correlation with the likelihood of giving advice to local communities, showing male fellows are more likely to give that advice.
- The **perceived appreciation of skills by the institution management** is positively correlated with local community advice, which suggests that fellows who experience higher appreciation by their management are more likely to give advice to local communities.
- The **political will** to change in a country is positively associated with advising local communities, which indicates that fellows who reside in countries in which they think the political will to change is supportive are more likely to give that advice.

Meso level outcomes: Career advancement

- Receiving a **scholarship** funded by GRÓ/UNU is associated with a higher career advancement score.
- A higher average **rating of skills improvement** due to the programme is associated with a higher career advancement score.
- The **sector of work after programme completion** significantly correlated with the career advancement score.
- The **perceived appreciation of skills by the institution management** is positively correlated with career advancement, which suggests that fellows who experience higher appreciation by their management rate their career advancement higher.

1.7 CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate a high level of **effectiveness of the training programmes between 2018 and 2023** across various dimensions, based on the perception of fellows from the postgraduate training programme. In terms of outputs, the training programs successfully equipped fellows with advanced technical skills and knowledge elevating professional competence. The outcomes indicated practical application of acquired skills through contributions to policy development, advisory roles, and community-based initiatives. The potential contribution to impact level results is evident in the

widespread involvement of fellows in projects and initiatives related to the SDGs as reported by fellows. Fellows have been instrumental in driving projects and initiatives related to climate change, gender equality, sustainable fisheries, clean energy, and more. Key assumptions about GRÓ's ToC were mostly validated. The data highlights the potential sustainability of these results as a significant proportion of fellows **continues to work in their trained technical fields and their home countries even decades after graduation**, indicating long-term retention and application of their skills.

Survey respondents had the chance to provide feedback in a final note. In total, **314 respondents used the opportunity to provide their open feedback**. The qualitative content analysis identified the following common topics:

- **Appreciation for the Programme's Impact:** Across all programmes, fellows expressed profound gratitude for the training they received and its significant impact on their professional development and personal growth.
- **Professional and Personal Growth:** Fellows consistently reported that the programmes had a substantial positive effect on their professional careers and personal development. They noted substantial improvements in their knowledge, skills, and capabilities — essential markers of an effective training program.
- **Global Networking and Collaboration:** Many fellows noted the value of the networking opportunities provided by the programmes. The ability to connect with professionals from around the world not only enriched their learning experience but also fostered global collaboration which is crucial for addressing international challenges.
- **Cultural and Scholarly Exchange:** Fellows appreciated the cultural exchanges and the scholarly environment attained through participation in the programmes. These elements enhanced their overall learning experience and contributed to a broader understanding of global perspectives.
- **Suggestions for Extended Program Duration:** Many fellows across the programmes suggested extending the duration of the training. They felt that a longer duration could provide a deeper understanding of complex subjects.
- **Request for More Practical and Field Experiences:** Fellows from various programmes expressed a desire for more practical training and real-world applications of their learning. They highlighted the importance of hands-on experiences and fieldwork to effectively apply their skills in their respective fields.
- **Enhanced Support and Follow-Up:** There was a common request for continued support after the programme's completion. Fellows suggested follow-up visits, ongoing technical support, and continuous professional development opportunities to help them apply their newly acquired skills effectively back in their home countries.
- **Creation of Stronger Alumni Networks:** Fellows advocated for more robust alumni networks through structured opportunities such as alumni gatherings, webinars, and online forums that would enable them to stay connected with peers and leverage collective expertise.
- **Opportunities for further Studies and Scholarships:** Many fellows expressed a desire for expanded opportunities to pursue further studies, such as Master's or PhD programs, related to their training.
- **Inclusion and Diversity:** Some fellows pointed out the need for more inclusivity and diversity among programme participants. They suggested that the programme should ensure a wider representation from different geographic and professional backgrounds to enrich the learning environment and degree of cultural exchange.
- **Improvements in Program Content and Structure:** Suggestions were made to update and diversify the curriculum to include cutting-edge topics and ensure content is relevant to the current global context.

ANNEX 14 PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE OF THE GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMMES

A. FTP

\ FTP FELLOWS AT THE MARINE AND FRESHWATER RESEARCH INSTITUTE



Photo 1 and Photo 2: Building of the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute, 16 April 2024



Photo 3: Fishing boat of the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute, 16 April 2024



Photo 4: GRÓ FTP and UNESCO branding at the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute, 16 April 2024



Photo 5: Lounge for FTP fellows at the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute, 16 April 2024



Photo 6: Linking UNESCO Learning for a Sustainable Future Framework with GRÓ FTP objectives, 16 April 2024



Photo 7: FGD with current FTP fellows at the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute, 16 April 2024



Photo 8: FTP fellows writing final research paper at the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute, 16 April 2024



Photo 9: FGD with current FTP fellows at the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute, 13 May 2024



Photo 10: FTP Heads of lines (Sustainable Aquaculture; Processing, and Aquatic Resources Assessment and Monitoring), 14 May 2024



Photo 11: FTP Supervisors and Lecturers (Aquatic Resources Assessment and Monitoring; Fisheries Policy and Management), 15 May 2024

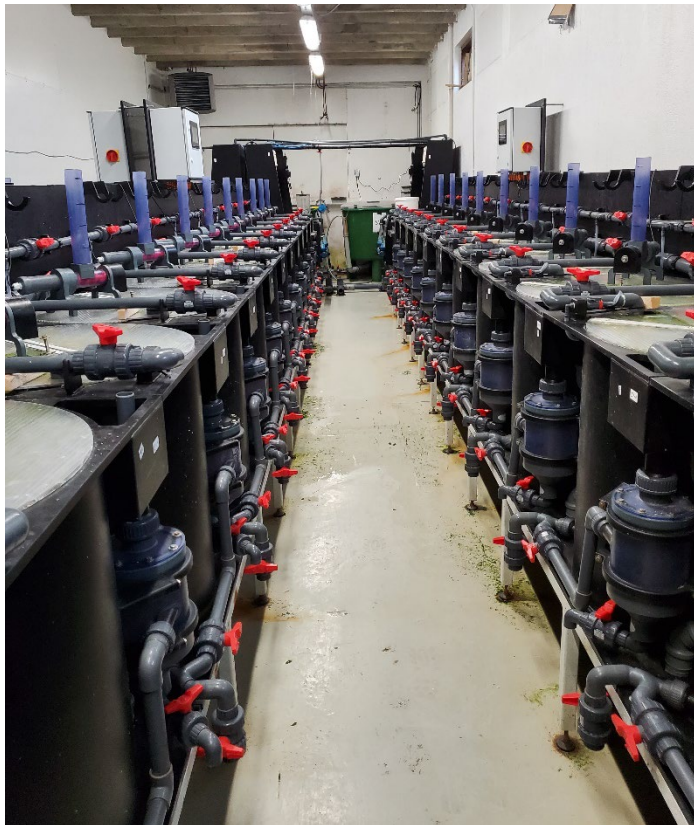


Photo 12: Lab at Matís Aquaculture Research Station (MARS), 16 May 2024



Photo 13: Lab at Matís- Food Research and Biotechnology, 16 May 2024



Photo 14: Lab at Matís- Food Research and Biotechnology, 16 May 2024



Photo 15: Classroom at Matis- Food Research and Biotechnology, 16 May 2024

\ PHOTOS TAKEN DURING DATA COLLECTION IN JAMAICA



Photo 16: Regional Headquarters of the University of the West Indies; Kingston, Jamaica, 04 March 2024



Photo 17: Former FTP fellow at an interview; Kingston, Jamaica, 04 March 2024



Photo 18: Former FTP fellow at an interview, Aquaculture Division, National Fisheries Authority; Spanish Town, St. Catherine, Jamiaca, 05 March 2024



Photo 19: Former FTP fellows being interviewed, Aquaculture Division, National Fisheries Authority; Spanish Town, St. Catherine, Jamiaca, 05 March 2024



Photo 20: Former FTP fellows at the Aquaculture Division, National Fisheries Authority; Spanish Town, St. Catherine, Jamiaca, 05 March 2024



Photo 21 and Photo 22: Hatchery facility, Spanish Town, St. Catherine, Jamiaca, 05 March 2024



Photo 23: Former FTP fellow at the Captures Fisheries Division, National Fisheries Authority; Kingston, Jamiaca, 06 March 2024



Photo 24: Meeting with the National Fisheries Authorities; Kingston, Jamaica, 07 March 2024



Photo 25: Old Harbor, landing site; St. Catherine, Jamaica, 08 March 2024



Photo 26: Fish market at Old Harbor; St. Catherine, Jamaica, 08 March 2024



Photo 27: Former FTP fellow, at Old Harbor landing site; St. Catherine, Jamaica, 08 March 2024



Photo 28: Selling the catch at Old Harbor landing site; St. Catherine, Jamaica, 08 March 2024



Photo 29: Fish vendors in Hellshire fishing village; St. Catherine, Jamaica, 08 March 2024

B. GEST

\ GEST FELLOWS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND (HÍ)



Photo 30 and Photo 31: FGDs with Current GEST Fellows at the HÍ, 17 April 2024

C. GTP

\ GTP SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS AT ICELAND GEOSURVEY (ÍSOR)



Photo 32: ÍSOR Building in Iceland, 15 April 2024



Photo 33: ÍSOR Building in Iceland is Branded GRÓ GTP and UNESCO, 15 April 2024



Photo 34: FGD with Former GTP Fellows and Current MA/PhD Scholarship Recipients, 15 April 2024

b. Photos taken during data collection in El Salvador



Photo 35: Members of a FGD with alumni of the diploma and employees of LaGeo, 6 Feb 2024



Photo 36 and Photo 37: Short Course Field Visit to a Geothermal power plant, 8 Feb 2024

Photo 38, Photo 39, Photo 40 and Photo 41: Short Course Participants in El Salvador attending lectures and conducting practical exercise, 6 and 7 Feb 2024



Photo 42: Women in Geothermal Session at the Short Course in El Salvador, 10 Feb 2024



Photo 43, Photo 44, Photo 45 and Photo 46: Short Course Practical Exercise, 6 Feb 2024



Photo 47, Photo 48: Participants of the short course proudly taking pictures with the course organizer after the diploma ceremony, 10 Feb 2024



Photo 49: Short Course Participants proudly showing their attendance certificate in El Salvador, 10 Feb 2024

D. LRT

\ LRT FELLOWS AT THE AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND (LBHÍ)



Photo 50: Building of the LBHÍ Branded with GRÓ LRT, 19 April 2024



Photo 51: Informal FGD with Current LRT Fellows at the LBHÍ, 19 April 2024



Photo 52: LRT Fellows Presents Group Work on Community Development of an Icelandic village using Different Development Planning and Capacity Development Methods in their Class Room at the LBHÍ, 19 April 2024

\ PHOTOS TAKEN DURING DATA COLLECTION IN UGANDA



Photo 53: Entrance of the School of Forestry, Environmental and Geographical Sciences of Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda.



Photo 54: KII with Prof. Dr. Gerald Eilu, (left) and Dr. Lawrence Orikiriza (right) on the campus of Makerere University, 15 April 2024.



Photo 55: KII with Dr. Jerome Lugumira at Kabira Country Club, 16 April 2024.



Photo 56: KII with Dr. Daniel Waiswa at SFECS, 16 April 2024.



Photo 57: FGD with Ugandan LRT alumni at SFECS, 17 April 2024.



Photo 58: KII with Teddy Nabwire (right) and Vincent Ogal (left) at the UNESCO project office, 18 April 2024.



Photo 59: KII with Dr. Enock Sekubwe at SFECS, 19 April 2024.