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Terms of Reference

External Evaluation of GRÓ
International Centre for
Capacity Development,
Sustainability and Societal
Change

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Background

The GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Societal Change was established on January 1st 2020 and operates under the auspices of UNESCO as a Category 2 Centre based in Iceland. It is the first multi-disciplinary Category 2 Centre at UNESCO.

Four training programmes are operated by GRÓ:

- [Geothermal Training Programme](#) (GRÓ GTP), established in 1979, is hosted at Iceland GeoSurvey (ÍSOR). GRÓ GTP promotes the utilisation and sustainable management of reliable, economically viable, and environmentally sound geothermal energy resources. The director of GRÓ GTP is Dr. Guðni Axelsson.
- [Fisheries Training Programme](#) (GRÓ FTP), established in 1997, is hosted at the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute. GRÓ FTP promotes sustainable use of living aquatic resources in less developed countries. The director of GRÓ FTP is Þór Heiðar Ásgeirsson.
- [Land Restoration Training Programme](#) (GRÓ LRT), established in 2007, is hosted by the Agricultural University of Iceland. GRÓ LRT focuses on combatting land degradation, restoring degraded land and promoting sustainable land management. The director of GRÓ LRT is Dr. Sjöfn Vilhelmsdóttir.
- [Gender Studies and Training Programme](#) (GRÓ GEST), established in 2009, is hosted by the University of Iceland. GRÓ GEST uses a multidisciplinary approach to promote gender equality and social justice in low income, conflict and post-conflict countries. The director of GRÓ GEST is Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir.

The organizational layout of GRÓ is set forth in figure 1. The GRÓ Centre operates under its own legal identity as a ministerial agency and is guided and overseen by a Governing Board, appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland. Regulation [No. 1260, adopted on 18 December 2019](#) applies to the operations of GRÓ – Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change. The Centre operates on the basis of [Act No. 121/2008 on Iceland's International Development Cooperation](#), [Act No. 115/2011 on the Government Offices of Iceland](#),¹ the [Public Finance Act No. 123/2015](#), [Iceland's policy for international development cooperation](#)² and the UN Sustainable Development Goals and international obligations.

¹ See article 17 on special units and ministerial agencies.

² The policy covers the years 2018 to 2023. A new policy has been formulated and has been through public consultation process. A resolution for a new policy 2024 to 2028 will be presented before parliament in its fall session, with a potential to be approved by the end of year 2023. The new policy will be provided to consultants once approved.

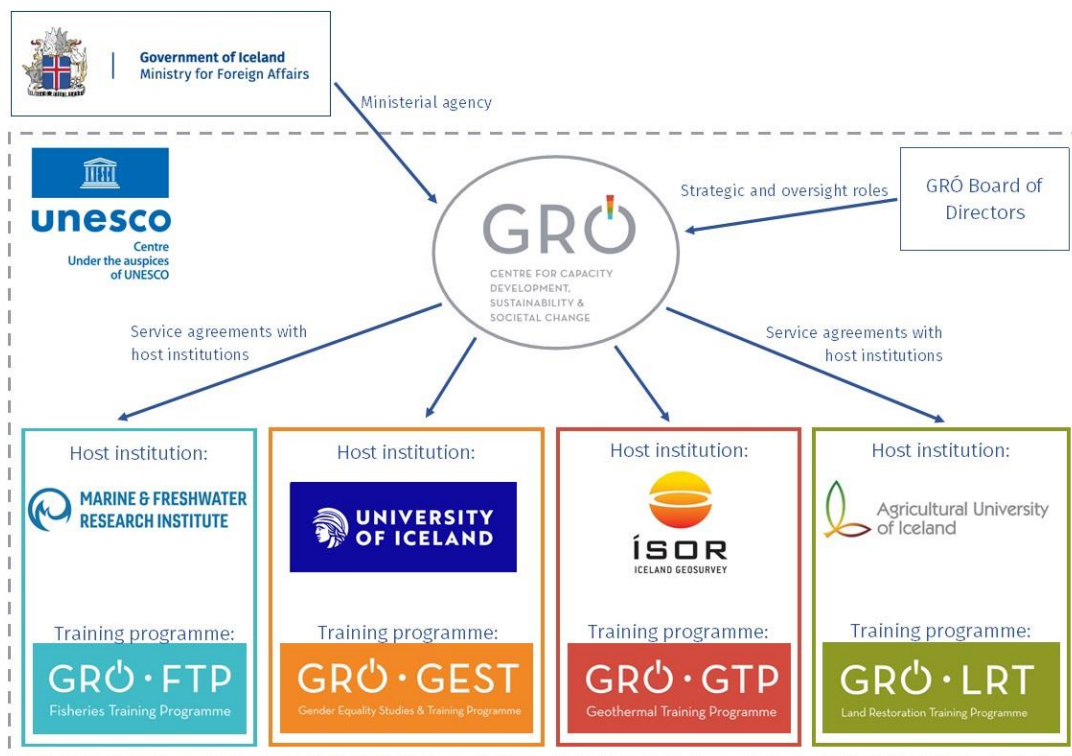


Figure 1 GRÓ organizational layout

The GRÓ Centre is led by a Director General, whose offices are within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and who reports directly to the Permanent Secretary of State. The Centre has service agreements with the four institutions that host the programmes. Current service agreements 2020/1–2023 are coming to an end by the end of the year, with renewals pending.

The four training programmes have been an important part of Iceland’s development cooperation portfolio for decades. In addition to the core funding provided by the government of Iceland, external funding is obtained by the GRÓ programmes, mainly through counterpart contributions from partner institutions, grants and by participation in international projects. MFA contributions to the programmes from 2010 to 2022 equalled roughly 7.848 million ISK³ and contributions in the year 2022 amounted to just over 791 million ISK. The division of contributions to each of the programmes is displayed in figure 2.

³ Individual, project-based contributions, MFA administration, GRÓ running costs and evaluation costs are excluded.

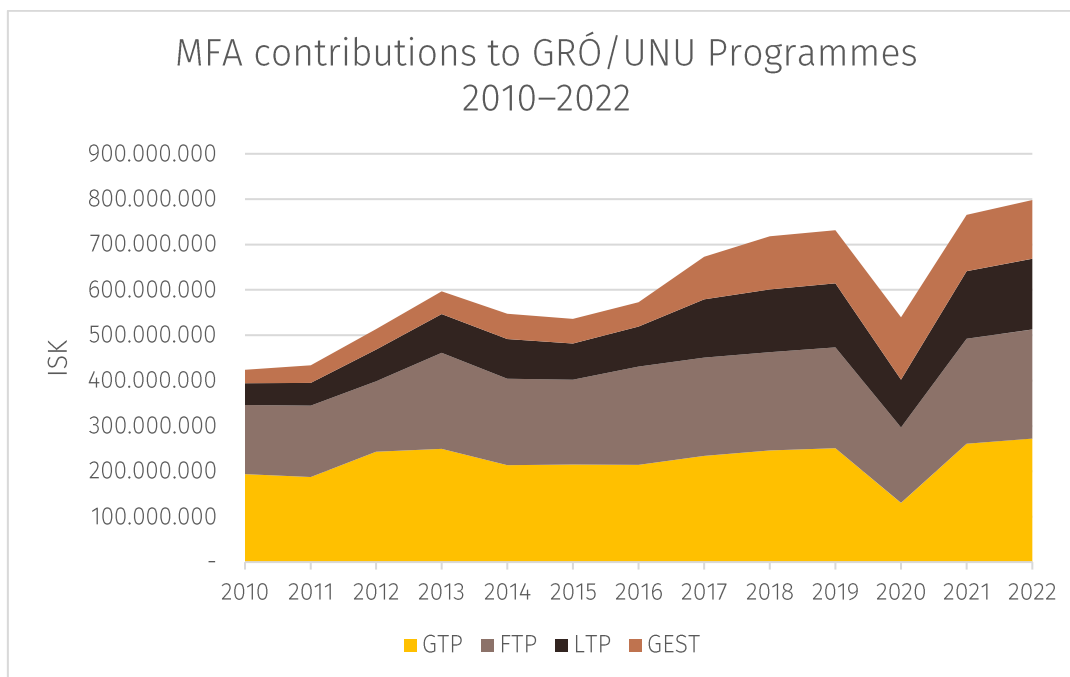


Figure 2 MFA contributions to GRÓ 2010–2022⁴

As is evident, the operations of the programmes were significantly disrupted in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the exception of GEST, the programmes could not invite fellows to Iceland that year. GEST fellows arrived in Iceland at the beginning of that year, and some additional costs occurred as it remained difficult for fellows to return to their home countries.

Important changes were made as regards the institutional arrangements of the programmes at the beginning of year 2020, but previously they had operated as a part of the United Nations University (UNU). In 2018, a steering group was formed within the MFA which submitted recommendations for a new arrangement, which included a new collaborative UN agency. Collaboration with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was formalized, and simultaneously the GRÓ Centre was established on 1 January 2020. The Centre operates as a Category II institution under the auspices of UNESCO. Category 2 institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO are a global network of institutions of excellence in UNESCO's domains of competence. Given their expertise, these institutes and centres contribute to the implementation of UNESCO's strategic priorities, programmes, and global development agendas, through international and regional cooperation, research, knowledge creation, policy advice, and capacity development. Such institutions are independent of UNESCO but may leverage its international reach and convening powers. In November 2019, [a new strategy for category 2 institutes and centres](#), was adopted. Only existing institutions with their own legal personality and a proven track record of excellence of at least two years in UNESCO's fields of competence could be proposed for C2C status. This had

⁴ Nominal amounts per year. This amounts to over 5.5 million USD in current exchange rates.

a bearing on the decision to form GRÓ as a legal entity, after a feasibility study had been conducted. GRÓ is also required to submit a yearly annual report on its activities using a standard reporting format. A representative from UNESCO sits on the GRÓ Board.

Before, the MFA had service agreements with four institutions that served as hosts for each training programme. The host institutions operate within their respective fields of expertise, gender equality, fisheries, geothermal energy and land restoration. After the organizational change, the GRÓ Centre has similar service agreements with the host institutions, and receives annually funding from the MFA, as a part of the ODA budget managed by the MFA.

The aforementioned steering group also suggested that a financial audit should be made on the programmes. An audit of the GTP was conducted in 2018 with a final report in January 2019. That year audits of the remaining three programmes, FTP, GEST and LRT, were implemented with a final report issued in February 2020. In 2022, audits were conducted of all four programmes, and the corresponding management response process is currently underway.

Some evaluative work has also been undertaken for and by the programmes in recent years. The last [comprehensive evaluation was undertaken in 2017](#), and an evaluation of the [GRÓ post-graduate scholarship programme](#) was conducted earlier in the year 2023. Other noteworthy evaluations from the past are an [external evaluation of GEST](#) (2013), [evaluation of GEST short course on gender and climate change](#) (2013), [LRT mid-term review](#) (2008), and [FTP evaluation](#) (2004). Additionally, some scholarly papers, particularly those published by FTP and GTP fellows and staff, also offer valuable insight into the work and results of the programmes, such as [training activities offered on-site in developing countries](#) (2015), and [capacity building for geothermal energy development](#) (2015).⁵

1.1 Overall Objectives and Outputs

The Development Objective (Goal) of *The GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change* is to strengthen individual, organisational and institutional, capacities in developing and conflict/post-conflict countries to deliver development results in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This work is carried out through capacity development training programmes with a focus on the four aforementioned thematic areas.

[GRÓ Theory of Change](#) covers the period 2022-2027. However, the pathway of change, impact, outcome and outputs align closely with the work of the four training programmes in the past years and will thus be applied as a point of reference for the evaluation, where the primary timeframe for evaluation scope is the period 2020-2023.

To achieve the intended outputs and outcomes the GRÓ Programmes apply the intervention strategies described below in sections 2.2.1 to 2.2.8. All four Programmes use these strategies, but to varying extents. While the basic strategies are the same, there are, however, some variations between the Programmes when it comes to implementation. The strategy

⁵ Some more recent work from 2022 and 2023 may also be relevant.

descriptions below are therefore general, with the major programme specific deviations described separately in Annexes 1 and 2. GRÓ's pathway of change: Impact, outcome and outputs.

As per the Theory of Change for the GRÓ Centre, set forth in Annex 1, GRÓ will work to achieve the changes aimed for by applying the strategies described below.

1.1.1 Impact:

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

1.1.2 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.

1.1.3 Outputs:

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

Assumptions: Candidates for GRÓ training activities have basic working knowledge, skills, and some experience in their fields but benefit from applied training to further improve their skills, knowledge, and leadership abilities. Partner organisations recognize the need for strengthening these capacities and competencies and are therefore willing to utilize GRÓ training opportunities for their staff members. Partner organisations are willing and able to work with the GRÓ Programmes to establish priorities for training.

Output 2: Production and dissemination of new knowledge by GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients. Assumptions: GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients develop an understanding of the main issues in their fields. They learn about and develop, innovative solutions applicable to challenges in their home contexts to reduce poverty. GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients undertake applied research that is relevant to addressing challenges in their home countries. Knowledge, techniques, policies and strategies can be adapted and applied in a variety of contexts.

Output 3: Professional empowerment of GRÓ training participants, fellows and scholarship recipients is increased through GRÓ community building and networking. Assumptions: Participants in GRÓ training activities, fellows, scholarship recipients, and teachers alike, have valuable knowledge and experience and learn from one another during the training and follow-up activities. GRÓ alumni interact and collaborate within their home countries, regions and beyond, thereby advancing sustainable development and equality in their organisations and countries. GRÓ alumni networks serve as mechanisms for cooperation between partner countries.

The logic and development path from the outputs, to impact, can be set forth in the following manner:

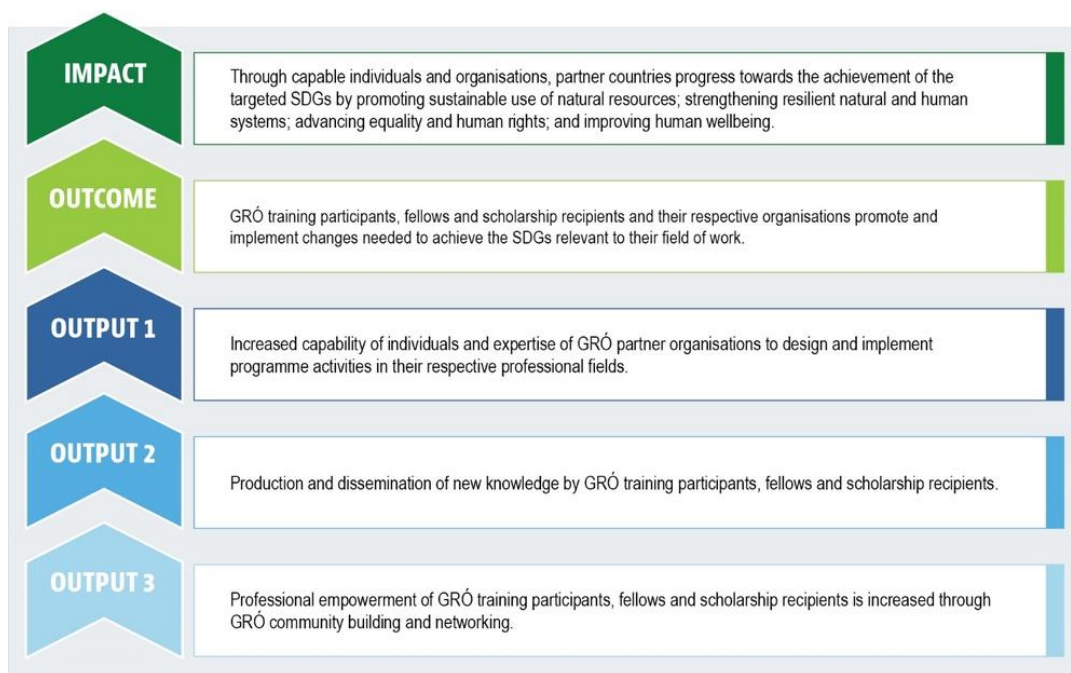


Figure 3 GRÓ development logic

2. Approach

2.1 Intervention strategies

To achieve intended outputs and outcomes, the GRÓ Programmes apply the intervention strategies described below in sections 2.1.1 to 2.1.8. All four Programmes apply these strategies, albeit to varying extents. While the basic strategies remain the same, there are, however, some variations between the Programmes when it comes to implementation.

It should be noted that these intervention strategies are relatively recent, however, they are considered to reflect well the operations of the four programmes since 2020. Therefore, and in the absence of coherent results framework across the four programmes prior to the current theory of change and results framework, it is considered feasible to rely on these for this evaluation.

2.1.1 Post-graduate level training programmes (5-6 month training)

A core activity of GRÓ is to offer post-graduate level training programmes for young/mid-career professionals (fellows) from partner institutions and organizations. The training programmes run for five (GEST) or six months (FTP, GTP, LRT). All GEST students who graduate receive a post-graduate university diploma and LRT training also offers the possibility of obtaining a 30 ECTS post-graduate university diploma.

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

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

Fellows get full scholarships, covering all expenses during the time they spend in Iceland. All expenses directly connected to the training are paid by GRÓ, and/or by other international partners. Fellows are generally funded by Fellowships granted by the programmes and thereby through the Official Development Assistance of the Icelandic Government. The programmes are open to, and encourage, the admission of additional fellows funded by external mechanisms, provided that such admissions are in line with the objectives of the programmes. Such external funding may come from development cooperation programmes, grant schemes, employers etc. In cases where the programme is working with partner organizations, they are

expected to release the fellows from their day- to-day responsibilities during the training period and to guarantee their positions on their return.

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

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

The training aims to increase institutional capacity by training individuals to become “change agents” within their countries and organisations by applying their new knowledge and skills. By training professionals from the same organisations and countries over many years, the intention is to build a critical mass within each organisation and country. With their enhanced knowledge, skills, and ability for teamwork and collaborative efforts, it is furthermore assumed that this mass of people can more easily promote change than if the GRÓ resources were more scattered.

Selection strategy for fellows

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

- Each Programme identifies organisations dealing with challenges relevant to the focus of the Programme and selects organisations to work with. The partner organisations are in key positions to contribute to the changes needed to deal with these challenges.
- Partner organisations are invited to nominate training candidates. Candidates must have at least one university degree, at least one year's working experience and hold a position within their organisation that allows them to apply and disseminate the knowledge and skills gained through the training. They should also have adequate oral and writing skills in English.

- Candidates are interviewed by GRÓ Programme staff members or their representatives. Usually, the interviews take place in the partner country,⁶ which in itself is a strategy for strengthening the connections between GRÓ and the partners and also offers opportunities for informal progress monitoring. It is also possible to take the interviews online when necessary.⁷
- The Programmes make the final selection and selected candidates are invited to attend the training.

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

2.1.2 In-country training

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

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

2.1.3 Scholarships

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

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

⁶ Such as in conjunction with short courses.

⁷ This trend has been reinforced during COVID-19, and for cost-saving measures.

home country level, even beyond the academic sphere. A more [recent evaluation of GRÓ's master's and doctoral scholarship programme](#) was completed in August 2023. The evaluation found that the scholarship programme, as an extension of the 5-6 month training programmes, is a core activity that contributes to capacity development in partner countries as outlined in GRÓ's Theory of Change and Strategy 2022–2027. Fellows who have been granted scholarships have been particularly proficient as change agents by contributing to important results at the home country level, even beyond the academic sphere. However, findings also raise questions about the need to ensure greater financial security and wellbeing of students while engaged in academic studies, in particular for doctoral students. The findings also reveal opportunities to maximize the educational and development impact of GRÓ through strengthened strategic collaboration between the four training programmes and GRÓ central.

Scholarship candidates must fulfil the entrance criteria and be accepted by GRÓ's partner universities in Iceland. The postgraduates will be expected to relate their research to their home institutions or home countries and, where possible, conduct a part of the research in their home country. This will further strengthen the academic environment and support institutional capacity development at the country level. The assumption is that graduated students will work in their home countries after graduation and that their research will contribute to improved and increased implementation of the SDGs. As is outlined elsewhere in this ToR, an evaluation of GRÓ programmes' support to post-graduate students, was conducted earlier in 2023. Therefore, such support is to be mostly excluded from this evaluation, but findings of that evaluation meant to feed into the current one.

2.1.4 Workshops and conferences

GRÓ Programme staff attend and organise national and international conferences, symposiums, and workshops in their fields of expertise. The GRÓ Centre will also support selected former fellows to attend international conferences, symposiums, and workshops relevant to their work as a means of disseminating their research and elevating the engagement of least developed and low and middle income countries in the international academic community.⁸ The opportunity for former fellows to attend and present their scientific research at international conferences is expected to strengthen their own academic careers and the academic capacity in their home countries.

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

2.1.5 Innovative online content creation

Through the creation of online courses and other digital material disseminated through online platforms, the GRÓ Centre can broaden its impact in its partner countries, and around the

⁸ In this context, it should be mentioned that GRÓ GEST has to date not supported former fellows' attendance in international conferences, due to lack of funds.

world. The GRÓ programmes have experience in the creation of MOOCs (massive open online courses) distributed through a variety of platforms, as well as the creation of supplemental training materials designed to promote digital learning, which have the potential to enhance other intervention strategies.⁹¹⁰

2.1.6 Research and knowledge creation

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

Fellows' research work is disseminated through [programme websites](#). In some instances, research conducted by GRÓ fellows can form the basis of publications in peer-reviewed journals or supplement their graduate research.

2.1.7 Networking

The GRÓ training programmes are geared towards building the competencies and skills of future change agents. GRÓ will therefore encourage the formation of alumni networks among its former fellows and create opportunity for fellows to meet and interact across the four thematic areas. For alumni work it is important that the initiatives and focus areas emerge from the alumni. Apart from exchanging ideas and news, networks can serve to advocate, organise training events, brief and later debrief new fellows, and foster synergies and opportunities for leveraging new initiatives and/or funding. As such, networks will contribute to enhance the sustainability of training results. Networks can also be drawn upon for the following-up of programme results. There are also opportunities for alumni to share their knowledge with UNESCO field offices in their home countries or regions.

2.1.8 Advisory and knowledge sharing

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

⁹ GRÓ GEST currently offers three MOOCs through the dX platform: [Gender and intersectionality](#); [Gender and development: critical theories and approaches](#); and [Gender, violence and post-conflict states](#).

¹⁰ GRÓ LRT currently offers two MOOCs as a part of the ENABLE consortium; [A business approach to sustainable landscape restoration](#); and [Business model innovation for sustainable landscape restoration](#).

capacity development and university curricula, serving on expert panels for, e.g. UNESCO entities, etcetera.

2.2 GRÓ Programme efforts 2018-2023

The number of graduates from each of the Programmes during the period 2018 to 2023 is set forth in table 1, but in total 468 fellows completed the 5-6 month training during this period.

Year	FTP	GEST	GTP	LRT	Total
2018	24	23	24	17	88
2019	23	22	24	21	90
2020	-	20	-	-	44
2021	27	20	25	17	62
2022	23	23	23	19	92
2023	22	23	24	23	92
Total for the period:				468	

Table 1 Graduates from 5-6 month training

In total, 92 fellows participated in the GRÓ 5-6 month post graduate training in 2022 and at the end of the year, a total of 1.578 fellows had finished the 5-6 month training in Iceland. Additionally, 101 had finished a master's degree and 21 a PhD at Icelandic universities on a GRÓ scholarship. The four programmes have held many short courses in-country with more than 4.000 participants.

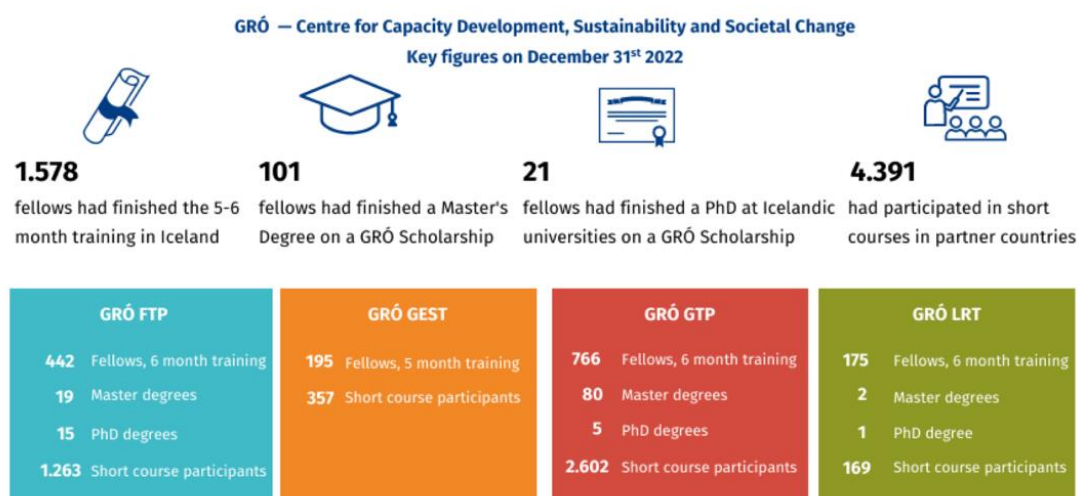


Table 2 Overview of main outputs since establishment of the Programmes

2.3 Administration and finances

As was laid out in figure 1, the MFA provides core funding for the programmes, which is granted to the GRÓ centre by the end of each financial year,¹¹ at which time financial planning for MFA ODA activities also takes place. As per the overview of [Iceland's development cooperation profile](#), 82,3% of Iceland ODA was disbursed through the MFA in 2021.¹²

The service agreements the GRÓ Centre has made with host institutions stipulate the core activities that the Programmes are meant to carry out. Annual work and budget proposals are submitted to GRÓ in the fall. The proposals are prepared in a coordinated fashion, which allows for comparative analysis of unit costs between the programmes. The financial allocations to the Programmes each year are determined by the GRÓ Director General and the GRÓ Board prior to the beginning of the financial year, subject to the Icelandic Parliament's approval of the annual Fiscal Bill. These allocations need to be within the frame allocated to GRÓ by the MFA by the end of the year. GRÓ is central to Iceland's international development cooperation, and based on recent history, it is unlikely that significant cutbacks will occur from one year to the next.¹³ Nevertheless, this arrangement means that plans and funding are primarily made on a year-to-year basis and that any firm longer-term planning may be hampered by this arrangement. Further, an important factor by the end of the year 2023, is the renewal of Iceland's policy for international development cooperation for 2024–2028. In the [current draft for a parliamentary resolution for the policy](#), GRÓ is featured as an implementation mechanism for development cooperation.¹⁴ Simultaneously, the ODA/GNI proportion is suggested to rise from 0,35% to 0,46% by 2028. The resolution will be submitted by the Minister for Foreign Affairs for Parliament's consideration and adoption before the end of the year. Therefore, the new policy and any potential associated rise in Iceland's ODA associated with Parliament's approval of the resolution for the policy is subject to change before adopted by Parliament.

¹¹ Financial year coincides with the calendar year.

¹² Additionally, most of the 7,8% of ODA disbursed through the Ministry of Finance, is administered by the MFA. The remaining portion that is disbursed through other agencies is primarily in-donor costs for refugees and asylum seekers.

¹³ With reservation about cutback in public expenditures.

¹⁴ Also note that the policy draft has already been through public consultation process.

3. Scope and Focus

3.1 Evaluation Purpose

[Iceland's Evaluation Policy 2020-2023](#) outlines evaluation principles and criteria, in accordance with OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria and quality standards for development evaluations. The process for evaluations is transparent and shall be independent from programme management and policy making. An [evaluation of GRÓ's four \(then UNU\) programmes](#) was conducted in 2017. The Evaluation of the UNU Training Programmes in Iceland was commissioned by Iceland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs to enhance accountability and learning based on an assessment of the processes and achievements of the four programmes.

Given the scope of GRÓ within Iceland's portfolio for international development cooperation, it is granted a certain priority and evaluations conducted within a project cycle frame of no less than every 5-6 years.¹⁵ A previous [comprehensive evaluation was conducted in 2017](#), and an evaluation of the [GRÓ post-graduate scholarship programme](#) was conducted in the first part of 2023. The intent is for the latter to feed into this external evaluation. Therefore, GRÓ's support to post-graduate students, is excluded from this evaluation.¹⁶

The goal of this evaluation of each of the four Programmes, and collectively, is to provide the MFA, GRÓ Board of Directors, Director General and the respective GRÓ programmes with an objective assessment of each Programme's past successes in meeting their respective objectives; their strengths and weaknesses; and any areas where change or reinforcement may be beneficial. The purpose is also to (1) assess the results of GRÓ's efforts¹⁷ **and** (2) assess the suitability of the organizational changes from 2020 when the training programmes moved from the United Nations University (UNU) under the auspices of UNESCO as a Category II Center. The intent is for the evaluation to offer evidence-based findings on how well the programmes have achieved their stated objectives; to generate learning; offer forward-looking perspectives for future engagements; and set forth applied recommendations based on evidence and findings.

3.2 Scope

The evaluation is to be conducted in accordance with the prevailing OECD DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation. The chronological scope of the evaluation is from beginning of year 2018 until end of year 2023 (6 years in total) and shall take aim of organizational changes that took place beginning of year 2020 when the Centre became an independent ministerial agency under the auspices of UNESCO, from being units within the framework of the United Nations University (UNU).

¹⁵ Similar to evaluations of bilateral programmes, where evaluations are set within the project cycles.

¹⁶ To the extent that it does not overlap with other efforts; post-graduate scholarship recipients are also alumni from the 5–6-month training programmes.

¹⁷ To include increased capacity by alumni but exclude support to post-graduate students.

3.3 Evaluation Questions

The subject of this evaluation is the Specific Objectives (outcomes) and outputs listed in the current results framework. The core questions of the evaluation which shall be answered in the 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 frame of reference in future endeavors?¹⁸
- Have the institutional changes in 2020 and associated shift from the auspices of UNU to UNESCO been suitable and generated expected results?¹⁹

The evaluation shall examine the extent to which the programme objectives, outcomes and outputs have been achieved, taking into account their implementation periods, the management structure of the programmes and additional external challenges, such as those inflicted by the double burden of Covid-19 pandemic and external shocks. Also, the evaluator shall assess whether the cross-cutting policy issues of environment, gender and human rights have been sufficiently addressed across the four programmes.

While the evaluation relies on the OECD-DAC evaluation dimensions, the following sub-questions are set forth, with the view of addressing the above core evaluation questions:

1. 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 SDGs?

To what extent:

- Are programmes relevant to Iceland's development policies, and in line with Iceland's national development vision and strategies?²⁰
- Are programmes relevant to national development policies in partner countries, and in line with the UN Sustainable Goals?

2. Coherence

How well does the programme fit with other development efforts, is duplication of efforts avoided and synergies maximized?

To what extent:

- are synergies between the work of the GRÓ programmes and across different development efforts by Iceland maximized?

¹⁸ This is particularly addressed with special case studies, see section 4.3.

¹⁹ This should particularly be addressed under the evaluation dimensions of coherence and efficiency, see further below.

²⁰ This includes if and how the GRÓ programmes are used to meet the policy needs of the MFA at any given time, such as through new partnerships?

- do programme activities duplicate or overlap with other efforts by Iceland or other donors?

3. Effectiveness

To what extent has GRÓ and the programmes achieved their objectives? The final evaluation shall examine the extent to which the objectives and outputs have been achieved.²¹

To what extent:

- are the stated outcomes and outputs on track, or have been achieved? The evaluation shall address the following intervention strategies:
 - post-graduate level training programmes
 - in-country training
 - workshops and conferences
 - online content creation
 - research and knowledge creation²²
 - networking, advisory and knowledge sharing efforts
- are there particular interventions that are effective and should be continued or scaled-up?²³

4. 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?

- Has programme management²⁴ and oversight procedures been effective?
- Are unit costs within acceptable levels in comparison with similar/comparable development efforts?

5. 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?

6. Impact

To what extent have the programmes generated significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, effects at the micro, meso and macro levels, and/or to what extent are they expected to?

²¹ While taking into account the implementation period, the management structure and external shocks such as the Covid-19 pandemic and economic shocks.

²² Evaluators should note that post-graduate scholarship programme has been evaluated separately, thus research pertaining to such programmes, should not be central in that regard.

²³ Special cases within the evaluation design are suggested to particularly address this question, see section 4.3.

²⁴ To include annual financial and work plans, are programmes on plan and on budget? However, for this question, it should be noted that financial audits have been conducted for all four Programmes in recent years, and thus less emphasis should be placed on efficiency, than otherwise.

- What are the long-term implications of the programme for stakeholders²⁵ and beneficiaries?

3.4 Special cases within the 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? To address this, the evaluators are asked to conduct four evaluative case studies to generate lessons for the future. These cases, which are set forth in the following sub-chapters, should also be a frame of reference when planning fieldwork for the evaluation. It should be noted that some of these initiatives may overlap between Programmes, e.g. GTP efforts in the Caribbean include university collaboration, and LRT has also been engaged in production of MOOCs, and GEST is also collaborating with Makerere university in Uganda.

The programmes shall provide further information on those initiatives during evaluation inception phase.

3.4.1 GTP efforts in El Salvador

In Latin America, GTP efforts have primarily been focused on the SICA states,²⁶ but close to 790 fellows have attended 6-month training in Iceland. Of those, 86 come from SICA states.²⁷

5-month Diploma Programme

The GTP has had a long-standing collaboration with partners in El Salvador for a local diploma programme in geothermal sciences. The history of the programme can be traced back to 2010 when it was established with support from Italy, through ODA. When that support ran its course, in 2012, the programme enjoyed support from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Three experts from GTP conducted an evaluation of the programme that year and IDB support continued 2013 through 2015. During that time, experts from GTP sat in the programme academic committee. In 2016, the Nordic Development Fund entered the collaboration as a funding partner, and the programme has also continued to enjoy support from GTP since that time. Local partners are the geothermal company LaGeo and the University of El Salvador.²⁸ The diploma programme was not carried out in 2023, but work is ongoing by partners in El Salvador to formulate and implement a diploma programme for geothermal experts from Latin America, which is based on lessons from collaboration with GTP.

The evaluator is asked to draw conclusions from this evaluative case, if centres of excellence, or comparative approaches, may be feasible for GRÓ and their programmes to scale up the training programmes with partners in developing countries as a means to enhance development impact.

²⁵ To include communities, regions and/or countries.

²⁶ Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Belize, and Dominican Republic.

²⁷ El Salvador 48, Honduras 3, Nicaragua 17, Costa Rica 1

²⁸ See some background in the conference paper „[Regional geothermal training programme at the University of El Salvador](#)“ (2014).

Short courses in El Salvador

Short courses have been held by GTP in El Salvador since 2007. These are 12 courses in total, attended by 635 experts to date. Next short course is due to take place in early February 2024. These efforts by GTP reflect a long-standing partnership for short courses, where significant experience has been accumulated and support provided to a large number of fellows. Thus, it is deemed feasible to place special emphasis on assessing the results of those efforts.

3.4.2 GEST efforts: seed funds for alumni projects

March 8 Fund

The [GRÓ GEST March 8 Fund](#) finances small projects — led by GEST alumni — promoting gender equality and social justice. After a successful pilot in 2020, two calls have been issued, in 2022 and 2023. Through the fund, GEST issues calls for proposals that focus on advancing gender equality and promoting gender transformative approaches to achieve social change. The projects funded are to be initiated and managed by alumni of the GEST programme, who must function as main applicants and those ultimately responsible for implementing the project.²⁹

As the GEST programme revolves around gender equality and social justice, the funded projects must have a primary focus on advancing gender equality and promoting gender transformative approaches to achieve social change. These priorities need to be clearly reflected in a project's activities and strategies. The aim of the fund is to support alumni in disseminating their knowledge and expertise obtained during their participation in the GEST programme and to encourage alumni to develop and implement projects focused on advancing gender equality in their home communities.

To date, three small grants have been awarded to fellows in Nigeria, Mexico and in Pakistan. The evaluation shall assess the feasibility of GRÓ and its programmes to provide seed money for projects to former alumni members, using the GEST 8 March as an evaluative case, its potential for development impact and empowerment of alumni. The findings will be useful for GRÓ, as examining the feasibility of establishing a GRÓ alumni fund is among the priorities the centre has set for itself in the period 2022-2027.

Massive Open Online Courses

Since 2019, GRÓ GEST has developed Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) on the edX[®] platform in collaboration with the University of Iceland. Founded by Harvard University and MIT in 2012, edX LLC is a leading MOOC provider. The edX platform is an online learning destination offering high-quality courses from the world's best universities and institutions to learners everywhere.

For GRÓ GEST, joining edX was part of its efforts to improve the quality and outreach of transnational knowledge transmission and exchange, and to adapt to rapidly changing

²⁹ In some cases, fellows might be able to use their final assignment in their diploma studies, as some formulate applied project proposals during their studies.

technological environments in higher education. As such, MOOCs offer unlimited participation and open access to education for dispersed audiences worldwide. Learners can arrange their studies in their own time, and the contribution of instructors reaches worldwide audiences. For the GRÓ programmes, MOOCs have the potential to complement and enhance both existing and new intervention strategies, reach a broader audience, and thus have substantial development impact.

The goal of GRÓ GEST's MOOCs in International Gender Studies is to provide aspiring development workers, young gender equality professionals, and policymakers around the world with a knowledge base they can use to change the world for the better. However, the courses also benefit learners in high-income countries by exposing them to topics related to international development, and the MOOCs have the potential to be an effective tool for outreach by the GRÓ programmes.

Massive open online courses (MOOCs) offer unlimited participation and open access via the internet. A primary objective of MOOCs is to offer quality education to a dispersed audience, students can arrange their studies during their own time, and the contribution of educators is experienced by a large audience. For the GRÓ programmes, MOOCs have the potential to enhance other intervention strategies, reach a broader audience, and thus have substantial development impact. Students in high-income countries may get exposed to topics of development, and the MOOCs may be an effective tool for outreach by the GRÓ programmes.

GRÓ GEST currently offers three MOOCs through the edX platform: [Gender and intersectionality](#); [Gender and development: critical theories and approaches](#); and [Gender, violence and post-conflict states](#). A fourth course: Men, Boys and Masculinities will launch in February 2024. A formal launch event for all four courses is planned for November 17, 2023, at the University of Iceland.

So far, over 15,000 learners have enrolled in GRÓ GEST online courses, and hundreds have completed the courses and received an edX certificate. The MOOCs are produced within the quality assurance framework of both edX and the University of Iceland and as such they have to follow very strict quality standards.

The intent is for this evaluation is to assess MOOCs as a tool for the GRÓ Programmes, either to offer full stand-alone courses, or to use remote teaching methods for other purposes, such as refreshment courses for alumni, joint teaching with universities and training institutions in the south, or to supplement other efforts, such as on-site training and follow-up.

3.4.3 LRT collaboration with universities

LRT, which is hosted within the Agricultural University of Iceland, is currently working on several initiatives with universities in the south to establish study programs in restoration ecology. A request for collaboration has already been received from Makerere University in Uganda.

The growth model of integrating training and education within existing universities has substantial advantages when compared to short courses in the field. Those would usually require the presence of experts during the course, but also extensive preparations, invitations to suitable candidates, lodging, per diems, field trips etc. Furthermore, LRT experience has led

to question the timeframe for short courses, which may be too narrow for generating substantial learning for the longer term.

When universities get support in formulating their own studies, the sustainability is for a longer term, potentials for duplicating curriculums and other efforts may increase efficiency, coupled with cost efficiencies by carrying out training in fellows' home or neighbouring countries.

Universities have their own student bodies and services on site and given a cross-disciplinary approach is applied to LRT training for ecological restoration and sustainable land management, such courses or training can be integrated into the universities in a variety of ways. For instance, in Lesotho, this has largely been within the integrated water catchment management, whereas in other universities the institutional home may be better suited within other faculties. A recent program has been formulated within the Agricultural University of Iceland, which may be suitable for scaling up. Partner universities in Uganda, Lesotho, Malawi and Uzbekistan are up for consideration.³⁰ An important resource for supporting such efforts are former fellows who work within or are closely associated with academia. On one hand, there are former fellows who have attended the 6-month training as a part of their PhD studies, and others who have pursued PhD studies after their training in Iceland. Alumni members and Icelandic experts may be engaged, and mutual interest by experts in Iceland and partner countries is evident. Further, joint work with partner universities has the potential to attract external funding for activities, such as through the Erasmus+ funding programme.

Although such efforts are only currently underway by LRT, this calls for consideration by the evaluators. The model for implementing may vary from one country to another, whether these are full-fledged master's studies, single courses, diploma studies, or integration into existing programmes within each university. The evaluators are asked to assess the potential for such approach and as a business case, and its feasibility as a growth model for the GRÓ Programmes. In this context, GEST might offer some lessons through Erasmus+ collaboration with universities in developing countries, which has also offered some co-financing opportunities.

3.4.4 FTP's regional collaboration in the Caribbean

GRÓ FTP partnered with CFRM (Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism) in 2008 with a signing of a memorandum and the partnership persists to this day. CFRM's mandate is to promote sustainable fisheries and aquaculture resources in and among its (16)³¹ member states by the development, management, and conservation of these resources in collaboration with stakeholders to benefit the people of the Caribbean region.

This regional collaboration can be traced back to 2008 when Iceland was reinforcing diplomatic relations with the states in the region. After a high-level round table meeting in the

³⁰ Followed by the American University of Central Asia in Kirgizstan, which might be a candidate in the nearest future.

³¹ CFRM member states: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, The Bahamas, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Caribbean, FTP was approached by the MFA and asked to receive fellows from the Caribbean region.

The main partners in FTP Caribbean cooperation are three:

Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, CRFM. The CRFM is approached annually to nominate fellows from their member states to the 6-month programme. FTP interviews and selects, working closely with CRFM. To date 32 fellows from 12 CRFM member states have been trained. Ideas for short courses are always developed in cooperation with CRFM to address their needs as well as the needs of their member states. Training is delivered by Icelandic specialists, FTP staff, regional specialists, and former FTP fellows. To date, nine regional courses have been held between 2010 and 2023 as part of an MoU between CRFM and the FTP.³² These courses have been on leadership in fisheries; data analysis and stock assessment; project cycle management; SPS measures implementation; and value chain approach in Caribbean fisheries.

University of the West Indies is often part of in-country training courses and materials made for any short courses in the region have also been made available to the university.

A number of government **Fisheries Institutes and Ministries of Fisheries and Marine Resources** (or equivalents) in all CRFM 16 member states.

Figure 4 displays a timeline with some of the activities of FTP in this regional cooperation since 2006.

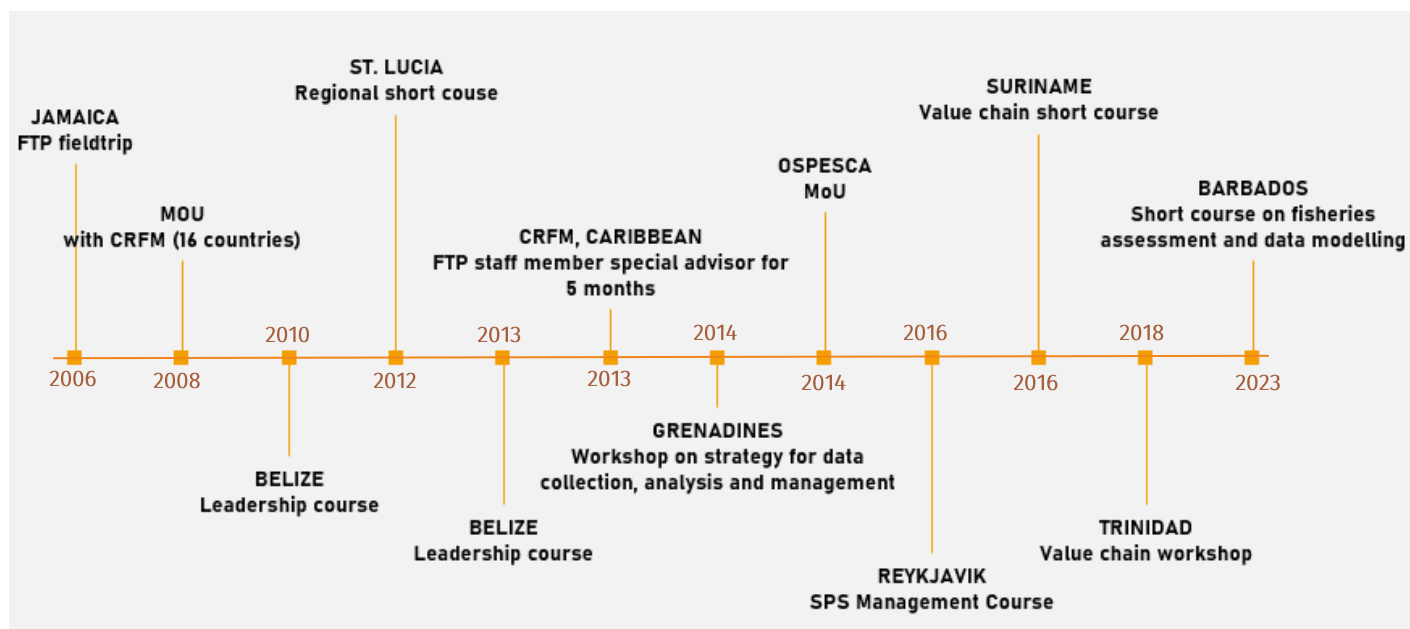


Figure 4 Examples of FTP activities in the Caribbean 2006-2023

³²These have been in Barbados in 2010, Belize 2010, St. Vincent 2011, St. Lucia 2012 and again in 2013, St Vincent 2014, Suriname 2016, Trinidad and Tobago 2018, and Barbados 2023. Information about all Caribbean courses will be provided as necessary.

The evaluator shall get access to more detailed information on the activities carried out through FTP regional cooperation in the Caribbean. The evaluation shall assess the feasibility of such regional cooperation, the value addition of concentrating efforts within the same region and collaboration with regional authorities.

4. Methodologies

The evaluation will be carried out in accordance with the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria³³, and Iceland's evaluation policy 2020-2023,³⁴ to include the ethical standards set forth and a requirement that cross-cutting issues of **human rights, gender equality and environmental issues** be addressed in all evaluations. The cross-cutting issues underpin all of Iceland's development efforts and should be addressed in the evaluation, irrespective of whether mentioned in the programme documents. The evaluation should apply qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate implementation and performance, and to make recommendations for future planning. The evaluation should be carried out through a participatory approach of all relevant stakeholders, to include development partners and right holders.

4.1 Data Collection

The evaluation shall make use of appropriate empirical methods such as key informant interviews, surveys, focus group discussion, and desk review of literature and data, which will be analysed using well specified judgement criteria and suitably defined qualitative and quantitative indicators (including indicators from the theory of change and GRÓ results framework). The aid of visual evidence in the form of pictures (e.g. from the field, or in support of success stories) may also be set forth as a form of evidence and in support of evaluation findings. The evaluation methodology shall be further described in the Inception Report.

A comprehensive desk review and critical analysis is to be conducted to include all relevant documents, information, data/statistics, by the consultant. The consultant must review available documents on the programmes such as agreements between partners, programme documents, internal and external financial evaluations, and other relevant documents. Full access to all relevant documents will be available. Upon signing of the contract, the consultant will be given the necessary working documents for reference.

The consultant is expected to conduct interviews both in-person and remotely, surveys, conduct discussions and consultative processes, and make observations in field missions with key informants among all stakeholders involved with the planning, implementing and review monitoring and evaluation data as well as any assessments and evaluations previously carried out.

The following is suggested:

- Alumni tracking survey

³³ The six DAC evaluation criteria are relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. For further information, please visit the [OECD/DAC website](#).

³⁴ See: <https://www.stjornarradid.is/library/03-Verkefni/Utanrikismal/Throunarsamvinna/uttektar--og-rynskyslur/Evaluation%20policy%202020-2023.pdf>

- Focus groups with alumni (remotely). Selection of participants in focus groups should cover all four programmes, take aim of locations and be gender sensitive.
- Interviews with stakeholders (see further list of suggestions below).
- Fieldwork in Iceland (time suggested at the end of April, beginning of May). For this, workshops with programme staff may be considered, interviews and focus groups with current fellows, as well as on-site interviews and observations (such as in classes).
- Field visits and fieldwork in El Salvador and the Caribbean region, and in Uganda

Evaluators are free to suggest other methods and approaches, to be set forth in the inception report. Following is a suggested list of stakeholders (evaluator may identify other stakeholders throughout the course of the evaluation, such as after initial interviews with Programme Directors and staff):

- GRÓ Board
- GRÓ Director General
- Host institutions in Iceland (University of Iceland (HÍ), Agricultural University of Iceland (LBHÍ), Marine & Fresh Water Research Institute (HAFRÓ) and the Iceland GeoSurvey (ÍSOR))
- Programme Directors and staff (GPT, LRT, FTP and GEST)
- Contracted external staff of the programmes (incl. lecturers, researchers, supervisors etc.)
- MFA Director General, Directorate of International Development Cooperation
- Partner institutions in partner countries, government representatives (as appropriate)
- Partner universities and partner academics/researchers (in the south as well as in the north)
- Beneficiaries: e.g. fellows and alumni members,³⁵ participants in short courses and funded projects, outreach efforts etc.

The evaluation is expected to solicit views of beneficiaries from the programme. Focus groups and individuals affected by the programme should be included in the evaluation design and the selection of respondents be gender and age sensitive.

Surveys and interviews with beneficiaries shall seek to identify results generated by training, to include their impact on micro, meso and macro levels.

Qualitative studies with focus groups or key informant interviews (KII) serve to give a reasonably sound judgement of programme delivery perceptions among beneficiaries.

Special case studies, where mixed methods are applied, are intended to offer in-depth understanding of specific interventions, with the aim of providing lessons for the future across all Programmes. The inception report shall lay out the methods for the evaluation in detail.

³⁵ To include 5-6 month fellows in Iceland and current MSc/PhD students who are former fellows of the programmes.

5. Expected Deliverables and Timeframe

It is expected that the assignment will be carried out from the beginning of December 2023 and be finalized by September 2024. The Inception report shall be submitted within three weeks from the start of the assignment. The assignment is budgeted with an estimated input from the consultants of up to 135 working days. The Final External Evaluation Report shall be submitted no later than September 15, 2024 and presented by September 30, 2024.

The following deliverables are expected:



The following deliverables are expected:

Expected Deliverables	Date
A. Preliminary processes deliverables	
- Request for Tenders	27 th October 2023
- Deadline for Submission of Proposals	20 th November 2023

- Evaluation and Award of Contracts	27 th November 2023
B. Consultancy Deliverables	
1. An inception report Inception report should include a framework of the evaluation and how the evaluation questions will be addressed to ensure that the consultant, the donor and implementing partners have a shared understanding of the evaluation. The inception report should e.g. include the evaluation matrix summarizing the evaluation design, methodology, evaluation questions, data sources and collection analysis tool for each data source and the measure, by which each question will be evaluated. It should also include recommended changes to the terms of reference, if any.	6 th January 2024
2. Draft report a. Preliminary results of desk research analysis, fieldwork, surveys and interviews.	15 th August 2024
b. Feedback/comments by MFA and the evaluation reference group.	23 rd August 2024
3. Final draft report submitted not later than a. Final draft report including an outline of how feedback was addressed (structure, facts, content, conclusion).	1 st September 2024
b. Feedback/comments by reference group and MFA.	7 th September 2024
4. Final evaluation report submitted	15 th September 2024
5. Presentation of final evaluation findings to be held remotely, and attended by other stakeholders.	30 th September 2024

All deliverables such as presentations and reports are to be submitted in electronic format in English in accordance with the deadlines set in the ToR. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs retains the rights with respect to all distribution, dissemination and publication of the deliverables.

6. Required Expertise and Qualifications

The evaluation is to be carried out by a team of four senior level consultants, referred to as the Consultant. Should the consultant propose fewer than four experts for the assignment, the requested expertise must still be covered among the proposed key experts.

Should the consultant propose more than four team members to cover the relevant expertise or backstopping, short CV's for these experts shall be provided, and will be evaluated as a part of the team's composition.

6.1 Team Leader

One of the four team members is expected to serve as an evaluation team leader and to possess core evaluation competencies with extensive experience in providing leadership on large-scale evaluations for international development, preferably involving capacity building and training. The evaluation team leader will manage and coordinate the work and provide the overall editorial guidance and synthesis of the evaluation report.

6.2 The Consultant Team

All four of the team members are expected to:

- Have advanced university degrees in relevant disciplines.
- Have a proven record of delivering professional results in projects relevant to the assignment.
- Have experience in conducting evaluations.
- Be fully acquainted with results-based management practices.
- Be fluent in oral and written English.

Each of the four team members is expected to focus mainly on the evaluation of one of the four Programmes. Each respective team member, assigned to the individual programme, is expected to have demonstrated knowledge of the issues relating to the focus of work of the GRÓ Programme to which he/she has been assigned: i.e., geothermal energy, fisheries management, land restoration, and gender equality.

In addition to the knowledge and experience in training and capacity building, which the team leader is expected to have, the team is expected to possess within its ranks significant knowledge in:

- **Natural resources and environmental issues**
- **Gender equality**
- **Evaluations in international development**

7. Management Arrangements

- A team of consultants will be hired for this evaluation.
- The evaluation will be commissioned and managed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, Directorate for Internal Affairs.
- The consultants hired may be international, but at least one core member of the evaluation team must be from the south.
- The evaluation fieldwork requires travels to interview staff, stakeholders and visit Programmes to: (1) Iceland (preferably April/May timeframe), (2) El Salvador (if possible, in February to observe short course), (3) the Caribbean region in conjunction with fieldwork in El Salvador, and (4) Uganda (where university collaboration can be explored and local alumni met with).
- The consultant reports directly to Erla Hlín Hjálmarsdóttir (<mailto:erla.hjalmarsdottir@utn.is>) Director of Internal Affairs, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Reykjavik Iceland who shall receive outputs, consult with stakeholders in Iceland and approve inception report and drafts of the evaluation report.
- GRÓ Director **General**, host institutions and the four training programmes will provide support with necessary documents, introduction to staff, development partners, former fellows and other stakeholders, as necessary.
- The consultants will be responsible for their transport, accommodation and per diems.
- The consultants will supply their personal laptops, stationery and, as needed for the work.
- Any required translation and interpretation services from local languages to English shall be the responsibility of the consultant.
- The consultants shall be paid the consultancy fee upon completion of the following milestones:
 - 10% upon signing of contract
 - 30% after approval of the inception report
 - 60% after the submission and approval of the final report

Tafla 1 Main POCs for evaluation

Points of contact	Name	E-mail
GRÓ, Director General	Nína Björk Jónsdóttir	nina.jonsdottir@utn.is
GRÓ Board		
Chairman	Jón Karl Ólafsson	jonkarlo@outlook.com
Representative of Iceland's National Commission for UNESCO	Sæunn Stefánsdóttir	saeunnst@hi.is
Representative the Icelandic Development Cooperation Committee	Guðrún Margrét Guðmundsdóttir	gudrunmargret@asi.is

Representative of the Director General of UNESCO	Zazie Schäfer, Director of the Bureau of Strategic Planning	z.schafer@unesco.org Ms. Schäfer can also be reached through her secretary Ms. Sabine Vayssières, S.Vayssieres@unesco.org
Representative of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	Ragnar Þorgeirsson	ragnar.thorgeirsson@gmail.com
Host institutions representatives		
University of Iceland, rector	Jón Atli Benediktsson	rektor@hi.is
Iceland GeoSurvey (ÍSOR), CEO	Árni Magnússon	arni.magnusson@isor.is
Agricultural University of Iceland, Rector	Ragnheiður Inga Þórarinsdóttir	ragnheidur@lbhi.is
Marine & Fresh Water Research Institute, Director	Þorsteinn Sigurðsson	thorsteinn.sigurdsson@hafogvatn.is
GRÓ Training Programmes representatives		
FTP, Director	Þór Heiðar Ásgeirsson	thor@groftp.is
GEST, Director	Irma Erlingsdóttir	irma@hi.is
GTP, Director	Guðni Axelsson	gax@grogtp.is
LRT, Director	Sjöfn Vilhelmsdóttir	siofn@grolrt.is
MFA representative		
Directorate for Development Cooperation, Director	Elín Rós Sigurðardóttir	elin.sigurdardottir@utn.is

Kindly note that the evaluators are not expected to contact the persons listed above for the preparation of proposals.

7.1 Evaluation Reference Group

An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) is a group of key internal and external evaluation stakeholders who review and comment on the draft Terms of Reference (TOR), inception and evaluation reports. The ERG members act as advisors during the evaluation process, while the consultant(s) act independently. The ERG for this evaluation shall be comprised of the following key stakeholders representing their respective institutions:

Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Reykjavik, Iceland

- Director of Internal Affairs

GRÓ

- Director General
- Chairman of the GRÓ Board

GRÓ Training Programmes

- Director of FTP
- Director of GEST
- Director of GTP
- Director of LRT

The evaluation reference group shall review and in minimum offer feedback on (1) the Terms of Reference, (2) inception report draft, and (3) the final evaluation draft, and offer other guidance and input as required throughout the evaluation process.

8. Evaluation Bid

Interested, qualified candidates are invited to send a bid not later than 12:30 hours (GMT) 20 November 2023. All bidders will be contacted and receive an official response to their application.

All files should be sent electronically, and instructions followed. Some essential documents for the consultants to enrich their technical and financial proposals are published alongside the call for proposals.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs may contact interested candidates for further information and references, as required. Any incomplete files or bids submitted after the deadline will not be considered. Fees will be negotiated and determined before contracts are signed.

The consultancy fee shall be paid as follows: 10% upon signing of contract; 30% after approval of the inception report; and 60% after the submission and approval of the final report. Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Iceland shall carry the costs of the evaluation and be responsible for the payments to consultant(s).

8.1 Administrative documents

The following administrative documents have to be provided by the consultant/ consultancy firm:

- A certificate of registration, trading license or equivalent
- Up-to-date tax clearance/certificate of non-bankruptcy

8.2 Technical Proposal

A Technical Proposal which shall describe how the team intends to approach and complete the assignment. The proposal shall include all following documents:

- Expression of interest/letter of confirmation of interest and availability, which includes a brief description of why the team consider themselves as the most suitable for the assignment;
- Personal CVs, indicating all past experience from similar evaluations, as well as the contact details (e-mail and telephone number) and professional references;
- An online link to (preferable) or a copy of a report(s) written by the bidder (the team, team leader, and/or team member);
- A methodological note that must demonstrate:
 - Understanding of the ToR (including goals and objectives);
 - Methods of data collection and analysis that the consultant believes are relevant to answering the evaluation questions set forth in the ToR;
 - Valid justifications for the use of each of the identified data collection and analysis methods; and
 - A clear definition of the roles and responsibilities the consultants will play on the team.

Complete technical proposals (100) will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- (1) Understanding of the problem, the expected outputs, and the purpose(s) of the evaluation, as well as adherence to accepted evaluation norms (10/100);
- (2) Methodologies: relevance and quality of the justification of the proposed methodology to the evaluation questions (30/100);
- (3) Timeline: adherence to the number of days (or alternatively clear rationale for shorter or longer timeframe/number of days required for the evaluation) and consideration of reasonable timelines for validation (10/100);
- (4) Qualification and experience of key personnel,³⁶ and allocation of tasks and responsibilities. General and specific experience in providing services of similar nature (40/100);
- (5) Writing and visualization/layout skills (10/100).

8.3 Financial Offer

The proposed financial offer must include fees and logistics, and may include reimbursables, if applicable. Financial offers shall be set forth in Euros (EUR) or US Dollars (USD) and **include any value added tax**, as appropriate.

³⁶ To include experience in similar assignments.

9. Annex 1: GRÓ Theory of Change diagram

GRÓ Theory of Change 2022-2027

GRÓ Theory of Change diagram

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

10. Annex 2: GRÓ Results Framework 2023-2027

Impact: Progress towards the SDGs through capable individuals and organisations				
Performance indicator	Baseline (B)	Source and means of verification	Target (T)	Assumptions
P1. SDG N°5: targets		Official /UN documents	TBD	NA
P2. SDG N°7: targets		Official /UN documents	TBD	
P3. SDG N°14: targets		Official /UN documents	TBD	
P4. SDG N°15: targets		Official /UN documents	TBD	

Outcome: GRÓ fellows, trainees and respective organisations promote and implement changes needed to achieve SDGs relevant to their field of work				
Performance indicator	Baseline (B)	Source and means of verification	Target (T)	Assumptions
P1. Management in partner organisations assess the training to be valuable for the organisation.	Under collection	Source: Coordinated survey of partner organisations by GRÓ 3 years after graduation. Means of verification: Survey feedback.	70% of survey respondents assess the training to be valuable for the organisation	Partner organisations recognise the new knowledge, skills and competencies acquired by GRÓ fellows and other GRÓ trainees. Partner organisations will encourage returning staff members to practice and spread what they have learnt in GRÓ supported trainings. The 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.
P2. Graduates have used the training to advance their contribution in their field/sector of work.	Under collection	Source: Coordinated status survey of fellows by GRÓ 3 years after graduation. Means of verification: Survey feedback.	70% of survey respondents report the training has advanced their contribution in their field/sector.	
P3. Graduates have used their training to share with colleagues and other experts in their respective field of expertise.	Under collection	Source: Coordinated status survey of fellows by GRÓ 3 years after graduation. Means of verification: Survey feedback.	70% of survey respondents report they have used the training to share with colleagues and other experts.	
P4. Graduates have advanced professionally (e.g. promotion or received scholarship for further studies).	Under collection	Source: Coordinated status survey of fellows by GRÓ 3 years after graduation. Means of verification: Survey feedback.	70% of survey respondents report they have advanced professionally.	

GRÓ Results Framework 2023-2027

Output N°1 (continued):				
Increased capability of individuals and expertise of GRÓ partner organisations to design and implement programme activities in respective professional fields				
Performance indicator	Baseline (B)	Source and means of verification	Target (T)	Assumptions
P4. Number of short courses (5-7 days) in partner countries	Annual # of weeks of on-site training from 2017-2022 # of participants in short courses (by gender)	Source and means of verification: Completion of training documents provided by course organisers (GRÓ programmes and partner organisation).	Annual target: 10 weeks of on-site training # of participants trained by year (by gender): baseline + 10% Gender ratio 40/60.	In order to deliver the expected outputs GRÓ needs to receive adequate funding for its activities.
P5. Quality of short course training	Average from previous assessments.	Source: Coordinated self-assessment survey at the end of training on knowledge and skills. Means of verification: Survey feedback.	>4 on a scale from 1 - 5 80% of course participants assess the course to be useful for enhancing skills and knowledge in the respective field.	Coordinated measures will be implemented across GRÓ programmes.
P6. Number of live streaming training courses	Annual # from 2017-2022	Source and means of verification: Completion of training documents provided by course organisers (GRÓ programmes and partner organisation).	Baseline + 10%	In order to deliver the expected outputs GRÓ needs to receive adequate funding for its activities.
P7. Quality live streaming training courses	(No coordinated measures available)	Source: Coordinated self-assessment survey at the end of training on knowledge and skills. Means of verification: Survey feedback.	>4 on a scale from 1 - 5	

GRÓ Results Framework 2023-2027

Output N°1 (continued): Increased capability of individuals and expertise of GRÓ partner organisations to design and implement programme activities in respective professional fields				
Performance indicator	Baseline (B)	Source and means of verification	Target (T)	Assumptions
P8. Number of online courses and number of participants in the online courses.	Annual # from 2017-2022	Source: Course software data. Means of verification: Survey feedback.	Baseline +10%	In order to deliver the expected outputs GRÓ needs to receive adequate funding for its activities.
P9. Quality of online training	<i>(No coordinated measures available)</i>	Source: Coordinated self-assessment survey at the start and end of training on knowledge and skills. Means of verification: Survey feedback.	>4 on a scale from 1 - 5	
P10. Number of GRÓ graduate studies scholarships provided annually	Annual # from 2017-2022: Master's and PhD	Source and means of verification: Admission confirmation to Icelandic or partner universities provided by universities. Recipients' progress reports.	20	In order to deliver the expected outputs GRÓ needs to receive adequate funding for its activities.

Activities

1. GRÓ programmes run a 5–6-month training course annually in Iceland.
2. GRÓ programmes provide financial and technical support to develop and deliver short courses in partner countries.
3. GRÓ programmes develop and deliver online content and courses
4. GRÓ programmes offer scholarships to alumni to pursue graduate studies at Icelandic universities in their respective fields of study.

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Output N°2: Production and dissemination of new knowledge by GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipients				
Performance indicator	Baseline (B)	Source and means of verification	Target (T)	Assumptions
P1. Number of research outputs (<i>research project reports</i>) annually by GRÓ fellows.	Annual # from 2017-2022	Source and means of verification: Research projects papers confirmed on GRÓ's website.	100 (<i>25 each programme</i>)	GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipients develop an understanding of the main issues in their fields. They learn about and develop innovative solutions applicable to issues in their home contexts to reduce poverty. GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipients undertake applied research that is relevant to address challenges in their home countries.
P2. Number of master's thesis published annually by GRÓ scholarship recipients (<i>research output</i>).	Annual # from 2017-2022	Source: Published thesis at universities' websites Means of verification: Published master's thesis.	One thesis per master's scholarship recipient.	
P3. Number of PhD papers published annually by GRÓ scholarship recipients (<i>research outputs</i>).	Annual # from 2017-2022	Source and means of verification: Publication in research journals.	TBD	Knowledge, techniques, policies, and strategies can be adapted and applied in a variety of contexts.

Activities

1. Applied final projects are part of the training curriculum in the GRÓ 5–6-month training programmes.
2. GRÓ offers scholarships for postgraduate programmes in GRÓ's areas of work.

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Output N°3: Professional empowerment of GRÓ training participants and scholarship recipients is increased through GRÓ community building and networking				
Performance indicator	Baseline (B)	Source and means of verification	Target (T)	Assumptions
P1. Number of alumni events organised by GRÓ annually	Annual # from 2017-2022	Source and means of verification: Seminar documents.	≥10	Participants in GRÓ training activities, teachers and fellows alike, have valuable knowledge and experience and learn from one another during the training and follow-up activities. GRÓ alumni interact and collaborate within their home countries, regions and beyond. As such, GRÓ alumni networks serve as mechanisms for south/south cooperation. In order to deliver the expected outputs GRÓ needs to receive adequate funding for its activities.
P2. Number of GRÓ funded alumni participating in regional and international conferences	Average annual # from 2017-2022	Source and means of verification: conference documents and GRÓ programmes' documents.	Baseline # + 10%	In order to deliver the expected outputs GRÓ needs to receive adequate funding for its activities.
P3. % of short courses involving alumni in teaching and organisation of short courses in partner countries.	Annual # from 2017-2022	Source and means of verification: Course documents and verification from programme directors.	100%	

Activities

1. A GRÓ community is created across countries, regions, and the thematic fields of GRÓ by hosting alumni seminars and network events.
2. GRÓ alumni are supported to participate in international and regional conferences
3. GRÓ alumni are involved in teaching and organisation of short courses in partner countries.

