United Nations Development Programme

Designing and delivering people-centred justice and security

A UNDP programming guide

One United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAR	After-action review
ADR	Alternative dispute resolution
CDR	Collaborative dispute resolution
CSO	Civil society organization
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross domestic product
HDP	Humanitarian–Development–Peace
HLP	Housing, land and property
HoJ	House of Justice
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
MEΛ	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
NHRI	National human rights institution
NSCDC	Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps
NVC	Nonviolent Communication
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCCIF	People-Centred Capacity and Integrity Framework
PCRC	Police Community Relations Committee
PEA	Political economy analysis
PPEA	Power and political economy analysis
PRMIS	Police Records Management Information System
PVE	Preventing violent extremism
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
ToC	Theory of change
UNGPs	United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
VRI	Video-recorded interview

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

CHAPTER 1

This introductory chapter to *Designing and Delivering People-Centred Justice and Security: A UNDP Programming Guide* presents the purpose, scope and structure of the Guide. It explains who the Guide is for, how it was developed and how it can be used. It situates the Guide within broader United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) strategies and shows how it complements other tools and resources.
The chapter encourages teams to start where they are, build on existing momentum and use the Guide flexibly as a resource for practical action, strategic reflection and inspiration.

Key messages

- **A practical and flexible guide for use at all stages of the programme cycle.**
- **The people-centred approach applies across all contexts, including stable, transitional and crisis-affected settings.**
- **Justice and security are cross-cutting development issues that require coherence between sectors and integrated approaches to systemic change.**

1.1 THE PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

This Guide supports UNDP teams in translating the UNDP people-centred approach to justice and security (also referred to in this Guide as "the people-centred approach" or simply "the approach") into effective, sustainable and responsive programming. It offers structured steps, practical tools and real-world examples to support the design, implementation and adaptation of interventions that are context-specific, inclusive and capable of driving long-term transformation of justice and security systems.

It is both a toolkit for action and a source of inspiration, whether teams are new to the people-centred approach or building on existing efforts. It encourages teams to start where they are (see Box 1), work with existing momentum and identify opportunities for change, from the incremental to the ambitious.

The Guide is grounded in a core insight: justice and security systems evolve in complex and diverse ways across different contexts. There is no single starting point or model. Progress depends on political dynamics, institutional capacity, public trust and willingness to change. The Guide emphasizes experimentation, adaptation and strategic navigation of political economy constraints, recognizing that transformative change begins not with perfect conditions but through action.

The people-centred approach is both a programming method and a strategy for systemic change. It builds on UNDP's commitment to inclusive governance and rule of law, access to justice, community security and human rights. It responds to the complexity of justice and security challenges by focusing on the outcomes that matter most to people, such as trust, safety, fairness, accountability and inclusion. This means starting with people's actual experiences, working across formal (State) and informal systems, and embedding feedback and learning at every stage of programming.

The Guide helps UNDP teams to:

- Design inclusive, context-specific interventions informed by diverse perspectives and data.
- Support the transformation of justice and security systems to become more fair, accountable, trusted and accessible.

The Guide focuses on two interlinked areas:

- **Improving programming** so that interventions are adaptive, participatory and evidence-driven and supported by robust monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems.
- **Improving systems** so that justice and security are not only delivered but also experienced in ways that are fair, trusted and rights-based.

The Guide is applicable across diverse contexts, from stable governance settings to transitional and crisis-affected environments, and ensures that justice and security are embedded in broader development pathways, aligned with Agenda 2030 and the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2026–2029.

See **Annex 1** for how the people-centred approach supports the achievement of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2026–2029.

The Guide is designed to be used alongside the UNDP people-centred policy framework laid out in The UNDP People-Centred Approach to Justice and Security (2025) and is complemented by thematic guidance on topics such as gender justice, customary and informal justice, and justice in contexts of forced displacement.

See The UNDP People-Centred Approach to Justice and Security for a full description of the approach.

It builds on past guidance, including UNDP's Practice Note: Access to Justice (2004) and Community Security and Social Cohesion: Towards a UNDP Approach (2009), and draws on UNDP's work in adaptive management, systems thinking, the portfolio approach and programming in complex contexts.

While this Guide reflects UNDP's own practice and learning, it also builds on the significant contributions of many other organizations and initiatives, such as the Hague Institute for Innovation of Law, the International Development Law Organization, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, and Saferworld, that have advanced people-centred approaches to justice and security globally.

1.2 WHO THE GUIDE IS FOR AND WHEN TO USE IT

The Guide is intended for UNDP teams engaging with justice and security issues across different contexts. These include teams designing new interventions, adapting existing ones or reflecting on past programming (see Box 1). It is relevant to governance, rule of law, and justice and security teams, as well as those working in closely connected areas, including:

- Gender
- Conflict prevention and peacebuilding
- Stabilization
- Early recovery
- Environmental governance
- Climate, peace and security

It applies at all stages of the programme cycle and is relevant at the project, programme and portfolio levels.

Justice and security are cross-cutting development issues that arise in sectors such as health, livelihoods, education and climate. The people-centred approach therefore applies across a wide range of thematic and operational areas, beyond the conventional areas of justice and security programming (such as access to justice or community policing). Recognizing and strengthening these connections helps move towards more integrated, coherent programming and supports UNDP's portfolio approach.

Box 1: **Start where you are**

At all stages of the programming cycle, the people-centred approach can help ensure support stays grounded in people's rights and their experiences and is responsive to evolving contexts and needs. This means asking:

- **How are people experiencing justice and security now?**
  What are affected communities telling us that may not have been visible earlier?
- **Whose voices, experiences, or perspectives are missing?**
- **How are systems responding to people's rights, needs and concerns?**
- **What adjustments can improve inclusivity, relevance, and effectiveness?**

People-centred programming is an ongoing process of reflection and adaptation. This Guide supports that process.

Table 1 presents an illustrative list of areas where justice and security dimensions are relevant, even if not always explicitly integrated in UNDP programming. These interventions are not people-centred by default; intentional efforts are needed to align them with people's rights, needs and experiences. See Annex 10 for thematic spotlights on three of these areas: Digitalization and E-justice, Environmental Justice, and Business and Human Rights. Each spotlight provides resources and practical examples from diverse UNDP Country Offices to support integration of the people-centred approach within these thematic areas.

Table 1: **Areas where justice and security are relevant in UNDP programming**

Justice	Security
Legal aid and legal empowerment (e.g., community-based paralegals, legal awareness)	Community security (e.g., community dialogues and forums, local security planning, cross-border initiatives)
Mobile courts and mobile legal aid	Security sector governance and reform (e.g., civilian oversight, institutions strengthening and capacity building, gender mainstreaming)
Institutions support and capacity building for formal justice institutions	Police reform and community policing (e.g., legislative reforms, training, accountability mechanisms)
Judicial oversight and accountability (e.g., complaints mechanisms, support to national human rights institutions, ombudspeople, parliaments)	Corrections (e.g., protection of detainee rights, institutional capacity and oversight)
Strengthening legal frameworks, including constitutional assistance	Early warning and conflict prevention (e.g., local peace committees and insider mediation)
Business and Human Rights (e.g., expanding accountability, improving access to remedy, empowering people)	Prevention of violent extremism
e-justice and digital transformation (e.g., case management systems, digital access platforms)	Small arms and armed violence reduction (e.g., SALIENT and SEESAC programmes)
Gender justice, including gender-based violence (GBV) focused justice services	GBV, including specialized police units, gender desks, training
Customary and informal justice	Stabilization, including restoring security, infrastructure rehabilitation, basic services delivery
Environmental justice	Climate security, including early warning, community security, conflict prevention
Transitional justice, reconciliation and restorative justice	Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), specifically community-based reintegration
Support for displaced populations and durable solutions (e.g., legal identity; housing, land and property [HLP] rights; inclusive justice mechanisms)	Safe returns and durable solutions (e.g., community security, social cohesion)

The approach applies across all contexts—from crisis prevention, response and recovery to long-term development. It supports prevention by addressing the root causes of injustice and insecurity, recognizing justice and security not only as an issue of institutional reform but also as a means to resolve conflict, address grievances and strengthen the social contract. It enables inclusive, rights-based responses across the Humanitarian–Development–Peace (HDP) nexus. In crisis and recovery settings, the approach helps ensure that efforts to address people's immediate justice and security needs are not disconnected from the underlying drivers of injustice and insecurity. This helps prevent the re-entrenchment of harmful practices and supports more inclusive, accountable systems over time.

See **Annex 2** for how the approach can reinforce UNDP's role across the HDP nexus, with an illustrative example of the link between stabilization programming and the people-centred approach.

1.3 HOW THE GUIDE WAS DEVELOPED

This Guide builds on the extensive consultations that shaped the UNDP people-centred policy framework. Its development included additional online consultations with over 60 UNDP staff from global, regional and country offices. The content was further informed by a review of existing UNDP guidance notes, tools and reports, as well as evaluations published by the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO).

A reference group composed primarily of UNDP staff from country offices across all five regions and diverse development contexts provided feedback throughout the drafting process. The Guide also underwent formal peer review to strengthen its quality and coherence.

1.4 HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

This Guide is a practical resource for designing and implementing people-centred justice and security programming in a way that is context-responsive, systems-informed and adaptive. It offers a structured yet flexible process to help translate the approach into action across design, implementation, learning and adaptation.

The Guide is available as a downloadable PDF and as an online version accessible via the UNDP Rule of Law and Human Rights website (https://www.undp.org/rolhr). An accompanying quick reference guide provides a concise overview of the key concepts, tools and steps in the Guide, serving as a practical navigation tool for users.

UNDP, *Designing and Delivering People-Centred Justice and Security: A UNDP Programming Guide* minisite at [INSERT MINISITE URL]
UNDP, *Designing and Delivering People-Centred Justice and Security: Quick Reference Guide* [insert the hyperlink]

The Guide is organized around three interrelated and reinforcing steps, as shown in Diagram 1.

Step 1 **Identify and understand the problem**
Understand how people experience justice and security and how systems contribute to those outcomes.

Step 2 **Design and test solutions**
Co-design and test interventions with communities and institutions, grounded in data and evidence.

Step 3 **Adapt and evolve interventions**
Reflect, learn and adapt interventions to remain relevant, responsive and focused on sustainable change.

Each step includes:

- Practical tools
- Guiding questions
- Country examples
- Programming tips and common pitfalls to avoid
- Links to additional UNDP and external resources

While presented here in three steps for clarity, the process of designing and delivering people-centred justice and security is not linear. The trio of steps are interdependent functions that reinforce one another throughout the programming cycle.

Diagnosis is ongoing:
Understanding the problem (Step 1) continues through implementation as new dynamics emerge.

Design evolves:
Testing solutions (Step 2) may reveal the need for adjustments to strategies (Step 1) or delivery (Step 3).

Adaptation is continuous:
Learning and reflection (Step 3) help ensure programming stays relevant and impactful, often prompting teams to revisit earlier steps.

This cycle of continuous learning helps teams stay grounded in people's rights, needs and experiences, while supporting long-term systems change. It also enables teams to anticipate and respond to emerging risks and opportunities.

Diagram 1: **The three-step programming process**

What the Guide does not do

This Guide does not cover all aspects of justice and security programming in detail. It does not offer technical guidance on every thematic area or prescribe specific models. Where tools such as political economy analysis or conflict analysis are addressed in other UNDP or external resources, the Guide refers users to those materials rather than duplicating them.

The Guide draws primarily on insights and lessons from UNDP programming. While aligned with broader practice, it does not include approaches or examples from other organizations.

Navigating the Guide

The main text is punctuated by seven types of materials designed to enhance the Guide's reader-friendliness, usefulness and impact.

As shown in Table 2, the Guide is divided into seven chapters. At the heart of the Guide is the three-step process (design, implement and adapt) for undertaking people-centred justice and security programming; this process is introduced in Chapter 3 and the three steps are laid out in turn in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 7 offers a short conclusion. At the end of the Guide are 10 annexes with practical tools and resources to support application of the approach in diverse programming contexts.

Table 3 provides a quick reference to help readers locate key sections of the Guide in response to common programming questions.

Connectors
Highlight links between ideas, concepts or sections within the Guide to reinforce key learning points and help readers make connections across different parts of the programming process.

Examples
Showcase practical interventions from diverse contexts, helping readers see how the approach has been applied in UNDP programming.

Boxes
Provide short explanations or insights that reinforce key messages within the main text.

Resources
Point to additional readings, tools and references that enable readers to deepen their understanding or explore specific issues in more detail.

Guiding questions
Offer key questions that help readers reflect on and apply the approach at different stages of programming.

Common pitfalls to avoid
Share lessons from UNDP programming experience the help readers anticipate and avoid common challenges in justice and security work.

Programming tips
Provide practical insights and strategies to support effective programming.

Table 2: **Content of the Guide**

Chapter 1	**About this Guide**	Introduces the purpose, scope and structure of the Guide. Explains who the Guide is for, how it was developed and how it can be used. Situates the Guide within broader UNDP strategies and shows how it complements other tools and resources.
Chapter 2	**UNDP's people-centred approach to justice and security**	Explains what the people-centred approach is, why it matters and how it should guide justice and security programming. Outlines key benefits for people, governments, UNDP, and development partners; defines the core elements of the approach; and highlights key messages for effective implementation.
Chapter 3	**Introducing the three-step programming approach**	Outlines a three-step process (design, implement and adapt) for undertaking people-centred justice and security programming. Identifies the seven design principles that should guide such programming.
Chapter 4	Step 1 **Identify and understand the problem**	Sets out the vision of a people-centred justice and security system; introduces key enablers for effective problem diagnosis; and provides guidance for understanding people's needs, how systems function and why they may not deliver fair outcomes. Includes tools and tips for stakeholder mapping, power and political economy analysis, conflict analysis and systems mapping. Concludes with diagnosing the problem based on evidence and people's experiences.
Chapter 5	Step 2 **Design and test solutions**	Provides guidance on identifying programming entry points, including in politically constrained environments; co-creating solutions with communities and institutions; and testing interventions. Introduces the Six Dimensions Tool and the People-Centred Capacity and Integrity Framework. Includes tools, tips and country examples to support people-centred design, participatory implementation, integrated programming and the development of effective monitoring, evaluation and learning systems.
Chapter 6	Step 3 **Adapt and evolve interventions**	Focuses on using data, evidence and experience to adapt interventions, embed change in systems and support sustainable, people-centred outcomes. Provides practical guidance, tools and examples for reflection, learning, adaptation and scaling. Includes strategies for applying the approach in complex and volatile settings.
Chapter 7	**Conclusion**	Offers a brief conclusion that emphasizes the Guide is not a blueprint, but a practical resource to support context-specific and adaptive people-centred justice and security programming.

Table 3: **Where to find what in this Guide**

What do you want to know?	Where to look		
I am not a justice or security practitioner—how can I understand and work with the people-centred approach?	**Chapter 2** **Chapter 5** Sections 5.5, 5.6	**Annex 1** The approach as an enabler of the UNDP Strategic Plan	**Annex 2** How the approach can reinforce the HDP nexus
How can I make a business case for the approach?	**Chapter 2** Sections 2.1, 2.2	**Annex 3** The benefits of the approach	
How can I identify and understand people's justice and security needs?	**Chapter 4** Section 4.5		
How can I analyse justice and security systems to understand why they produce the outcomes they do?	**Chapter 4** Section 4.6, 4.7	**Annex 4** The Stakeholder Influence Tool	
How can I engage people and institutions in co-creation and ensure local ownership?	**Chapter 5** Sections 5.2		
How do I identify programming entry points, especially in constrained or volatile contexts?	**Chapter 5** Sections 5.3, 5.4	**Annex 5** Applying the Six Dimensions Tool	**Annex 6** The People-Centred Capacity and Integrity Framework

What do you want to know?	Where to look		
How can people, communities, and non-State and hybrid actors be empowered as partners in people-centred change?	**Chapter 5** Part A		
How can I ensure support to State institutions is people-centred?	**Chapter 5** Part B		
How can I design an MEL system for people-centred programming?	**Chapter 5** Section 5.7	**Annex 7** People-centred indicators	**Annex 9** People-centred evaluations
How can I adapt and scale interventions in response to evidence and context change?	**Chapter 6**	**Annex 8** How to reflection sessions	
How can I work across sectors and integrate justice and security into other programmes?	**Chapter 5** Section 5.6	**Annex 1** The approach as an enabler of UNDP's Strategic Plan	**Annex 10** Thematic spotlights

UNDP'S PEOPLE-CENTRED APPROACH TO JUSTICE AND SECURITY

This chapter introduces the UNDP people-centred approach to justice and security. It explains why the approach is essential for advancing rule of law, conflict prevention and sustainable development, and outlines the concrete benefits it brings to people, governments, development partners and UNDP. The chapter defines the approach and its relationship to human rights-based programming and the principle of Leave No One Behind, and sets out the five core elements that guide its application across diverse contexts. The section concludes with key messages to inform programming design, implementation and adaptation.

Key messages

- **Justice and security are strengthened by centring people's rights, needs and experiences.**
- **Combining systems thinking, adaptive programming and human rights principles fosters inclusive and accountable systems.**
- **The approach delivers tangible benefits by enhancing legitimacy, resilience and development outcomes.**
- **Transforming systems requires engaging the diversity of State, non-State and hybrid justice and security actors.**
- **Justice and security is about addressing immediate needs and structural drivers of injustice and insecurity.**

CHAPTER 2

2.1 WHY THE PEOPLE-CENTRED APPROACH TO JUSTICE AND SECURITY MATTERS

The people-centred approach to justice and security is critical for advancing the rule of law and preventing or mitigating rights violations, democratic backsliding and conflict. While not a panacea, it offers a systemic and sustainable path to resilience. It serves as a stabilizing force by reasserting the social contract, rebuilding trust between people and institutions, and promoting inclusive processes where people shape justice and security solutions. This matters because when people experience justice and security systems as fair, accessible and accountable, it strengthens institutional legitimacy and fosters commitment to the rule of law.

Justice and security are shaped by a wide variety of State, non-State and hybrid actors ("hybrid" actors are those that straddle State and non-State authority). The approach requires engaging this broad set of actors, not only formal institutions. It also addresses the underlying drivers of injustice and insecurity. It tackles structural inequalities and power imbalances, such as gender exclusion or unequal access to natural resources; supports bottom-up reform through local actors (e.g., customary leaders, paralegals, civil society); and invests in adaptive systems change that aims to shift power, not just provide technical fixes.

Democratic backsliding is often preceded by weak civic participation, exclusionary justice systems, and centralized or militarized responses to dissent. The approach helps counter this erosion by empowering communities to hold institutions accountable. It anchors rule of law not in the actions of elites (i.e., political, judicial, or international actors) to pass laws or support institutional reforms, but in social legitimacy: the extent to which people view formal institutions as fair, accessible, responsive and respectful of their dignity and rights.

The approach rebuilds and strengthens that legitimacy by ensuring formal institutions listen to communities, adapt service delivery based on what they hear and report back on the changes made. This creates feedback loops that help institutions remain responsive, adaptive and grounded in public expectations and needs. These mechanisms can also serve as important early warning systems for grievances, injustice or conflict.

Justice and security are essential public goods. The State, as the primary duty bearer, has a fundamental responsibility to ensure they are available to all people. As rights holders, all people are entitled to access justice and security without discrimination and to hold all service providers accountable (whether they are State, non-State or hybrid). The approach also recognizes that legitimacy is often negotiated among State and non-State actors, particularly in plural or hybrid governance settings. By creating space for inclusive dialogue and collaboration, it supports systems that reflect how people actually seek justice and security in practice.

The approach can help prevent relapses into conflict and support long-term peace by strengthening local justice infrastructures such as court user committees, paralegals, mediation forums and legal aid; empowering people and communities to know and realize their rights through, for example, legal awareness and support to civil society, media and human rights defenders; and building accountability networks that include formal and informal mechanisms such as ombudspersons, human rights institutions, police–community forums or local peace committees. By grounding justice and security in inclusive and participatory systems, it enhances a society's capacity for conflict transformation, enabling people and institutions to address injustices and historical grievances, transform relationships, and resolve disputes through peaceful, inclusive and rights-based processes.

The approach strengthens the foundations of legitimate and accountable governance by ensuring that when government authorities overreach or State structures are weakened, societies retain the means to restore justice, protect rights and rebuild peace. It helps recalibrate the relationship between State and society, reinforcing the roles and responsibilities of both and ensures justice and security systems remain responsive, inclusive and resilient through times of stability, crisis or transition.

See The *UNDP People-Centred Approach to Justice and Security* (2025) for a full description of the approach and strategic framework.
UNDP Global Rule of Law and Human Rights, "Innovations in Justice Transformation".

2.2 BENEFITS OF THE APPROACH

The cost of injustice and insecurity

Unresolved justice and security problems carry profound human and economic costs. In 2024, the global economic impact of violence reached $19.97 trillion—equivalent to 11.6 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP), or $2,455 per person. More than 123 million people were forcibly displaced, and approximately one-quarter of the world's population lives in places affected by conflict. Insecurity causes human suffering, disrupts economies and undermines development gains.

More than 5 billion people face at least one unmet justice need. These needs range from unresolved legal problems such as lack of legal identity or land tenure to living in extreme conditions of injustice such as statelessness or modern slavery. The OECD estimates that these justice gaps cost economies between 0.5 and over 3 percent of GDP through lost income, health impacts and legal costs.

Injustice and insecurity are not just development challenges. They are economic and social liabilities. Investing in people-centred justice and security systems is therefore both a development necessity and a strategic investment in peace, stability and inclusive growth.

Tangible benefits for different actors

This section highlights some of the tangible benefits the people-centred approach offers for people and communities, governments, development partners and UNDP.

See **Annex 3** for additional benefits of adopting the people-centred approach.

Benefits for people and communities

- **Stronger protection of rights and safety**: People-centred justice and security systems protect individuals and communities from violence, exclusion and discrimination. They expand access to justice and security services for all people, especially those most at risk of being left behind; they empower people to understand and claim their rights; and they help prevent and address rights violations, including GBV and harms affecting children, minorities and displaced people.
- **Greater empowerment and local ownership**: When communities, especially women and marginalized groups, help shape justice and security services, they gain voice, agency and trust. Co-designed solutions are more effective and sustainable because they reflect and respond to local priorities and are more likely to be used, supported and maintained over time.
- **Safer communities and increased trust in authorities**: When justice and security providers engage communities, people feel safer and are more likely to trust and use these services. Responsive systems foster trust, reduce conflict risks and promote cooperation. Over time, this trust encourages people to invest in their communities—by starting businesses, joining cooperatives, participating in local governance, supporting development projects or engaging in civic associations. These actions strengthen local development, social cohesion and community resilience.

Benefits for governments

- **More efficient services that support economic activity**: People-centred justice systems improve service delivery by resolving cases faster, reducing public costs (e.g., detention and court administration) and better meeting the priority justice needs of people. In Kenya, the nationwide expansion of Small Claims Courts, which handle commercial disputes involving less than 1 million Kenyan shillings, resolved over 68,000 cases in the first three years of operation and released 12.6 billion Kenyan shillings (approximately US$100 million) back into the economy. Efficient, accessible justice improves institutional performance and enables economic participation and growth.

- **Greater local and global trust and legitimacy**: Fair, responsive institutions build public trust and State legitimacy. Trusted police and justice services encourage people to comply with laws, report crime and engage with authorities, which are critical for safer communities and more effective governance. People-centred reforms align with international commitments to justice, security, human rights and inclusive governance. They contribute directly to national efforts to deliver on 2030 Agenda's call for peaceful, just and inclusive societies (Sustainable Development Goal [SDG] 16), while also enhancing governments' global standing and unlocking cooperation on development and trade.
- **Conflict prevention, peace and security**: The approach enables governments and communities to address tensions before they escalate into violence. Resolving underlying grievances, such as land disputes or community tensions, through legal aid, mediation or dialogue, can prevent conflict and reduce the need for costly security responses. Justice systems that are accessible and trusted play a critical role in maintaining peace, preventing cycles of violence and building lasting security.

Benefits for development partners

- **Higher impact and value for money**: People-centred justice and security interventions deliver strong returns by focusing on services people actually use. In Bangladesh, investment in village courts yielded benefit–cost ratios of up to 18:1 (i.e., 18 dollars in economic and social benefits for every 1 dollar invested). These initiatives can unlock wider development progress by resolving legal barriers to health, education, livelihoods or economic participation (e.g., through civil documentation, access to alimony or the recognition of land rights). For development partners, this means greater and more sustained impact across sectors per dollar invested.
- **Sustainable, locally owned results**: By investing in local capacity and leadership, the approach ensures that results endure beyond a project's life cycle. Services built with local commitment and ownership, such as community paralegals or community policing forums, tend to remain active and effective after donor funding ends. This reduces the risk of reforms backsliding and supports long-term impact. Sustainability is further strengthened when these initiatives include mechanisms for ongoing feedback, accountability and adaptation. Grounding interventions in people's needs and experiences also enables better targeting, monitoring and evaluation of outcomes.
- **Reduced risk and stronger development returns**: The approach protects development gains and reduces future risks. By addressing root causes of instability, it supports more resilient, investment-ready societies. Fair, effective institutions foster trust, rule of law and stable environments where cooperation on trade, mobility and security becomes more viable. This aligns with donor strategies that seek to balance economic goals with governance, rights and inclusion. Early investment in locally driven justice and security can help prevent crises, reducing future spending on humanitarian aid and emergency response.

Benefits for UNDP

- **Strategic alignment and leadership**: The approach reflects UNDP's core commitment to human development, human rights and inclusive governance. It enables UNDP to deliver justice and security programming that is accessible, accountable and people-centred, strengthening governance, reducing inequality and fostering peace. It reinforces UNDP's contribution to SDG 16 by promoting justice and security systems that are not only effective but also responsive and accountable to people's rights and needs. This strategic coherence reinforces UNDP's credibility as a trusted partner and convener, positioning it to lead dialogues, shape policy and drive collective action on justice and security.
- **Holistic and integrated programming**: The approach enables UNDP to integrate justice and security efforts across sectors, designing joined-up interventions that address both symptoms and root causes of insecurity or injustice. This supports UNDP's portfolio approach and focuses on transforming systems rather than treating isolated problems. The approach aligns with UNDP's emphasis on systemic development solutions and leverages its broad expertise in a coordinated way.

- **Innovation, learning and adaptability**: The approach fosters adaptive, evidence-based programming. By grounding interventions in people's experiences and adjusting based on feedback and data, UNDP can innovate and improve outcomes. This leads to more effective, scalable results, whether refining a pilot service or iterating reform policies based on community input. It supports UNDP's commitment to learning and innovation, and enables high-quality support to governments, civil society and communities.

See **Annex 1** for how the approach supports the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2026–2029.

2.3 DEFINING THE APPROACH

The people-centred approach places people's rights, needs and experiences at the centre of efforts to strengthen justice and security systems. Rather than viewing justice and security solely through the lens of the State and its institutions, the approach focuses on how justice and security are experienced by people, especially those who are marginalized, vulnerable or at risk of being left behind.

At its core, the approach envisions justice and security systems that are equitable, accessible, responsive and accountable to the people they are meant to serve, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized. This means engaging the full range of State, non-State and hybrid actors, institutions and mechanisms that together shape people's justice and security outcomes. The goal is to ensure these diverse actors deliver high-quality, accountable and effective justice and security services in line with human rights standards.

This requires a shift from conventional State-centric approaches to a people-centred one. It does not mean focusing solely on communities or moving away from support for State institutions. Rather, it emphasizes the importance of strategically combining community-driven and institution-focused interventions in a mutually reinforcing way. Community action empowers people, especially the vulnerable and marginalized, to articulate their needs, claim rights, shape solutions and hold justice and security providers to account. Institutional reform, in turn, is essential to address systemic barriers, embed rights protections, and ensure high-quality, fair and accountable service delivery. When pursued together, these two levels create cycles of change that strengthen trust, responsiveness and legitimacy across the justice and security system as a whole.

People-centred justice and security is sometimes confused with terms such as "community-based", "access to justice" or "community security." While these are related, they are not the same. (See Box 2 for further explanation.)

Injustice, insecurity and exclusion are both symptoms of deeper systemic problems and drivers of instability and inequality. When these problems go unresolved, grievances grow, trust in institutions erodes, and the risk of conflict or violence increases. The approach seeks to address both the underlying causes and the visible consequences of injustice and insecurity by supporting systems that are fair, effective, and capable of protecting and upholding people's rights and responding to their needs.

The approach is fundamentally rights-based. Justice and security systems are effective, responsive and accountable when they protect, promote and fulfil human rights and advance the dignity and well-being of all people. The approach builds on the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), which provides both the legal and normative framework and is a complementary programming approach grounded in participation, accountability and non-discrimination. The HRBA is anchored in the human rights obligations that countries have committed to and have a legal obligation to fulfil. It focuses on the accountability relationship between duty bearers (primarily the State) and rights holders (people), guided by international human rights standards and principles. The people-centred approach complements and extends this by focusing on people's **everyday experiences** of justice and security. It considers the roles of diverse State, non-State and hybrid actors, and the **quality** of justice and security services and outcomes that people receive. Together, the two approaches are mutually reinforcing, grounded in shared principles of participation, empowerment, accountability, and the strengthening of the capacities of both duty bearers and rights holders.

Box 2: **Clarifying programming concepts**

People-centred justice and security:
A system-wide approach that centres people's rights, needs and experiences. It aims to make justice and security systems accessible, responsive, inclusive and accountable by engaging State, non-State and hybrid actors. It focuses on how justice and security services are delivered, how people and communities participate in and shape decision-making, and how rights are upheld and accountability is strengthened across the system.

Access to justice:
A key component of the people-centred approach. It refers to the ability of people to seek and obtain remedies for justice problems through formal or informal mechanisms, in line with human rights standards. Access to justice programming often focuses on removing legal, institutional or practical barriers to justice. However, the people-centred approach is broader: it includes interventions aimed at prevention, participation, and the transformation of how justice is conceived, delivered and experienced across justice and security systems.

Community-based:
Focuses on empowering communities to play an active role in addressing justice or security challenges. Initiatives are designed and implemented with the participation and leadership of the local community. It is a key component of the people-centred approach but not equivalent to it.

Community security:
A strategy that implements the people-centred approach by engaging State, non-State and hybrid actors to identify the root causes of violence and develop coordinated responses. It focuses on improving service delivery and ensuring that communities have agency in defining their safety needs and solutions.

Citizen security:
A community security framework used mainly in Latin America and the Caribbean. It links people-centred security with democratic governance, emphasizing the role of accountable State institutions for delivering inclusive, rights-based approaches to public safety and addressing the root causes of insecurity.

The approach supports greater coherence and integration between State and non-State systems to more effectively meet justice and security needs in line with human rights standards. It envisions the State and society as partners: people have agency and participate in shaping the services that affect their lives, while governments fulfil their responsibility to provide justice and security for all. Justice and security are not only public services but also essential to the social contract—a foundation of legitimacy, trust and accountability between people and the State.

The approach is anchored in the commitment to **Leave No One Behind** and to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. It prioritizes the rights, needs and voices of those most marginalized, ensuring their meaningful participation in shaping solutions to justice and security problems. By tackling exclusion and inequality and promoting inclusive, gender-responsive outcomes, the approach upholds rights, responds to diverse needs and addresses systemic disparities, particularly those related to gender and intersecting inequalities. See Table 4 for a summary of how the people-centred approach, the HBRA and the commitment to Leave No One Behind complement each other in the delivery of people-centred justice and security programming.

Table 4: **How Leave No One Behind, HRBA, and the people-centred approach support justice and security programming**

	LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND	HRBA	THE PEOPLE-CENTRED APPROACH
Role and focus	A guiding principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is a political commitment made by Member States.	A programming approach and problem-solving tool to ensure development policies and programmes are anchored in international human rights standards and principles.	A strategic and programming approach that strengthens the social contract by making justice and security systems accessible, accountable and responsive to people.
	It focuses on addressing the immediate, underlying and root causes of the deprivations, disadvantages or discriminations that cause people to be left behind.	It focuses on strengthening accountability by developing the capacities of both duty bearers to meet their obligations and rights holders to claim their rights.	It focuses on how people experience and seek resolution to their justice and security problems, and whether systems respond to their rights, needs and priorities.
How they work together in justice and security programming	*Sets the priority:* Focuses on reaching those furthest behind, addressing discrimination and exclusion.	*Provides the normative framework:* Anchors interventions in rights, accountability and non-discrimination.	*Operationalizes the change:* Makes justice and security systems trusted, accountable, and responsive to people's rights and experiences.
Cross-cutting principles	Empowerment and agency, participation and inclusion, accountability, equality and non-discrimination.		
Key resources	UNSDG, Operationalizing Leaving No One Behind: Good Practice Note for UN Country Teams (2022).	UNDP, The Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Programming: HRBA Toolkit (2025).	UNDP, The UNDP People-Centred Approach to Justice and Security: A Policy Framework for Justice and Security Programming (2025).

2.4 THE CORE ELEMENTS OF THE APPROACH

The people-centred approach is operationalized through a strategic framework built around five interlinked and mutually reinforcing elements. Grounded in human rights, inclusion and participation, empowerment, local ownership, and accountability, these elements guide how justice and security programming is designed, implemented and adapted. They provide an integrated foundation for long-term transformation across systems, institutions and communities. These five elements (see Diagram 2) are not a checklist, but a sustained approach to building justice and security systems that are accessible, inclusive, responsive and accountable to all people.

Element 1

Supporting social transformation

Enabling the emergence of trustworthy, accountable, accessible and responsive justice and security systems that protect people's rights, respond to their needs and expectations, and strengthen trust and the social contract for peace and sustainable development.

Element 2

Enabling systems change

Navigating the complexity of justice and security systems through problem-driven, context-specific and adaptive programming that responds to people's actual experiences. The approach recognizes the diversity of State, non-State and hybrid actors who deliver justice and security, and supports change across the system as a whole, not just within individual institutions.

Element 3

Delivering through holistic and integrated programming

Addressing both the symptoms and structural causes of injustice and insecurity by strategically combining community-driven and institution-focused interventions in ways that are mutually reinforcing. This requires integrated, multisector and multidisciplinary responses across national, local and sectoral levels.

Element 4

Empowering people and communities

Engaging and empowering people, communities and civil society to know and claim their rights and to participate meaningfully in shaping responses to their justice and security needs. This includes inclusive, participatory processes that build agency and strengthen accountability.

Element 5

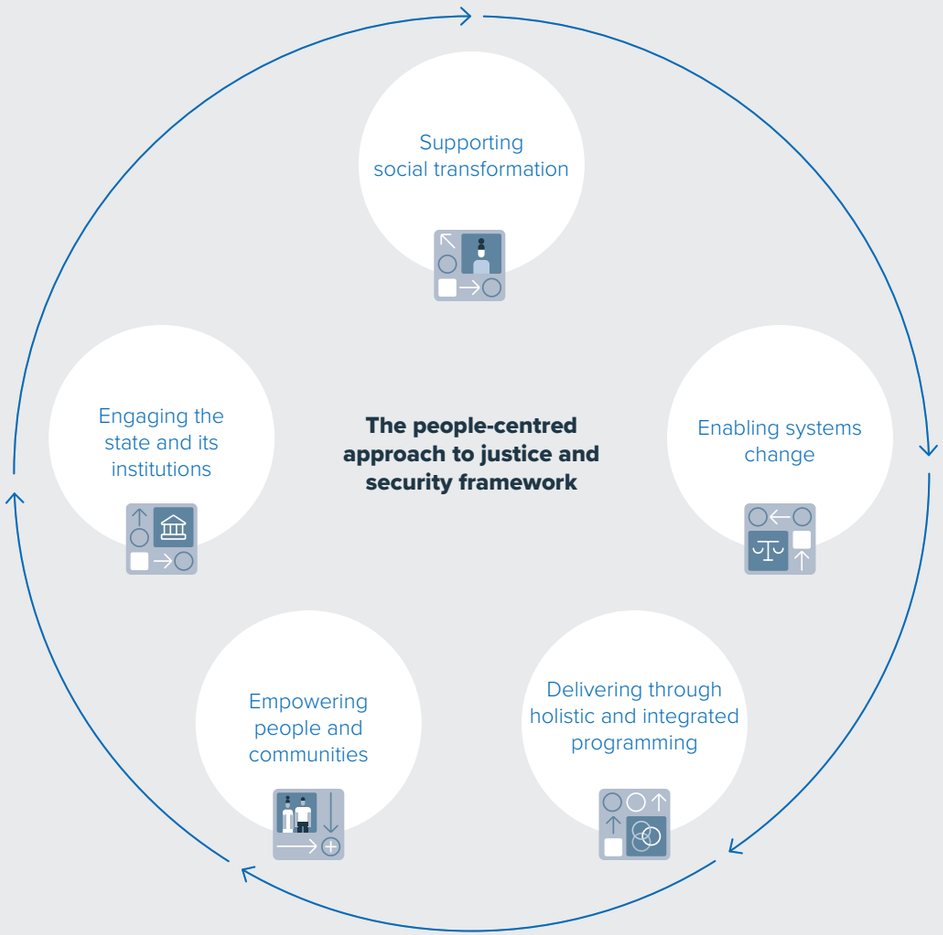
Engaging the State and its institutions

Transforming formal institutions to deliver high-quality, accountable and effective justice and security services for all people, especially those most at risk of being left behind. This includes enabling personnel to lead and sustain change and ensuring services are trusted, accessible and legitimate in the eyes of those they serve.

The people-centred approach and its framework offer both a strategic lens and a practical pathway to strengthen justice and security systems. While not all interventions can address the whole system at once, the approach provides long-term direction for making services more inclusive, effective and accountable. This Guide supports teams to apply the approach in adaptive, context-sensitive ways that respond to people's rights and needs and promote sustainable transformation.

See The *UNDP People-Centred Approach to Justice and Security* (2025) for a full description of the approach and strategic framework.

Diagram 2: **Elements of the UNDP people-centred approach to justice and security framework**



2.5 KEY MESSAGES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PEOPLE-CENTRED APPROACH

The approach challenges conventional ways of understanding and addressing justice and security. It shifts the focus from institutional reform alone to how people experience justice, security and rights in their daily lives. The key messages below highlight core shifts in perspective that are essential for guiding implementation. They provide a foundation for programming that is responsive to people's rights and needs, and that supports inclusive, accountable and trusted justice and security systems.

Justice and security are about people

The approach focuses on how individuals and communities experience justice and security in their daily lives, not only on how courts, police or legal systems perform. People's rights, their priority needs, and experiences must guide how justice and security are understood, delivered and measured. Strengthening formal institutions is important, but their legitimacy and impact depend on how well they serve people, uphold rights and respond to people's needs.

Justice and security reflect power and must be analysed politically

Justice and security are shaped by social, political and economic dynamics that determine who can obtain fair outcomes, access services and participate in decision-making and who is excluded. Understanding these dynamics—including power relations, incentives and institutional interests—is essential for identifying where change is possible and for promoting more inclusive, accountable and responsive systems.

People use multiple justice and security pathways

People resolve justice and security problems through a range of pathways, including State institutions, non-State and hybrid actors, and community-based mechanisms. The approach engages with this plurality and seeks to ensure that all pathways are accessible, accountable and uphold the rights of those who rely on them, especially those most at risk of exclusion or harm.

Justice and security are integral to peace and development

The approach recognizes that people's justice and security needs are closely linked and often connected with other development issues such as land, livelihoods, education and health. Their interdependent nature requires integrated responses. Injustice and insecurity are both symptoms and drivers of conflict and underdevelopment, reinforcing cycles of exclusion, instability and inequality. Justice and security are essential for sustainable peace and development: they enable the delivery of inclusive public goods, support social cohesion and create the stability needed to advance all other development goals.

Legitimate systems require trust, empowerment and accountability

Justice and security systems are more legitimate when services are fair, accessible, responsive and accountable to all people, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised. Empowering people, particularly women, youth and other excluded groups, to participate meaningfully in these systems is essential. When communities shape how justice and security services are delivered, they gain voice, agency and trust in the system, strengthening both accountability and the social contract.

Evidence must reflect people's needs, experiences, and outcomes

People-centred programming requires data and evidence of people's perspectives, their needs and experiences of seeking justice and security. Data informs action, drives accountability and supports learning. Combining quantitative and qualitative data helps reveal barriers, capture diverse needs and identify where rights may be at risk, informing effective responses. Community participation in data collection and use ensures that information empowers people and guides decisions that reflect their priorities and improve justice and security outcomes that uphold their rights.

INTRODUCING THE THREE-STEP PROGRAMMING APPROACH

CHAPTER 3

This chapter introduces a structured, step-by-step process for translating the people-centred approach into practice. It supports teams to diagnose problems, co-create and test solutions, and adapt interventions based on evidence and learning. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 detail in turn each of the three steps.

Key messages

- **A flexible step-by-step process that supports continuous learning, adaptation and responsiveness.**
- **Programming works with the system and embeds people's rights, needs, perspectives and experiences at every stage of design and implementation.**
- **It strengthens the relationship between people and service providers, building trust, agency and accountability.**
- **Reflection, iteration and adjustment are core practices in justice and security programming.**

3.1 A SNAPSHOT OF THE THREE-STEP PROCESS

The three-step process for designing and implementing the people-centred approach is practical, grounded in the UNDP people-centred policy framework, and supports UNDP teams to move from policy to action in a way that is adaptive, inclusive, and responsive to local realities.

The process is structured around three steps that mirror the three phases of the UNDP programme cycle (design, implement and transition) and are shown in Diagram 3:

Step 1 **Identify and understand the problem**

Understand how people experience justice and security and how systems contribute to those outcomes.

Step 2 **Design and test solutions**

Co-design and test interventions with communities and institutions, grounded in data and evidence.

Step 3 **Adapt and evolve interventions**

Reflect, learn and adapt interventions to remain relevant, responsive and focused on sustainable change.

The process is designed to be flexible and iterative, rather than linear. The three steps are interconnected functions that continually shape and inform one another, supported by robust monitoring, learning and evaluation, as shown in Diagram 3. Teams will move between these steps as new information, opportunities and challenges emerge. This iterative process is essential to people-centred and systems-informed programming.

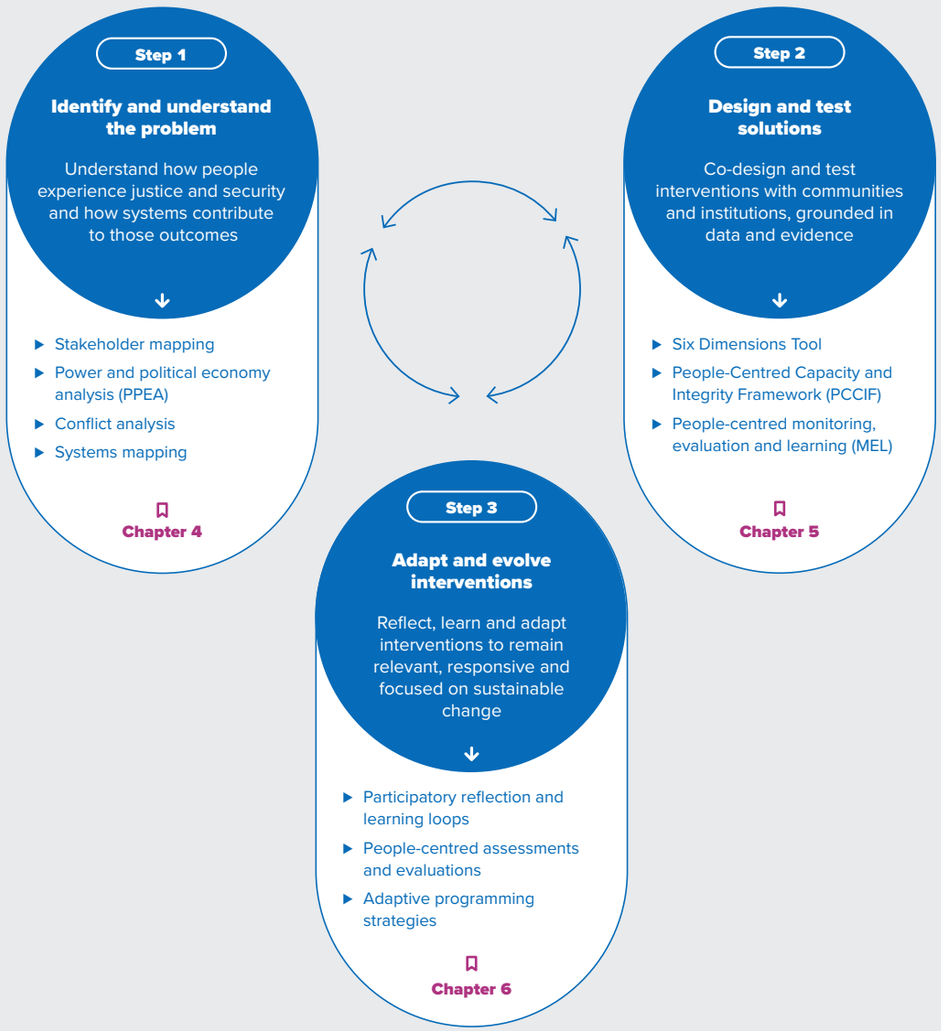
As teams will discover:

- **Insights from Step 1** (such as system dynamics, people's experiences and power relationships) inform how interventions are designed in Step 2: who co-designs, which constraints must be considered, and what resistance or risks should be anticipated.
- **Testing in Step 2** often reveals new dynamics or hidden assumptions, prompting teams to revisit their analysis in Step 1 and refine their understanding of the system.
- **Learning in Step 3** builds on Step 2, revealing whether interventions are shifting trust, legitimacy or outcomes for people, and informing what requires adaptation, refinement or return to design.
- **Adaptation or scaling decisions in Step 3** often require a fresh look at system conditions and deeper context analysis under Step 1, sometimes surfacing entirely new entry points for change.

Each step includes tools, examples, programming tips, reflection questions and common pitfalls to avoid for people-centred programming.

The steps are supported by a set of core design principles detailed in the following section. Where the steps are about doing, the design principles shape how to implement each step in accordance with the people-centred approach.

Diagram 3: **The three-step process and key programming tools**



3.2 SEVEN DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR PROGRAMMING

Seven core design principles underpin people-centred justice and security programming. These principles translate the values and vision of the UNDP people-centred policy framework into practical guidance for how interventions, projects and programmes are designed, implemented and adapted (see Table 5).

The seven principles shape every aspect of design, delivery and impact. They help teams embed the people-centred approach from the outset and sustain it throughout implementation, adaptation and scaling. Interdependent and mutually reinforcing, the principles apply at all stages of the programming cycle and should be revisited regularly as programming evolves.

1. **Start with people's justice and security needs**

People's needs include their legal and human rights and their ability to access to fair, accountable services and just outcomes. Understandings of justice and security problems must be shaped by people's actual experiences. Start by listening to how people, especially women, youth and other marginalized groups, experience injustice and insecurity in their daily lives, and ensure that their voices are central in defining the problems to be addressed.

2. **Design with people, not for them**

People-centred programming means designing and testing solutions with the people most affected by justice and security problems. Engage communities as active partners with government and State institutions and with informal mechanisms and actors in shaping priorities, co-creating solutions and defining what success looks like.

3. **Work with the ecosystem**

Justice and security systems are complex ecosystems shaped by relationships, incentives, histories and power dynamics, not just institutions and laws. People navigate between State, non-State and hybrid pathways based on what they need, trust or can access. Consider the whole ecosystem to identify entry points where systemic change is possible.

4. **Focus on relationships, not just institutions**

The people-centred approach prioritizes rebuilding trust-based relationship between justice and security institutions and the people they serve. Trust and legitimacy grow when institutions and their personnel are able to deliver accessible, accountable, fair and quality services that respond to people's rights, needs and expectations.

5. **Strengthen people's agency and voice**

People-centred programming strengthens people's ability to influence and take part in the decisions that shape their access to justice, safety and rights. Agency means that people and communities are not passive recipients of support but active drivers of change. This involves building their knowledge, confidence and collective voice to claim rights, solve problems and hold State, non-State and hybrid justice and security actors to account.

6. **Measure what matters to people**

Programming success should be judged by the quality of the relationship between people and justice and security providers (State, non-State and hybrid), not just by institutional outputs. This means tracking whether people experience these providers as fair, accountable, responsive, inclusive and trustworthy, using evidence from people's everyday experiences and perspectives alongside institutional data.

7. **Adapt as you go**

Justice and security challenges are complex and context-specific. There are no one-size-fits-all solutions. Addressing them requires creativity, testing, learning and adaptation. Use regular reflection, feedback, and evidence to refine, adapt, and scale interventions based on what works for people in a given context.

Table 5: **How the design principles align across the three steps**

PRINCIPLE	STEP 1 **IDENTIFY AND UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM**	STEP 2 **DESIGN AND TEST SOLUTIONS**	STEP 3 **ADAPT AND EVOLVE INTERVENTIONS**
1. **Start with people's justice and security needs**	Identify priorities through people's everyday experience	Co-design rights-based solutions that respond to what people need and value	Refine based on people's changing needs
2. **Design with people, not for them**	Use participatory analysis methods	Jointly design and test interventions	Feedback drives iteration and decisions for scaling
3. **Work with the ecosystem**	Map the ecosystem including non-State and hybrid actors	Select entry points across ecosystems	Focus on sustained system shifts
4. **Focus on relationships, not just institutions**	Analyse power, politics and social dynamics	Build collaborative platforms (e.g., joint justice or security forums)	Institutionalize relationship-building mechanisms
5. **Strengthen people's agency and voice**	Centre the agency of excluded groups	Empower people to shape, not just receive, services	Track how power dynamics evolve over time
6. **Measure what matters to people**	Gather data on perception, trust and experience	Embed people-centred measurement and indicators in MEL systems	Track user experiences and outcomes alongside outputs
7. **Adapt as you go**	Treat analysis as ongoing, not a one-off exercise	Test and learn in small iterations	Use data and feedback to continuously improve

STEP 1

IDENTIFY AND UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM

This step helps teams understand justice and security problems from the perspective of the people affected. It begins by identifying whose needs are not being met and why, examining how systems function and what drives current outcomes. Step 1 brings together stakeholder mapping, power and political economy analysis (PPEA), conflict analysis and systems mapping to develop a shared understanding of the problem. It also shapes what and how evidence will be gathered, ensuring MEL is anchored in people's needs and experiences from the outset. Step 1 recognizes that people-centred programming requires ongoing diagnosis, not only at the start of a programme but throughout implementation, to remain relevant, inclusive and responsive to shifting dynamics.

Key messages

- **A long-term people-centred vision anchors immediate actions and informs strategic decision-making.**
- **Data and evidence are the foundation for people-centred justice and security programming.**
- **Including diverse perspectives, especially those most often excluded, is essential to understanding justice and security challenges.**
- **Understanding the system involves stakeholder mapping, PPEA, conflict analysis and systems mapping.**
- **Analysis examines how justice and security systems function and why they produce the outcomes they do.**

CHAPTER 4

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Understanding justice and security requires looking at the systems that shape them from two distinct but interconnected angles:

- **A user-facing perspective**—how people experience justice and security in their daily lives.
- **A system-facing perspective**—how justice and security institutions, power and relationships interact to produce those outcomes.

This section helps teams bring both perspectives together to create a shared understanding of why people's justice and security needs are not being met and what might need to change for systems to be more accessible, accountable and responsive to the needs of all people, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized.

A people-centred approach begins with understanding justice and security problems as people experience them, analysing how the system functions, and diagnosing why people's needs are not being met. The aim is to generate a strategic understanding that supports adaptive, inclusive and impact-driven programming.

While it is essential to invest time in this process, programming often takes place under tight timelines and resource constraints. **Step 1 is not expected to be completed in full from the outset.** Instead, treat it as an iterative process that evolves over time. Where possible, include activities that generate data and insight, such as perception studies, stakeholder dialogues and legal needs assessments, as part of project design and delivery. These activities not only improve analysis but also strengthen the responsiveness and relevance of programming throughout implementation.

See Diagram 4 for an overview of the key components of Step 1 and how they fit together as an integrated, iterative problem analysis process.

This analysis also provides a valuable opportunity to engage donors strategically. Donors may not always have a full understanding of local dynamics. Sharing robust, evidence-informed analysis can help shift assumptions, highlight overlooked actors or drivers, and point to areas where donor investment could catalyse meaningful change. It also strengthens value-for-money arguments by identifying targeted opportunities for early impact that are aligned with broader, long-term transformation goals.

Programming tip

The Step 1 analysis will directly inform the "Development Challenge" section of the UNDP project document template. It ensures that projects and programmes are grounded in a robust understanding of the context and respond to actual needs, not imposed assumptions.

4.2 THE LONG-TERM VISION

Effective people-centred justice and security programming is guided by a long-term vision of justice and security systems that are accessible, fair, inclusive, accountable and responsive to the rights and needs of all people, especially those most at risk of being left behind.

See The *UNDP People-Centred Approach to Justice and Security*, "Element 1: Supporting social transformation".

This vision is grounded in justice, security, and human rights and reflects global and national commitments, including the 2030 Agenda's call for peaceful, just and inclusive societies (SDG 16). Justice and security are fundamental public goods, essential for upholding the rule of law, ensuring accountability and sustaining the social contract. The State is responsible for ensuring their provision, and people are entitled to access them without discrimination.

While the core values of a people-centred system reflect global norms and commitments, the specific vision must be grounded in local context. In each setting, the long-term goal should be collectively defined through inclusive dialogue with State, non-State and community actors. This ensures the vision is legitimate and contextually relevant, and provides a shared foundation for prioritization and implementation.

Diagram 4: **Step 1 at a glance—Building a strategic understanding of the problem**

		PURPOSE	ANALYTICAL FOCUS	TOOLS
FRAME	4.2 **The long-term vision**	Co-define a shared direction that reflects the kind of justice and security system people want and need.	What is the shared vision for justice and security in this context? Does it reflect the rights, needs and priorities of different groups?	Visioning workshop, theory of change, strategic foresight.
	4.3 **Defining system boundaries**	Clarify the scope of the issue or system being analysed to ensure focus, relevance and feasibility.	What part of the justice or security system is being examined? Are boundaries shaped by people's needs and experiences, or by predefined assumptions?	Problem framing workshops, stakeholder engagement.
	4.4 **Foundations for effective diagnosis**	Be intentional about how problems are framed, whose perspectives are included and what kinds of evidence are used.	Are problems framed from the perspective of those most affected? Are different voices, types of knowledge, and data informing the analysis?	Problem framing workshops, stakeholder engagement, participatory assessments.
UNDERSTAND	4.5 **Understanding people's justice and security needs**	Understand how people define and experience justice and security, and whether their needs and rights are being met.	What are people's justice and security priorities, and how are these shaped by identity, power and structural inequalities? How do people perceive and engage with justice and security systems, actors and institutions?	Legal needs surveys, user journey mapping, citizen scorecards, administrative data, cross-sectoral datasets.
	4.6 **Understanding how the system functions**	Understand how justice and security systems operate in practice, how power is exercised, how decisions are made, and how system dynamics enable or resist change.	How do actors across the system interact to produce justice and security outcomes? How do power, interests, incentives and informal norms shape system behaviour?	Stakeholder mapping, PPEA, conflict analysis, systems mapping.
DIAGNOSE	4.7 **Diagnosing the problem: Connecting people's experiences and system dynamics**	Build a shared understanding of the problem (linking people's experience and systems dynamics) to inform collective action.	What do people's experiences and system dynamics reveal about the causes of exclusion, harm or distrust? Where do these insights point to opportunities for change?	Iceberg model, sensemaking, UNDP deep demonstrations, foresight and anticipatory governance.

Once the vision is co-defined, the pathway to achieving it will vary across contexts. What is prioritized first and how progress unfolds depends on context-specific factors such as political dynamics, security conditions, institutional capacity and people's immediate priorities. For example, in conflict-affected or fragile settings, early steps may focus on restoring safety, rebuilding trust and enabling people to resolve disputes and access protection locally. In more stable environments, efforts may concentrate on strengthening oversight, accountability and the quality of services. The sequence will differ, but each step should move systems closer to the overarching goal.

The vision is a practical reference point for analysis, action and adaptation throughout the programming cycle (see Box 3). It guides analysis, shapes how problems are defined, helps teams set priorities and provides criteria for assessing progress. By keeping attention on things that matter to people, such as fairness, trust and inclusion, it ensures that system-level change is grounded in people's actual experiences of safety, justice and rights, rather than focusing only on short-term or purely institutional outputs.

Guiding questions

- What kind of justice and security system (or systems) is the programming ultimately working towards?
- Whose safety, dignity and rights are being prioritized?

Common pitfalls to avoid:

- Focusing on short-term interventions without a long-term vision. This can lead to fragmented efforts and risks entrenching harmful practices, exacerbating conflict or deepening exclusion.
- Prioritizing efficiency, infrastructure or formal reforms over people's experience. Neglecting experiences of justice, safety, inclusion and service quality can weaken trust and undermine sustainable change.

Box 3: **What does a people-centred system look like?**

In every context, the form of a people-centred justice and security system will differ, while the values and vision remain constant. A people-centred system is one where a combination of State, non-State and hybrid actors provide high-quality justice and security services that are accessible, fair, accountable and responsive to all peoples' rights and needs. This means:

- **People can access quality justice and security services that respect, protect and fulfil their rights.**
- **People know and understand their rights and responsibilities.**
- **People have the agency and means to claim their justice and security rights.**
- **Services respond to people's diverse needs and experiences.**
- **Services are trusted and perceived as legitimate.**
- **Services deliver fair and consistent outcomes that uphold rights.**
- **People have meaningful opportunities to shape justice and security responses.**
- **Institutions are accountable to the people they serve.**
- **Institutions and communities work together to prevent and resolve problems.**
- **Solutions are adapted to local context and system dynamics.**

These attributes give substance to the vision and provide a benchmark for analysis. They encourage teams to move beyond identifying problems and to start asking "How can the system better deliver justice and security in ways that reflect people's rights, needs and experiences?" For example, it is the difference between asking, "Why is the police force corrupt?" and asking, "What does it take to have an effective police service?"

4.3 DEFINING SYSTEM BOUNDARIES

With the long-term vision in mind, the next step is to clarify the boundaries of the justice or security system being examined.

This means deciding what to focus on and what to set aside, based on the purpose of the work. In most cases, teams are analysing not an entire justice or security system, but rather a specific part or issue, such as informal justice, community safety, legal identity or digital case management.

Boundaries may be shaped by:

- **Purpose**: What is the issue we are trying to understand?
- **Opportunity**: For example, a request from a government partner, a donor-funded initiative, or a new policy or law that opens a programming opportunity.
- **Feasibility**: The time and information available, and which actors are accessible and can be engaged.

Setting clear boundaries at the start of the analysis helps teams:

- Focus on what is relevant and actionable.
- Avoid getting overwhelmed by the complexity.
- Stay aligned with the problem they are trying to understand or address.

However, boundaries are not fixed. As learning deepens, teams may need to adjust the scope of their analysis to reflect new insights, include overlooked stakeholders or respond to context changes.

How a problem is initially framed also shapes where boundaries are set. If the framing is based on assumptions or predefined solutions, it can exclude critical parts of the system or overlook potential entry points.

For example, framing the problem as “weak law enforcement” might narrow the focus of the analysis to police capacity or operations. This risks overlooking wider issues that may be contributing to policing ineffectiveness, such as a breakdown in trust between communities and police, lack of accountability or unresolved grievances. By contrast, framing the issue around “public safety” or “rebuilding trust” can lead to a broader inquiry that includes the role of justice and security actors, community dynamics, oversight mechanisms and other factors that are combining to shape people’s experiences of safety and security, enabling a wider set of strategies to be used to improve outcomes.

Framing and boundary-setting should be considered together, and both should remain open to revision throughout the process. As teams engage with stakeholders and gather new insights into how the system works, they may need to reframe the issue. A learning mindset helps treat analysis as an evolving process.

See **Section 4.4.1** for guidance on framing problems.

A practical starting point is to identify the core system essential for understanding the issue and then expand outward as needed. Relationships and interconnections across the system are important, but not everything needs to be analysed at once.

For example, if the issue is lack of access to legal identity, the core system might include civil registration authorities, local government offices, and religious or traditional leaders, as well as legal aid providers or community paralegals. As analysis progresses, it may expand to include schools, health facilities or security actors who play a role in verifying identity or enabling access to public services.

For resources related to legal identity, see UNDP, “Legal Identity”.

Guiding questions

- Are the boundaries shaped by people's needs and experiences, or by assumptions about what the solution should be?
- Are the key aspects of this issue understood from the perspective of those most affected, especially marginalised or excluded groups?
- Which institutions, actors and relationships most influence how this issue is experienced in practice?

Common pitfalls to avoid:

- Setting boundaries based on the structure of formal institutions or sectors. This can obscure how people actually encounter justice and security, leading to gaps in understanding how systems function for those they are meant to serve.
- Trying to analyse everything at once. This can dilute the focus and result in superficial analysis that misses key insights, dynamics or actors.

4.4 FOUNDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE DIAGNOSIS

This section introduces three foundational enablers that influence how justice and security systems are analysed. They help ensure that analysis remains focused on people's rights and needs throughout the process.

To generate meaningful insights that can inform programming decisions, teams need to be intentional about *how* problems are framed, *whose* perspectives are included, and *what* kinds of evidence are used. These three enablers support all aspects of the Step 1 process.

4.4.1 Framing and reframing problems

How a problem is framed influences what we see, who we listen to, which dynamics we prioritize and what types of solutions are considered possible. Teams often begin with a predefined topic, such as e-justice or community policing. These entry points may reflect institutional interests, donor agendas or political priorities rather than the actual justice and security problems people face, especially those most vulnerable and marginalized.

A people-centred approach invites teams to pause and consider:

- What problem is being defined and on what basis?
- Whose perspective does this framing represent?

For example, a team may be asked by a partner, donor or UNDP unit to explore opportunities for e-justice. But this framing starts with a proposed solution—digital tools—rather than a clearly defined, people-centred problem. While digitalization can support access to justice, transparency and efficiency, it is not inherently transformational unless it responds to people's actual needs, the barriers they face and their levels of trust in justice systems.

If, for instance, a core issue is that women do not feel safe reporting violence or marginalized groups distrust State institutions, a digital platform alone may not improve access to justice and could even reinforce exclusion. Reframing the issue through a people-centred lens helps to uncover deeper drivers of injustice such as stigma, fear or lack of accountability. It clarifies when and how digital tools can support change and when other types of interventions are needed.

UNDP, *E-Justice: Digital Transformation to Close the Justice Gap* (2022).

Framing is the foundation for good diagnosis. It helps ensure that analysis stays grounded in people's rights and needs, and is not limited by technical, institutional or pre-set agendas.

Framing is also shaped by *mental models*. These are the underlying beliefs all people carry, often unconsciously, about what justice and security mean, how institutions should function and how change happens. These beliefs influence how problems are defined, who is seen as legitimate and what kinds of responses are valued.

A people-centred approach requires teams to reveal these assumptions, seek out multiple perspectives, and remain open to different ways of understanding what is working, what is flawed, and what matters most to people.

Box 4: **Mental models, framing and reframing**

Mental models are the underlying beliefs and assumptions people hold (often unconsciously) about how systems work.

Framing is how a situation is defined or interpreted, often shaped by those mental models.

Reframing means deliberately looking at a situation from a different angle, revealing alternative perspectives to unlock new insights, entry points or solutions.

In the context of people-centred justice and security, this means:

- Questioning how justice and security are defined (e.g. is it about law, relationships, fairness, or peace?)
- Re-examining who is considered a legitimate actor (e.g., State versus non-State)
- Challenging what success looks like (e.g., more convictions versus more problem resolution, inclusion, or restored trust)

Programming tips for effective framing

- **Start with people's experiences**. What are people facing? What do they need?
- **Explore what's underneath**. Are we assuming the problem is poor service delivery when it may be a lack of trust or protection?
- **Challenge the starting point**. If the mandate is to analyse "e-justice," reframe the question to ask, "What is the problem e-justice could solve, and for whom?"
- **Treat framing as iterative**. Revise framing as new insights emerge. It may need to broaden, narrow or shift over time.

4.4.2 Engaging diverse perspectives

People-centred analysis requires engaging a broad range of perspectives, including the perspectives of people who are often excluded from formal decision-making.

See **Section 5.2**, "Co-creation and local ownership".

People experience justice and security systems differently depending on factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, social status and experience. These differences shape how problems are understood, which justice and security actors are trusted, and what kinds of change are seen as possible. Understanding intersecting identities helps identify both the challenges and opportunities for change and ensures that programming does not reinforce or contribute to further discrimination or inequality.

Analysis should also draw on different forms of expertise. Justice and security challenges are shaped by political, social, historical and cultural dynamics. Alongside community perspectives and institutional insights, teams should engage other disciplines. For example:

- Historians can help trace the legacies of conflict.
- Psychologists may explain how trauma affects perceptions of legitimacy and trust.
- Anthropologists can help interpret indigenous systems.
- Political analysts can help map power relationships and vested interests.

These diverse forms of knowledge help teams understand how systems really function and why they do, or do not, serve people well.

See **Section 4.6** for tools to better understand how the system functions.

Engaging diverse perspectives is essential because:

- **Everyone experiences the system differently**. Women, youth, community leaders, court clerks, paralegals, civil servants and security providers all experience justice and security systems in different ways, and each brings different insights into how it works, or fails, them in practice. These perspectives help reveal system dynamics that may be missed by institutional or elite viewpoints. Consider how to engage State and non-State justice and security actors, civil society, the private sector (e.g., employers, grievance mechanisms) and excluded or marginalized groups.
- **Trust and change start with inclusion**. Early engagement is not just about information gathering. It is the beginning of a change conversation. It helps build trust, shape shared understanding and improve programme relevance. The way problems are defined, and who is involved in defining them, often determines whether meaningful change can take root. Without inclusive engagement, interventions risk being resisted, misunderstood or disconnected from lived realities.
- **Engagement helps reveal informal rules and power dynamics**. In many contexts, formal laws and policies only explain part of how the system works. Unwritten norms, gatekeepers and informal practices often determine who has access to justice or protection. Court clerks may hold more practical power than judges. Policing decisions may be shaped less by official policy than by peer expectations, a culture of impunity or a leadership culture that tolerates violence. These dynamics are rarely documented but play a critical role in shaping people's experiences. Engaging diverse perspectives helps uncover these hidden systems.

> **"Meaningful engagement goes beyond a one-off consultation or tokenistic involvement and seeks to empower stakeholders to contribute to decision-making, shape outcomes and hold decision-makers accountable."**
>
> The UNDP People-Centred Approach to Justice and Security , p. 33.

Programming tips for engaging diverse perspectives

- **Include a wide range of actors**. Map and engage State, non-State, community and private sector actors inside and outside a system to understand a problem.
- **Create intentional spaces for dialogue across groups**. Meeting separately, then together, can help surface diverse perspectives, reduce power imbalances and foster shared ownership of the problem and its solutions.
- **Involve both experience and expertise**. Combine people's experience with expert knowledge.
- **Engage early and often**. Use early engagement to build trust, reveal insights and support shared understanding of the problem and co-creation of the solutions.
- **Pay attention to power and position**. Engage people who operate behind the scenes and who may have more influence than their formal titles suggest.

4.4.3 Gathering diverse and layered data

A people-centred approach requires data, information and knowledge that reflect how people understand and experience justice and security, and what they expect from systems and institutions.

Data can inform programming decisions, shape government resource allocations, or support locally led change interventions. It can also help identify emerging risks or trends, such as environmental shocks, political shifts or rising tensions, and inform timely, people-centred adaptation.

Effective analysis draws on a mix of methods and sources to build a nuanced understanding of the challenges different groups face, the dynamics shaping those challenges, and what kinds of responses are most likely to be relevant and effective.

Quantitative and qualitative data each offer distinct value. Quantitative sources, such as perception and legal needs surveys, and institutional data on subjects such as court usage or police reporting, can identify patterns and disparities. Qualitative sources, such as interviews, focus groups or community mapping, can help explain why certain barriers to justice and security exist and how people perceive issues of fairness, safety or legitimacy. Together, these layers of information support a more accurate and grounded understanding of justice and security systems.

People's experiences and expectations are shaped by many factors, including social identity, culture, power dynamics and historical legacies. The same institution may be seen as protective by one group and harmful by another. Understanding this diversity requires deliberate attention to context and a commitment to disaggregation, not only by gender or age but also by disability, ethnicity, geography, income level or other relevant factors.

Gathering layered data also means asking why the data is being collected and for whose benefit. Depending on how it is gathered and used, data can reinforce power imbalances. Who asks the questions, how they are framed, and how findings are interpreted all influence which perspectives are prioritized or excluded. Respecting and understanding cultural contexts, indigenous knowledge systems and non-quantifiable aspects of justice and security is also essential to avoid imposing external assumptions or standards.

See The UNDP People-Centred Approach to Justice and Security, p. 32, for the importance of data.

A people-centred approach to data collection includes enabling the active participation of communities in decision-making about data collection, design, analysis and use, and empowering them to drive and own data for their own development.

UNDP, *Gender and Recovery Toolkit*, (2025)

Programming tips for gathering diverse and layered data

- **Use mixed methods**. Combine quantitative and qualitative tools, including surveys, interviews, legal needs assessments and participatory tools, to capture both breadth and depth.
- **Disaggregate meaningfully**. Go beyond basic categories to reflect relevant differences in power, access and outcomes.
- **Leverage data from across UNDP**. Consider how data collected by other teams in areas such as GBV, stabilization, governance and livelihoods can inform analysis of justice and security.
- **Clarify purpose**. Know why data is being collected, for whom, and how it will be used.
- **Promote participation**. Include affected communities in shaping how data is collected, interpreted and applied.

4.5 UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE'S JUSTICE AND SECURITY NEEDS

Understanding people's justice and security needs is the starting point of the people-centred approach. This section explores what justice and security needs are, how people define and experience them in different contexts, and why their perspectives must guide programming. It highlights that justice and security needs are often deeply intertwined and closely linked to broader issues such as inclusion, livelihoods, identity and access to services. The section outlines key data sources that can help identify people's needs, including community-generated data, administrative data, insights from UNDP's own programming and cross-sectoral data. It provides practical tools and country examples to support analysis.

4.5.1 What are justice and security needs?

Understanding people's justice and security needs, including their legal and human rights and their ability to access fair, accountable services and just outcomes, is the foundation of the people-centred approach. This includes understanding the distinct needs of groups who are vulnerable and marginalized or who are at risk of being left behind.

This is the starting point for all analysis. Whether working in contexts affected by conflict, fragility or displacement, or supporting institutions in more stable environments, it is essential to understand how people define justice and security, to identify their diverse needs, and to learn about their experiences and expectations of justice and security systems, actors and institutions.

Acquiring this knowledge requires going beyond technical or legal definitions. People's understandings of justice and security are shaped by their experiences, cultural traditions, political dynamics, religion, historical legacies and power relations. These factors influence how people define problems, whether and where they seek help, and what outcomes they view as fair or legitimate. Without this insight, interventions risk addressing problems as defined by institutions or outsiders, not by those directly affected.

Justice and security programming operates at multiple levels, from State institutions to community-based mechanisms. In all cases, the relevance and impact of these efforts depend on how well they respond to the needs and priorities of those most affected by injustice and insecurity. People's perspectives are essential for designing community-oriented interventions, strengthening institutions, and identifying realistic entry points for change.

A people-centred analysis asks whose needs are being addressed, how those needs are defined, and whether interventions will meaningfully improve access to protection, dispute resolution or redress for violations of their rights. For example, digitizing court records or training police may be important, but these actions are not people-centred unless they are linked to *improved outcomes for people* seeking justice or security.

Example | **Yemen**

In Yemen, UNDP's Promoting Inclusive Access to Justice in Yemen (PIAJY) Project was based on comprehensive studies and situation analyses. A final evaluation found that this grounding was key to the project's success, as it responded directly to the needs of people and institutions. Interventions such as community committees, community mediators, and paralegals, combined with infrastructure rehabilitation and reconstruction, helped address access to justice gaps at the community level, including for women and other rights holders at heightened risk of vulnerability and exclusion.

Box 5: **Institutional change must be informed by people's actual experiences and needs**

A multiperspective approach to understanding justice needs could include court user surveys, volunteer-led court observations, interviews with judges and lawyers, and surveys of justice seekers. This layered method helps capture the priorities of both service providers and users, revealing barriers and informing reforms based on people's real experiences—not just institutional assumptions.

See The *UNDP People-Centred Approach to Justice and Security*, p. 37.

Box 6: **Diverse understandings of justice**

Justice means different things to different people. In Myanmar, religious values such as social harmony, karma and forgiveness shape justice-seeking behaviour, including a preference for local dispute resolution over the formal justice system. In Indigenous or customary systems, justice may focus on restoring relationships and community balance rather than asserting individual rights or imposing punishment. Understanding these conceptions of justice is essential for designing interventions that support meaningful and legitimate outcomes for the people they are intended to serve.

Sources:
Helene Maria Kyed, "Justice Provision in Myanmar: Reforms Need to Consider Local Dispute Resolution", DIIS Policy Brief, 2017; and UN General Assembly, "The Right of Indigenous Peoples to Maintain and Develop Justice Systems: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Margaret Satterthwaite" (A/HRC/59/52), 2025.

People-centred analysis seeks to understand:

- How people define justice or security.
- What people identify as their most pressing needs.
- Who is most affected by injustice or insecurity, and why.
- What strategies people use to resolve their justice and security problems.
- How people experience, perceive and expect justice and security systems, actors and institutions to function.
- What barriers prevent people seeking help or accessing fair outcomes.

UNDP takes a broad and inclusive view of justice and security. These are not just institutional services or legal protections. They are essential components of people's dignity, agency and ability to live free from harm, discrimination and fear.

Justice is not limited to access to courts or criminal accountability. It includes the ability to resolve disputes fairly, claim rights, protect against abuse or harm, and challenge arbitrary and unfair decisions. Justice problems may relate to family, housing, land, employment, legal identity and civil documentation, or personal safety issues, and may be resolved through formal institutions (e.g., courts), administrative processes, alternative dispute resolution (e.g., mediation and negotiation) and other community-led solutions.

Rebecca Sandefur, "Access to What?" *Dædalus*, 148, no. 1 (Winter 2017), 49–56.

Box 7: **From legal needs to justice needs**

Many people do not describe their problems as "legal", even when they involve rights, procedures or the law. Framing these only as legal needs can narrow the response to formal legal services (such as access to courts, lawyers or legal aid) and risks missing what people actually require to feel safe, have their rights recognized and protected, and pursue accountability and remedy.

The term "justice needs" shifts the focus from legal institutions to people's experiences. Justice needs are:

- **Broad**: They include the full range of criminal and civil justice issues—including everyday problems related to housing, debt, employment, family or social protection—that affect people's rights, well-being and ability to live safely and with dignity.
- **Not tied exclusively to lawyers or courts**: Many justice needs can be met through administrative processes, alternative dispute resolution, community-based or customary mechanisms, or access to protection and support services that enable justice—such as obtaining identity documents or accessing safe housing and medical care for survivors of violence.
- **Concerned with fair processes and outcomes**: Justice needs are not only about the result, but also about the process and experience of seeking resolution to a justice problem, whether through the State's formal apparatus or via informal pathways. People want processes that are timely, respectful, impartial and trustworthy—where they feel heard, protected and treated with dignity. Meeting these needs may require systemic reforms to address exclusion, discrimination or structural barriers to justice.

For example, a survivor of GBV may require immediate access to a safe house, medical care or psychosocial support, as well as the option to pursue accountability through police or the courts. All of these are justice needs.

Responding to justice needs means working with a wide range of stakeholders—not just judges, lawyers or formal institutions. It includes community-based actors, administrative bodies, protection and support services, and oversight institutions. It also means engaging at both community and institutional levels to support systems that are more fair, inclusive and responsive to people's rights and needs.

Security is grounded in the concept of human security. This means security is not limited to protection from violence or conflict but includes the conditions needed to live with dignity and freedom, free from fear and want. This includes access to food, healthcare, livelihoods, clean environments, and political participation. Security needs may be addressed through formal security and justice institutions, such as the police, through local authorities, and an array of non-State and hybrid (those straddling State and non-State authority) structures.

UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994* (1994).
UNDP, *New Threats to Human Security in the Anthropocene: Demanding Greater Solidarity*, Special Report (2022).
UNDP, *Community Security and Social Cohesion: Towards a UNDP Approach* (2009).

Justice and security needs are often deeply intertwined. Disputes and conflicts are frequently symptoms of unresolved grievances and perceived injustices. Understanding these interconnections is essential for identifying where systems are breaking down and how integrated responses can more effectively meet people's needs. Even when analysis begins from a justice perspective, teams should remain alert to the security dynamics that shape people's experiences, risks and outcomes. Avoiding creating programmatic siloes from the outset allows for a more accurate diagnosis and supports responses that reflect how injustice and insecurity intersect in people's everyday lives.

People often describe the impact of a justice or security issue, such as fear, violence, denial of land, police harassment, unresolved disputes or exclusion from services, without using sector-specific terms such as "justice" or "security." The people-centred approach focuses on how people describe their own experiences, not the labels they use. This helps ground the analysis in people's real concerns and priorities, rather than in institutional or programming definitions.

Justice and security problems are not experienced equally. They disproportionately affect vulnerable and marginalized groups, shaped by intersecting factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, disability and displacement. Recognizing these intersecting needs is essential for identifying patterns of harm and exclusion, and for designing responses that promote inclusion, uphold rights and rebuild trust in systems that

may have failed them. This requires deliberate efforts to gather data that reflects the diverse experiences and identities of those most at risk of being left behind.

UNPRPD and UN Women, *Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit: An Intersectional Approach to Leave No One Behind* (2022).

4.5.2 Data sources for identifying people's needs

Understanding people's justice and security needs requires layered data from a range of sources. These help identify patterns of exclusion, highlight informal practices, and make visible the justice and security challenges that matter most to people.

This section presents some key data sources that teams can draw on. These sources are not only useful for diagnosis but can also feed into MEL systems to continuously track whether people's needs are being addressed and to test and refine solutions over time.

See **Section 5.7**: Building a monitoring, evaluation and learning system.

Community-generated data

Community-generated data provides critical insight into how people understand, experience, and respond to justice and security problems. It includes both structured tools, such as legal needs surveys, court user surveys and community safety perception surveys, and more participatory methods, including focus groups, storytelling and user journey mapping. These approaches help reveal people's experiences within justice and security systems: who they trust, which actors or mechanisms they perceive as legitimate, and what barriers prevent them from accessing fair and effective processes and outcomes.

These methods capture not only which services exist, but who uses them, who avoids them, and why. They are particularly valuable for identifying diverse justice and security pathways, gaps in access and the informal strategies people rely on when formal (State) systems are not trusted or available.

Community-generated data can be collected in innovative and low-cost ways. For example, simple perception surveys can be shared via social media, or QR codes placed in courts to invite user feedback. These tools can help teams start listening to people's experiences even in low-resource settings.

Where possible, this data should be disaggregated by age, gender, disability, income and displacement status. Special efforts are needed to ensure that youth, women and excluded groups are actively engaged and heard.

UNDP's *Listening to the Present, Designing the Future: A Guide to Deep Listening* (2023) offers strategies for creating inclusive spaces for community dialogue and data collection.

Common community-generated data sources include the following.

Community perception surveys
These can provide insight into issues of trust and legitimacy of justice and security actors, including courts, police and community-level actors and mechanisms.

Example | **Iraq**

In Iraq, UNDP conducted surveys on public perceptions of safety and security across six governorates to inform the Government of Iraq's Security Sector Reform Programme. Surveys were conducted in 2016, 2018, 2021 and 2022 to allow for comparison and assessment of changes on the ground.

Legal needs surveys
These identify people's most pressing justice and security problems, how they try to resolve them, and the barriers they face. While some surveys are nationwide, targeted legal needs surveys are often necessary to understand the specific challenges of disadvantaged populations. Many people do not characterize their experiences as "legal" or "justice" problems; instead, they describe them in terms of housing, debt, violence or exclusion.

Questions such as “What are the biggest problems you face?” or “What situations make you feel unsafe or unfairly treated?” often yield more meaningful responses than “What justice problems do you experience?”

Examples | **Moldova** | **Albania**

In Moldova, UNDP conducted a nationwide access to justice survey using a people-centred approach to assess the types of disputes people face, the methods of resolution, and the financial, social, and legal impact on justice users. It assessed levels of trust in institutions such as courts, the police, and legal aid service providers, and people’s knowledge of the law and human rights.

In Albania, a 2024 household survey generated quantitative evidence regarding people’s understanding of, confidence in, and satisfaction with the justice system. It also assessed the extent to which legal aid services had addressed the needs of vulnerable groups since the previous survey conducted in 2017.

OECD and Open Society Foundations, *Legal Needs Surveys and Access to Justice* (2019).

Legal aid data

Data from legal aid interventions can reveal priority justice needs and the experiences of vulnerable and marginalized people in navigating justice and security systems.

Focus group discussions and community-based storytelling

These qualitative methods generate in-depth, collective insight into people’s experiences of justice and security. To ensure inclusive participation, it is important to address physical, cultural, logistical and attitudinal barriers, for instance, by adapting the timing (e.g., evening meetings for workers) or location (e.g., home-based sessions for women) or by providing additional support (e.g., transport, childcare) to suit different groups.

UNDP, *Stakeholder Engagement: Guidance Note, Social and Environmental Standards (SES)* (2022).

Citizen scorecards and participatory assessments

These tools enable communities to assess and provide feedback on public services, such as policing, justice or community security, from their own perspective. They give voice to community perceptions about justice and security systems, support evidencebased reforms, help strengthen trust, and enable UNDP and partners to adapt interventions based on community-generated insights.

Box 8: **Community scorecards for justice transformation in Jamaica**

An evaluation of UNDP Jamaica’s Justice Undertakings for Social Transformation Program (JUST) found that citizen scorecards were a valuable source of empirical data about people’s view of the justice system. The tool helped ensure the voice of justice users informed decisions, leading to tangible improvements in customer service through the establishment of court-based customer service kiosks. The evaluation noted that the scorecards contributed to identifying reform priorities and created new space for supporting people centred justice.

See UNDP, *End-of-Program & Lessons Learned Assessment of the Justice Undertakings for Social Transformation Program (JUST) Report 1* (2021).

User journey mapping

This is a visual tool that outlines the steps people take when interacting with justice or security systems, from recognizing a problem to seeking help, navigating services, and resolution. It provides insights into how justice and security systems function in practice, helping to identify hidden barriers, bottlenecks, and power dynamics.

Example | **Pakistan**

In Pakistan, UNDP undertook a journey mapping of transgender political candidates to explore the barriers they faced in exercising their political rights. The exercise revealed specific obstacles and opportunities for increasing their inclusion, participation and engagement both as voters and as candidates.

Research from external partners, universities and other UN entities

Studies from academic institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), and other UN agencies can provide valuable evidence, especially in areas where UNDP lacks direct access or where longitudinal or comparative evidence is needed. These sources can complement UNDP's own data and fill knowledge gaps.

The World Justice Project's *Atlas of Legal Needs Surveys* includes more than 250 studies conducted in 110 countries and jurisdictions since 1991.

Box 9: **Data for more than monitoring**

People-centred justice and security programming is evidence-led and learning-oriented. Data is valuable not only for monitoring. It can also support learning, accountability and adaptation.

Community-generated data, such as legal needs surveys, perception studies and journey mapping, can reveal barriers, challenge institutional assumptions and inform more responsive action. Building feedback loops into services (e.g., client satisfaction surveys, community scorecards, paralegal monitoring) helps ensure that interventions reflect people's experiences, not just institutional goals.

Participatory data collection must prioritize the voices of those most excluded. Listening to people throughout the programming cycle enables teams to adapt and improve outcomes such as trust, fairness and safety.

Administrative data

Administrative data from courts, police, prisons, legal aid providers, ombudspersons and other public institutions can provide valuable insights into justice and security needs. These data sources offer a service-level view of who is using justice and security services, for what purposes, and with what outcomes. When systematically collected and disaggregated by age, gender, location and other characteristics, administrative data can help identify usage trends, patterns of exclusion and gaps in institutional response.

Example | **IEO Access to Justice evaluation**

The IEO *Evaluation of UNDP Support to Access to Justice* (2023) found:

In Indonesia and Uzbekistan, the collection and analysis of data through a dedicated algorithm allowed ministries of justice to detect service delivery gaps and improve performance.

- In **Kyrgyzstan**, a mobile application enabled citizens to access legal information and services and report their justice needs. Data collected through the application was used by justice sector institutions to better understand user demand and inform planning.
- In **Albania**, data from legal aid requests and complaints mechanisms helped identify systemic issues and target outreach efforts to underserved areas.
- In **Brazil**, geospatial data and administrative data from the judiciary were used to map legal service gaps and monitor access to justice trends over time.

This type of data is particularly useful for understanding case volume and types, service demand, and institutional performance. For example, legal aid data can help reveal priority justice problems faced by vulnerable people, while court and prison data may highlight case processing delays or structural barriers affecting specific groups.

However, administrative data has limitations. It reflects only those who interact with formal systems and does not capture the experiences of people who seek help elsewhere or not at all. Administrative data systems are often fragmented across

institutions and lack common standards or definitions. In the security sector, data access can be especially challenging. Police data may be unavailable, unreliable or not disaggregated. To build a more complete and accurate picture, administrative data should be triangulated with other sources, such as perception surveys, legal needs assessments and qualitative insights.

Example | **Saint Lucia**

In Saint Lucia, the Central Statistical Office implemented a Crime Victimization Survey (CVS) designed under the CariSECURE (Strengthening Evidence Based Decision Making for Citizen Security in the Caribbean) project to complement crime statistics. The survey focused on victims' experiences of the justice system and captures perceptions of the police, prosecutors, judges and courts, the prisons and GBV-related services. The data directly informed evidence-based policy decision making across the justice chain.

Box 10: **Strengthening justice and security data through digital innovation**

UNDP supports justice and security institutions to improve data collection and analysis through digital tools.

- In Palestine, the *Mizan* digital court case management system analyses case data to support more accessible and efficient justice services. Algorithms prioritize cases involving GBV, and aggregated legal needs data is shared with the Bureau of Statistics and justice institutions for planning and service improvement.
- In Grenada, the Police Force Goes High Tech initiative helps the Royal Grenada Police Force (RGPF) move from paper-based to digital reporting, improving crime monitoring and data management. The GrenadaInfoSAFE platform, used by the Central Statistical Office, the National Data Centre of Grenada, the RGPF, the Ministry of Health and CSOs, collects and analyses GBV data to inform cross-sectoral response.

Insights from existing UNDP programming

Many UNDP projects and programmes generate valuable yet underutilized data that can inform justice and security analysis. This includes information from peacebuilding efforts, governance programming and initiatives focused on conflict prevention, civic space or violence reduction.

Teams can also revisit project or programme-generated data to identify patterns of exclusion, barriers to accessing justice, and community concerns, even when programmes are not explicitly focused on justice or security.

Box 11: **Understanding youth perspectives in justice and security**

Youth perspectives are often overlooked in justice and security reform. Young people are frequently portrayed as perpetrators or victims of injustice and insecurity, rather than as rights holders, problem-solvers or partners in change. This limits both the relevance and effectiveness of change efforts. Youth experience distinct justice and security challenges: over-policing, detention, discrimination or exclusion from formal processes. Youth perspectives on justice and security are often captured through programming that is not labelled as "justice" or "security". For example, peacebuilding, education, livelihoods, or preventing violent extremism (PVE) programming frequently reveal structural barriers, mistrust and exclusion affecting young people. For example, UNDP's 2017 report *Journey to Extremism in Africa* and the UNDP Maldives 2019 report *Youth Vulnerability in The Maldives* both found links between youth experiences of security and justice actors, including police and prisons, and vulnerability to radicalization. Such insights are directly relevant and should be intentionally integrated into people-centred analysis.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the UNDP violence prevention portfolio has generated valuable insights into how young people in high-risk communities experience justice and law enforcement. These perspectives were integrated into the design of subsequent justice initiatives, positioning UNDP as a thought leader in the citizen security and justice space. The office recruited a young leader from one of the projects, who continues to play a central role in shaping UNDP's youth justice programming

Example | **Lebanon**

In Lebanon, UNDP developed a Tensions Monitoring System to capture real-time data on community dynamics. The digital portal makes data, analysis and conflict sensitivity tools accessible to policymakers, practitioners and researchers. Regular surveys track people's perceptions of safety, access to services and trust in institutions, including local authorities and the courts. This supports evidence-based programming that upholds Do No Harm principles.

UNDP teams can also adapt other types of surveys to include justice and security dimensions. For example, a community safety survey might be adjusted to capture trust in institutions, or a livelihoods or early recovery assessment might include questions related to disputes over land or employment, or barriers to economic participation due to insecurity, civil documentation gaps or experiences of discrimination.

Cross-sectoral data

Cross-sectoral data can reveal the structural conditions that shape people's justice and security needs. These include data from sectors such as social protection, health, education, livelihoods and humanitarian response. This information helps expose the systemic inequalities and vulnerabilities that influence people's experiences of justice and security. For example, people living with HIV may avoid accessing healthcare services due to stigma, discrimination or criminalization. These problems require both a health and a justice response. Similarly, the absence of civil documentation may prevent people from accessing public services or claiming legal entitlements. This can contribute to food insecurity, inadequate housing or exclusion from schooling. These conditions disproportionately affect women, children and other marginalized groups, and may heighten their vulnerability to exploitation or violence.

Relevant data sources may include:

- Multidimensional poverty index, human development index, or surveys of living standards.
- Public administration records related to legal identity (e.g., birth, marriage, death, and other civil documentation), social protection, or access to services.
- Social protection, livelihoods and displacement assessments (e.g., income insecurity, informal work, barriers to services).
- Health and education datasets (e.g., civil registration, GBV referral pathways, access to education and healthcare).
- Humanitarian and development assessments (particularly in crisis or post-conflict settings).

In contexts where justice and security institutions may be weak or disrupted, cross-sectoral data can provide critical insights into vulnerability and risks. These sources can help identify priority needs, reveal the experiences of overlooked or excluded groups, and guide integrated responses, for example, linking access to justice support to obtain legal identity documentation, with livelihoods and social inclusion programming.

Box 12: **Integrating justice into poverty data in Argentina**

In Argentina, UNDP supported the integration of an access to justice module into the Survey on Argentina's Social Debt (EDSA), a national annual survey. This was the first time the global SDG 16.3.3 indicator on access to civil justice was tested in the country. The initiative aimed to understand justice needs through people's socio-demographic, occupational and economic profiles. The module explored people's experience of legal problems and their ability to access formal or informal institutions. The data highlighted how socio-economic conditions and structural disparities limit access to justice. Findings showed that while 8 in 10 people from the middle professional class accessed dispute resolution mechanisms, only 6 in 10 from lower socio-occupational strata did. By embedding justice questions into this mainstream poverty survey, the initiative revealed the intersection between justice, poverty and inequality; strengthened national SDG 16 reporting; and supported more inclusive, people-centred and cross-sectoral policymaking.

For more information: UNDP, *Justice and Sustainable Development* (2023); and UNDP, UNODC, and OHCHR, *SDG16 Survey Initiative Questionnaire* (2022).

Guiding questions

- What do people identify as their most urgent justice and security needs?
- Who is most affected by harm, exclusion or barriers to access, and why?
- Which institutions or actors do people trust, rely on or avoid, and for what reasons?
- How do justice and security needs intersect with other development issues (e.g., health, livelihoods, identity)?
- What do people expect from justice and security systems, and are those expectations being met?

Common pitfalls to avoid:

- Treating communities as passive sources of data. This limits understanding of the problem and misses opportunities to build trust, validate findings and support co-creation of solutions.
- Imposing sector labels such as “justice” and “security” too early. This can obscure how people experience and describe harm, and their priority concerns.
- Collecting data without disaggregation or attention to intersectionality. This can obscure who is most affected and why, undermining efforts to address exclusion and inequality.
- Treating analysis as a one-off exercise. Without follow-up and iteration, programming risks becoming outdated or disconnected from people’s realities.

4.6 UNDERSTANDING HOW THE SYSTEM FUNCTIONS

Justice and security programming cannot be based on people’s experiences alone. It also requires an understanding of how the systems that shape those experiences function: how decisions are made, who holds influence, and why outcomes differ across contexts.

This section begins by unpacking the complexity of justice and security systems and highlighting the implications for programming. It then introduces a practical process to help teams analyse how systems operate in specific contexts. This includes four interrelated tools—stakeholder mapping, PPEA, conflict analysis and systems mapping—as well as a “Getting Started” guide for teams new to systems thinking.

Understanding systems is not a one-off exercise. It is an ongoing mindset and process that supports more responsive, politically aware and adaptive programming. The insights generated through systems analysis, combined with an understanding of people’s needs and experiences, provide the foundation for diagnosing the problem, identifying programming entry points and designing people-centred strategies for change.

4.6.1 What are justice and security systems?

The UNDP people-centred policy framework emphasizes that in any society, justice and security systems are inherently complex. They are made up of multiple actors, institutions (including entities, laws, norms and informal structures and traditions), and processes that interact in dynamic and often unpredictable ways. These systems are shaped by diverse experiences, power dynamics and constantly changing social, political and economic conditions. They also vary significantly across locations. How justice and security systems function depends on how authority, resources and responsibilities are distributed across local, regional and national levels. This multilevel governance shapes how decisions are made and how policies and services are implemented in practice.

This complexity has important implications for programming:

- Problems in complex systems have multiple causes and change is rarely linear or predictable. Outcomes often emerge over time and in unexpected ways. Linear "cause-and-effect" responses rarely produce sustained results. Programming must be able to test, learn and adapt.
- No part of the system, whether a State institution or community actor, operates in isolation, nor can it be "fixed" in isolation from other elements of the system. Programming that focuses on a single institution or actor, without considering how it interacts with others, is unlikely to lead to sustainable or system-wide change.
- Changes in one part of the system can have unforeseen or unintended consequences elsewhere. Taking a system-wide view helps anticipate these effects and reduce the risk of harm.

See The *UNDP People-Centred Approach to Justice and Security*, p.14, for more on complexity and systems thinking in justice and security.

Understanding justice and security systems requires engaging with complexity. It is essential for identifying not only the causes of injustice and insecurity but also the opportunities for change. Efforts to simplify or bypass this complexity risk overlooking critical relationships, missing influential actors or focusing only on surface-level problems. Programming must look beyond visible issues to the underlying patterns, norms and incentives that shape how systems behave.

Engaging with complexity helps teams move beyond technical fixes and narrow assumptions about how change happens. It supports programming that is grounded in context, responsive to political realities and better able to navigate uncertainty.

See "Systems and Portfolios: Modernizing Development" on the UNDP website for more on how UNDP is adopting a systems-way of working in development.
UNDP's *Multi-Level Governance in Crisis-Affected Settings* (2025) is a lessons learned review and toolkit that supports Country Offices and partners to apply multi-level governance principles in practice.

A complete understanding of justice and security systems is rarely possible. These systems are constantly evolving, shaped by both formal and informal forces, and experienced differently depending on people's roles, identities and positions within them. They are not static, and the way they function can shift in response to changing expectations, decisions and behaviours of the people within and around them. While it may not be possible to map them fully, it is still possible to generate useful insights that can inform adaptive and effective programming. This involves:

- Mapping key stakeholders and power relationships.
- Analysing the historical, political, economic and social dynamics that shape how people access justice and security.
- Identifying the relationships and feedback loops that help explain why problems persist or evolve, and where opportunities for change may exist.

See **Box 17** to learn about feedback loops.

4.6.2 A process for understanding systems

Understanding justice and security systems is not just a technical exercise. It is about equipping teams with insights that help shape meaningful, inclusive and feasible programming. Before selecting tools, it is important to be clear on **why** the analysis is being done and for **whom**. Whether the aim is to understand power dynamics, identify entry points for change or anticipate risks, tools should help teams generate the insights they need for informed decision-making.

This section presents a simple, structured process for understanding justice and security systems, using a set of interlinked tools:

- **Stakeholder mapping**: Identifies the individuals, groups or institutions with an interest in, influence over, or vulnerability to a given issue.
- **Power and political economy analysis (PPEA)**: Explores the interplay of power, interests, institutions, structures and incentives in a given context. It helps explain how political, economic and social forces, including the formal and informal "rules of the game", shape justice and security outcomes, and it identifies potential pathways for change.
- **Conflict analysis**: Examines the causes, dynamics, actors and impacts of conflict in a specific context. It supports conflict-sensitive programming and the application of Do No Harm principles by helping teams anticipate risks and avoid reinforcing divisions or exacerbating tensions.
- **Systems mapping**: Brings these strands together to explore how different elements interact over time and where targeted interventions may have the greatest leverage. It helps visualize relationships among actors and institutions and identify where bottlenecks, blind spots or opportunities for change exist. For example, UNDP Bhutan used systems mapping to explore the interconnected challenges facing youth in the country.

Together, these tools help teams move beyond surface-level explanations to identify deeper patterns and drivers of injustice and insecurity. This understanding is essential for identifying opportunities for people-centred change.

These are not linear steps but interrelated layers of inquiry that build and evolve over time. Used iteratively, they support continuous learning and adaptive programming. For example:

- If PPEA reveals hidden influencers, the stakeholder map should be revised.
- If stakeholder mapping uncovers systemic constraints, the PPEA should be refined.

In practice, teams often draw on multiple tools at once. Stakeholder mapping may incorporate power and political economy insights to better understand stakeholder relationships and incentives. Conflict analysis requires attention to power, actors and system dynamics. Systems mapping typically brings all these layers together as part of an integrated process.

These tools help teams respond to emerging insights, shifting dynamics and evolving priorities. They also complement UNDP's use of methods such as sensemaking and adaptive management to enable teams to navigate uncertainty, reflect on strategic choices and adjust strategies based on real-time insights.

See **Chapter 6: Step 3** for how to reflect, learn and adapt programming.

Importantly, teams can begin engaging systems even without full or perfect analysis.

The following "Getting Started" guide offers a simple structure to help teams develop a "good enough" understanding of how justice and security systems function. It poses four key questions to guide initial analysis. The remainder of Section 4.6 builds on this foundation, showing how to deepen understanding over time using stakeholder mapping, PPEA, conflict analysis and systems mapping, and highlighting key issues to consider when using them.

Getting started: **A practical entry point for system analysis**

System analysis does not need to be perfect or exhaustive to be useful.
It only requires enough insight to support informed, inclusive and realistic decisions about where and how to act. A simple starting point is to focus on four core questions:

1

Who is involved?
Identify the people and institutions that shape justice and security outcomes. Look beyond courts and police to include customary leaders, paralegals, civil registry officials, CSOs and others.

Tool: **Stakeholder mapping**

2

What shapes their behaviour?
Explore the interests, incentives, power dynamics and relationships that influence their actions. Who benefits from the current system? Who does not? What are people accountable for, and to whom?

Tool: **PPEA**

3

Where are the risks and tensions?
Consider how justice and security actors are connected to conflict, exclusion, or contested authority. How do different groups experience harm, discrimination or mistrust? What might trigger resistance or backlash?

Tool: **Conflict analysis**

4

Why do problems persist?
Look for patterns that explain why certain issues keep recurring, such as institutional incentives, social norms, power imbalances or lack of accountability. What reinforces the status quo, and what might shift it?

Tool: **Systems mapping**

To answer these questions effectively, keep the following in mind:

- **"Good enough" is enough to start**. These questions provide a strong foundation. They do not need to be fully answered upfront. The aim is to build a working picture of the system that is good enough to guide early programming choices and can be refined over time.

- **The team must own the process**. This is not a desk-based review or a consultant-led deliverable. It works best when grounded in the team's own insights, used to test assumptions and revisited as programming evolves. Draw on the knowledge and expertise of other UNDP teams (such as governance, gender, conflict prevention and youth) and local partners who may bring important perspectives, data or relationships.

- **Participation matters**. Talk to people who use, deliver and are affected by justice and security systems, including those often excluded. Engage local officials, service providers, women's groups, traditional authorities, community leaders and others. Simple tools such as interviews, mapping exercises and group discussions can generate valuable insights, reveal blind spots and build shared understanding of how the system functions and where change is possible.

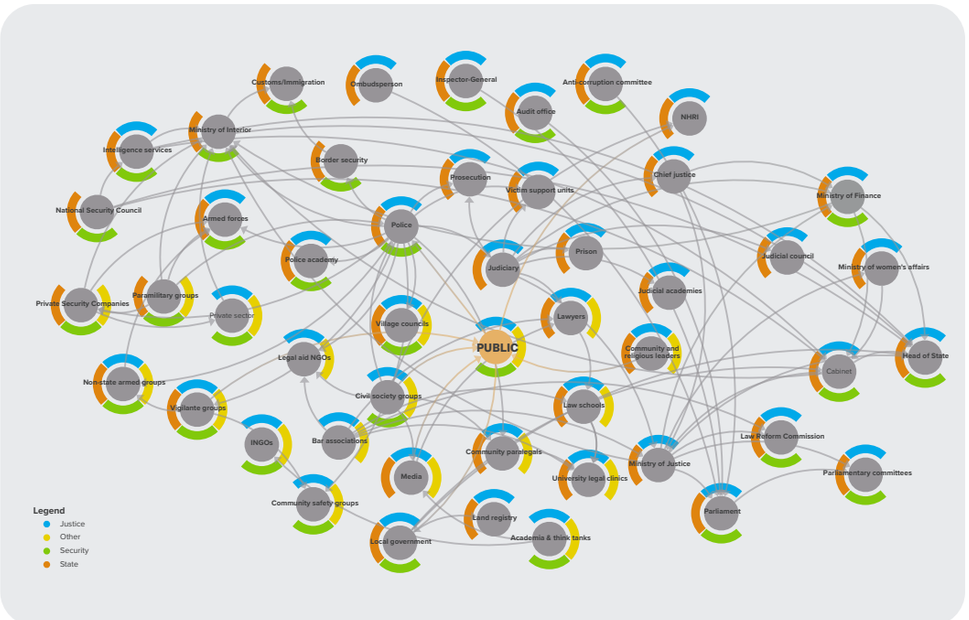
Start with stakeholder mapping

Stakeholder mapping is a foundational step in understanding how justice and security systems function. It helps teams identify the full range of actors who shape, deliver or experience justice and security, whether through formal mandates, informal authority or practical influence within the system. This supports a clearer understanding of how different actors interact, where influence lies and how programming can engage them effectively. Stakeholder mapping can reveal potential partners, identify influential actors who are not yet meaningfully engaged and highlight people or institutions that may support or enable transformation.

In people-centred justice and security programming, stakeholder mapping should not be limited to conventional justice and security actors and institutions. It must reflect the full ecosystem of actors, including non-State, indigenous, hybrid and community-based systems. As highlighted in The *UNDP People-Centred Approach to Justice and Security* (see p. 25), justice and security systems are often plural and layered. People navigate multiple pathways to resolve disputes or seek protection, and these pathways involve a diverse set of actors with different forms of authority and legitimacy.

The people-centred approach also recognizes that justice and security systems rely on multiple core functions such as policymaking, financing, oversight and service delivery. These are carried out by a wide range of institutions and actors, including parliaments, ministries of justice or interior, police, courts, community peace committees, the media, CSOs or national human rights institutions (NHRIs). Understanding how the system functions requires mapping not only service providers but also those who shape how the system is governed, resourced and held accountable.

The stakeholder map below is taken from The *UNDP People-Centred Approach to Justice and Security* (see p. 25). It shows how people's justice and security experiences are shaped by interactions across multiple State, non-State and hybrid actors, often in parallel or overlapping ways.



Key considerations for people-centred justice and security programming:

- **Move beyond traditional categories**. Mapping should include State, non-State and hybrid actors, such as judges, police, customary leaders or elders, paralegals, militia groups, or local authorities.
- **Pay attention to overlapping roles**. Drawing rigid lines between "justice" and "security" actors can obscure how they function in practice. Security actors may regularly play justice-related roles, such as helping resolve local disputes. A community leader might assist individuals with justice problem while also managing community-level conflicts.

Example | **Nigeria**

In Nigeria, the Nigeria Security & Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) (a paramilitary agency) has a formal mandate that includes assisting in disaster response and crowd control. It is also authorized to mediate disputes among members of the public. In practice, many communities, especially in underserved or rural areas, turn to NSCDC Peace Desks to resolve disputes ranging from farmer-herder clashes and family or land disputes to broader community disagreements. Yet NSCDC personnel typically view their work as part of security, not justice service provision.

- **Recognize informal influence**. Power and legitimacy are not always tied to formal mandates. Influence may stem from trust, access to information or control over resources.
- **Include less visible but influential actors**. These may include frontline service providers or influential figures who shape decisions behind the scenes. For example:
  - Civil registry officials can determine access to identity documents. Such access is often essential for claiming basic rights (e.g., the right to vote, to own property, to an education) yet is typically viewed as administrative rather than justice-related.
  - Institutional actors such as chiefs of staff, as well as senior experts or advisers, can shape which justice and security issues are prioritized, how they are resourced and how they are framed politically.
  - Social workers or health workers support cases such as domestic violence or child custody yet are often excluded from justice reform discussions.
  - Religious or customary leaders resolve land or family disputes through community-based mechanisms, often without using "justice" terminology.
  - Political parties influence justice and security through control of local councils, appointments and budget decisions, shaping both opportunities and resistance to change.
- **See the system as dynamic**. Roles and relationships shift over time, particularly in conflict-affected contexts. Stakeholder mapping should be updated regularly to reflect changes in power, alliances or social expectations.
- **Analyse relationships and interdependencies**. Understanding how actors relate to one another—for example, through authority, trust, coordination or conflict—helps teams identify how decisions are made, where influence is exercised and which relationships may enable or constrain change.

Stakeholder mapping supports strategic decision-making about where and how to engage and who needs to be involved to enable meaningful change. Used well, it can help identify potential entry points and partnerships, reveal hidden sources of resistance or influence and locate potential allies and change agents within the system.

Programming tip:
Use stakeholder mapping to identify potential change agents

Stakeholder mapping can help identify allies, supporters and champions of change. Engaging these actors early can strengthen the legitimacy and sustainability of programming. Systems change takes root more effectively when it is supported and led by actors within the system itself.

UNDP, *Stakeholder Engagement: Guidance Note, Social and Environmental Standards (SES)* (2022).
"Stakeholder mapping and analysis", on the BetterEvaluation website.
"Levels of Action (Lederach's Pyramid)", as summarized by Michelle Maiese on the Beyond Intractability website.

Layer in PPEA

Stakeholder mapping is a critical first step in identifying who shapes justice and security systems. But to understand how these systems function and how change can happen, teams must also explore what drives or resists transformation. This Guide treats PPEA as a single integrated tool, recognizing that political economy drivers cannot be understood without analysing how power is held, exercised and contested (see Box 13). PPEA helps unpack the underlying interests, incentives, institutional arrangements and relationships that influence justice and security outcomes.

PPEA combines two essential dimensions. The power analysis dimension focuses on how influence operates: who holds it, how it is exercised, and how it shapes behaviours, choices and relationships within the system. It includes both visible and hidden forms of power, such as formal authority, informal influence, access to resources or control over public narratives, and helps identify how legitimacy is established and which actors shape the enabling environment for change.

See **Box 14** for the link between power, disinformation and control of justice narratives.

The **political economy** dimension examines how political, social and economic factors interact with institutions and actors to influence decisions, block or enable reform, and determine how power and resources are distributed. It considers both formal (State) structures and informal rules, interests and incentive systems, as well as broader political settlements or elite bargains that determine who does or does not have access to justice and security.

PPEA helps teams understand the operating context, assess pressures for or against change, and develop politically feasible and realistic strategies. It can identify how actors, alliances and behaviours might shift over time, and where entry points may exist.

Example | **Palau**

In Palau, UNDP and the Centre for Human Security and Social Change (La Trobe University) used PPEA to understand how formal and informal institutions interact to shape accountability. The analysis highlighted how customary norms limit formal oversight, and how women's groups, though among the most active accountability actors, remained underleveraged in reform efforts. It mapped incentives and power relationships and produced concrete recommendations focused on working with existing systems, building socially legitimate accountability structures and strengthening public oversight.

Box 13: **The distinction between power analysis and political economy analysis**

While this Guide treats PPEA as an integrated tool, the two dimensions remain analytically distinct:

- **Power analysis** might explore why court clerks wield more practical influence than judges in some areas, or how traditional leaders undermine formal dispute resolution mechanisms.
- **Political economy analysis** looks at how systemic reforms are constrained by elite interests, legal pluralism, or patronage networks, and how these have evolved over time.

Power analysis:

UNDP Global Food Systems, "Work with Power".

UNDP, *Systems, Power, and Gender: Perspectives on Transformational Change* (2022). This guide supports deeper understanding of power and gender dynamics in systems transformation.

Powercube.net: A resource for understanding power relations in efforts to bring about social change. The powercube supports analysis of the levels, spaces and forms of power and their interrelationship.

Political economy analysis:

UNDP, *Institutional and Context Analysis Guidance Note* (2012). A UNDP-specific programming tool for understanding the political and institutional context within which UNDP teams operate.

The UNDP Crisis Academy offers PEA training for UN and non-UN practitioners.

United Nations, *Good Governance in National Security: Nine Policy Briefs on Building Stronger Institutions that Deliver Genuine Security to All - 01. We Must Think and Work Politically* (4 February 2025). Offers a PEA framework to support people-centred security sector reform interventions.

UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, *Understanding Political Economy and Thinking and Working Politically* (2023) and *Understanding a Quick Political Economy Analysis (PEA) Approach* (2025). Presents a set of PEA analytical tools.

When used together, power analysis and political economy analysis can help teams to:

- Understand who benefits from the current system, and who may lose from reform
- Identify the actors and alliances that can enable or block change
- Recognize how incentives, interests and ideas interact to shape behaviour
- Design programming strategies that are realistic, adaptive and politically informed.

Programming tip:
Using sensitive PPEA findings

PPEA can reveal politically sensitive issues, such as entrenched corruption, vested interests or institutional weaknesses. Such insights are often unsuitable for inclusion in project documents or public reports but are vital for internal decision-making. Teams should plan early how to store, update and use this information to guide adaptive strategies, while protecting sources and relationships. For example, some teams maintain a separate risk matrix to track politically sensitive dynamics that cannot be included in the formal project documentation.

In-depth PPEA can reveal the systemic drivers of exclusion, power imbalances or institutional resistance to change. However, people-centred programming also requires ongoing, real-time political analysis that is embedded in day-to-day decision-making and responsive to shifts in context. Tools such as everyday political analysis (EPA) or "light-touch" mapping exercises such as the Stakeholder Influence Tool (see Annex 4) support real-time political analysis throughout the programme cycle.

See **Annex 4** for how to use the Stakeholder Influence Tool.

These tools are particularly important in justice and security programming, where institutions are often deeply politicized and embedded in broader power dynamics. In many contexts:

- Security actors are not only enforcers of the law but also political and economic players. They can wield coercive power, control access to justice or services, and may participate in markets or informal economies.
- Justice providers may be accountable not to the public, but to political elites, donors or religious authorities.

Understanding these dynamics is essential to avoiding harm and identifying entry points for people-centred change.

Box 14: **Power, information pollution and control of justice narratives**

Information can be a powerful tool used by actors to shape public perceptions, protect vested interests and block reform. Power analysis helps uncover who controls the flow of information, how narratives are constructed and whose voices are amplified or silenced. This offers critical insight into barriers to justice and the rule of law.

Information pollution, including hate speech, malinformation, misinformation and disinformation, is increasingly used to erode trust in justice institutions, shield elites from accountability and discredit reform actors. Institutions such as courts, oversight bodies, police and legal aid providers depend on public trust, legitimacy and access to accurate information. When information integrity breaks down:

- **People may be deterred from seeking justice.**
- **Advocates may be silenced.**
- **Reform may be discredited.**

Power analysis can uncover who controls information, for what purpose and whose voices are amplified or excluded. PEA helps explain the structural conditions that allow harmful narratives to thrive, such as media capture, polarized institutions and weak regulation.

Understanding how information is used to shape perceptions of and trust in justice institutions is essential to designing interventions that counter harmful narratives, empower communities, and strengthen more inclusive, transparent, and trusted systems that uphold rights and the rule of law.

Key considerations for people-centred justice and security programming:

- **Go beyond formal mandates**. Understand what actors actually do, who they are accountable to, whose interests they serve and what shapes their behaviour.
- **Uncover hidden interests and informal rules**. Barriers to justice and security are often political, not technical. Understanding informal norms, gatekeepers, patronage systems and sources of legitimacy helps explain why reforms stall or trigger backlash.
- **Understand justice and security as political arenas**. These sectors determine how power, rights and protection are distributed. These issues are inherently political and often contested.
- **Map competing sources of legitimacy and control**. Customary authorities, armed groups, political elites, religious leaders and other powerholders can all influence how justice and security are delivered or withheld.
- **Account for economic incentives**. Justice and security actors may rely on income from unofficial sources such as user fees, fines or parallel economic activities. This can influence their behaviour and priorities.
- **Assess alignment with human rights**. Use UNDP's Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) Toolkit to assess whether justice and security frameworks align with international human rights obligations and constitutional guarantees. Identify areas where exclusion is not simply a service delivery gap, but a violation of legally recognized rights.

PPEA helps teams navigate risks, identify opportunities and design realistic rights-based programming. By grounding justice and security programming in political and institutional realities, teams can improve the relevance, impact and sustainability of their work.

Box 15: **Navigating tensions between individual rights and collective concerns**

Justice and security actors, such as police, judges, or community leaders, may discourage individuals, especially women, from pursuing formal (State) justice pathways to resolve problems such as divorce, criminal prosecution or property claims. These positions are often framed as necessary to preserve family harmony and community stability, or to avoid shame or stigma.

Empowering people to claim their rights (such as women survivors of violence) can challenge power dynamics and provoke backlash. But resistance is not inevitable. Reform may gain support when the harms of the status quo are clear or change is introduced through trusted actors using culturally sensitive approaches.

PPEA helps unpack these tensions and assess where there is space to advance rights-based change without doing harm. By understanding the values, interests and trade-offs at play, programming can better navigate risks and design interventions that are both feasible and transformative.

Understand conflict dynamics

Conflict analysis is essential for understanding how justice and security systems function, particularly in contexts affected by conflict, crisis and fragility. It helps teams identify the dynamics that drive exclusion, violence and contestation, and informs the design of contextually relevant, politically aware and conflict-sensitive interventions.

Justice and security institutions are often shaped by, and can contribute to, conflict dynamics. They may reinforce exclusion or impunity, reflect contested authority, or be perceived by communities as biased or as parties to conflict. Understanding how these institutions are embedded in local conflict systems helps teams assess whether interventions are likely to reduce tensions, trigger resistance or unintentionally exacerbate existing grievances.

Conflict analysis not only helps teams avoid harm; it also identifies where justice and security systems can actively contribute to conflict prevention and transformation. It enables programming to reinforce social cohesion, support peaceful dispute resolution and address grievances before they escalate. It can also help pinpoint where interventions can build trust, reduce structural violence and support inclusive governance.

Teams can draw on UN and partner expertise to ensure analysis remains politically aware and conflict-sensitive. For example, UNDP/DPPA Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs) are a valuable resource, offering political insight and facilitating dialogue across UN entities and national partners.

Key considerations for people-centred justice and security programming:

- **Identify local drivers of insecurity and injustice**. Disputes over land, identity, resources or political representation are often at the heart of conflict. These dynamics shape how people seek justice or safety, and who they trust to provide it.
- **Recognize how institutions reflect or reinforce power dynamics**. In many contexts, justice and security institutions are perceived as biased, abusive or inaccessible. Conflict analysis helps explain how these perceptions arise, who benefits from the status quo and how institutional practices may aggravate or mitigate tensions.
- **Assess exclusion, impunity or inequality**. Analysis should examine whose interests are protected, which groups are marginalized and how institutional behaviour affects perceptions of legitimacy and fairness. It should consider how different groups experience injustice and violence, recognizing that conflict dynamics often have gendered, generational, ethnic or geographic dimensions.
- **Understand perceptions of justice and security actors**. These actors may be seen as neutral service providers, partisan actors or conflict parties. Perceptions shape trust, legitimacy and people's willingness to engage with institutions.
- **Anticipate risks and resistance**. Interventions may provoke backlash or resistance from actors who fear losing power, legitimacy or control. Conflict analysis helps in identifying these risks early and adapting accordingly.

- **Identify opportunities for transformation**. Conflict analysis can highlight existing peacebuilding, mediation or justice efforts, such as through community-led initiatives, informal mechanisms or alliances between State and non-State actors. Linking these to institutional reform can help generate local ownership and momentum for change.

Conflict analysis overlaps with PPEA. Together, they uncover how violence, authority and contestation shape systems and influence access to justice and security. Conflict analysis is not just a diagnostic tool; it identifies entry points, partnerships, risks and priorities, and helps ensure programming remains responsive to shifting dynamics. It can be conducted in light-touch or in-depth ways, depending on the context, stage of programming and available resources. It should be treated as an iterative process that evolves alongside programming.

Programming tip:
Use conflict analysis to anticipate risks and unlock opportunities

Conflict analysis helps identify the actors, interests and issues that may enable or obstruct justice and security reform. It can reveal both the fault lines to avoid and the local momentum to build on. This is especially important in fragile contexts, where dynamics are fluid and institutions may be politicized or lack legitimacy. For example, UNDP's Crisis Risk Dashboard supports anticipatory decision-making by analysing conflict risks and trends at global, regional, national and subnational levels..

UNDG, *Conducting a Conflict and Development Analysis* (2016). The CDA tool provides guidance on conducting conflict analysis and applying the findings of analysis for a range of purposes.
UNSDG, *Good Practice Note: Conflict Sensitivity, Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace* (2022). This note provides practical guidance and concrete tools for UN entities to integrate conflict sensitivity into programming
UNDP, *Conflict Sensitivity and Monitoring & Evaluation Toolbox* (May 2024).
UNDP, *Gender-Responsive Conflict Analysis for Development Programming: A UNDP Guidance Note* (2025).

Map the system

Systems mapping brings together the insights from stakeholder mapping, PPEA, and conflict analysis to better understand how and why a justice or security system produces specific outcomes for people. It is not about identifying solutions upfront, but about understanding the dynamics that sustain current outcomes and revealing potential entry points for strategic change.

Rather than focusing on individual problems or actors, systems mapping helps teams visualize how the system functions as a whole, how different elements interact, how and why problems persist, and where change is possible (see Box 16).

Box 16: **The problem of high levels of pre-trial detention**

High levels of pre-trial detention cannot be sustainably addressed by focusing only on one element, such as improving the technical capacity of judges or facilitating mobile hearings within detention facilities. A disproportionately high percentage of youth in pre-trial detention may result from interconnected factors: discriminatory policing practices, weak legal safeguards, underenforced due process protections, socioeconomic exclusion or political dynamics such as repression of protest movements. These dynamics reinforce one another and can make the problem persist, even when one element is addressed. Systems mapping helps teams see such patterns and identify entry points for more strategic, integrated responses.

Systems mapping focuses not on what the problems are, but on how they are sustained.

Systems mapping matters because persistent problems rarely stem from a single source. In complex systems, problems are shaped by relationships between actors, institutional incentives and feedback loops that reinforce the status quo (see Box 17).

Box 17: **Understanding feedback loops for justice and security programming**

In complex systems, feedback loops explain how problems evolve, persist or sometimes resolve themselves. A feedback loop occurs when something in a system causes a change, and that change then influences the original cause, either **reinforcing** or **balancing** it.

A **reinforcing feedback loop** strengthens or amplifies the original cause and its effects. For example:

- Trust-building initiatives between communities and police (the original cause) lead to greater cooperation (the change), which improves safety and further increases trust, thus reinforcing the original cause.
- Police violence (the original cause) triggers fear and public mistrust, reducing cooperation and increasing police-community tensions (the change), which in turn heightens the likelihood of more police violence.

A **balancing feedback loop** creates a counter-response that reduces or offsets the original cause, helping to restore balance or stability. For example:

- Rising community tensions (the original cause) prompt dialogue and mediation (the change), which de-escalate the situation and prevent further conflict.
- High levels of corruption (the original cause) discourage people from using the State justice system, weakening demand for reform (the change), which in turn allows corruption to persist.

Justice and security programming typically aims to **strengthen** balancing feedback loops that reduce harm and restore stability, while **supporting** reinforcing loops that drive positive, transformative change.

Systems mapping supports programming that moves beyond technical fixes or siloed interventions and instead targets the underlying dynamics that shape outcomes for people through integrated, strategic and adaptive responses.

At its core, systems mapping involves identifying and visualizing the elements of a system and how they interconnect, influence each other and produce outcomes. While this may result in a literal visual "map", the real value lies in the insights the process generates. The goal is to support strategic reflection, reveal hidden dynamics and identify potential entry points for change.

Systems mapping is a participatory process. It supports teams and partners to build a shared understanding of how the system operates, where it is stuck and where small, strategic interventions could unlock broader change. Systems maps should evolve throughout the programme cycle, being refined as teams deepen their understanding of the context and engage with new actors and perspectives.

There are many ways to do systems mapping, from light-touch pen-and-paper exercises such as cluster mapping, to more in-depth processes. For example, the UNDP portfolio approach supports structured workshops, facilitated inquiry, and sensemaking sessions. The approach has been applied in contexts such as Ukraine and Peru to co-create system maps with partners and drive adaptive, systems-informed programming.

See UNDP Bhutan's video "Systems Mapping of Youth Unemployment," which shows how a systems approach helped the Country Office better understand and respond to the multidimensional challenge of youth unemployment.

Key considerations for people-centred justice and security programming:

- **Embrace the messiness**. Systems mapping is not about neat solutions or polished diagrams. It is a tool for exploring complexity, not resolving it. Relationships in justice and security systems are rarely tidy. Messy, overlapping connections often reflect the most valuable insights. Resist the urge to impose order too early. Allow the mapping process to surface tensions, gaps and contradictions that may reveal entry points for deeper change.

- Focus on relationships and dynamics, not just institutions. Mapping should reflect how justice and security services are actually experienced by people, not just who delivers them. Consider how decisions are made, who influences them and what dynamics sustain inequality or exclusion.
- Make feedback loops visible. Feedback loops can reinforce trust and safety or perpetuate violence and impunity. Mapping helps identify where programming might strengthen positive loops, such as community-police cooperation, or interrupt harmful ones, such as cycles of corruption and mistrust (see Box 17).
- Identify leverage points. Systems maps help locate areas where small, strategic shifts could ripple out to support broader change.
  - Community paralegals can improve access to justice in one location, but the ripple effect may include increased legal awareness and reduced reliance on unfair informal dispute resolution. Paralegals can also highlight systemic issues, prompting improved institutional responsiveness and broader reforms.
  - Court user help desks and publicized service charters can shift power dynamics by helping people to better navigate justice processes and understand and claim their rights. They create pressure on institutions to meet service standards, which can lead to simplified procedures, improved staff responsiveness and greater public trust.

See **Box 18** for how support to a law school in Puntland, Somalia catalysed systems-wide change

- **Embed local perspectives**. Systems maps are built from the perspectives of those doing the mapping. Including diverse perspectives, especially the perspectives of people with everyday experience of injustice or insecurity, is essential to understanding how a system is perceived and where it breaks down in practice.

Example | **Indonesia**

In Indonesia, UNDP used behavioural insights to create a GBV survivor journey map, showing the decision points and path a GBV survivor may take after experiencing violence. The process identified behavioural barriers that can discourage survivors from seeking help through formal channels, as well as behavioural facilitators that may encourage help-seeking.

See **Section 4.4.2** for the importance of engaging diverse perspectives

Use mapping to support strategic reflection. The goal is not just to create a picture of the system, but to use it to guide strategic choices. Once patterns and relationships are visible, teams should step back and ask, “What does this mean for where and how we intervene?” Mapping should help test assumptions, identify leverage points, anticipate risks and prioritize where small, strategic shifts could create meaningful change.

Programming tip: Use systems mapping to identify leverage points

Systems mapping can uncover high-impact opportunities for change. These are often not the most obvious actors or institutions; instead, they may be informal powerholders, overlooked bottlenecks or strategic alliances. Ask:

- Where in the system are decisions made or influenced?
- Which dynamics are reinforcing harm or exclusion, and could be interrupted?
- Which relationships or actors, if supported, could ripple out into wider change?
- What assumptions are we making about how change happens, and are they still valid?
- Prioritize entry points where small, targeted interventions can disrupt harmful patterns, unlock accountability or create momentum for broader transformation.

These tools build the foundation for diagnosis (Section 4.7). They help teams move from understanding *how* the system functions to identifying *why* it produces exclusion, harm or distrust, and where the potential for sustainable change lies.

4.7 DIAGNOSING THE PROBLEM: CONNECTING PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES AND SYSTEM DYNAMICS

Diagnosis builds on systems mapping by helping teams understand why the system produces exclusion, harm or distrust, and what would need to shift for change to be possible. It connects people's needs and experiences (Section 4.5) with system dynamics (Section 4.6), helping teams to reach a shared, strategic understanding of the problem. Diagnosis is not a standalone task. It emerges from this broader process of inquiry.

A strong diagnosis is grounded in evidence, shaped by diverse perspectives and useful for decision-making. It creates the foundation for strategic collaboration by enabling stakeholders to align around a common understanding and define a collective approach, even if they come from different perspectives, interests or sectors.

The diagnosis process can also be critical for shifting donor assumptions. Step 1 analysis can help challenge misconceptions and highlight where donor investment could support meaningful change. This makes robust diagnosis a strategic asset for both programme design and resource mobilization.

Diagnosis is most effective when it includes a range of actors, such as UNDP teams, government partners, donors, civil society and affected communities. Participatory diagnosis deepens understanding, builds ownership and identifies entry points that are both politically feasible and socially relevant.

It is often a natural outcome of the systems mapping process. As teams explore how the system functions, they begin to see why it produces the outcomes it does. Diagnosis emerges through facilitated inquiry, sensemaking workshops or participatory mapping sessions. Several tools can support this process. One of the most commonly used is the iceberg model.

Example | **Caribbean**

In the Caribbean, UNDP supported a needs assessment and mapping of the judicial cycle in nine countries to identify key challenges for advancing a people-centred approach to justice. Consultations with hundreds of stakeholders across the justice system, including end users, revealed systemic bottlenecks, such as a lack of administrative data, and common issues, such as court backlogs.
The process also highlighted effective government-led innovations to improve the administration of justice, and revealed overlooked actors, such as corrections officers supporting victim-offender reconciliation. The findings provided an analytical foundation for donor engagement and responses to identified justice needs.

4.7.1 The iceberg model: A tool for systemic diagnosis

The iceberg model is a visual metaphor from systems thinking that helps identify deeper causes of persistent problems. It helps teams to move from surface-level descriptions of "what is wrong" to a deeper understanding of *why* it keeps happening and what beliefs, assumptions or incentives are keeping it in place.

The model breaks down issues into four levels:

1. Events: What we see happening (e.g., a protest, displacement, conflict outbreak).
2. Patterns/trends: Recurring events over time (e.g., recurring ethnic tensions during elections).
3. Structures/systemic causes: The systemic factors driving these patterns (e.g., exclusionary governance, inequitable service delivery, weak accountability systems).
4. Mental models: Deep beliefs, values, norms or assumptions that shape system behaviour (e.g., ethnic mistrust, gender bias).

A justice and security example could be:

- Event: A surge in vigilante violence.
- Pattern: Repeated use of vigilantes where police are absent or mistrusted.
- Structure: Weak justice institutions, low police presence, poor grievance resolution.
- Mental model: Belief that "only force ensures order" or "the State cannot protect us".

The iceberg model helps teams and key stakeholders look beyond surface-level fixes, such as more police training or equipment, and focus on underlying system shifts, such as improving institutional legitimacy, rebuilding public trust and addressing harmful social norms.

See "Iceberg Model" on the EcoChallenge website.
See "Iceberg Systems Mapping to Identify Leverage Points" on the ThinkJar Collective website.

4.7.2 Other tools for collaborative and systemic diagnosis

UNDP is increasingly adopting tools drawn from systems thinking to deepen its understanding of complex problems, in line with its portfolio approach. These methods support collective sensemaking, reveal hidden dynamics and help identify leverage points for change. They include:

- Deep Demonstrations: A systems innovation approach that supports collective sensemaking and the identification of strategic entry points.
- Sensemaking: A strategic process to extract insights from current UNDP projects and to generate actionable learning.
- Foresight and anticipatory governance: These approaches help teams explore multiple futures, examine emerging risks, and rethink current assumptions. They can be particularly helpful in politically volatile, fast-changing or reform-resistant environments.

Examples | **Panama** | **Colombia** | **Fiji**

In Panama, UNDP applied the iceberg model to analyse the complexity of social cohesion during the portfolio process.

In Colombia, UNDP used deep demonstrations to explore new approaches to regional development by working with diverse stakeholders to reframe problems and co-create a portfolio of solutions.

In Fiji, UNDP conducted a sensemaking workshop to reflect on the programme portfolio, identifying opportunities for greater coherence across projects.

Guiding questions

- Why is the system producing this result?
- Who benefits from the status quo? Who is excluded?
- What assumptions, incentives or relationships need to shift for change to happen?

STEP 2

DESIGN AND TEST SOLUTIONS

This step focuses on translating insights from problem analysis into strategic, people-centred interventions. It supports teams to identify programming entry points, co-create solutions with communities and institutions, and test those solutions in ways that are inclusive, adaptive and grounded in evidence. Step 2 offers practical guidance on developing MEL systems, as well as integrated and portfolio programming that reflects both long-term goals and current context dynamics. It introduces tools such as the Six Dimensions Tool and the People-Centred Capacity and Integrity Framework to support strategic design and implementation.

Key messages

- **Programming entry points should be informed by political dynamics, institutional incentives and systemic opportunities for influence.**
- **Co-creation is built on shared priorities, inclusive participation and locally led design.**
- **Integrated and portfolio approaches embed justice and security across development sectors.**
- **MEL systems enable adaptation and track people-centred outcomes.**
- **People-centred programming prioritizes outcomes and engages diverse actors, making it feasible even in politically constrained settings.**

CHAPTER 5

5.1 INTRODUCTION

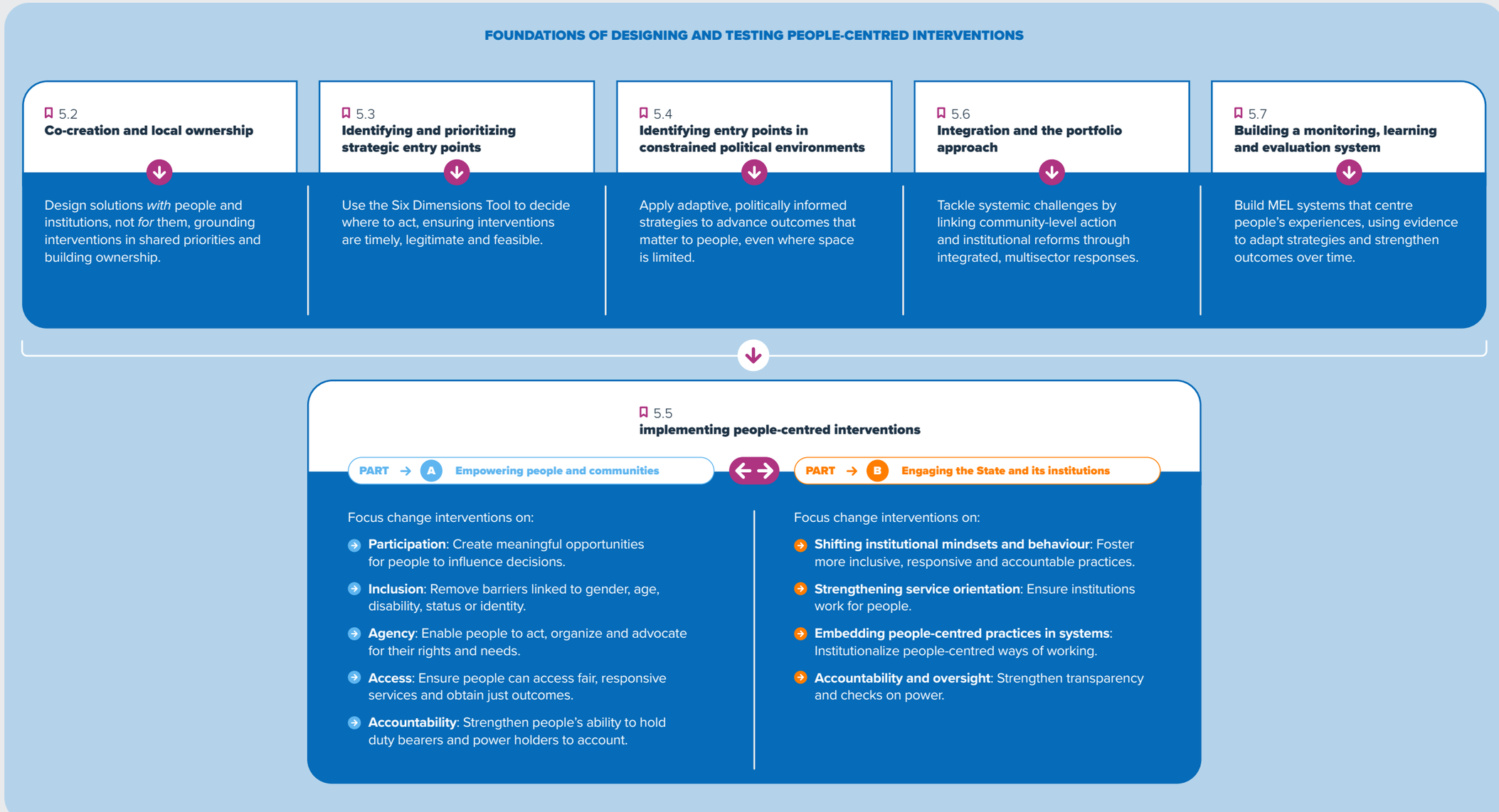
In Step 1, teams analyse justice and security systems by mapping stakeholder interests, understanding how power operates, and identifying the formal and informal institutions, actors, and relationships that shape outcomes. Tools such as PPEA, stakeholder mapping, and systems analysis help expose the structures, incentives, and dynamics that sustain injustice or drive insecurity.

Step 2 builds on this analysis. It moves teams from diagnosis to design by identifying entry points for engagement, co-creating solutions with communities and institutions, and testing and adapting interventions. Strategic design means using learning to decide where and how to begin, in ways that build trust, avoid harm, and create the potential for broader, long-term change. The **Six Dimensions Tool**, developed specifically for this Guide, supports this process by helping teams identify entry points that are timely, legitimate and feasible (see Section 5.3.2). These are not technical fixes, but opportunities to shift power, relationships and outcomes for people.

A core element of the approach is the need to strategically combine support at both the institutional and community levels to enable systems change. This holistic approach is essential to shifting outcomes at scale, as neither level can do so alone. In practice, teams may not always be able to engage both levels at once. Political constraints, limited access or risks will shape what is feasible. This does not mean the approach cannot be applied. What matters is understanding why the combination matters, acting where space exists now and remaining alert to opportunities to connect the two over time. This helps ensure that change within institutions translates into improved experiences for people, and that people's rights, needs and perspectives shape how systems evolve.

Diagram 5: Step 2 at a glance—Designing and testing people-centred solutions provides an overview of the key components of Step 2. It highlights the core dimensions of people-centred change across both communities and institutions. As shown in the diagram, much of this chapter is dedicated to **Parts A and B**, which explore in depth how to work with **communities**, **non-State and hybrid actors** (Part A) and **State institutions** (Part B) to design people-centred solutions. These sections are central to the Guide, reflecting the importance of combining action across both levels to enable meaningful systems change. They translate the core principles of the approach into actionable strategies that can be adapted across contexts.

Diagram 5: **Step 2 at a glance—Designing and testing people-centred solutions**



The people-centred approach helps teams think in the long term while acting strategically in the short term (see Box 18).

Box 18: **Puntland University Law School: A strategic entry point for long-term system change**

In 2008, UNDP supported the establishment of the first law school in Puntland, Somalia, where almost no formally qualified lawyers existed. This strategic entry point addressed a critical gap in legal capacity while laying the foundation for long-term transformation of the justice system. Law students were supported to apply their learning through moot courts, internships across the justice sector and conducting community outreach activities to raise legal awareness.

By 2019, 46 women law graduates had become legal professionals, including seven appointed as regional prosecutors. These prosecutors established a gender desk in the Attorney General's Office, improving the prosecution of GBV cases and building public trust in justice institutions. Graduates also founded the first Puntland Women Lawyers Association, creating a network of change champions within the system.

This example illustrates a reinforcing feedback loop: a targeted intervention triggered broader institutional shifts and long-term impact, showing how people-centred programming links immediate gains to deeper systemic change.

See **Box 17** to understand feedback loops.

5.2 CO-CREATION AND LOCAL OWNERSHIP

Effective people-centred justice and security programming depends on sustained engagement with communities, institutions and other stakeholders. It requires their active involvement not only in shaping interventions but also throughout implementation, monitoring and adaptation.

Co-creation offers a structured way to achieve this. It is a collaborative process that brings stakeholders together across the programme cycle—from identifying problems and designing solutions to delivering, evaluating and adjusting interventions. Unlike one-off consultations, co-creation is ongoing and participatory. It is grounded in shared analysis, joint decision-making and collective responsibility for outcomes.

This section defines the core elements of co-creation and identifies common challenges and strategies to address them. It explores practical ways of applying co-creation in programme design and implementation and highlights its role in developing a robust theory of change and fostering local ownership.

Co-creation begins during design, with participatory processes to define problems, generate ideas and shape solutions. It continues through delivery and adaptation, involving stakeholders in setting priorities, testing interventions and sharing responsibility for results. Participatory data collection—such as legal needs surveys, user journey mapping and community scorecards—can support this process and strengthen shared learning and accountability.

Co-creation helps teams engage diverse perspectives, identify strategic entry points, promote inclusion, foster integration across sectors and build sustained local ownership of reforms. It also strengthens learning by enabling community-generated data to inform decisions, reveal programming blind spots and support adaptive programming.

See **Section 4.4.2** for how to engage diverse perspectives.
See **Section 4.5** for how to understand people's justice and security needs.

Engaging communities in justice and security programming is critical. For community-level interventions, participation ensures they are locally led, reflect community priorities and respond to real needs. It recognizes that people affected by injustice or insecurity bring valuable insights and practical knowledge about what can improve their situation.

For institution-focused interventions, participation ensures that justice and security services respond to how people actually experience these systems, including their needs and expectations. This is particularly important for groups who face systemic exclusion, such as women, persons with disabilities, displaced populations and marginalized communities.

Co-creation does not require engaging all stakeholders at all times. It means strategically involving the right people, at the right time, in the right way, to shape decisions and outcomes.

Sustained co-creation supports local ownership. When institutions, civil society and communities lead and drive reforms, initiatives are more likely to reflect real needs, be seen as legitimate and remain relevant and accountable over time.

Co-creation is essential for systems change. Shifting systems requires changes in relationships, mindsets and power dynamics. Co-creation starts with people's experiences and perspectives, fostering new ways for institutions and communities to work together. It can build trust, reshape accountability and transform how justice and security are delivered. For example, it might involve community members and police jointly identifying local safety concerns, or court staff and users jointly redesigning case management tools. These processes are not purely technical. They build trust, change relationships and support shared accountability.

UNDP, *Practical Guide on Democratic Dialogue* (2013). This guide provides tools for achieving shared understanding of problems and strengthening relationships among stakeholders, helping identify actions that can transform systems and strengthen citizen participation.

Table 6 contrasts traditional State-centric approaches to justice and security programming with people-centred co-creation, using digitalization in court systems as an example.

Table 6: **From State-centric to people-centred digitalization in the court system**

STATE-CENTRIC APPROACH	PEOPLE-CENTRED APPROACH
Considers how technology can make the existing court system more efficient.	Considers how technology can improve people's access to fair and inclusive justice systems.
Treats digitalization as a technical endeavour focused on training and equipment.	Treats digitalization as an opportunity to shift how justice is delivered, supporting participation, fairness and trust, not just efficiency.
Features top-down decision-making primarily by high-level government officials and/or technical experts.	Features holistic decision-making that engages diverse stakeholders across the system, including local authorities, courts, lawyers and the communities the courts are meant to serve.
The digital tool is designed according to what the law says, how the court should manage cases and what the staff need to do their job more efficiently.	The digital tool is based on an understanding of how the system works in reality—how people actually navigate the court system, whether the law is working, who has access and what barriers exist for different groups.
Involves limited or one-off consultation with communities.	Collaborates with communities, considers their perspectives and priorities and ensures the digital solution aligns with their diverse needs.

See **Annex 10** for examples and resources related to Digitalization and E-justice.

Co-creation is not a stand-alone activity. It is part of the process of moving from understanding how the system functions to designing an effective response. Step 1 focused on understanding problems through people's perspectives and experiences and analysing the actors, incentives and structures that sustain unjust outcomes. It identified potential partners, sources of resistance and entry points for change, as well as who needs to be engaged for solutions to be legitimate and sustainable.

Step 2 builds on this foundation. It focuses on how to bring different stakeholders together around a shared understanding of the problem and a common direction for change. Co-creation is the bridge that connects analysis to action supporting teams to test solutions, shift relationships and build shared ownership of justice and security reforms.

Resource: UNDP, *A Guide to Effective Collaborative Action* (2021). This guide sets out a participatory process where multiple stakeholders collectively define problems, identify solutions, and share ownership of implementation and outcomes.

5.2.1 Challenges for co-creation

Teams may face legitimate challenges that constrain co-creation:

- Projects are focused on institutions with limited community interface
- Resistance from institutions or communities to engage with each other
- Limited access to stakeholders, especially in remote, insecure or politicized contexts
- Stakeholder reluctance due to fear of losing control or scepticism about participation
- Legal or regulatory barriers limiting who can participate or how decisions are made
- Personnel unfamiliar with people-centred approaches or unsure of their value

Co-creation remains possible even in constrained environments. The strategies identified in Box 19 may help.

See **Section 5.3.2** for how to use the Six Dimensions Tool to identify programming entry points.

Co-creation ensures that those most affected by injustice, including women, people with disabilities and marginalized groups, can shape interventions. It also enables real-time learning by embedding community feedback and participatory monitoring into how programmes adapt.

Co-creation is the foundation of a people-centred approach, enabling shared ownership, responsiveness and transformation of justice and security systems.

5.2.2 Co-creation in the project design

Co-creating during the design phase ensures that justice and security interventions are based on the right problem, reflect people's everyday experiences, promote shared ownership and support sustainable outcomes.

Step 1 analysis informs participation. Stakeholder mapping, conflict and power analysis, and political economy insights help identify who to engage, when and how. This makes participation both inclusive and strategic. It reflects power dynamics, highlights likely resisters and allies, and clarifies whose involvement is essential to unlock change. For example, in conflict-affected settings, developing action plans in collaboration with local authorities to address specific challenges in their communities has strengthened joint ownership, improved responsiveness to locally defined priorities, and helped build institutional capacity for participatory planning and service delivery. This approach increases the likelihood that improvements will be maintained and scaled over time.

In some contexts, government or institutional partners may actively resist aspects of the people-centred approach. Where direct co-creation is not possible, teams can explore other entry points such as supporting community-led initiatives or working through trusted intermediaries. A people-centred approach can still be applied by adjusting how, where and with whom engagement happens.

Box 19: **Building pathways for community voice in institutional decision-making**

In contexts where direct engagement between institutions and communities is limited, targeted strategies can help surface community priorities and foster institutional openness. The strategies below aim to create entry points for dialogue, strengthen mutual understanding and set the stage for deeper collaboration over time.

- Invest time in relationship-building to foster institutional commitment and ownership for a participatory way of working.
- Build people-centred mindsets through exposure, joint training, or structured reflection on user needs and priorities.
- Anticipate resistance by identifying institutional incentives and framing community engagement as a way to improve performance and legitimacy.
- Reframe collaboration. Focus on shared goals such as reducing caseloads or increasing public trust.
- Use trusted intermediaries to bridge perspectives, such as respected individuals or institutions (e.g., bar associations, ombudspersons offices or retired judges).
- Leverage UNDP's convening role to create neutral spaces for multistakeholder dialogue and learning.
- Work in parallel tracks. Engage communities and civil society, use their insights to inform design and share them with institutions for feedback, and inform communities of how their input influenced action.
- Support communities to articulate their needs through legal needs surveys or user journey mapping.
- Equip civil society with tools and platforms to engage through oversight bodies, media or reform champions.
- Apply the Six Dimensions Tool to identify where change is possible and build from there, including working with other entities such as NHRIs or parliamentary committees.

See **Section 5.4** for tips on navigating resistance and political constraints.

Programming tip:
Engage likely resisters early

Co-creation is not only about working with allies. Engaging likely resisters, such as sceptical institutional actors or wary community leaders, can reveal concerns, reduce opposition and identify shared interests. Their participation in shaping the problem or identifying entry points can reveal more viable pathways for change. Intentionally bringing together actors with different perspectives and priorities can help build common ground, reduce potential resistance and create a stronger basis for collaboration. This early strategic inclusion can build support, clarify what is feasible, and identify opportunities for early wins or compromises that create momentum for change.

Many activities in Step 1, such as systems mapping, user journey analysis, and community consultations, can serve as entry points for co-creation. These should be built upon, not repeated.

See **Section 4.6** for systems mapping tools and guidance.

The UNDP Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) Toolkit offers additional guidance on participatory design. It promotes structured engagement between rights holders (e.g., women, youth, displaced people) and duty bearers (e.g., justice, security and governance institutions) to define priorities, shape objectives and influence the design of initiatives from the start (p46).

Examples of participatory design approaches include:

- Building on existing consultations, dialogue platforms or community-level mechanisms where communities have identified justice and security needs.
- Facilitating joint sensemaking workshops with State and non-State actors.
- Organizing validation sessions to review draft outcomes or theories of change.
- Creating multidisciplinary design teams that reflect how justice and security are delivered.
  - For example, in Kenya, the Chief Justice assembled a diverse team with expertise in law, human rights, information technology and communications to co-design a people-centred transformation framework for the judiciary.

What matters most is not the tool or workshop format, but the process. Effective co-creation creates space for diverse actors to shape key decisions and the direction of change.

As part of co-creation, teams should develop a theory of change (ToC) that links interventions to meaningful outcomes for people. This should be grounded in Step 1 analysis, including who holds power, who may resist or support change, and why justice and security needs remain unmet. A strong ToC clarifies how interventions improve people's experiences, not just institutional outputs. For example, instead of stopping at "train community police", the ToC should explain how that training will build trust or improve perceptions and experiences of safety. Making these assumptions explicit keeps programming focused on outcomes that matter and supports adaptive management.

HIVOS, *Theory of Change Thinking in Practice: A Stepwise Approach* (2015).

See **Section 5.7** for how to build an MEL system.

Programming tip

This section directly informs the "Strategy" section of the UNDP project document template.

5.2.3 Co-creation in implementation

Co-creation during implementation focuses on how justice and security services, and the reforms that support them, are actually delivered, tested, adapted and scaled. This phase is critical for embedding participation, sustaining collaboration, and ensuring interventions remain relevant, accountable and grounded in people's rights and needs, especially those of the most vulnerable and marginalized.

The goals of co-creation in implementation are to:

- Strengthen community agency and accountability mechanisms
- Generate continuous feedback for learning and adaptation
- Institutionalize participatory structures for sustainability

Co-creation includes ongoing collaboration between communities, institutions and civil society actors to shape how services are delivered, how challenges are addressed and how progress is monitored. This includes feedback mechanisms, joint decision-making and adaptive responses that ensure justice and security services reflect people's needs and respond to systemic barriers. Participatory monitoring tools, such as community scorecards, client satisfaction surveys or citizen oversight platforms, can support this process.

Co-creation in implementation builds relationships, clarifies roles and enables joint problem-solving. It creates mechanisms, such as dialogue forums or community committees, that can outlast individual projects and support sustained reform. Tools such as process mapping (see Box 20) can support multistakeholder processes of co-creation.

Examples | **Moldova** | **Thailand**

In Moldova, local dialogue platforms bring together justice actors, community members and civil society to identify access to justice challenges and co-develop solutions. These platforms are a sustained, locally led mechanism that improves justice institution coordination, strengthens service delivery through more integrated responses such as case referrals and influences national policy.

In Thailand, a judiciary-led co-design process involving judges, lawyers, court officials, ordinary citizens and students identified barriers to access to justice and led to the redesign of the judiciary's website to improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

Box 20: **Process mapping to improve services**

Process mapping is a structured method for visualizing how justice and security services operate in practice. For a specific service or case type, such as handling a GBV complaint or issuing a birth certificate, the process is documented step by step, showing the formal procedure, the actual sequence of actions, the user experience (including barriers to accessing the service), expert inputs, and the time and cost involved. Presenting these findings in both narrative and visual formats makes the complexity of each step visible to all actors. This shared picture helps identify bottlenecks, duplication and unnecessary steps, and shows where multiple institutions are involved. By making the process clear from the user's perspective, process mapping provides a practical evidence base for improving service efficiency, accessibility and coordination.

See **Section 5.5** for examples of participation-focused interventions.

Co-creation embeds accountability and supports adaptive learning. Communities and civil society participate not only in service delivery but also in monitoring and oversight. Mechanisms such as joint monitoring, independent oversight and civic feedback ensure services remain responsive to community priorities and institutions are accountable.

Example | **Sudan**

In Sudan, community management committees oversee UNDP-supported security and stabilization initiatives. These committees, which include traditional leaders, women, youth, local commissioners and displaced persons, monitor project implementation, resolve local disputes and strengthen trust between communities and local authorities.

See **Section 5.5** for examples of accountability-focused interventions.

Co-creation enables local ownership. When institutions, civil society and communities co-lead implementation, they are more likely to invest in and sustain reforms. Local ownership means that those affected by injustice or insecurity have influence over decisions and a stake in shaping outcomes.

People-centred systems thrive when communities are not just beneficiaries, but active partners in delivering justice and security. Co-creation is the foundation of a people-centred approach supporting shared ownership, responsiveness and transformation of systems.

Guiding questions

- Are the people most affected by justice and security issues meaningfully involved in shaping the response?
- Are civil society and community groups equipped and supported to monitor justice and security services?
- Are there mechanisms for joint analysis, decision-making and adaptation between institutions and communities?
- Is participatory data, especially from marginalized groups, being used to inform and adjust justice and security interventions?

Common pitfalls to avoid:

- Treating co-creation as a one-time event. Without sustained engagement and regular feedback, programmes risk losing trust, relevance and shared ownership.
- Assuming all stakeholders can engage equally. Without addressing power imbalances and barriers to engagement, participation may exclude those most affected by injustice or insecurity.
- Focusing only on upward accountability. When institutions prioritize reporting to donors or senior officials over responsiveness to communities, trust and legitimacy are weakened.
- Creating new structures without mapping what exists. Establishing new community-based groups or oversight mechanisms without mapping, consulting or building on existing local structures can undermine legitimacy, duplicate efforts, and weaken accountability and oversight.
- Neglecting gender, inclusion and human rights dimensions in design and implementation. Failing to prioritize these dimensions can reinforce inequalities, fuel instability and miss the critical needs of vulnerable populations.

5.3 IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITIZING STRATEGIC ENTRY POINTS

Participatory co-creation processes help generate ideas and potential entry points for programming. But how do teams prioritize where to start?

Selecting entry points requires attention to what is realistically possible now, not just what is theoretically ideal. There is no fixed list of best options. Entry points must be identified through a context-specific process.

Identifying entry points is necessary not only at the start of a new programme. It is equally important when refining existing work, responding to shifts in context, or aligning with government, donor, or organizational priorities. Entry points help focus efforts where change is possible and meaningful, whether that means adapting a current intervention, finding opportunities within a mandated area of work or layering in more inclusive and locally relevant approaches. This section introduces a structured tool to support that process in a wide range of scenarios.

5.3.1 The Six Dimensions Tool

The Six Dimensions Tool, developed by Leanne McKay, helps teams evaluate and choose among possible entry points using a structured, systems-aware lens. It balances what is desirable, possible and feasible, and translates Step 1 analysis into a people-centred strategy.

It supports identification of entry points that are context-relevant, politically smart, rights-informed, operationally feasible and catalytic.

The most strategic entry points are those where:

- People's needs and system opportunities intersect, and
- UNDP is well-positioned to act safely, credibly and effectively.

The tool consists of six dimensions:

1. **Readiness and ripeness of the system**
2. **Receptiveness of actors**
3. **Resistance to change**
4. **Risks of engagement**
5. **People's priority needs**
6. **Organizational feasibility**

Each dimension is explored below to guide teams through a structured process for prioritizing where and how to act.

1 Readiness and ripeness of the system

Assess whether there are signals that the system is ready for change. Are there existing reform efforts, policy shifts or social dynamics that create momentum? Look for windows of opportunity such as post-conflict transitions, leadership changes or institutional reforms. Entry points are more strategic when they align with broader shifts already underway, making change more viable and sustainable.

2 Receptiveness of actors

Identify individuals or groups who are open to rights-based engagement and change. These may include reform-minded officials, civil society leaders, or community networks. Step 1 stakeholder analysis helps locate such actors. Change agents are more effective when connected into supportive networks that can drive and sustain change from within the system. Nurturing and empowering these networks builds their resilience and supports transformational change.

The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI), *Building Networks for Systemic Impact*.

Example | **Asia-Pacific**

In the Asia-Pacific, the Judicial Integrity Network in ASEAN, supported by the Gender Justice Platform, promotes women's leadership in the judiciary, bringing together women judges to share knowledge, advocate for gender-responsive judiciaries and support one another through mentoring. By creating spaces for connection and collaboration, the women judges network strengthens the role of women as change agents within justice institutions and contributes to more inclusive access to justice for women.

3 Resistance to change

Examine where resistance may arise and why. Resistance may come from actors who fear losing power or status, control, or resources. It can stem from capacity gaps or uncertainty about the goals of the change intervention. Resistance is a natural response to change. Understanding sources of resistance enables adaptive strategies, such as reframing reform benefits (e.g., describing the benefits as yielding greater efficiency or reducing burdens on institutions) and starting with incremental change that does not directly threaten entrenched interests or engaging trusted intermediaries.

Vivienne O'Connor, *A Guide to Change and Change Management for Rule of Law Practitioners*, INPROL (2015).

4 Risks of engagement

Evaluate potential risks, including harm to communities, reputational risks for UNDP or legitimization of harmful practices. Ensure interventions abide by the Do No Harm principle by assessing social and environmental risks, political and operational risks, and human rights risks. Ensure that adequate safeguards, monitoring and accountability measures are in place. Prioritize the safety and rights of communities, especially vulnerable groups, in all engagements.

Example | **Yemen**

In Yemen, the use of UNDP's Human Rights Due Diligence Policy, close monitoring and regular updating of the project's risk log ensured the justice programme engaged the right partners and mitigated any potential reputational or operational risks For example, the risks of non-engagement in the north of the country was found to outweigh the risks of continuing with the tailored interventions working at the local level with local authorities and the communities.

The UNDP Social and Environmental Standards are an integral component of UNDP's quality assurance and risk management approach to programming. UNDP Implementation Tool for the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy is a risk management mechanism aimed at ensuring UNDP does not provide support to entities committing grave violations of international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law when engaging with the security sector. UNDP, Choosing Your Tomorrows: Using Foresight and Anticipatory Governance to Explore Multiple Futures in Support of Risk-Informed Development, Development Futures Series no. 49, explores how foresight (the practice of exploring multiple, plausible futures) can be systematically applied to strengthen anticipatory governance and risk-informed development.

5 People's priority needs

Ensure entry points reflect the real needs and expectations of affected populations, particularly women, youth and other marginalized groups. What do people want from justice and security systems? What barriers do they face in accessing justice and security? Ground analysis in a rights-based approach and focus on interventions that can progressively advance people's rights. Prioritizing people's rights, needs and expectations helps ensure interventions focus not only on where the system is ready but also where change is urgently needed and most likely to be felt by people, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized.

See **Section 4.5** for more on how to understand people's justice and security needs.

6 Organizational feasibility

Even when an entry point aligns with people's justice needs and system dynamics, teams must assess what is institutionally feasible and strategically appropriate. Determine whether the intervention aligns within UNDP's mandate, partnerships, capacities and comparative advantage, while also considering how it complements the wider ecosystem of actors engaged in this space. Key considerations include:

- **Mandate and positioning**: Does the engagement align with UNDP's development role and position within the UN system? Are there political or operational sensitivities that limit direct engagement with certain actors?
- **Delivery modalities**: Where engagement with government is constrained, can UNDP support intermediary actors such as university legal clinics, national human rights institutions or bar associations? Whether using DIM (Direct Implementation Modality) or NIM (National Implementation Modality), the key is shaping the modality to promote inclusion, responsiveness, legitimacy and accountability to the people justice and security systems serve.
- **Partnership ecosystem**: What existing partnerships can be leveraged or strengthened? How can UNDP complement rather than duplicate efforts by other UN agencies, donors or national institutions?
- **Added value**: What unique capabilities, convening power or technical expertise does UNDP bring? Where can it enable reform, broker dialogue or foster inclusion in ways others cannot?
- **Internal coherence and integration**: Can existing work be adjusted to better reflect a people-centred approach? Can support to national-level reforms (e.g., policy or legal frameworks) be more intentionally connected to local-level interventions (e.g., legal aid, police-community engagement) for greater responsiveness? Are there opportunities for integration across UNDP teams and projects?

See **Section 5.6** for more on integrated programming and the portfolio approach.

These dimensions are interconnected and should be considered together when identifying and prioritizing entry points. The Six Dimensions Tool supports strategic planning, guides adaptation of ongoing work, and helps navigate complex or constrained contexts.

5.3.2 How to Use the Six Dimensions Tool

The Six Dimensions Tool is designed to help teams translate analysis into strategy. It supports prioritization of entry points for justice and security programming that are not only desirable but also strategic, feasible and people-centred.

This tool works best when used collaboratively with UNDP teams, partners and stakeholders as a structured conversation rather than a checklist.

When to use the tool

The tool can be used for:

- Designing a new project or intervention
- Reviewing or adapting existing work
- Exploring options in constrained or shifting contexts
- Prioritizing among multiple possible interventions

Step-by-step guidance

1. **Start with your analysis**. Use findings from Step 1 (e.g., stakeholder mapping, PPEA, conflict analysis, and people's justice and security needs) as the evidence base. The tool helps move from understanding how the system functions to deciding where and how to act.
2. **Identify a potential entry point**. This could be a specific issue (e.g., legal aid, community safety, informal justice), a space for engagement (e.g., a new policy, a local initiative) or an idea already under consideration
3. **Assess the entry point using all six dimensions**. Ask guiding questions such as:
   - Is this timely—are there shifts in the system that make change possible?
   - Who is open to collaboration?
   - Who might resist people-centred change interventions?
   - What are the potential risks of engagement or non-engagement to people, institutions or UNDP?
   - Does the intervention respond to people's priority needs, especially those of the most marginalized groups?
   - Can UNDP act safely, credibly and effectively?

   Use a table or visual matrix to structure the conversation.
4. **Compare and prioritize options**. If you are considering multiple entry points, use the tool to compare them. Some may be high-impact but high-risk; others may be feasible but limited in scope. The aim is to select entry points that are strategic, rights-based and capable of catalysing broader change.
5. **Document decision-making**. Capture key insights and decisions in a short note. This can inform concept notes, discussions with partners or donors, and future learning. Revisit the analysis regularly to adapt as context shifts.

See **Annex 5** for how to apply the Six Dimensions Tool to the question of engagement with non-State justice and security actors.

Programming tips for applying the Six Dimensions Tool

- **Use the Six Dimensions Tool iteratively**. Entry points change. What was not feasible six months ago may be viable now.
- **Engage diverse perspectives**. Involve local partners or stakeholders in the conversation, especially those who bring insights into risks, resistance and community needs.
- **Watch for blind spots**. Teams often underestimate resistance, risk and feasibility. Use the tool to reveal hidden dynamics and challenge assumptions.

5.2 IDENTIFYING ENTRY POINTS IN CONSTRAINED POLITICAL ENVIRONMENTS

In some contexts, space for justice and security programming is limited. Political will may be weak, engagement with government restricted, and working with civil society may be politically sensitive or operationally difficult. In such settings, some may assume that little can be done until conditions improve.

These assumptions often stem from narrow understandings of justice and security—for example, equating justice with access to courts and formal laws, or viewing State security institutions as the primary providers of security. They may also reflect a limited definition of success, focused on institutional outputs such as passing laws or reforming State entities, rather than people-centred outcomes such as empowerment or improvements in people's experience of rights, safety and justice.

The people-centred approach challenges these assumptions. It recognizes that even in constrained environments, there are practical ways to reduce harm, strengthen protection, and improve people's ability to access justice and feel safe. This requires working politically and adaptively to advance meaningful outcomes, even where space is limited. In some cases, this may involve pivoting from support to institutions to working with community-based or civil society actors, particularly where institutional legitimacy has collapsed, or political repression constrains other options. Such pivots can open space for people-centred interventions if they are intentionally grounded in local priorities and developed in partnership with communities and civil society. The approach also encourages teams to look ahead—identifying early signals of change, preparing for shifting conditions and positioning local actors to seize emerging opportunities when space opens.

See **Section 5.2** on co-creation and local ownership.

Understanding the political landscape and identifying risks, opportunities and feasible entry points requires robust political economy analysis. This helps ensure that programming is grounded in context, informed by power dynamics and responsive to evolving conditions.

See **Section 4.6** for PPEA tools and guidance.

The people-centred approach is a method, and a mindset: even in constrained contexts, UNDP can still act as a broker of trust, legitimacy, and accountability. The following strategies can help teams identify feasible entry points, navigate political constraints, and stay focused on outcomes that matter to people.

5.4.1 Reframe justice and security to unlock space for action

Reframing is part of an adaptive approach that allow programmes to remain relevant and responsive, while sustaining a focus on empowering people, improving fairness and strengthening public trust.

Use locally resonant terms

Terms such as "dignity", "fairness" and "safety" may align more closely with cultural and local norms than formal rights-based or accountability language, which can be politically sensitive. Framing justice and security in terms of social stability, public trust (especially after elections or crisis) or economic stability can open space for meaningful engagement. For example, police-community dialogues can be framed around improving local safety and reducing tensions, rather than as formal police

reform. Reframing is not a retreat from people-centred goals but an adaptive strategy to maintain space for engagement and action.

Emphasize practical service improvements

Frame interventions around procedural improvements, such as making services more efficient or reducing pressure on public services. These changes may be more acceptable to authorities while still supporting positive outcomes. However, the focus must remain on whether interventions are improving outcomes for people. Tactical entry points must align with people-centred principles. How fairly and respectfully a person is treated in their day-to-day interactions with justice and security providers often matter more to the person than formal accountability mechanisms. Strengthening procedural fairness can help build trust, even when political conditions constrain deeper reforms. In some contexts, this may also include supporting informal actors and networks that help deliver accessible and trusted services.

See **Box 28**: Building trust by embedding procedural justice in policing.

5.4.2 Strengthen community-level justice and security solutions

In constrained contexts, local-level action often provides the most practical and trusted entry points for people-centred justice and security. Strengthening justice and security solutions at the community level, including their capacity, sustainability and reach, can support people to peacefully resolve disputes, reduce harm and promote social cohesion, even where national institutions are inaccessible or contested. This also responds to the reality that, across contexts, most people do not rely on State institutions to resolve their justice and security issues, turning instead to a diverse range of local providers. Where appropriate, strengthening linkages between local providers and formal (State) systems can support longer-term impact and coherence.

See **Section 4.6** for stakeholder mapping tools and guidance.

See **Annex 5** for how to apply the Six Dimensions Tool to the question of engagement with non-State justice and security actors.

Work with subnational authorities to improve services

Where central engagement is restricted, subnational actors such as local councils, municipal administrations and local police may remain operational and trusted. Procedural improvements, such as complaint mechanisms, court user helpdesks or community safety audits, can build momentum for broader change. For example, participatory audits to identify local safety concerns can lead to safety plans and practical measures such as improved street lighting or changes to patrol patterns, creating space for ongoing police-community engagement. These approaches can be especially effective when integrated into broader area-based programming that coordinates justice, security and service delivery efforts within a defined locality.

Support trusted intermediaries and non-governmental providers

Actors such as universities, NHRIs, and bar associations or other professional associations (e.g., associations of social workers or mediators) can serve as trusted intermediaries where direct engagement with State institutions is constrained. They help extend access to justice, deliver services that are locally relevant and accessible, and can act as a bridge between communities and formal systems where appropriate.

Support civil society and community-led mechanisms

When institutions are repressive or lack legitimacy, CSOs, community-based groups, and community leaders often provide essential access to justice and protection. Legal empowerment efforts, such as paralegals, mediation and collaborative dispute resolution, can offer trusted, safer alternatives to formal institutions. However, support must be based on genuine participatory design to ensure interventions reflect local priorities, enable ownership, and avoid reinforcing existing tensions or power imbalances. Conflict analysis and a Do No Harm approach is critical, especially where civic space is closing or communities face surveillance or retaliation.

Example | **Myanmar**

In Myanmar, following the February 2021 military coup, UNDP pivoted from institutions to communities, supporting paralegals, community leaders and CSOs to provide access to justice for land and labour disputes where courts were inaccessible and not trusted.

See **Section 5.5**, Part A for examples of access-focused interventions.

UNDP, *Area-Based Development Practice Note* (2025).
Working Group on Customary and Informal Justice and SDG16+, *Diverse Pathways to People-Centred Justice: Report of the Working Group on Customary and Informal Justice and SDG16+* (2023). This report offers practical examples of the spectrum of engagement options possible.

5.4.3 Integrate justice and security into other development work

People's priority justice and security needs often relate to issues such as access to basic services, legal identity, family matters or land disputes. In constrained environments, these needs can often be identified and addressed through programming in other sectors, such as livelihoods, health or social protection. Integrating justice and security elements into broader development work can open space for meaningful engagement, even where direct justice or security programming is restricted.

Link justice to access to services or economic opportunities
Support to civil documentation can enable access to education, healthcare and social protection, while reducing exclusion and vulnerability. Linking land tenure to livelihoods programming can support more sustainable economic recovery and women's economic empowerment.

Embed dispute resolution mechanisms
In return and reintegration programmes, land disputes or family tensions may pose risks to community stability. Supporting community leaders or local peace and security committees to address these issues through legal awareness, mediation training or access to legal aid can help prevent local grievances from escalating.

Leverage existing community structures
Link with UNDP-supported mechanisms such as community stabilization committees—for example, by training members as paralegals or connecting them with bar associations to ensure serious cases are referred to formal justice systems.

See **Section 5.6**: Integration and the portfolio approach.

5.4.4 Use data and dialogue to influence change

Data and dialogue can be instruments for maintaining engagement, negotiating entry points and shifting institutional behaviour. In constrained contexts, this requires careful attention to how data is collected, framed and shared. Data must be gathered ethically and safely, with informed consent and appropriate anonymization. It should be grounded in political economy analysis, therebv ensuring that recommendations reflect the realities of power and incentives and are shared strategically with the right actors at the right time.

Strategically open space for dialogue
Use evidence to shift narratives towards service improvements rather than system critique. For example, legal needs surveys, user journey mapping and service audits can highlight practical service gaps. This data can open space for dialogue with key stakeholders (either directly or through allies and third parties), focused on incremental improvements.

Enable engagement through regular briefings
Presenting findings in informal, private briefings with key government stakeholders (rather than through public dissemination) helps maintain relationships, reduce defensiveness and build momentum for practical change.

5.4.5 Work politically

Working politically means recognizing that justice and security programming is not only technical; it is inherently political. In constrained environments, progress depends on navigating power dynamics, building coalitions and adapting strategies as space for action shifts. This requires working politically both externally, in relation to governments, donors and partners, and internally, within UNDP itself. Constraints on institutional engagement, donor pressures or restricted civic space are not unique, and strategies that worked in other contexts can inform decision-making and action.

Engage strategically with political and donor dynamics

Programme pivots, access restrictions and decisions to end a project or withdraw from a location are often shaped by political and donor priorities, not just technical analysis. Building space for people-centred justice and security requires evidence of outcomes that matter to donors and decision-makers, such as contributions to stability, resilience or economic inclusion. Advocacy should link justice and security outcomes with these broader priorities to secure support and legitimacy for continued engagement.

Coordinate and align through informal alliances

UN and donor coordination platforms, such as joint working groups, can serve as entry points for shaping shared narratives and identifying programming space for justice and security interventions. Community-generated data can help align local actors such as civil society, academics and subnational officials and foster collaboration around shared problems and solutions.

Navigate internal constraints

Internal constraints, including risk aversion, rigid funding models and pressures to deliver quickly, can hamper people-centred interventions that rely on localization (i.e., shifting power and resources to local actors). Working politically includes advocating internally for the people-centred approach and for the enabling conditions it requires, such as flexible funding, local decision-making and space for adaptation.

5.4.6 Support State and non-State change champions

Successful change initiatives depend on champions who can drive and sustain progress. Even where space for change is constrained, identifying and nurturing champions is essential. Political space can shift quickly due to leadership changes, crises or new opportunities. Champions who are informed, motivated and trusted are well positioned to act when conditions allow. They may include reform-minded officials, respected community leaders or civil society coalitions. Each can play a role in sustaining local initiatives, influencing mindsets, or advancing broader policy or behavioural shifts at the institutional level.

Internal change champions can be identified by using Step 1 analysis to identify individuals within government or allied institutions, such as mid-level officials or local leaders, who are supportive or could benefit from being associated with a successful initiative. Support for them can include technical assistance, peer support, providing data and evidence for internal use, or learning opportunities, such as local exchanges, to demonstrate people-centred practices.

Example | **Iraq**

In Iraq, police station commanders from across the country visited the model police station in East Mosul to see firsthand how the model has strengthened police-community trust and improved local safety.

Common pitfalls to avoid:

- Conducting insufficient political and context analysis. Without a sound understanding of power dynamics, incentives and risks, interventions may be blocked, co-opted or disconnected from realities.
- Underestimating the importance of political will and ownership. Without clear commitment from key actors, even well-designed interventions may stall or fail.
- Pursuing complex reforms without enabling conditions. Ambitious reforms launched without legal, policy or institutional support are unlikely to deliver sustainable change and may exacerbate instability.
- Coordinating weakly with stakeholders. Poor coordination within UNDP or with partners can lead to duplication, confusion and missed opportunities.
- Treating CSOs as implementers, not partners. This risks undermining local ownership and missing opportunities to build sustainable locally driven solutions.

5.5 IMPLEMENTING PEOPLE-CENTRED INTERVENTIONS

5.5.1 Adopting a holistic and integrated approach

Effective justice and security programming requires an integrated approach that strategically combines institution-focused ("top-down") and community-focused ("bottom-up") interventions. These are not separate tracks but interdependent and mutually reinforcing dimensions of a holistic, people-centred strategy.

Without this integration, top-down reforms risk becoming technocratic and disconnected from people's needs, while bottom-up efforts risk creating parallel systems that lack sustainability or legitimacy. For example, improving access to justice for women may require both stronger institutional responsiveness and greater community-level agency. Progress in one area can reinforce gains in another, generating more sustainable, legitimate and responsive outcomes (see Box 21).

Successful change comes from a process that involves both sustained community demand and a willingness by the State to support and enable reform.

Box 21: **Strategically marrying top-down and bottom-up interventions for systemic solutions in Yemen**

As noted in the 2024 final evaluation of the UNDP Promoting Inclusive Access to Justice in Yemen (PIAJY) project:

- The project has significantly contributed to enhancing the justice ecosystem in Yemen by fostering an enabling environment that supports sustainable and transformative outcomes. This achievement reflects a dual focus on grassroots engagement and collaboration with various justice sector actors, thereby building a foundation for a more responsive and resilient justice system, combined with building on already existing institutions and processes within the Constitutional and legal framework in Yemen. . . . This combination of grassroots engagement and collaboration with institutional actors has created a robust ecosystem that supports sustainable change. As a result, the project is positioned not only to achieve immediate impacts but also to potentially contribute to long-term, transformational justice outcomes in Yemen.

Source: UNDP, Final Evaluation Report, Promoting Inclusive Access to Justice in Yemen (PIAJY) Project, UNDP Yemen Country Office (2024), p. 56.

The approach recognizes that while justice and security are conceptually distinct, they are deeply interconnected in practice. People's experiences of justice and security depend not on isolated institutions or sectors, but on a **system** of State, hybrid and community-based actors, institutions and mechanisms.

What matters is whether these actors contribute to outcomes that matter for people, such as safety, access to justice, fairness and accountability. Achieving these outcomes often requires coordinated action across diverse actors. For example, resolving community disputes, preventing and responding to GBV, or ensuring accountability in places of detention may require collaboration between police, courts, local authorities, civil society, and community groups and leaders.

Improving people's experiences of justice and security means looking beyond conventional sectors to include all actors whose efforts help deliver services that are fair, accountable, and responsive to people's rights and needs (see Box 22).

See **Section 4.6** for guidance on identifying actors beyond conventional justice and security sectors.

Box 22: **Joint responsibility for addressing GBV**

An integrated response to GBV may involve specialized police units, the judiciary, legal aid providers and community-based women's networks. Police training on gender-sensitivity and referral systems is supported by community-based paralegal initiatives that support survivors to navigate the justice system. Mobile courts deployed to remote areas support timely resolution of GBV cases. This coordinated approach improves both access to justice and the safety of survivors, demonstrating how justice and security actors must work together to address protection gaps, uphold rights and strengthen accountability.

5.5.2 Applying the approach across development contexts

While the specific focus, sequencing, and delivery mechanisms may vary, justice and security interventions are relevant across all contexts, from conflict and crisis to long-term development. The people-centred approach provides continuity across this spectrum by grounding interventions in local needs, realities and outcomes, and adapting over time in response to changing governance conditions, capacities and risks.

In conflict-affected and crisis response settings, a people-centred and integrated approach is particularly important. State institutions are often weak or absent, and people rely on non-State and emerging mechanisms (such as non-state armed groups) for justice and safety. Programming typically focuses on re-establishing core functions, such as access to justice, dispute resolution and a trusted police or court presence, in ways that rebuild trust and enable responsive, inclusive governance. These efforts are often reinforced by stabilization and early recovery programmes that help create the conditions for the people-centred approach to take root.

In more stable contexts, programming may shift more towards institutional reform, civilian oversight, and ensuring that justice and security systems are not only functional but also deliver quality services that are inclusive, rights-based and accessible.

See **Annex 2** for how the approach can reinforce UNDP's role across the HDP nexus, with an illustrative example of its link to stabilization programming.

Box 23: **People-centred justice in moments of disaster**

In Lebanon, UNDP partnered with the Beirut Bar Association to provide legal aid to people affected by the 2020 Beirut port blast. Hundreds of thousands lost jobs and homes, making housing and labour issues priority justice needs. Some people refused to leave their damaged homes for fear of losing the only shelter they had, due to unclear property tenure rights.

In Pakistan, communities impacted by environmental crises have been connected to justice mechanisms through environmental and human rights defenders and insider mediators. A grievance redress mechanism was also established to support access to justice in displacement settings.

5.5.3 Core elements of the approach: People and institutions

People-centred justice and security programming focuses on two elements of the UNDP people-centred policy framework: **Element 4: Empowering people and communities**, and **Element 5: Engaging the State and its institutions**. These are explored in depth in Part A and Part B of this chapter.

Each element is defined by a set of core dimensions, or "domains of change", that highlight where transformation is needed for justice and security systems to become more people-centred. These dimensions are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. They guide programme design and monitoring by helping teams to define the types of change they aim to achieve and how to observe or assess that change in practice.

See **Section 5.7** and **Annex 7** for more on MEL systems and people-centred indicators.

Empowering people and communities means expanding people's ability to shape and access justice and security, and to hold State, hybrid and non-State service providers to account. It focuses on five dimensions that reflect changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, access to services and power:

- **Participation**: Creating meaningful opportunities for people to influence decision-making
- **Inclusion**: Addressing barriers linked to gender, age, disability, status or identity
- **Agency**: Enabling people to act, organize and advocate for their rights and needs
- **Access**: Ensuring people can use services and mechanisms that deliver fair justice and security outcomes
- **Accountability**: Ensuring power holders and duty bearers are held to account for their actions

Engaging the State and its institutions means supporting formal institutions to better serve people. This typically requires shifts in structures, incentives, norms and behaviours. It focuses on four dimensions:

- **Shifting mindsets and behaviour**: Promoting more responsive and inclusive practices
- **Service orientation**: Ensuring institutions work for people
- **Embedding practice in systems**: Institutionalizing people-centred ways of working
- **Accountability and oversight:** Strengthening transparency and checks on power

Table 1 (in Section 1.2) presents an illustrative list of areas where justice and security are relevant in UNDP programming. These interventions are not people-centred by default. Their design must be based on an understanding of the context; people's needs, rights and expectations; institutional capacities; and the risk environment.

See **Section 1.2**, **Table 1** for typical entry points for addressing justice and security across UNDP programming.

Programming should focus on outcomes that matter to people and achieve them in ways that both empower people and communities and strengthen justice and security systems (see Box 24).

Box 24: **What makes an intervention people-centred?**

To be people-centred, a programming intervention should:

- Be defined by people's actual experience, not institutional assumptions
- Be shaped by affected communities and justice and security actors for local ownership and legitimacy
- Shift power, not just deliver services
- Prioritize fair processes, just outcomes and accountability, not just access to justice and security services
- Strengthen both people's agency and the system's ability to respond to their needs
- Be adaptable and context-specific, grounded in local needs

5.5.4 Enablers of people-centred change efforts

Combining institution-focused and community-level support is essential because systems change requires shifts on both the demand and supply sides. Communities shape demand and hold institutions accountable, while institutions enable consistent, rights-based service delivery.

For example, supporting communities and local authorities to jointly identify safety concerns and co-develop responses, such as community safety plans, can ensure that people's priorities are addressed in ways that are both responsive and institutionalized. Efforts to empower communities must be coupled with investment in the capacity

of local authorities to understand and respond to justice and security needs, and to deliver sustainable services.

Sustained political and institutional support at the highest levels is also critical. When ministers, attorneys general, or heads of police and judiciary champion reforms, they can unblock bottlenecks, align incentives and ensure that commitments are acted on. Their backing strengthens implementation and increases the likelihood that reforms will be sustained. This support is also essential for embedding and institutionalizing change over time (see Step 3).

In some contexts, it may not be immediately feasible to engage at both community and institutional levels. What is essential is that the longer-term objective of integration remains part of the programming strategy and that teams stay alert to emerging opportunities—for example, a new reform-minded police chief or village administrator, or a change in government policy towards decentralization.

Teams should also seek synergies with other UNDP or partner projects or programmes; for example, a team might link a community dispute resolution intervention with a local governance project supporting administrative capacity. **This integration mindset is a core part of the people-centred approach**.

See **Section 5.6**: Integration and the portfolio approach.

INTRODUCING PARTS A AND B

Parts A and B form the heart of this Guide representing the two core elements of the people-centred framework:

- **A** **Empowering people and communities.**
- **B** **Engaging the State and its institutions.**

They translate the people-centred approach into practice by focusing on how to work with both communities, non-State and hybrid actors (Part A) and institutions (Part B). Each part provides practical entry points, programming strategies and lessons drawn from UNDP's justice and security work across a wide range of contexts. They are designed to inspire and support teams in adapting the approach to their own settings.

PART A

PEOPLE-CENTRED PROGRAMMING: **EMPOWERING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES**

People are not just users of justice and security systems—they are co-creators of solutions, drivers of accountability and agents of change.

This part of the Guide explores how programming can strengthen the five interrelated dimensions of empowerment:

1. Participation
2. Inclusion
3. Agency
4. Access
5. Accountability

Each dimension reinforces the principle that justice and security must be built with people, not for them. They serve as guides for designing and monitoring of interventions that are context-specific and responsive to the needs of people and communities.

These dimensions go beyond service delivery to focus on how programming can support the capacities, relationships and mechanisms that allow people, and especially the most vulnerable and excluded, to define justice and security priorities, influence decisions, and actively shape the systems that affect them.

The dimensions are interconnected and should be considered together when designing any empowerment-focused intervention. For example, establishing community mediation committees can involve all five dimensions:

- **Participation**: Community members are involved in the design of the mechanism.
- **Inclusion**: Women, youth, minority groups and other often-excluded voices are intentionally represented.
- **Agency**: The committee enables people to resolve disputes, assert their rights and solve problems collectively.
- **Access**: It brings justice services closer to the community, especially where State mechanisms are absent or distrusted.
- **Accountability**: Transparent, fair, rights-based processes and community oversight build trust.

For each dimension described below, a brief explanation is followed by selected examples from UNDP programming. These examples aim illustrate the practical impact of people-centred interventions but are not intended as a comprehensive list of all possible activities.

Each dimension concludes with a checklist to help ensure interventions are people-centred, impactful and sustainable. These checklists draw on lessons from UNDP's global practice and evaluations.

For UNDP evaluations, see the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) Evaluation Resource Centre.

Common pitfalls to avoid:

- Neglecting community agency and ownership. Top-down design with limited community engagement risks ineffective solutions, weak legitimacy and poor sustainability.
- Providing one-off trainings without follow-up. Capacity-building efforts often fail to deliver impact without mentoring, peer learning or ongoing support.
- Neglecting trust-building. Failing to address mistrust, lack of transparency or past harms can block meaningful engagement and reduce public confidence in justice and security actors.
- Working in silos. Fragmented interventions, such as focusing solely on infrastructure or a single service area, rarely address root causes or achieve transformational results.
- Overlooking sustainability. Community-based mechanisms that lack formal recognition, resourcing or links to formal justice and security systems often struggle to sustain themselves once external support ends.

A.1 Participation

Participation is a cornerstone of the people-centred approach to justice and security because it enables those most affected by injustice and insecurity to shape the systems intended to serve them. Rather than treating people as passive recipients of services, participation ensures they are co-creators of solutions, helping to define priorities, design interventions and monitor outcomes. This shift from consultation to co-creation strengthens public trust, legitimacy, and the accountability of justice and security systems, especially in contexts where State–society relationships are weak.

Participation goes beyond one-off consultations. It requires informed, active and sustained engagement, particularly of marginalized or excluded groups, in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

For UNDP, participation is not only a human rights principle; it is a strategic programming approach that improves effectiveness, strengthens local ownership, and increases the sustainability of justice and security reforms. Context-specific participatory processes that integrate local practices and respect sociocultural realities foster trust and support, promote inclusion, and ensure that justice and security efforts are aligned with people's needs and priorities. Participation is closely tied to the principles of inclusion, agency and accountability.

An example of participatory practice is the use of community-police mechanisms that enable shared security planning and foster people-centred outcomes. UNDP supports the creation and institutionalization of diverse, locally led platforms that prioritize participatory approaches and have consistently contributed to improved trust, crime reduction and community-police cooperation. Evaluations show that sustainability depends on local ownership, integration into national frameworks, capacity building and inclusivity, particularly gender responsiveness.

Example | **Bangladesh**

In Bangladesh, police and communities in Cox's Bazar jointly developed community safety plans, ensuring responsiveness to community needs and fostering sustainability and local ownership.

What makes participation-focused initiatives people-centred and impactful?

- Dialogue and planning processes are inclusive and shaped by communities, including vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- Communities define priorities, shape interventions and monitor progress, rather than being passive recipients of services.
- Community input though participation mechanisms directly influences institutional decision-making.
- Participation is sustained and institutionalized, not limited to one-off consultations.

- Communities and local justice and security actors (formal and informal) share responsibility for outcomes, fostering mutual accountability and shifting power dynamics towards more inclusive decision-making.

Box 25: **Police Community Relations Committees in South Sudan**

In South Sudan, UNDP-supported Police Community Relations Committees (PCRCs) have created inclusive spaces for community members, including women, youth and internally displaced persons, to shape local security strategies. They have been instrumental in reducing crime rates and resolving community conflicts. By the end of 2023, approximately 220 PCRCs had been established, with 34 led by women, 47 by youth and 9 by IDPs. Volunteer community members, nominated through inclusive community consultations, are trained in community policing, conflict resolution, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and human rights, and equipped with radios, torches, bicycles and gumboots to support local safety initiatives. For example, organized efforts to protect women fetching water or collecting grass have reduced the risk of violence and exploitation. Regular community–police dialogues and the development of joint action plans have built trust and improved collaboration between communities and police. In locations where PCRCs were established, respondents to a UNDP impact assessment reported higher levels of improved perceptions of community safety than in non-intervention locations.

Source: *UNDP, Impact Assessment for the Access to Justice and Security Interventions Supported by United Nations Development Programme in South Sudan* (November 2024).

A.2 Inclusion

Inclusion requires deliberate strategies to address the structural barriers that prevent certain groups from participating in and benefiting from justice and security systems. Exclusion based on gender, age, disability, displacement, ethnicity or social identity violates fundamental rights and undermines the rule of law, which holds that all people must be equal before and accountable to the law, and have access to fair and effective dispute resolution mechanisms. Exclusion undermines the legitimacy of institutions, weakens the effectiveness of justice and security systems, and increases risks of grievance and instability.

The people-centred approach supports inclusion by identifying and addressing structural and identity-based barriers that limit access to justice and security. It recognizes that these systems often fail to serve certain groups and places particular emphasis on reaching those furthest behind, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, displaced populations and others facing systemic discrimination. This aligns with the commitment to Leave No One Behind.

See **Annex 10** for how the people-centred approach to Environmental Justice supports traditionally excluded groups to monitor environmental harm, access remedies, and participate in environmental decision-making.

Inclusion starts with understanding whose perspective, voice and knowledge are being prioritized in decision-making, who is excluded, and why? For example, why are women or Indigenous groups underrepresented within formal justice institutions (such as the judiciary) and what impact does that have on the perceptions of justice and the quality of justice experiences and outcomes for members of those groups? Based on this analysis, an inclusive approach looks at how systems can better respond to their rights and needs through changes in institutions, relations, behaviour and organizational capacities. It is advanced through meaningful participation, changes in institutional practices (see Part B: Engaging the State and its institutions) and shifting power so that all people can influence and benefit from justice and security systems. Using disaggregated data is critical to identifying patterns of exclusion and designing targeted interventions.

UNDP's Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) Toolkit supports country offices to integrate human rights, equality and inclusion across all programming phases.

The use of community dialogue platforms is a well-established strategy for amplifying the voices and needs of marginalized groups, enabling participation in local decision-making structures, and strengthening social cohesion across diverse contexts and regions. Lessons from implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, for example, highlight the value of women-led community platforms that not only provide mutual support and foster recovery but also enable survivor-led advocacy for accountability around sensitive issues such as SGBV, helping to break stigma, influence local responses and strengthen trust within communities.

Examples | **Nigeria** | **Ukraine**

In Nigeria, community-led platforms supported by the local government enable women and girls to have their specific needs heard and responded to and have created space for diverse groups to exchange ideas and cooperate around shared concerns.

In Ukraine, Community Security Working Groups and networks of self-help groups representing vulnerable and marginalized populations enable communities to better organize, articulate their demands and constructively engage local authorities in joint decision-making around their priority justice and security needs. The mechanisms have proved resilient even during the full-scale invasion and have been effective for building trust and cooperation.

UNDP is increasingly applying behavioural insights to address the social and psychological drivers of exclusion. The approach helps identify barriers rooted in attitudes, mindsets and social norms, and supports the design, testing and adaptation of interventions that are informed by local contexts and behavioural science. This includes working with both service providers and communities to shift behaviours and perceptions that limit access to justice and security, especially for women and marginalized groups. Behavioural insights complement legal and institutional reform by addressing the underlying factors that shape how people act and interact with justice and security systems.

Examples | **Syria** | **Guinea-Bissau**

In Syria, behavioural insights revealed that traditional programming to support women's inheritance rights often unintentionally placed the burden on women alone, exposing them to social and familial pressures. In response, UNDP adopted a whole-of-society approach, engaging fathers, brothers, mothers, religious figures and community leaders as part of the solution, and addressing fears around family cohesion, property loss and community reputation. The approach has been embedded across legal aid, livelihoods and governance programming, and is helping reframe inheritance rights as both religiously legitimate and socially beneficial, increasing community acceptance.

In Guinea-Bissau, behavioural insights were used to assess the accessibility, effectiveness and perceived legitimacy of a model House of Justice (HoJ), which brings justice services—including the court, legal aid providers and civil documentation assistance— under one roof. Findings are being used to inform the nationwide roll-out of HOJ's in line with the government's access to justice strategy.

UNDP, Human Development Report 2023/2024: Breaking the Gridlock, Reimagining Cooperation in a Polarized World (2024), p. 105.

What makes inclusion-focused initiatives people-centred and impactful?

- Inclusions strategies are context-specific and culturally sensitive, apply an intersectional lens (recognizing the overlapping and compounding forms of exclusion faced by individuals), and use disaggregated data to address overlapping forms of exclusion and support adaptive responses.

- Behavioural and social approaches, such as nonviolent communication or behavioural insights, help identify and shift norms, attitudes and mindsets that perpetuate exclusion.
- Marginalized groups gain voice, power and influence through sustained and meaningful participation in decision-making, often supported by local organizations and leveraging local knowledge and networks
- Capacity development is delivered for both institutions and communities.
- Inclusion interventions are institutionally supported and aligned with national policy priorities to support more inclusive and responsive systems.

Box 26: **Shifting mindsets and behaviours through nonviolent communication in Somalia**

Traditionally, interventions aimed at strengthening justice or security systems to uphold human rights and eradicate discriminatory practices and harmful social norms have largely adopted a normative and technical approach. UNDP Somalia recognized that discriminatory practices are so embedded in societal and cultural norms that meaningful change can occur only when people change the way they think and interact with one another. To support this, UNDP piloted the Nonviolent Communication (NVC) model at an ADR centre in Baidoa. The approach emphasizes empathetic listening, respectful dialogue and constructive conflict resolution. The centre includes traditional elders, religious leaders and women leaders who support dispute resolution based on customary law (Xeer) and Sharia law. The NVC training had a transformative impact on the behaviours of the mediators, who began to embrace practices based on empathy, mutual respect and understanding. Members made greater efforts to ensure that outcomes met the needs of both parties, particularly women. Mediators also took the initiative to spread NVC practices within their communities, including to camps of internally displaced persons and remote villages where many people are typically excluded from meaningful participation in justice.

A.3 Agency

Agency is a defining feature of the people-centred approach that recognizes individuals and communities not only as rights holders or recipients of services but also as active agents of change capable of navigating, influencing and transforming the systems around them. When people are empowered with knowledge, confidence, and capacities and tools to understand, claim and defend their rights, they are better equipped to participate meaningfully in decision-making that affects their lives, to resolve disputes peacefully, and to hold justice and security actors to account.

See **Annex 10** for examples of how the approach supports communities to challenge exploitative practices, shape policy and access remedies in the field of Business and Human Rights.

Legal empowerment (the ability of people to know, use and shape the law to achieve justice) is an essential component of the people-centred approach, helping to expand access to justice and promote community security. Since the early 2000s, UNDP has supported legal empowerment interventions working with communities, civil society, governments and justice actors to strengthen legal awareness, expand access to legal aid and promote community-based dispute resolution across all development contexts.

Support to **community-based paralegals** is a common component of legal empowerment. Community paralegals come from impacted communities. They are usually not qualified lawyers but are trained to support people and communities to know their basic legal and human rights through legal education and rights awareness, to understand their options for resolving problems, and to navigate pathways to resolution. They generally do not provide legal advice or representation but are connected to legal aid providers or lawyers who help people navigate formal justice pathways through courts or administrative processes. Paralegals empower people and strengthen their agency in terms of accessing not only justice services but also other public services to which they are entitled. Their support to resolve a person's civil documentation problems, for example, can unlock access to education, healthcare or social protection services that are essential for economic and social development.

Learn more about designing and implementing community-based paralegal programming here.

Programming tips for impactful and sustainable community paralegal interventions:

- Invest in sensitizing key stakeholders within government, the legal profession (including bar associations) and communities to the role and value of community paralegals from the outset of programming to ensure local support and long-term sustainability.
- Design interventions with input and leadership from local stakeholders, including community members, local authorities and existing service providers.
- Engage national stakeholders and institutions from the outset to embed paralegal initiatives within national legal aid and justice sector reform efforts, supporting the shift towards more people-centred systems.
- Clarify the role and scope of work of community paralegals to address potential resistance from the legal profession.
- Ensure strong referral mechanisms between community paralegals and formal justice actors—for example, through legal aid centres or bar associations.
- Provide continuous training, capacity building and oversight to ensure quality and accountability and to support networks of champions who can sustain and expand impact.
- Strengthen and leverage existing laws, institutions and government service delivery networks, such as social protection centres, by integrating paralegal services within government legal aid offices or agencies.
- Link community paralegals with health, livelihoods or other development programmes. For example, train health workers or community mobilizers as paralegals, or connect paralegals with local peace committees.

Agency provides viable alternatives to violence by building skills for dialogue, reconciliation, mediation, negotiation and collective problem-solving. Community-based mediation and ADR are practical, people-centred approaches to resolving disputes, particularly where formal justice and security systems are inaccessible, overburdened or lack public trust. Investing in local mediators, traditional leaders and inclusive dispute resolution platforms, supported by safeguards such as human rights and gender-sensitive training and clear referral pathways to formal systems, helps build more responsive, trusted and fair justice and security systems. These mechanisms can reduce pressure on courts and law enforcement, and ensure more timely and accessible justice, particularly for women and children. They help restore relationships, reduce community tensions and prevent the escalation of disputes into violence. UNDP's support for these approaches helps strengthen social cohesion and promote peaceful conflict resolution, while creating space for marginalized groups, especially women and youth, to assert their rights and obtain fair and timely outcomes.

What makes agency-focused initiatives people-centred and impactful?

- Ensure local ownership of community-based mechanisms through the early and ongoing input and participation of community members, local authorities, civil society, and vulnerable groups.
- Invest in sustained capacity building and mentoring for community paralegals, mediators, and other local actors to develop the skills, knowledge, and leadership capacities that persist beyond the life of a project.
- Build from existing local or indigenous structures where relevant, recognizing and strengthening trusted, context-appropriate community mechanisms to enhance legitimacy and avoid duplication. Strengthen referral pathways to formal institutions to improve access to justice and reinforce the legitimacy and accountability of both systems.
- Plan for and support the formalization of community-based mechanisms through standardized ways of working and integration with local or national institutions and legal frameworks to promote long-term sustainability and the potential for scaling.
- Enable broad inclusion and accessibility, particularly for women, youth and other marginalized groups, by building trust between stakeholders and actively addressing social and institutional barriers to the meaningful participation and leadership of traditionally excluded groups in justice and dispute resolution.

Examples | **Ethiopia** | **Malawi** | **Yemen**

In Ethiopia, revitalized local peace forums in the Amhara region have helped address blood feuds that displaced families, disrupted schooling and prevented farmers from accessing their land. Composed of elders, religious leaders, youth and local officials, the forums focus on forgiveness and healing, contributing to a sharp drop in revenge killings—from 159 in 2022–23 to just five in 2023–24. The process has also reduced trauma, restored dignity and expanded community participation, including by women and youth. A government-facilitated compensation mechanism, coordinated with religious leaders, elders and peace committees, enabled perpetrators to provide restitution to affected families. This combination of local justice and reparative processes, local support, and government coordination has allowed affected families to return home, children to resume schooling and farmers to restart their livelihoods. This has helped to break cycles of violence and strengthen resilience within affected communities.

In Malawi, village mediators empowered to resolve minor civil and criminal cases through ADR have supported community stability and helped reduce congestion in detention facilities. While serious cases are referred to the police, the mediators resolved over 50,000 local disputes in just two years. This grassroots approach not only improved access to justice but also laid the groundwork for more inclusive national peacebuilding strategies. It contributed to the establishment of the Malawi Peace and Unity Commission, created under the 2022 Peace and Unity Act to promote unity, cohesion, and conflict prevention and resolution. The experience illustrates how locally grounded initiatives can influence and shape broader institutional reform.

In Yemen, community mediation committees have increased citizens' willingness to cooperate with police and justice sector institutions and to resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner. Collaboration between the committees and local police to help resolve minor family and financial disputes resulted in a significant drop in pre-trial detention rates. Joint trainings between police, prosecutors, judges and communities have improved communication and coordination. Women committee members support women to access police stations, prosecution offices and courts. Institutionalization of the committees through standard operating procedures and designated workspaces at the Governor's Office and District Offices is supporting the sustainability and scalability of the model. (See UNDP, Final Evaluation Report, Promoting Inclusive Access to Justice in Yemen [PIAJY] Project, UNDP Yemen Country Office [November 2024], Finding 6.)

Box 27: **Insider mediation for people-centred justice and security**

Insider mediation is a peacebuilding and conflict prevention approach that empowers trusted, locally rooted change-makers to mediate, prevent and resolve disputes within their own communities. These insider mediators typically have long-standing relationships with those involved in the conflict and possess both local legitimacy and influence. They serve as connectors, conveners and early warning actors, helping to build trust across all levels of society.

Insider mediators may act independently or operate as part of more formalized Infrastructures for peace, such as local peace committees, commissions or task forces. They work on a wide range of thematic issues, including peace processes, natural resource-related conflicts, electoral violence, social cohesion and religious and faith-based issues. UNDP and its partners provide support through capacity building, peer exchange and accompaniment to strengthen their skills for sustained and adaptive engagement.

By fostering inclusive dialogue and supporting communities to articulate grievances, resolve disputes, and collectively address drivers of exclusion and insecurity, insider mediation can advance people-centred justice and security grounded in human rights principles such as participation, equality and accountability.

In Timor Leste, an Early Warning, Early Response System is sustained by a network of local volunteers trained to monitor and report on local conflict dynamics in their community. Mediation training has enabled the volunteers to respond to localized violent incidents through customary dispute resolution mechanisms. Through direct engagement with local security and justice providers, they help ensure that responses comply with human rights standards.

UNDP, *Engaging with Insider Mediators: Sustaining Peace in an Age of Turbulence—Guidance Note 2.0* (2020).

A.4 Access

At the heart of the people-centred approach is the principle that all people, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized, should have access to quality, accountable and trusted justice and security services that help prevent or respond to harm and deliver fair outcomes.

The approach recognizes that access to justice and access to security are distinct but closely interconnected:

- **Access to security** focuses on protection from harm. It refers to people's ability to feel safe, protected, and fairly treated, and to have reliable avenues to prevent and respond to threats, whether those are violence, harassment or broader forms of insecurity.
- **Access to justice** focuses on redress and resolution. It is about having the ability to seek and obtain a fair resolution when harm or rights violations occur, in ways that are affordable, timely, equitable, and uphold people's dignity and rights.

In practice, the two often intersect, particularly in situations involving violence, injustice or exclusion. The people-centred approach addresses both, grounded in people's experiences, rights, and expectations of justice and security actors and systems.

Access is not only about physical or geographical access to services such as a police station, legal aid office or community safety forum. It also depends on whether people can afford to seek help, whether they know their rights and understand how to navigate the system, and whether they trust the system and believe they will be treated fairly and receive a just outcome.

Access refers to the full array of services, actors and mechanisms that people turn to in any context to resolve their problems or seek safety, including State, non-State and hybrid institutions, actors and mechanisms at the national, subnational and community levels.

Access is about fair processes and outcomes. In a people-centred approach, access to justice and security is fundamentally about the quality of the outcome people achieve, not just about the availability of services or institutions.

Access to justice and security is not just about the availability of services or institutions, but about what people experience when they seek help. This includes whether they receive a fair outcome that resolves their problem and protects their rights, and whether the process itself is fair, impartial, respectful and accountable. These procedural fairness elements shape whether people see justice and security actors as legitimate and trustworthy.

The people-centred approach emphasizes the importance of addressing "everyday" justice problems, including civil, administrative and criminal issues such as land disputes, debt, family conflicts, housing, employment or exposure to violence. These problems are often manifestations of rights violations, and can directly affect people's dignity, livelihoods and well-being. They also disproportionately impact those who are already vulnerable or marginalized. When left unresolved, they can deepen exclusion, fuel conflict and erode trust in institutions and the State.

People-centred support must focus not only on whether a person received a service but also on the extent to which the service helped them to resolve a problem and how that then contributed to improvements in their lives.

Finally, access reflects how all the other dimensions in this section function in practice. People are more likely to seek justice or security when they feel included, empowered, informed and respected, and when systems are service-oriented, accountable and fair. For this reason, access is a cross-cutting concern and is a key indicator of whether people-centred systems are truly working.

Supporting ADR and legal aid

ADR and legal aid are two practical entry points that are commonly used to strengthen access to justice and security. UNDP's support in these areas typically focuses not only on strengthening these mechanisms but also on creating enabling environments for their legitimacy, sustainability and impact. Institutionalizing or formalizing effective community-based mechanisms, such as paralegal networks, mediation committees or community security platforms, can expand their reach, improve coordination with formal institutions and support alignment with human rights standards across broader justice and security systems (see the Yemen example). However, in contexts of low trust, premature or poorly managed formalization may undermine the autonomy, responsiveness or perceived legitimacy of community mechanisms. Community-based mechanisms and systems should not be absorbed in a way that erodes their responsiveness to local needs. The goal is not to subjugate, replace or override

non-State or hybrid systems, including customary and indigenous systems, but to strengthen their fairness, accessibility and accountability—for example, through government regulatory frameworks.

The focus should remain on how best to enable a range of trusted pathways to justice and safety that are accountable, rights-based and responsive to people's needs.

ADR and legal aid support is not limited to "justice" programming, but can occur in programmes such as stabilization, social cohesion and peacebuilding. Teams should be alert to and seek out synergies with other programming areas to ensure people are provided with trusted, legitimate and fair pathways to seek justice and security.

Example | **Nigeria**

In the northeast of Nigeria, UNDP's stabilization programme partnered with the bar association to train community stabilization committee members as community paralegals. This empowered them to actively engage with the police, local government representatives and other institutions to help solve people's justice problems. This engagement meant they could refer more complicated and serious cases to the bar association for legal assistance and representation, if necessary.

Supporting ADR mechanisms

ADR mechanisms, such as community mediation committees, customary justice forums and local peace committees, are often the most accessible avenues for people seeking to address problems, especially where formal pathways are weak or absent. Examples from across UNDP's work, including in Yemen, Ethiopia and Somalia (see the examples above in the sections on Participation and Agency), show how ADR can resolve local disputes affordably, quickly and in ways that are perceived as legitimate and fair, and can do so even in the most politically constrained environments.

In Syria and Myanmar, UNDP has implemented the Collaborative Dispute Resolution (CDR) model to help address unresolved disputes that contribute to community instability.

Examples | **Syria** | **Myanmar**

In Syria, the CDR model design was informed by research into traditional mediation practices and participatory consultations with community representatives, justice professionals, local networks and UNDP field staff to ensure it was culturally appropriate and responsive to local needs. It primarily addressed housing, land and property (HLP), inheritance, and family matters. Committees were composed of volunteers nominated by communities for their reputations as trusted, neutral and fair mediators. Each committee is paired with a Syrian lawyer who ensures compliance with national laws and prepares written records of mediated agreements, which are registered with relevant government entities. This hybrid model combines community trust with legal expertise, strengthening legitimacy and long-term sustainability.

In Myanmar, HLP issues arising before and following the military coup, including land grabs, destruction of property and unchecked exploitation of natural resources by State and private actors, contributed to displacement and persistent insecurity within communities. These issues disproportionately impacted women and girls. Without access to formal land governance systems to resolve land related problems, communities are increasingly relying on largely male-dominated customary systems and the role of village leaders. At the same time, CSOs faced challenges and increased restrictions on their ability to operate. To address these challenges, UNDP empowered community leaders and CSOs to provide gender-sensitive CDR assistance on HLP and family matters, ensuring community access to fair justice outcomes. For CSOs, pivoting their legal aid work in this way, coupled with support from UNDP to build the capacities and capabilities to manage the risk environment, has strengthened their resilience and enabled them to continue operating in a highly constrained context. (See UNDP, Myanmar: *Lesson Learnt—Interim Protection of Housing, Land and Property Rights after the 2021 Military Takeover* [June 2024]).

In other contexts where governments are committed to expanding access to justice, community-based mechanisms have been integrated into formal justice and governance systems, while retaining their unique community-based character:

Example | **Bangladesh**

In Bangladesh, village courts are a quasi-judicial local dispute resolution mechanisms that resolves minor civil and criminal dispute swiftly, affordably and fairly. Recognized in law, and delivering legally binding and enforceable decisions, they operate at the lowest tier of government, called the Union Parishad. The courts are designed to remove barriers to access by having extremely low fees and not permitting parties to have a lawyer. User satisfaction is consistently high, and awareness of the justice mechanism increased dramatically, from 9 percent in 2017 to 90 percent in 2021. The village courts have strengthened the capacity of the local authorities to respond to the needs of local communities. Support at the highest political levels and cost-sharing arrangements are helping in the expansion of village courts to over four thousand Union Parishads nationwide.

Supporting legal aid

UNDP has significant experience supporting legal aid to expand access to justice and protect vulnerable and marginalized people from harm. As justice needs rise and resources are constrained, countries are increasingly adopting a hybrid model of legal aid delivery that integrates State institutions, private sector actors (e.g., professional associations and law firms), civil society (e.g., university law clinics and CSOs), and non-lawyers (e.g., community organizers and paralegals) to expand access and enable sustainability.

UNDP's support to legal aid includes:

- Working with civil society, bar associations and other non-State legal aid providers (such as paralegals and university law clinics) to expand access and strengthen the quality, availability and responsiveness of services.
- Partnering with governments to develop inclusive legal and policy frameworks.
- Strengthening institutions to become more responsive, accessible and service-oriented (see Part B: Engaging the State and its institutions, Service orientation).

Partnerships with civil society actors are especially impactful when UNDP invests in their capacity development and reinforces their role as a key actor within a State's legal aid system. This includes enabling CSO participation in national discussions and planning processes for people-centred access to justice and rule of law reforms.

Examples | **Nepal** | **Lebanon**

In Nepal, UNDP supports the government to implement the Integrated Legal Aid Policy 2076, which brings together government institutions, the judiciary, bar associations and civil society to deliver accessible socio-legal aid services throughout the country.

In Lebanon, a Ministry of Justice–led effort to develop a national legal aid system is based on evidence from four UNDP-supported pilot legal aid service delivery models: a bar association–operated model; the local government-NGO–operated model; the university legal clinic model; and the NGO-operated prison-based model. By partnering with non-State actors and harnessing innovations such as mobile legal aid services and community paralegals, the models have shown how comprehensive legal aid can flexibly and cost-effectively meet the diverse justice needs of Lebanon's most vulnerable populations. The flexibility of the models allowed for tailored, locally relevant approaches to justice delivery in vulnerable communities and emphasizes the importance of focusing on function (ensuring access to justice for the most vulnerable) over form (adopting a uniform delivery model). (See UNDP Lebanon, "Advancing Justice in Lebanon: The Case for Greater Investment in Legal Aid" [draft report, June 2025])

Programming tips for people-centred legal aid support:

- Focus data collection and analysis on the impact of legal aid services for people and communities. Did the client feel they received fair treatment and a just outcome? Did resolution of their justice problem lead to tangible improvements in their lives?
- Intentionally use legal aid data that reveals bottlenecks, gaps, and legal or systemic barriers to justice based on people's actual experiences to inform evidence-based people-centred justice sector reforms.
- Support governments to embrace legal aid as a tool for advancing justice, social protection and poverty reduction agendas. Legal aid protects vulnerable and marginalized people from eviction and violence, enables access to essential public services, and supports economic empowerment (e.g., by protecting labour rights or enabling women to access alimony and inheritance rights).
- Support capacity building for legal aid CSOs and reinforce their role as key actors in national discussions and policymaking for access to justice
- Identify opportunities to link ADR and legal aid services to other programming areas, including stabilization and early recovery, environment, and Business and Human Rights to ensure vulnerable people have access to fair dispute resolution mechanisms that protect their rights.

What makes access-related interventions people-centred and impactful?

- Interventions are shaped by the justice and security problems people actually face, with success measured by whether those problems were resolved fairly, safely and sustainably, not just by whether services were delivered.
- Programming addresses specific barriers to access such as geography, cost, literacy, gender, displacement or discrimination, and is tailored to the needs of women, displaced persons and other vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- Interventions work with existing community-based and hybrid mechanisms that people already rely on, while supporting those mechanisms to become more inclusive, accountable and rights-based.
- Community-based mechanisms are strengthened to offer legitimate, effective and fair options for resolving everyday problems, especially where formal mechanisms are inaccessible or distrusted.
- Interventions recognize that many justice problems are civil or administrative in nature and often require support to access services such as health, social protection, housing or legal identity.

UNDP, *Accessing Justice: Legal Aid in Central Asia and the South Caucasus* (2013).
UNDP, *Legal Aid Service Provision: A Guide to Programming in Africa* (2016).
UNDP and UNODC, *Early Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Processes Handbook* (2014).
UNDP and UNODC, *Global Study on Legal Aid* (2017).

A.5 Accountability

Accountability is a core principle of the people-centred justice and security approach and a necessary condition for systems that are accessible, equitable, effective, and responsive to people's rights, needs and expectations. It is also a fundamental pillar of the rule of law. In any just society, laws must apply equally to all, meaning that individuals, institutions and authorities are held accountable for their actions, regardless of their status or affiliation. Where rights are violated or harm is caused, there must be mechanisms in place to ensure redress, sanction or remedy, whether through formal or informal justice systems.

UN Security Council, *The Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post-conflict Societies, Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2004/616, 23 August 2004, p. 4.

There are multiple dimensions to accountability within the people-centred approach.

At the foundational level, the approach builds on the HRBA, which defines accountability in terms of the relationship between rights holders (people) and duty bearers (primarily the State), and the obligation of the State to respect, protect and fulfil rights.

See UNDP's *Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) Toolkit*, "Accountability," p. 49.

At the systemic level, the approach goes beyond whether rights are protected in law and by formal institutions to examine ***how*** people experience justice and security in practice, and the outcomes they receive. It focuses on whether systems are accessible, trustworthy, and capable of helping people to resolve their problems safely and fairly. This requires understanding how power is exercised and whether power holders (State, non-State and hybrid actors) act in ways that are transparent, consistent, and uphold people's rights and their dignity.

See **Section 4.6** for more on power analysis.

Accountability is therefore not only legal and institutional but also relational. It is shaped by the quality of interaction between people and justice and security actors. This includes whether people, especially the most vulnerable or excluded, can participate in processes, have their concerns heard, and trust formal or informal actors and institutions to respond in a way that is transparent, fair and just.

Accountability underpins the legitimacy and perceived trustworthiness of justice and security actors, which in turn affects whether people engage or avoid them.

In many contexts, people access justice or security through a range of State, non-State and hybrid actors. These actors may derive legitimacy from community trust, tradition or legal recognition, but their accountability relationships can shift over time. A community defence group formed by and accountable to a community for daily security may, over time, align with political, military or State actors, reducing its responsiveness and accountability to local needs. People-centred programming must constantly analyse these power dynamics and adapt accordingly to ensure interventions support mechanisms that are accountable, locally legitimate, and responsive to people's rights and needs.

The people-centred approach recognizes that accountability is not the responsibility of any single institution. It must be supported through a combination of political and institutional leadership, internal accountability structures, independent oversight, and public participation. Political commitment, civil society engagement, grievance mechanisms and user feedback systems all play complementary roles in making justice and security systems fairer and more responsive. By reinforcing these different layers, programming can identify where accountability is weak, where it is shifting, and how it can be strengthened at national, subnational, and community levels.

The previously discussed dimensions of participation, inclusion and agency are essential for enabling people to articulate their demands, raise concerns, and hold justice and security institutions to account through co-design, feedback systems and regular dialogue mechanisms. These interventions focus on ensuring institutions are answerable not only to legal frameworks but also to people's real problems,

expectations and outcomes. They aim to ensure that individuals can raise concerns safely and that their feedback results in fair and timely responses. For example:

- **Community policing forums** enable community members, CSOs and officials to collaborate to monitor police performance, share feedback and guide policing priorities. This fosters trust, enhances transparency and embeds community oversight into everyday policing. See the example of Local Prevention and Security Boards in Türkiye.
- **Local safety platforms** composed of police, community leaders, youth, women's groups and local authorities that co-develop safety plans give communities direct and institutionalized influence over public safety decision-making and foster accountability through sustained engagement.
- **Court user committees** involving court users (e.g., litigants, victims and community members), legal professionals, court staff and civil society can identify service gaps, raise them directly with court leadership and local authorities, and co-create solutions for improved court processes. Such forums create an accountability loop for users to voice needs directly into reform planning and court operations. See the example of court user committees in Kenya.
- **Civil society-led court monitoring** programmes that monitor court cases and gather user perceptions can directly inform court processes, enhancing transparency, accountability, and responsiveness of the courts to people's experiences of and actual needs when seeking justice. See the examples of Sierra Leone and Palestine.

What makes accountability-related interventions people-centred and impactful?

- Interventions create safe, structured and direct ways for people, especially those who are often excluded, to raise concerns, provide feedback, and influence justice and security systems.
- Accountability mechanisms are designed to be inclusive, with deliberate representation of women, youth, displaced people, people with disabilities and minority communities to reflect the diversity of those served by the system.
- Programming is grounded in a contextual understanding of how power operates and how accountability relationships shift over time to ensure that power holders are answerable to the people they serve and that actions are constrained by principles of fairness, transparency and human rights.
- Support is given to legitimate community-based mechanisms, such as mediation committees, police-community forums, or court user groups, that are linked to formal institutions in ways that strengthen mutual accountability.
- Interventions focus on outcomes, including whether people receive just resolution to their problems and the quality of services improve. Effectiveness is measured by improvements in people's experiences of justice and security.

PART B

PEOPLE-CENTRED PROGRAMMING: ENGAGING THE STATE AND ITS INSTITUTIONS

This part focuses on how to support institutional change from within. It begins by exploring what makes justice and security institutions trusted and legitimate, and how institutional leadership, incentives and culture influence behaviour and outcomes.

Lessons from UNDP's long-standing experience in institutional support highlight what enables or hinders meaningful transformation. Based on these insights, Part B introduces the People-Centred Capacity and Integrity Framework (PCCIF), a practical tool for identifying strategic entry points and diagnosing where change is needed in justice and security institutions.

With the PCCIF as a foundation, Part B sets out four interrelated dimensions of change that underpin people-centred institutional transformation:

1. **Shifting institutional mindsets and behaviour**
2. **Strengthening service orientation**
3. **Embedding people-oriented practices in systems**
4. **Accountability and oversight**

Each section offers programming insights, examples and a checklist to support people-centred, impactful and sustainable interventions.

B.1 Laying the foundation for institutional transformation

State institutions play a critical role in delivering justice and security services. Yet for institutions to be effective and legitimate, they must also be responsive, trustworthy and accountable.

In the people-centred approach, institutional reform is shaped not only by formal mandates or institutional perspectives but also by how people actually experience justice and security institutions. Programming is guided by practical questions: When, how and why (or why not) do people seek help from institutions? What is their experience when they do? What is the quality and fairness of the service and the outcome they receive?

The goal is to support institutions to become more accessible, responsive, legitimate and accountable, delivering quality justice and security services that protect the rights of all people, especially those who are vulnerable, marginalized or at risk of being left behind. The approach is grounded in understanding how institutional actions can strengthen (or undermine) the relationship of trust between the State and society, and how that trust can be built through changes in institutional behaviour and in the actions of individuals within them.

Building trusted and legitimate institutions

The perceived and actual legitimacy of justice and security institutions does not rest solely on legal mandates. It is also shaped by how these institutions operate in practice—whether they uphold people's rights, deliver services fairly and effectively, and are accountable to the people they serve. Institutions earn trust and legitimacy when they act with integrity, operate transparently, and treat all people with dignity and respect. This depends not only on laws but also on how institutions behave and how people experience their actions.

Legal frameworks are essential for ensuring accountability and consistency in institutional actions. As outlined in UNDP's Guidance Note for Assessing Rule of Law in Public Administration, decisions by public authorities must have a legal basis, and agencies must act in accordance with the law. Yet, legal frameworks alone do not ensure legitimacy. What matters is how laws are implemented and whether institutions are seen as trustworthy by communities.

Example | **Iraq**

In Iraq, UNDP's approach to people-centred policing combines national-level legal and policy reform with changes in policing management and practice, and community engagement. By strengthening the Ministry of Interior's capacity to guide reforms, piloting new people-centred practices through the model police station initiative, and linking national strategy with local implementation, policing has become more service-oriented and aligned with the needs of communities.

Public perceptions of justice and security institutions are shaped by daily interactions (see Box 28). Trust is influenced by whether people feel their rights are protected, they are treated fairly, they are given a voice, and decisions are made transparently and fairly. These perceptions affect whether people cooperate with institutions, accept their authority and engage with the State more broadly.

Box 28: **Building trust by embedding procedural justice in policing**

Procedural justice refers to the fairness of the processes through which decisions are made and authority is exercised. Research shows that people are more likely to comply with the law and cooperate with police when they perceive police procedures as fair, respectful and impartial. Embedding procedural justice in daily policing practices and culture is essential for building public trust and strengthening police-community relations. This can include integrating procedural justice principles into training, performance evaluation and supervision systems—for example, assessing whether officers use respectful communication, explain decisions clearly and provide people with an opportunity to be heard.

Source: Tom Tyler, Jeffrey Fagan and Amanda Geller, "*Street Stops and Police Legitimacy: Teachable Moments in Young Urban Men's Legal Socialization*", *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies* vol. 11 (2014).

Institutional change comes from within

Effective people-centred justice and security programming invests in building public trust, strengthening accountability, and promoting a service-oriented approach. Institutions must be not only technically capable but also inclusive, fair and trusted. Building this trust and legitimacy requires institutional change that goes beyond technical performance. It requires engaging personnel within institutions in a process of behaviour, mindset and organizational change. This means more than technical training. It calls for attention to motivations, values, relationships and the internal dynamics that shape institutional behaviour (see Box 29). Sustainable change must be led by those within institutions.

> **"To bring justice to people we have to change ourselves."**
>
> Milorad Markovic, Supreme State Prosecutor for Montenegro, UNDP Rule of Law Annual Meeting 10 June 2025.

See **Section B.2** for more on shifting institutional mindsets and behaviour.

John P. Kotter, "Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail," Harvard Business Review, vol. 73 (January 2007).
UNDP, *Capacity Development: A UNDP Primer* (2006).
UNDP, *Capacity Diagnostics Methodology: User's Guide* (2006).
UNDP, Institutional Reform and Change Management: Managing Change in Public Sector Organisations (2006).

Box 29: **Supporting institutional change in the people-centred approach**

Supporting justice and security institutions is fundamentally about managing change within complex organizations. UNDP's capacity development approach provides the foundation, focusing on strengthening both organizational and individual integrity and capacity, and supporting personnel at all levels to lead and sustain institutional transformation. People-centred programming builds on this by emphasizing how institutions relate to the people they serve—how behaviour, incentives and internal culture shape trust, inclusion and public confidence.

Institutional change is a long-term process. It is not only technical but also adaptive. It involves shifts in leadership, incentives, organizational culture, internal dynamics and informal norms. It also requires attention to how laws, systems and processes are structured, how knowledge is created and shared, and how accountability to people is ensured. These shifts need to be actively managed through change management strategies that combine technical reforms with behavioural and cultural change, enabling institutions to perform more effectively, adapt to change and deliver quality services to people.

Practical strategies for people-centred institutional change include:

- **Institutional arrangements**: Clarify mandates, align incentives with service orientation, streamline procedures, strengthen partnerships, and embed monitoring and evaluation that reflects people's needs and feedback.
- **Leadership**: Build leadership capacity at all levels, cultivate reform-minded champions, manage resistance and support coalitions for change. Coaching and mentoring help leaders and personnel adapt to new ways of working and sustain momentum.
- **Knowledge and learning**: Invest in continuous learning, mentoring and peer exchange; support reflective practice and knowledge sharing within and across institutions; and create safe spaces for personnel to discuss challenges and adapt approaches.
- **Accountability and integrity**: Reinforce oversight and internal integrity systems, promote transparency, and establish mechanisms for community feedback and participation in institutional performance.

Together, these strategies foster internal ownership and accountability, and help shift institutional culture and behaviour in ways that improve public trust and service quality

Programming tips for managing resistance in institutional change:

Resistance is a normal and often predictable part of institutional change. It often reflects concerns about losing control, competence or status within an institution. Change may threaten familiar ways of working, expose gaps in skills or capacity, or disrupt informal power dynamics. Effective programming identifies potential sources of resistance early and engages them constructively. This means:

- Understanding institutional dynamics through readiness assessments, stakeholder analysis and political economy insights.
- Working with reform-minded staff to design practical, achievable changes and support internal leadership for reform.
- Investing in skills, tools and mentoring to help personnel adapt and feel equipped to succeed in a new way of working.
- Framing change in terms of institutional purpose and public service, linking reform to professional integrity, trust and improved outcomes for the people institutions serve.

Managing resistance is part of managing change. People-centred reform requires attention not only to technical systems but also to the incentives, relationships and motivations that shape institutional behaviour.

Lessons from UNDP's experience with institutional change

UNDP's experience shows that the relationship between State and society is shaped as much by how institutions behave as by how they are designed. Through long-term, trust-based partnerships, UNDP has supported institutional change that improves justice and security service delivery. Evaluations since the mid-2000s highlight important progress in this area:

- **Long-term engagement produces results**. The most visible improvements in capacity and performance occur where UNDP has maintained sustained engagement and been adaptive. In Timor-Leste, years of support enabled a shift from institution-specific projects to sector-wide assistance. Support to the Public Defender's Office led to its legal recognition and government funding for free legal services, laying a foundation for sustainability. In Tajikistan, UNDP's sustained support to the legal aid system began in 2015. By 2024, the government had assumed full responsibility for funding the system.
- **Integrated approaches support systems change**. UNDP has evolved from infrastructure-heavy, siloed interventions to more integrated, people-centred approaches. In Nigeria and Mozambique, area-based stabilization approaches integrate justice, security and human rights with peacebuilding and reconstruction.
- **From ad hoc to institutionalized legal aid**. UNDP's legal aid support places support to individual providers within broader efforts to institutionalize legal aid systems that address everyday justice needs. In Kyrgyzstan, legal aid was expanded to cover family, land and inheritance issues, and integrated within national systems through the leadership of the Ministry of Justice.

Despite this progress, some challenges persist. See Box 30 for a summary of common obstacles to institutional change. The people-centred approach responds to these challenges by promoting participatory and sustained multistakeholder engagement, evidence-based adaptation, and politically informed support.

See **Section 5.2** for tips on co-creation and participatory design.
See **Section 5.7** for building an MEL system.
See **Section 4.6** for guidance on political economy analysis.

Box 30: **Common challenges in supporting institutional change**

UNDP's experience highlights several factors that can undermine sustainability or impact:

- **Sustainability**. In fragile contexts or where national ownership is weak, reforms often falter. Sustainability requires early and continuous engagement with government, civil society and communities; alignment with national development plans and sector strategies; and upfront planning for financial sustainability (including securing national budget allocations) and capacity transfer (skills, systems and leadership).
- **Results measurement**. People-centred metrics such as case resolution times, user satisfaction and dispute outcomes remain underused. Strengthened measurement involves embedding monitoring in national strategies and sector plans; undertaking regular user surveys and justice needs assessments; and investing in institutional capacity for data collection, analysis and use, including leveraging digital tools (such as electronic case management systems) and adopting people-centred outcome indicators.
- **Adaptation to changing political realities**. Shifting political priorities, leadership turnover and inconsistent government commitment can disrupt reform processes. Regular political economy analysis is essential for adaptive and politically aware programming that grounds technical solutions in political realities.

These insights point to the need for strategic support that strengthens both the internal workings of institutions and their relationship with the people they serve. The People-Centred Capacity and Integrity Framework (PCCIF) provides a practical tool for assessing institutions and identifying priority areas for people-centred change.

The People-Centred Capacity and Integrity Framework: A tool for supporting people-centred institutional change

Supporting institutions to become more people-centred requires a structured way to assess what needs to change, both internally and in how they serve the public. The PCCIF provides this structure. It helps teams to identify strengths; pinpoint gaps across skills, systems, behaviours and cultures; and find entry points for strategic, people-centred support.

See **Annex 6** for a detailed description of the PCCIF.

The tool was developed by Leanne McKay and builds on the original Capacity and Integrity Framework in UNDP's Vetting Public Employees in Post-Conflict Settings: Operational Guidelines (2006). It adapts that tool to focus on strengthening institutions in ways that are inclusive, accountable and grounded in people's rights, needs and expectations.

The framework considers two core dimensions:

- The individuals who work within an institution
- The organization as a whole.

It also considers two qualities that are essential across both dimensions:

- Capacity: the ability to do the job well
- Integrity: the ability to do the job fairly and in line with human rights and rule of law

As shown in Diagram 6, the framework creates four fields.

Diagram 6: **The People-Centred Capacity and Integrity Framework**

The PCCIF is designed to support strategic, people-centred interventions. It helps teams to:

- Diagnose institutional strengths and weaknesses, and critical areas for change
- Facilitate dialogue with stakeholders—such as institutional personnel, government actors, civil society, community members/end-users and development partners—around opportunities for change
- Identify entry points and design practical, people-centred interventions
- Measure progress in implementation

It promotes a holistic view of institutional transformation by addressing both the technical and public-facing sides of justice and security systems, so they work better for the people they serve.

The PCCIF also supports sequencing by helping teams identify what to prioritise first—whether that is securing leadership support, strengthening internal systems or building frontline capabilities. By revealing where gaps are most acute or where momentum already exists, it helps teams sequence interventions realistically and strategically.

See **Box 31** for tips on sequencing institutional support.

The tool can be applied during institutional assessments, strategy development or stakeholder dialogue to guide reflection on capacity and integrity. It complements the Six Dimensions Tool and participatory co-design methods.

See **Section 5.3.2** for the Six Dimensions Tool.

Box 31: **Tips for sequencing institutional support**

Practitioners often ask, “Where do we begin?” The PCCIF provides a structured starting point. It helps teams identify critical gaps in capacity and integrity before jumping to solutions. But sequencing still matters.

Some practical tips include:

- **Start with a shared diagnosis**. Use tools such as the PCCIF to jointly assess strengths, challenges and entry points with institutional counterparts. A shared understanding builds support and ensures interventions are relevant and aligned with institutional priorities.
- **Secure leadership and ownership early**. Change is more likely to take root when it is supported by senior leaders who can authorize adjustments to structures, roles or behaviours.
- **Start where there is momentum**. Identify and build around areas with existing interest or pressure for change. Early, visible improvements (e.g., court user information desks or professional development opportunities for staff) can generate early wins, demonstrate practical value and build momentum for deeper reform.
- **Sequence support over time**. Prioritize what is feasible and meaningful in the short term while laying the foundation for longer-term shifts in policy, systems or behaviour. Focus on trust-building and strengthening internal champions for sustained change.
- **Do not assume linear progress**. Be prepared to revisit earlier steps as conditions shift or resistance emerges.

The PCCIF encourages teams to think beyond technical fixes and approach institutional transformation as a long-term, relational process. It supports the design of institutional support that is politically aware, behaviourally informed, and centred on relationships of trust between institutions and people. The following four sections build on this foundation by examining the key dimensions of people-centred institutional transformation.

B.2 Shifting institutional mindsets and behaviour

Changing mindsets and behaviour is generally understood as essential for institutional transformation, yet it remains difficult to define and support in programming. This section explores how practical strategies—such as reforming training systems, mentoring, leadership engagement, change management, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and performance feedback—can come together to shift institutional culture and behaviour. A summary checklist at the end highlights what makes mindset-change interventions impactful and people-centred in practice.

Shifting mindsets and behaviour is a foundational step in people-centred institutional change. It means moving beyond technical skills to reshape the values, beliefs and attitudes that guide how people within institutions think and act. It emphasizes that institutional transformation must start with individuals and how they understand their roles, their relationship with the public, and their own attitudes towards service, rights, and accountability. While structural reforms are important, they rarely succeed without corresponding changes in individual mindsets and internal incentives.

UNDP supports mindset-driven change by equipping people in institutions with the skills, motivation and enabling conditions to work in more inclusive, accountable and service-oriented ways. For example, experience shows that support to reforming training architectures can be a powerful and strategic entry point for mindset and behavioural change within the police.

Training and study tours are widely used in institutional reform. Yet without a clear link to people's justice or security outcomes, they risk reinforcing institution-centred approaches. See Box 32 to test whether an initiative is truly people-centred.

Shifting mindsets and behaviours can also be catalysed through relational experiences, such as joint problem-solving, shared initiatives or changes in how institutions interact with users. These experiences can help reframe institutional roles, build trust and embed people-centred principles and practices within institutional culture. For example, UNDP's support to prison reform in several contexts demonstrates how engaging both staff and inmates can help shift institutional culture from punishment to rehabilitation. Initiatives such as hydroponic farming show how practical livelihood and food security interventions can serve as entry points for cultural transformation. Involving prison officers in training and the joint management of activities alongside detainees helps foster trust and mutual respect. In this way, rehabilitation becomes embedded not just in programming but also in institutional values and practices.

UNDP is increasingly integrating MHPSS into people-centred justice and security programming to enhance institutional resilience and strengthen the delivery of empathetic and responsive services. Trauma exposure is widespread among police officers, judges and civil servants, and moral injury can be significant (see Box 33). Without specialized support, this can lead to burnout, absenteeism and behaviours that undermine public trust. Through skills development, peer support and safe spaces, MHPSS interventions help identify and refer individuals with mental health conditions, reduce stress and fatigue, and foster greater empathy, which in turn strengthens professionalism and trust in service delivery.

Example | **Nigeria**

In Nigeria, a holistic approach to police training support has contributed to visible changes in individual attitudes and institutional culture. UNDP worked with the Nigeria Police Force to introduce modern, adult-oriented and experiential learning methods for recruit training. Police academy commandants and senior officials were sensitized to the new approach to secure leadership support; selected academies received infrastructure upgrades to improve the learning environment; and a cadre of over one thousand police trainer "change champions" were equipped to support the roll-out of this new training approach nationwide. Trainers reported a fundamental mindset shift about their role—from simply delivering information to actively supporting and coaching recruits to understand, apply and internalize what they learn. Recruits trained under the new model described how it reshaped their understanding of the role of police and directly improved their ability to deliver service-oriented policing.

Box 32: **Is this training intervention people-centred?**

If a training programme considers only what a judge or police officer wants to learn, without linking it to how it improves access to justice or security for communities, it is institution-centred, not people-centred.

A judicial training or study tour, for example, can be people-centred if:

- It responds to clear justice challenges experienced by users (e.g., case delay, lack of sensitivity to GBV survivors, barriers faced by people with disabilities).
- It is informed by data from legal needs assessments, court user surveys or community consultations.
- It is part of a broader effort to change both knowledge and practice within the courts.
- It focuses not only on technical skills but also on shifting mindsets and values through participatory methods such as roleplay, case studies and simulations that mirror real ethical or operational dilemmas, facilitated reflection, and site visits or community engagement.
- It includes mentoring and follow-up to support practical application and sustained change.
- Its success is measured by improvements in accessibility, fairness or trust in the justice process.

Not people-centred: A study tour for judges is organized at the request of the partner or donor, without evidence of why and how it will improve people's experience of justice. There is no follow-up after the tour and success is measured solely by participation numbers.

People-centred: A study tour is designed to help judges implement a new sexual offences bench book. The design of the tour is informed by consultations with justice users, lawyers and court staff and by data on courtroom practices. Follow-up support is provided to the judiciary to integrate learning into court procedures and monitor results in terms of improved justice outcomes for people.

Examples | **Ethiopia** | **Fiji** | **Ukraine** | **Tajjikistan** | **Nigeria**

In Ethiopia, MHPSS training for judiciary, police and local administration staff in conflict-affected regions has been integrated into UNDP's stabilization programming. The training increased awareness of how conflict and trauma affect communities, while helping officials recognize and manage the impact on their own well-being. It strengthened their capacity to deliver trauma-informed services, especially for survivors of GBV. In some locations, it led to post-training action plans agreed between police and communities that included establishing community security coordination mechanisms, promoting peace education in schools, strengthening community policing and establishing local early warning systems. Local officials described the support as a "gamechanger" for enabling the return of basic services to communities.

From Fiji to Ukraine, UNDP has supported MHPSS trainings for police officers covering topics such as stress and trauma management, post-traumatic stress disorder, vicarious trauma, burnout prevention, and self-regulation techniques. Participants gained practical tools to support their own well-being, assist colleagues and families, and provide sensitive and effective support to communities.

In Tajikistan, Supreme Court judges and Ministry of Justice staff received, for the first time, training on trauma-informed service delivery for GBV survivors. By deepening their understanding of trauma and its effects, judges were able to strengthen the quality and responsiveness of judicial services—ensuring they were not only legally sound but also compassionate and informed by the experiences of survivors.

In Nigeria, community engagement training for police and security personnel included modules on mental health, trauma response and conflict de-escalation. The training helped them to better understand not only the effect of the Boko Haram insurgency on local communities but also their own personal experiences of trauma so they could better serve those communities with empathy and professionalism.

Example | **Angola**

In Angola, UNDP supports the Ombudsperson's Office to improve justice service delivery by combining digital and MHPSS support. The installation of digital hearing rooms in 12 provinces expanded access to the only public office where citizens can report complaints about public services, from a corrupt official to the absence of a local school. Recognizing the emotional toll on staff, who often share the same conflict-affected experiences as the communities they serve, the programme also provided trauma resilience training. A group of Ombudsperson staff and trainers from the National School of Administration and Public Policy certified as community-led trauma resilience facilitators deliver cascade trainings to municipal and Ombudsperson's staff across the provinces.

Box 33: **MHPSS for people-centred justice and security**

For UNDP, MHPSS is a comprehensive approach that aims to protect and promote the psychosocial well-being of individuals and communities, and to prevent or treat mental health conditions, particularly in the context of development and peacebuilding efforts. It recognizes that conflict and crisis can cause not only trauma but also moral injury—the deep psychological distress that arises when individuals witness, participate in or fail to prevent actions that violate their moral or ethical values. This may lead to guilt shame, and a compromised sense of integrity.

MHPSS includes trauma-informed programming, which ensures that policies, services and systems are designed and delivered in ways that acknowledge the effects of both trauma and moral injury, promote healing, and prevent re-traumatization.

Source: UNDP, *Integrating Mental Health and Psychosocial Support into Peacebuilding: Guidance Note* (2022).

Programming tips for effective MHPSS engagement:

- **Strengthen internal resilience**. Supporting the psychosocial well-being of frontline personnel helps reduce burnout, absenteeism and retraumatizing behaviours. It also enhances empathy, professionalism and institutional trustworthiness.
- **Normalize open dialogue**. Create safe, supportive spaces for personnel—especially frontline and first responders—to speak openly about trauma, survivor guilt, and moral injury. Normalizing these conversations reduces stigma, encourages help-seeking and strengthens peer support networks.
- **Institutionalize trauma-informed practices**. Embed MHPSS into the design and delivery of justice and security services through policies, standard operating procedures, staff supervision and accountability frameworks. This includes adapting how cases are handled, how staff are supported, and how institutions respond to trauma and moral injury in communities and among their personnel.
- **Connect to wider support systems**. Effective trauma-informed programming links institutional efforts to broader MHPSS services for survivors, staff and communities. This layered approach recognizes that healing and resilience require coordinated, system-wide support.
- **Localize delivery**. Where possible, support national institutions, local trainers or peer-led networks to deliver MHPSS interventions. Locally anchored approaches are often more sustainable, context-sensitive and better trusted by those affected.

What makes mindset-change interventions people-centred and impactful?

- Interventions are based on evidence and understanding of the broader context, institutional culture, dynamics and behavioural norms that shape how justice and security actors behave.
- Training is integrated into broader strategies for institutional transformation. Mindset shifts are more likely to be sustained when reinforced by policies, standard operating procedures, infrastructure, leadership, supervision and accountability mechanisms such as regular performance assessments that promote and incentivize new ways of working.

- Change agents within institutions are supported to model new behaviours, influence peers and shift organizational norms from the inside out. Refresher training, peer networks, mentoring and ongoing leadership engagement are critical for reinforcing change over time.
- Monitoring and evaluation systems track changes in attitudes and behaviours over time, while feedback mechanisms (e.g., user surveys and interviews) help programmes adapt and reinforce progress. Interventions monitor for unintended consequences and adjust strategies to ensure that positive changes are sustained and risks of backsliding are addressed.

B.3 Strengthening service orientation

Service orientation reframes justice and security institutions not merely as rule enforcers, but as providers of fair, accessible and responsive services that meet people's everyday needs. It is grounded in the idea that justice and security are public goods and that institutions must be designed and resourced to serve all people, especially those traditionally excluded or underserved. Service orientation focuses on trust and legitimacy, which grow when people see that institutions are responsive to their everyday needs, treat them with dignity, and deliver outcomes that are fair, just, and timely. It is not just about what institutions do, but how they do it: with respect, accountability, and attention to the experience of those seeking justice and security services.

This shift requires more than technical reform. It calls for a transformation in how justice and security institutions function. As emphasized in the UNDP people-centred policy framework, service orientation demands moving beyond institutional *form* (laws, structures, procedures) to focus on their *function*, that is whether institutions are actually solving people's problems. It entails a shift away from elite-serving systems and towards inclusive, legitimate institutions embedded in communities. Service orientation is closely linked to the mindsets and behaviours of those working within institutions, as explored in the previous section, and often requires new capabilities and ways of working to sustain change.

See **Section B.2** for more on shifting mindsets and behaviour.

Service orientation is a core pillar of people-centred justice and security, central to building trust and ensuring institutions work for everyone. UNDP supports justice and security institutions to move beyond conventional models of service delivery by designing services that respond to how people actually experience and seek help to resolve their problems. Innovations that extend the reach of services to underserved areas and integrate services are essential for vulnerable and marginalized people navigating often intersecting legal and socio-economic challenges.

Examples | **Kazakhstan** | **Guinea-Bissau** | **Kyrgyz Republic**

In Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population and UNDP piloted an integrated service model based on the "one-stop shop" principle, bringing together multiple departmental services in a single location. Vulnerable families are supported by an interdepartmental team that works collaboratively to assess and respond to their needs across social assistance, education, health care and other essential services. The team includes specialists from housing, education, health, law enforcement and social protection sectors, and can involve justice actors when required.

In Guinea-Bissau, UNDP partnered with the Ministry of Justice to test mobile delivery of integrated civil registry and legal awareness services in remote areas. The services reached an average of 65 civil registration users per day, compared with just 6 at fixed points, and 488 legal aid seekers in one week, versus just 2 at the fixed legal aid desk. The success led the Ministry of Justice to commit to a nationwide roll-out of the mobile services, attracted new partners, and set the foundation for adaptation and improvements through digitalisation.

In the Kyrgyz Republic, the Ministry of Justice's Bus of Solidarity is a mobile service that provides free legal aid, raises legal awareness, and strengthens trust between government and remote communities.

Examples | **Argentina** | **Rwanda** | **Türkiye**

In Argentina, multidisciplinary teams of lawyers, social workers, doctors and psychologists travel to underserved communities to provide coordinated mobile legal and health services.

In Rwanda, through the One UN initiative and in partnership with the Rwanda National Police, UNDP supported the Isange One Stop Centre model. Attached to hospitals, the centres offer survivors of GBV and child abuse medical care, psychosocial support, legal aid and forensic services in one location. The model has led to increased reporting and improved coordination among service providers.

In Türkiye, the Ministry of Justice, the Turkish Bar Associations and UNDP are expanding Victims of Violence Support Centres across six provinces, offering women integrated access to legal and social services tailored to their needs.

UNDP supports the institutionalization of people-centred justice services by linking frontline service delivery with national policies, legal frameworks, and strategies for capacity development and financing to ensure sustainability and long-term impact.

UNDP supports investments in frontline police capacity and improved coordination across the justice sector as a foundation for more effective and people-centred policing. Reconfigured police spaces, such as model police stations, can transform how people experience safety and justice, and help embed cultural and behavioural shifts within police institutions, reinforcing a more responsive and accountable policing ethos. People-centred policing cannot be achieved by the police alone. It requires coordinated action across the entire justice chain to address systemic bottlenecks, protect people's rights and deliver fair outcomes.

Examples | **Colombia** | **Georgia** | **Mozambique** | **Sierra Leone** | **Somalia**

In Colombia, Justice Houses (Casas de Justicia) are one-stop centres for responding to people's justice needs, combining services such as legal aid, police, social workers and community development officers under one roof. They support access to justice and peaceful conflict resolution, and are a key part of Colombia's national strategy to transform the justice system by focusing on the needs of individuals, communities and territories.

In Georgia, UNDP partnered with the State Legal Aid Service to launch a mobile legal clinic delivering legal aid to conflict-affected and remote communities. Initially supported under a grant agreement, the initiative has continued independently since the partnership ended. The State Legal Aid Service fully operates and maintains the clinic without external donor support, providing legal consultations and awareness sessions to people in underserved areas.

From Mozambique and Sierra Leone to Somalia (Somaliland and Puntland) and beyond, UNDP's support to mobile courts has evolved through decades of experience. Evaluations show that where mobile court initiatives are judiciary-led or have strong institutional support, grounded in legal frameworks, and complemented by legal aid and capacity development, they can sustainably expand access to justice, increase trust, and strengthen links between formal and traditional justice systems to better protect vulnerable groups.

Examples | **Pakistan** | **Iraq** | **Fiji**

UNDP supports model police station initiatives in a range of contexts, including Pakistan, Iraq, Guinea-Bissau and Somalia. These models go beyond physical infrastructure support to embed new professional practices, community policing principles and inclusive service delivery.

- In Pakistan, 67 model police stations have supported significant improvements in management, accountability and gender responsiveness, including gender desks staffed by trained women officers, and facilities for women police personnel such as women's dormitories and day-care centres. These changes have strengthened community trust, improved access to services for women and vulnerable groups, and enhanced overall policing quality.
- In Iraq, model police stations demonstrated the feasibility of the government's commitment to transform the police into a service-oriented institution. UNDP, the Ministry of Interior, and the police co-designed an evidence-based blueprint for the model stations that addressed operational, structural and systemic barriers to people-centred policing. By establishing a policy–practice feedback loop that engaged the police, government and communities, the initiative catalysed organizational culture change and the reforms essential for people-centred policing.
- In Fiji, UNDP supported the establishment of the National Justice Coordination Committee, a unique platform that brings together police, prosecutors, legal aid, judiciary, corrections and the Ministry of Justice to collectively address justice system bottlenecks. The committee has tackled issues such as arbitrary detention and streamlining police charging processes, with a particular focus on protecting vulnerable groups. It championed the roll-out of video-recorded interviews to improve due process and enhance accountability across justice institutions. By fostering joint evidence-based problem-solving and shared responsibility, the initiative marked a significant shift towards a more coordinated, rights-based justice system rooted in people's experiences.

What makes service-oriented interventions people-centred and impactful?

- Initiatives are designed around people's needs and experiences, not institutional convenience. Location, staffing and physical space are planned to promote safety, dignity and accessibility, especially for women and marginalized groups.
- Initiatives are embedded in national strategies, legal frameworks and sector-wide reforms. This ensures they are not stand-alone pilots, but part of a coherent, long-term effort to strengthen people-centred justice and security institutions.
- National and subnational ownership, through leadership, budget allocations and cost-sharing, and institutional mandates, is essential for sustaining service delivery once donor support ends.
- People-centred service delivery is supported by coordinated action across justice, policing, prosecution, corrections and legal aid systems. Whole-of-system approaches help resolve bottlenecks, improve accountability, and deliver more consistent and just outcomes for people.
- Service improvements are accompanied by ongoing capacity-building, professional standards, and investment in infrastructure, staffing and management systems that reinforce quality and responsiveness.

B.4 Embedding people-centred practices in systems

People-centred practices are more impactful and sustainable when they are intentionally embedded within institutions and the broader justice and security system. Embedding means making people-centred practices the standard operating logic of justice and security institutions. This involves codifying them in strategies, laws, policies and procedures; aligning budgets, staffing and performance systems; supporting them through leadership and peer learning; and sustaining them through capacity-building, and feedback loops that support continuous improvement, such as monitoring data, community scorecards, user surveys and complaints mechanisms.

Box 34: **How data can drive people-centred institutional change**

Data is essential for designing people-centred institutional support that responds to people's needs and strengthens accountability. Across contexts, UNDP supports justice and security institutions to collect, analyse and use data to improve performance and service delivery.

In the Caribbean, a regional needs assessment used a rights-based and intersectional framework to identify system-wide bottlenecks and map the main barriers to access to justice. The analysis informed targeted recommendations for government and development partners for enhancing effective and people-centred administration of justice across nine countries.

In Sri Lanka, UNDP worked with justice institutions and civil society to improve the sector's ability to gather and use data. This included mapping the data systems of police, courts, prisons and other actors, and supporting the Ministry of Justice to use the findings to inform legislative and policy reform and evidence-driven resource allocation, strengthen SDG 16 monitoring, assist in sector performance measurement, and improve case management, coordination and oversight by parliament and justice institutions.

Tools such as UNDP's Judicial Integrity Self-Assessment Checklist also help courts identify weaknesses in integrity, transparency, and accountability, and guide institutional reform from within.

When embedded in institutional processes, data can enable better decision-making, support internal accountability, and strengthen the link between institutions and the people they serve.

While embedding can strengthen the resilience of people-centred practices, it is not a guaranteed solution. Contexts evolve, government capacity may be limited and political commitment can shift. But where efforts align with national people-centred visions or sector-wide strategies—such as Iraq's commitment to people-centred policing, Nepal's Integrated Legal Aid System, Colombia's national development plan (2022–2026) that incorporates human security and social justice, and the Kenyan judiciary's Blueprint for Social Transformation through Access to Justice 2023–2033—there is often stronger traction, ownership and potential for scale.

Embedding also requires attention to the broader ecosystem. People-centred justice is reinforced when formal and informal systems are integrated in ways that expand access and coherence, as seen in countries such as Bangladesh, and Somalia. Harmonizing processes and clarifying roles between State and community-based actors strengthens both institutional legitimacy and people's ability to navigate the system.

UNDP's experience shows that embedding people-centred change requires deliberate effort in five areas:

- **Translate promising practices into policy and law** Initiatives such as community policing or victim support centres are more likely to endure when integrated into national strategies, sector plans and legal frameworks that give them long-term mandates and legitimacy.
- **Align roles, budgets, and structures**. Practices must be reflected in job descriptions, staffing and operational budgets, and supported through supervision and performance management systems.
- **Institutionalize through standard operating procedures and tools**. Approaches such as trauma-informed services or gender-sensitive investigations should be incorporated into standard operating procedures, case management systems and digital tools to shape daily operations.
- **Build institutional memory**. Monitoring and capturing lessons learned and regular training helps sustain reforms across leadership transitions and staff turnover.
- **Create loops for continuous improvement**. Embedding is a constant process. User surveys, oversight mechanisms and community dialogues create feedback loops that support institutions to adapt and continuously learn how best to deliver people-centred services.

See **Section 5.7**: Building a monitoring, evaluation and learning system.

This systemic perspective reinforces a central tenet of the people-centred approach: **meaningful change comes not just from new ideas and innovations, but from how they are sustained, scaled and embedded across institutions over time.**

B.5 Ensuring accountability and oversight

People-centred justice and security require a strong rule of law culture in which officials and the public hold themselves and one another accountable. This requires a legitimate legal framework that is grounded in shared values and upholds, protects and fulfils the rights of all people.

UNDP's support for legislative frameworks is often embedded within broader governance and rule of law strategies and aligned with national development plans, constitutional mandates and international human rights standards. It includes direct assistance to constitution-making processes, drafting and revising laws, and supporting the creation of policies that underpin justice and security for all.

See **Section 4.5**: Understanding people's justice and security needs.

This involves engaging a range of institutions, including justice and security institutions, parliament, civil society and public administration entities in participatory, inclusive and rights-based processes.

UNDP, *Protecting Human Rights in Constitutions* (2023).
UNDP, *Guidance Note on Constitution-Making Support* (2016).
UNDP, *Global Good Practices in Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Constitutions* (2017).
UNDP, *Parliamentary Development, UNDP Strategy Note* (2019).

Examples | **The Gambia** | **Nepal**

In The Gambia, UNDP supported the Constitutional Review Committee, National Assembly members, civil society and other stakeholders in their respective roles in the post-Jammeh constitutional reform process. The support included capacity building, expert advice in formulating drafts constitutional provisions, and a nationwide civic education campaign to inform the public on the draft constitution and referendum process.

In Nepal, UNDP supported women's engagement in intensive discussions on the integration of gender issues in Nepal's constitution. More than 41,000 women participated in the process and voiced their perspectives. The active inclusion of women in radio debates was also an important means of amplifying the voices and views of women.

A holistic approach combining legislative reform, the empowerment of individuals and communities to understand and exercise their rights, and the strengthening of institutional capacities (including training, infrastructure, coordination mechanisms and oversight functions) is important to sustainably advancing access to justice and strengthening the rule of law.

Example | **Sierra Leone**

In Sierra Leone, support to legislative and policy reforms related to bail and sentencing, combined with community legal education and capacity building for the judiciary and legal aid services, supported reduced congestion in prisons, reduced backlog of court cases, increased confidence in the police and promoted greater rights awareness.

The people-centred approach also requires ensuring accountable, high-quality service delivery across public institutions beyond justice and security actors (e.g., courts or police). Denial of access to basic services is both a justice and security concern. Understanding how weaknesses in public administration undermine justice and security outcomes, especially for the vulnerable and marginalized, is a key element of the approach. It supports more integrated programming that links justice and security with wider development interventions.

See **Section 5.6** for details on integrated programming and the portfolio approach.

For example, maladministration in the application of housing, land and property rights perpetuates inequality and discrimination and can prevent generations of poor families from lifting themselves out of poverty. Deficiencies in civil registration, or in the issuance of birth, death, marriage and citizenship certificates, can have a direct impact on people's right to vote or to other entitlements such as access to health care and education. Conflicts often erupt because of perceptions of corruption, unfairness and discrimination in the way services and utilities are delivered.

Example | **Tajikistan**

In Tajikistan, UNDP integrated access to justice, gender equality, inclusive governance and digital transformation to expand access to civil registration services for marginalized populations, including rural communities and women. In partnership with the Civil Registration Services, the Ministry of Justice launched mobile legal aid services that brought critical legal aid and civil registration to remote mountain villages. Through comprehensive support to legal reforms, capacity building, infrastructure, public awareness, legal aid and digitalization, the project measurably improved the quality and accessibility of civil registration services that are essential for access to healthcare, education and other public services.

UNDP, *UNDP Guidance Note for Assessing Rule of Law in Public Administration* (2015).

While the people-centred approach emphasizes accountability of the State (the duty bearer) to the public (rights holders), this cannot be achieved without strengthening how State institutions take responsibility for their own performance and conduct. Internal accountability and oversight are a critical entry point for ensuring justice and security systems are fair, transparent and responsive to people's needs.

Building effective and people-centred institutions requires embedding accountability into their internal architecture through laws, policies, procedures, disciplinary systems and performance monitoring. These internal mechanisms help institutions uphold professional standards, detect and address misconduct, and ensure that justice and security personnel act in accordance with rights-based principles. UNDP supports justice and security institutions to develop and implement internal accountability systems that improve integrity, performance and public trust. Tools such as UNDP's Judicial Integrity Self-Assessment Checklist help courts identify weaknesses in integrity, transparency and accountability, and guide institutional reform from within.

Technological and procedural innovations can improve the fairness of justice processes and enable stronger oversight of institutional conduct. UNDP supports the adoption of tools such as video-recorded interviews (VRIs) and procedural protections that safeguard human rights and enable more effective monitoring by judicial or independent bodies. When embedded in law and practice, such tools enhance both internal accountability and external trust in justice and security systems, as evidenced by UNDP's support to implementation of VRI systems in Iraq and Fiji.

Examples | Armenia | Palestine | Timor Leste | Asia-Pacific

In Armenia, UNDP supported the introduction of a merit-based selection mechanism for judges, implemented by the Ministry of Justice and the Supreme Judicial Council. This mechanism included a psychological testing platform to assess candidates' characteristics, traits and behaviours—representing a shift from traditional appointment processes towards more objective criteria. The reform encouraged the selection of judges with appropriate competencies for judicial decision-making.

In Palestine, the UNDP-supported Mizan digital court case management system has strengthened both internal and external oversight of the justice system. By enabling real-time case tracking, it allows supervisors to identify delays, monitor individual performance, and conduct follow-up, creating clear incentives for civil servants to move cases forward and fulfil their responsibilities. Users can also track the progress of their own cases and follow up with institutions, lawyers, or civil society actors. This dual functionality makes Mizan a built-in, accessible feedback and complaint mechanism that supports efficiency and transparency, improves service quality and builds trust in the justice system.

In Timor Leste, the introduction of an inspectoral system within the Office of the Prosecutor General strengthened internal disciplinary processes and improved operational efficiency. It contributed to a 27 percent reduction of the office's case backlog between 2015 and 2016, demonstrating the practical benefits of internal oversight for institutional performance and public service delivery.

In the Asia-Pacific region, the Judicial Integrity Network in ASEAN has become a platform for strengthening judicial integrity, peer learning, and regional collaboration on accountability and integrity measures across member judiciaries.

Ombudspersons, parliaments, NHRIs, judicial councils, and inter-agency coordination mechanisms also play a key role in strengthening justice and security system accountability. These bodies help monitor institutional performance and reform processes, investigate complaints and ensure remedies for rights violations, and promote shared standards for service delivery across the justice and security chain. They also represent people's concerns in local and national dialogues and within justice and security policymaking. These institutions can serve as critical bridges between people and institutions, reinforcing transparency, accountability and the rule of law.

Examples | Somaliland | Philippines

In Somaliland, the Human Rights Commission has provided legal aid for hundreds of individuals, monitored prisons and police stations, trained police officers on community policing, and created space for dialogues between law enforcement institutions and the media for increased collaboration. It systematically presents evidence-based findings from these activities to government, triggering institutional responses such as the release of unlawfully detained individuals and changes in police practice.

In the Philippines, the Bangsamoro Human Rights Commission, with field offices and human rights monitoring centres in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, provided access to human rights and legal services to remote communities and marginalised groups.

For details of UNDP's support to NHRIs and other available resources, see the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions' UNDP webpage.

What makes accountability-focused interventions people-centred and impactful?

- Interventions are embedded within national strategies, institutional mandates, or established legal and policy frameworks and are supported by government or local regulatory structures for sustainability.
- Internal accountability is strengthened through clear procedures and performance monitoring, such as standard operating procedures, disciplinary systems, and tools such as case tracking and peer review to reinforce professional conduct and rights-based service delivery.
- Interventions enable public oversight by linking institutional accountability to community feedback and participation. Structured mechanisms such as complaint systems and community scorecards make it possible for people to raise concerns, monitor performance, and shape how justice and security are delivered.
- Effective accountability is supported by inter-agency mechanisms and strategic partnerships within government (across justice, security and oversight bodies) and with external actors (donors, NGOs, community groups) to encourage transparency, foster collective learning and support impactful reforms.
- Interventions build institutional readiness for greater accountability through assessments, training, mentoring and phased roll-outs of reforms to ensure justice and security institutions have the capacity and confidence to adopt and sustain accountability practices.

Parts A and B explored the core dimensions of people-centred change.

A focused on empowering people and communities through five interconnected dimensions of change: participation, inclusion, agency, access and accountability.

B examined how justice and security institutions can transform to better serve people through four key dimensions: shifting mindsets and behaviour, strengthening service orientation, embedding people-centred practices in systems, and ensuring accountability and oversight. Together, these nine dimensions offer a comprehensive lens for designing and delivering people-centred programming.

The next section explores how these dimensions can be integrated into broader UNDP programming, ensuring that people-centred justice and security are pursued not in isolation, but as part of a coherent response to complex, interconnected development challenges.

5.6 INTEGRATION AND THE PORTFOLIO APPROACH

The people-centred approach calls not only for thinking in systems but also for acting systemically to address the interconnected causes and consequences of injustice and insecurity. These challenges such as poverty, displacement, gender inequality and climate vulnerability are deeply entwined and require coherent, multisectoral responses that reflect how people experience them in real life.

Integration is not an end in itself, but a means to enable **systemic change.** UNDP pursues integrated approaches to respond more effectively and sustainably to complex, interconnected development challenges.

The people-centred approach reinforces and operationalizes UNDP's corporate commitment to systems thinking, integration and portfolio-based programming as essential enablers of the systemic transformations needed to achieve "shared prosperity, strengthened social cohesion, and more resilient, equitable futures" (UNDP Strategic Plan, 2026–2029).

See "Systems and Portfolio" on the UNDP website for more on how UNDP is turning system and portfolio approaches into action.

5.6.1 Integration in practice

Integrated programming refers to the deliberate connection of multiple sectors, disciplines and actors to respond to complex development challenges in a coherent and collaborative way. It goes beyond parallel or coordinated efforts by convening actors across mandates and areas of expertise to co-design, co-implement and co-monitor multifaceted solutions.

See **Section 5.2** on co-creation and participatory design.

Integration is a way of working that breaks down sectoral silos and tackles development challenges holistically.

The people-centred approach recognizes that people's justice and security problems are often intertwined with issues such as poverty, gender inequality, climate vulnerability and displacement. Addressing these challenges requires holistic, multisector responses that reflect the complexity of people's everyday experiences and the problems they face.

Because justice and security challenges are rarely addressed by a single actor, integrated programming also requires awareness of the wider system of responses. UNDP can support integration by convening diverse actors, aligning their efforts and helping to connect community-level initiatives with institutional reforms. This convening role helps enable more coherent, system-wide responses that reflect people's realities and maximize collective impact.

See **Section 5.5** for examples of service orientation–focused interventions that adopt an integrated approach.

Designing and delivering integrated programming is a core element of the people-centred approach. It recognizes that integration occurs at multiple levels. While not all interventions will operate across all levels, the key is to be intentional in identifying where integration can add value and how efforts can evolve over time towards more holistic and systemic responses. The following four layers illustrate how integration can be approached in practice.

System-level integration

The people-centred approach requires the strategic integration of bottom-up interventions (focused on agency and empowerment of people and communities) and top-down interventions (focused on responsive and accountable justice and security actors) to address people's diverse justice and security needs and foster systemic and structural change. Integration also supports more inclusive, evidence-informed national and subnational policies and practices that reflect and respond to people's actual justice and security priorities and needs. By connecting frontline innovations to

institutional reforms and promoting feedback between communities and authorities, it lays the groundwork for long-term systems change. For example, community-based dispute resolution mechanisms can inform the development of national community policing policies, while data from legal aid providers can highlight systemic barriers to justice and shape sector-wide reform priorities.

Example | **Yemen**

In Yemen, UNDP strategically integrated community-based interventions, such as community mediation, with institutional support to expand access to justice and strengthen the responsiveness of formal systems. This included capacity building for police, prosecutors and prisons, and the establishment of model police stations. Linking customary dispute resolution with formal justice actors helped reduce service provision gaps and enabled more coordinated, local justice delivery. This approach improved referral pathways, increased trust, and promoted shared accountability for justice and security outcomes.

Cross-sectoral integration

The people-centred approach explicitly supports the mainstreaming of justice and security across all areas of development, recognizing their role as enablers of all other development outcomes. People cannot attend school, access healthcare or claim social protection if they face insecurity, discrimination or unresolved disputes. Many development challenges stem from structural inequalities, unresolved grievances, weak accountability or denial of rights. Integrating justice and security with sectors such as health, education, employment or climate helps to identify the drivers of injustice and shape solutions that do not only address isolated symptoms but also promote systemic and structural change. This requires deliberately connecting efforts across different areas, such as frontline services, policies, formal and informal institutions, and community action, so that change in one space can support and sustain change in others.

Example | **Moldova**

In Moldova, UNDP's human security-based programme addressed the multifaceted needs of Ukrainian refugees, third-country nationals and host communities through an integrated, multisectoral response. Justice and protection interventions were combined with support for livelihoods, social cohesion and access to basic services. This helped meet urgent humanitarian needs while laying a stronger foundation for long-term inclusion, empowerment and human security outcomes.

Integration across the HDP nexus

The people-centred approach recognizes that justice and security are essential components of crisis response and early recovery. In contexts affected by crisis, conflict, and displacement, integrated programming embeds justice and security within broader area-based and stabilization initiatives. This involves aligning efforts to restore justice and security services, promote community safety, and respond to immediate justice needs, alongside support for livelihoods, basic services, governance and social cohesion.

Example | **Ethiopia**

In Northern Ethiopia, the UNDP Peace Support Facility, a catalytic stabilization mechanism, supports the rapid restoration of essential services and infrastructure, reintegration of displaced populations, restoration of livelihoods, reactivation of justice and policing services, and strengthening of community peace platforms. It also works to enhance government service delivery to be more responsive and accountable to communities and their needs. These early efforts help prevent relapse into conflict, restore trust and lay the foundation for longer-term recovery.

Institutional and inter-agency integration

Coherent, coordinated action across institutions and partners can support the people-centred approach. This includes joint planning and programming with other UN agencies and with national counterparts to align justice and security with broader development goals. Platforms such as the UN Global Focal Point for Rule of Law exemplify how UNDP anchors integrated, inter-agency efforts that connect humanitarian, development and peacebuilding responses. Institutional integration ensures shared analysis, coordinated interventions and the leveraging of complementary expertise.

Example | **Palestine**

In Palestine, the joint access to justice programme combines the strengths of UNDP, UN Women and UNICEF to deliver a comprehensive response to the justice needs of women and children. Through joint planning, shared monitoring and evaluation, and coordinated action, the programme has integrated institutional reforms with service delivery improvements. For example, data from UNDP-supported digital case management reforms informed UN Women- and UNICEF-led service initiatives, resulting in more holistic, responsive and impactful interventions. The programme also serves as a platform for donor coordination, aligning diverse national priorities, including rule of law, police reform and women's rights, into a coherent, systems-based approach. In this way, donors have been able to define a common position enabling more effective dialogue with the Palestinian Authority.

People-centred justice and security programming that is designed as part of a broader system (rather than as a stand-alone workstream) can achieve greater relevance, traction and long-term impact.

Programming tips for integration:t:

Through the people-centred approach, teams can strengthen integration by:

- Intentionally linking community-based efforts with institution-focused support
- Identifying entry points where justice and security intersect with other development priorities (e.g., governance, climate, gender, livelihoods, peace)
- Coordinating interventions across sectors within shared geographic areas or among specific population groups
- Embedding justice and security objectives within broader governance, stabilization or recovery strategies
- Planning and coordinating early with other UN agencies and government partners to maximize complementarity

5.6.2 Beyond integration: The portfolio approach as a vehicle for systems change

While integration enables more coherent action across sectors and systems, the UNDP portfolio approach goes beyond integration by providing the architecture to manage these efforts dynamically and direct them towards systems change. It supports UNDP and its partners to align, learn and adapt across multiple interventions in pursuit of long-term systemic transformation.

The portfolio approach is a way of working that connects diverse partners, projects and sectors around a shared vision of systemic transformation. It operationalizes UNDP's commitment to a systems approach by treating development challenges not as isolated problems, but as interconnected issues requiring dynamic, coordinated responses.

"At UNDP, a portfolio is a dynamic set of interconnected interventions designed and dynamically managed to generate a continuous supply of new options over time. It helps deliver strategic development impact in the face of complex, system-level challenges."

UNDP, *Modernizing Development: Introducing Portfolios* (August 2025), p. 10.

Rather than managing stand-alone projects, the portfolio approach strategically organizes multiple interventions to learn, adapt and evolve together, aligning efforts with complex, shifting realities on the ground. This enables UNDP and its partners to co-create solutions that are more responsive, integrated and transformative over time.

Key features of the portfolio approach:

- Focused not only on delivery of activities but also on strategy, learning and adaptation,
- Encourages curiosity, experimentation, iteration and sensemaking
- Views the portfolio as a living system—not just a collection of projects, but a deliberate configuration to achieve transformation
- Requires trust-based collaborative, cross-disciplinary and integrated responses.

Justice and security are foundational systems in societies. They influence how people access services, resolve grievances and exercise their rights. They shape trust in institutions and the distribution of power and resources. When these systems are weak, exclusionary or inaccessible, they can create structural barriers that undermine development outcomes and increase risks of instability.

UNDP's portfolio approach can be applied to any complex development challenge, from climate and green transitions to governance, livelihoods or digital transformation. In many contexts, however, integrating justice and security within portfolios can help identify root causes of inequality, exclusion and conflict, and enable coordinated, adaptive and multi-actor responses. This is particularly vital where progress depends on rebuilding trust, strengthening accountability and protecting the rights of vulnerable groups.

Examples | **Chile** | **Burkina Faso** | **São Tomé and Príncipe**

In Chile, the portfolio approach to environmental justice is focused on shifting the social contract by embedding rights-based approaches and local voices into environmental governance.

In Burkina Faso and São Tomé and Príncipe, the portfolio approach recognizes that supporting accessible, trusted and accountable justice and security services is critical for lasting social cohesion.

The people-centred approach and the portfolio approach are mutually reinforcing. While the people-centred approach grounds programming in the rights, needs and priorities of people and communities, the portfolio approach offers a strategic and adaptive architecture to co-create, test, learn and evolve interventions in response to those needs. Together, they enable UNDP to pursue more integrated and transformative change systemically and at scale.

Example | **Tunisia**

In Tunisia, UNDP's SDG16+ portfolio aims to tackle interconnected challenges across justice, security, governance and inclusion. The people-centred, integrated and area-based response is focused on institutional reform, access to justice, community safety, youth engagement and citizen participation. By treating challenges such as violence, exclusion and weak rule of law as interdependent "wicked problems" (problems with many interdependent factors making them seem impossible to solve). the portfolio supports adaptive problem-solving and locally led solutions that bring together national and local institutions, CSOs, and vulnerable groups.

To learn more about the portfolio approach, see "Systems and Portfolios: Modernizing Development" on the UNDP website and take the free self-paced course "Systems Thinking: Tackling Complex Challenges with a Portfolio Approach," which is designed by UNDP and apolitical. See "Programme and Operations Policy and Procedures: Portfolio" on the UNDP website to access the portfolio policy, tools and related programming documents.

5.7 BUILDING A MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING SYSTEM

This section focuses on key considerations when establishing an MEL system to support people-centred programming. It provides an overview of the challenges for measuring outcomes and impact, the implications this has for people-centred justice and security programming, and practical strategies for strengthening people-centred MEL systems. The section is complemented by promising practices and lessons from UNDP programming and examples of people-centred output and intermediate outcome indicators available at Annex 7.

5.7.1 Responding to complexity

Justice and security systems are complex. They involve multiple actors, overlapping mandates, plural norms and shifting power dynamics. Change rarely follows a predictable or linear path. This complexity generates uncertainty—not only about how change happens but also about what kind of change is possible, for whom, and under what conditions.

MEL systems need to reflect this reality. They are not just tools for tracking delivery or meeting reporting requirements. A well-designed MEL system enables teams to engage with complexity, test assumptions, and adapt strategies based on evidence and experience. It helps ensure that programming remains focused on outcomes that matter for the people and communities it aims to support.

This means asking:

- What will be different in people's lives if this intervention works?
- How will people experience the system differently?
- Whose needs are being prioritized and whose are still left out?

These questions define success, shape implementation and lay the foundation for monitoring, learning and adaptation.

For example, people-centred legal aid interventions should not just focus on the number of cases or legal aid services delivered, but ask whether people now resolve disputes more fairly, safely or quickly, and whether groups previously excluded now have access to justice

A well-designed and implemented MEL system is essential to ensuring that people-centred justice and security programming supports systems that are more effective, accountable and responsive to people's rights, needs and expectations.

5.7.2 Measuring what matters to people

An effective MEL system does more than track outputs for accountability and reporting. It also supports learning, drives continuous improvement and ensures that programming remains focused on outcomes that matter for the communities it aims to serve (see Boxes 35 and 36 and Table 7).

MEL systems are built on the project's or programme's theory of change (TOC), enabling teams to test whether expected outcomes, such as improved perceptions of fairness, trust or safety, are materializing. This requires identifying clear indicators and feedback mechanisms and regularly reviewing evidence to understand whether programming is delivering meaningful change. By using data to test assumptions and understand what is or is not working, teams can adapt their approach, refine strategies and strengthen impact.

See **Section 5.2.2** for tips on co-created theories of change.

Box 35: **Understanding output, outcome and impact indicators**

People-centred programming should not stop at measuring outputs. MEL systems must be designed to measure and learn from outcomes and, where possible, contributions to longer-term societal change (impact). While people-centred programming aims for transformative change (such as building trust between communities and police), project timelines often require a focus on intermediate outcomes that can be observed sooner and serve as building blocks for longer-term impact. These intermediate outcomes, such as strengthened leadership, shifts in behaviour or changes in development dynamics, can be early signs of progress towards people-centred justice and security. Capturing these changes, such as improved responsiveness, increased participation or more inclusive decision-making, helps teams understand whether interventions are building trust, fairness and accountability. These indicators may not be easily quantifiable, but they provide essential feedback for learning and adaptation.

See **Annex 7** for examples of people-centred indicators.

A people-centred MEL system goes beyond indicators. It provides a structured plan for how information is generated, used and shared to improve programming and accountability. This plan supports the adaptive approach required to navigate the complex and dynamic development contexts within which UNDP operates. It enables teams to test, learn and adapt based on real-time data and experience without losing sight of the desired longer-term results. **This requires adequate resourcing, including staffing, skills and budget.**

See **Section 6.6**: Navigating change and volatility.

Table 7: **Defining output, intermediate outcome and outcome indicators**

TYPE OF INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION
Output indicators	These measure the tangible products that UNDP directly produces or supports. *Examples: The number of people trained, or the number of legal aid clinics established.* These are necessary for accountability and implementation monitoring, but are not sufficient to demonstrate whether activities led to real improvements for people.
Intermediate outcome indicators	These capture important short-term shifts in perceptions, behaviours, experiences and relationships that signal progress towards broader change. These often reflect procedural fairness, perceived responsiveness or service satisfaction. *Examples: The percentage of legal aid users who report being treated with respect and listened to, or the percentage of women who feel safer engaging with local security providers.*
Outcome indicators	These measure the short- to medium-term changes in behaviour, institutional practices, or people's trust and confidence in justice and security systems. *Examples: Increased trust in police, or the proportion of users who report greater confidence using formal justice systems.* These indicators verify whether the desired change has taken place.
Impact indicators	These capture longer-term, systemic change in people's lives or society. *Examples: The overall public trust in justice and security institutions, or the reduction in conflict-related violence in a community.* Impacts are influenced by many factors, not just a single project, and are often tracked at the national or sector level.

5.7.3 Essential elements of an MEL system

The MEL system should include:

- **A theory of change** that shows how interventions contribute to people-centred justice and security outcomes, including the key assumptions and risks, with learning questions that guide data collection, regular reflection and formal reviews.
- **Indicators** that measure changes that matter for people, generate evidence to test assumptions and support programme learning.
- **Context-specific approaches** and methods for collecting and analysing evidence.
- Systematic and participatory collection and analysis of both **qualitative and quantitative** data.
- The use of data for **learning and adaptation**, including unexpected results that may signal unintended impacts, hidden barriers or emerging opportunities.
- **Feedback and participation mechanisms** that inform programmatic decisions and improve service delivery.
- Strong **ethical safeguards**.
- Regular **reflection** and reporting of findings and results internally and externally for broader learning, transparency and accountable decision-making.
- A focus on **sustainability**, including support to national institutions and CSOs to develop and own MEL processes.

Institute of Development Studies, *Developing a MEL Approach*. This resource guide provides an introduction to the components of MEL systems and their role in adaptive programming.

See **Annex 7** for examples of people-centred indicators.

Challenges in measuring outcomes and impact

Shifting the emphasis from outputs to people-centred outcomes is not without challenges. Teams face a range of technical, institutional and political obstacles to measuring outcomes and impact, including the following:

Complex and gradual change

Justice and security outcomes, such as feeling safer or having greater trust in institutions, are multidimensional and evolve over time. They are difficult to capture with time-bound indicators and often hard to attribute to a single intervention. Unlike a simple output (e.g., number of courts constructed), outcomes such as “increased confidence in the justice system” depend on many variables, including people’s perceptions and experiences. This makes it difficult to demonstrate linear progress or establish clear causal links.

Data gaps and weak measurement systems

In many contexts, especially those affected by conflict or fragility, reliable justice and security data is limited. Administrative data may be fragmented or inconsistent, community surveys may be infrequent or unavailable, and projects often lack baseline data or outcome-level frameworks. Teams may operate without the systems or capacities to track change over time. In these “data-poor” environments, teams often rely on proxy indicators or qualitative methods (e.g., interviews, focus groups, community consultations), which can generate valuable insights but are harder to standardize, aggregate or sustain.

Political and security constraints

Justice and security programmes often operate in politically sensitive and unstable environments. Governments may resist sharing performance data (especially if it reflects poorly on institutions), and insecurity may limit access to affected communities. These factors can hinder safe, ethical and consistent data collection. While qualitative methods or proxy indicators are often the most viable option, they also bring challenges in terms of verification and comparability.

Output-driven incentives

Donor and internal pressures can push teams to prioritize quick, countable results (e.g., numbers of people trained) over harder-to-measure outcomes. Results frameworks may focus narrowly on activities and outputs, without space to capture

whether people's experiences of justice and security are actually improving. Teams often have limited time, skills or resources for outcome-focused monitoring.

Attribution vs. contribution

Justice and security outcomes rarely follow a linear path. Change is influenced by multiple actors and context dynamics, making it difficult to directly attribute results such as improved trust or reduced violence to a single intervention. UNDP and its partners may play a meaningful contributing role, but they are rarely the sole drivers of change. This can make it harder to communicate impact through conventional reporting tools.

Complexity of people-centred change

The approach seeks to improve trust, fairness, accessibility, and inclusion by shifting behaviours and relationships. These qualitative and experiential changes are difficult to capture through standard monitoring frameworks. For example, improving "access to justice" is not only about the number of cases handled or a new legal aid law. It also depends on people's perception of fairness and whether they feel empowered to seek remedies. These human experiences are at the heart of the people-centred approach but harder to measure than tangible outputs such as staff trained or cases processed (see Box 36).

Limited institutional learning culture

MEL should drive learning and adaptation, not just accountability. Yet teams may hesitate to report negative or inconclusive findings, especially when donors or institutions are risk-averse. Without space for honest reflection, teams may miss critical lessons, and outcome-level learning can be limited.

These challenges are especially relevant in people-centred programming, where success is defined by meaningful improvements in people's lives. Measuring whether those improvements are occurring requires investment in well-resourced MEL systems and a commitment to new ways of thinking and working.

> **The approach expands the focus on activities and outputs to ask: Are we helping to shift experiences, perceptions and outcomes in ways that matter for people?**

Implications for people-centred justice and security programming

UNDP is evolving its approach to MEL in response to the complexity of today's development challenges. There is growing recognition that traditional, linear monitoring and evaluation approaches often fall short in the dynamic contexts within which UNDP operates. In response, UNDP is embracing more agile, systems-informed, learning-oriented and people-informed approaches to MEL, in recognition that doing development differently requires working and measuring differently.

See the UNDP Strategic Innovation Unit's M&E Sandbox and the MEL 360 General Guidance that explains how to put Systems-Informed MEL into practice.

This shift provides the foundation for people-centred justice and security programming. It also calls for a different monitoring mindset across UNDP teams, implementing partners and donors, one that sees MEL not just as a reporting tool, but as a means to understand whether people's experiences of justice and security are genuinely improving due to programming interventions.

This mindset shift requires:

- Indicators that reflect people's experiences (e.g., trust in police, satisfaction with dispute resolution, time and cost to access legal help), with disaggregated data to help identify who is reached and who is at risk of being left behind.
- Measurement methods such as evaluations, assessments and studies that generate deeper insights and complement routine monitoring, and follow ethical safeguards (e.g., informed consent, anonymization, role-based access, survivor-safe protocols).
- Data that captures qualitative change, such as shifts in perceptions, behaviours and relationships.
- Monitoring that enables real-time learning and adaptation.

The people-centred approach encourages teams to work with the complexity of justice and security by prioritizing **continuous learning and adaptation**. This means setting realistic goals, focusing on intermediate outcomes as stepping stones towards longer-term change, using data to test assumptions, and adjusting programming in response to evidence of what is or is not working, for whom, and under what conditions.

Putting people at the centre also means that the users of justice and security systems, and especially those most often excluded, must have a voice in defining what effective, fair and trustworthy services look like, and in assessing whether those outcomes are being achieved. This includes how they are treated by justice and security actors and institutions, not just the outcomes they receive. Determining what change is feasible and a priority should emerge from inclusive processes with government, civil society and affected communities, not be imposed by UNDP or external actors. Participatory MEL must follow ethical safeguards as well as survivor-centred and child-safeguarding protocols, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, safe referral pathways and collecting only the minimum necessary data.

Achieving this shift requires a shared understanding of the people-centred approach and a willingness to rethink how progress is measured and reported. It also requires flexibility from donors and partners to support outcome-focused monitoring, even when results are harder to quantify or attribute.

Strategies for people-centred justice and security MEL systems

Despite the challenges mentioned above, there are practical strategies UNDP can employ to develop and strengthen MEL systems in people-centred justice and security programmes, whether teams are designing a new project or refining existing programming. Key strategies include:

1. **Hack the system: Use MEL plans to capture change beyond outputs**
2. **Define what success looks like using the dimensions of people-centred change**
3. **Invest in data capacity and innovation**
4. **Make MEL participatory and inclusive**
5. **Embed structured learning and cultivate a culture of adaptation**

Box 36: **Measuring what matters most to people: A legal aid example**

Whether a case is resolved in the client's favour can be one indicator of legal aid effectiveness. But research shows that people's experience of the process (i.e., how fair, respectful and transparent it felt) strongly influences whether they accept the outcome and how they perceive justice. Measuring both the effectiveness and the fairness of the service is critical to understanding whether it delivers meaningful justice for people. Examples of people-centred indicators include:

- The percentage of legal aid clients who report understanding the advice or process after receiving services
- The percentage who report being treated with respect and fairness during the process
- The percentage who feel they had the opportunity to explain their situation
- The percentage who report the time and cost to resolve their matter was reasonable
- The percentage who report their case progressed or was resolved and they accept the result as fair
- The percentage who report overall satisfaction with the process, regardless of case outcome

Source: Nourit Zimmerman and Tom R. Tyler, "Between Access to Counsel and Access to Justice: A Psychological Perspective", Fordham Urban Law Journal vol. 37, no. 473 (2010).

These strategies draw from real-life examples of UNDP justice and security programming, including in Palestine and Yemen where evaluations have found people-centred MEL approaches to be especially strong.

1 Hack the system: Use MEL plans to capture change beyond outputs

Even when formal results frameworks are limited to output indicators, teams can "hack the system" by developing complementary MEL plans that track intermediate outcomes. A complementary MEL plan is not just a workplan. It should serve as

a strategy and learning agenda that defines the types of change sought, tests assumptions, and generates the insights needed to adapt and influence. This approach enables teams to measure meaningful change (such as shifts in behaviour, perceptions and trust) even when such changes are not explicitly and formally required in UNDP or donor reporting.

In Yemen and Palestine, justice programmes adopted this strategy. While complying with output-level reporting, they developed parallel MEL systems that captured user feedback and behavioural change including client satisfaction, perceived fairness of processes, and increased engagement with mediation committees or police stations. These metrics provided credible evidence of progress towards more inclusive, trusted and legitimate systems, even where attribution was complex.

Example | Palestine

In Palestine, the Sawasya II programme conducts a biennial Public and User Perception Survey in collaboration with the Central Bureau of Statistics to assess impact and inform programme adjustments based on people's experiences.

Teams can define learning questions to explore how and why change occurs. These can help teams test assumptions about how an intervention will lead to outcomes, identify what works and why, and guide adaptive decision and identify unintended effects of an intervention. For example: How are women, youth or displaced people engaging in local justice or security mechanisms, and what factors support or hinder their participation? Is trust in formal justice or security actors increasing among communities, and what is contributing to that change?

Teams should define their **signals of change**—observable signs that suggest the intervention is having an effect, and that can be tracked at the output or intermediate outcome level. For example:

- Increased use of services by previously excluded groups
- Improved perceptions of fairness or respectful treatment
- Greater responsiveness by justice and security actors following training

A mix of qualitative and quantitative tools can be used to track these changes. These might include administrative data, satisfaction or perception surveys, pre-and post-training tests, community consultations, focus group discussions, or interviews. Capturing qualitative evidence such as stories of change and user feedback is essential. These insights not only support learning and adaptation but also strengthen strategic communications and advocacy, demonstrating relevance and impact through the voices and experiences of those affected. In fragile or crisis-affected settings, MEL tools and expectations should be adapted. Even when full data collection is not feasible, teams can still gather meaningful insights through simplified, ethical and context-appropriate methods, such as brief "pulse-check" surveys (rapid feedback tools designed to quickly assess perceptions, experiences or changes in behaviour over time).

Programming tip:

Develop a complementary MEL plan that tracks outcome-level change alongside the formal results framework. Use learning questions and signals of change to generate evidence for adaptation, strengthen programming impact and support strategic communications.

2 Define what success looks like using the dimensions of people-centred change

To measure meaningfully, teams must first be clear on what kind of change they aim to support. The Guide provides a structured way to do this. Step 2 sets out five dimensions for empowering people and communities (participation, inclusion, agency, access and accountability) and four dimensions for engaging the State and its institutions (shifting mindsets and behaviour, service orientation, embedding practice in systems, and accountability and oversight). These serve as **domains of change** that help teams articulate the behavioural, institutional and experiential shifts they are working toward.

See **Section 5.5** for examples of people-centred interventions.

This structure supports the formulation of indicators across output, intermediate outcome and outcome levels. It encourages teams to move beyond activity-based metrics to capture whether people feel treated fairly, safe and heard. For example, instead of measuring only the number of cases resolved or trainings delivered, people-centred intermediate outcome indicators might include:

- The percentage of users who report feeling heard and treated fairly (during a service interaction)
- The level of satisfaction with (formal or informal) dispute resolution processes
- The percentage of people who report being treated with respect by justice or security actors
- The percentage of people who feel safer in their community (due to a range of interventions)

These indicators focus on experience and perception, not only service delivery. They are particularly important for justice and security programmes, where trust in justice and security providers, and perceptions of fairness and respectful treatment, are as important as technical performance.

Capturing these indicators often requires qualitative tools such as perception surveys, interviews, focus groups, or user feedback sessions. These methods provide richer insights into whether systems are becoming more inclusive, accessible, and responsive.

See **Annex 7** for examples of people-centred indicators.

UNDP, *Why, What and How to Measure? A User's Guide to Measuring Rule of Law, Justice and Security Programmes* (2014).

3 Invest in data capacity and innovation

Effective people-centred MEL depends on the capability to collect, analyse and act on data that reflects people's experiences and outcomes. This can include strengthening national and local data systems, investing in new tools, and supporting partners' capacities to generate and use evidence to better ensure that evidence informs decision-making beyond the duration of the intervention.

Collaborating with national statistics offices can strengthen long-term ownership and sustainability of people-centred MEL systems. Aligning justice and security indicators with national frameworks increases the likelihood that results are recognized and used by national counterparts and promotes consistency with SDG monitoring and reporting (e.g., SDG 16.3.3 on access to civil justice). For example, since 2015, Kenya's National Bureau of Statistics has incorporated questions about access to dispute resolution mechanisms in its integrated household budget survey.

Where official data is limited or missing, UNDP can partner with national entities or research institutes to conduct baseline surveys or include relevant questions in household surveys, as has been done in Argentina.

See **Box 12** for how Argentina integrated justice metrics into national poverty data collection tools.

Innovative data sources and tools should be used not only to meet reporting requirements but also to help identify whether people's justice and security experiences are improving and why. At the institutional level, digital case management systems and mobile apps can generate critical data to inform policy priorities.

See **Box 10**: Strengthening justice and security data through digital innovation.

At the community-level, tools such as mobile phone surveys or online dashboards can get quick feedback from users. SMS feedback systems (which let citizens report if a service was helpful) or community WhatsApp groups can help generate real-time insights at low cost.

4 Make MEL participatory and inclusive

People-centred MEL means collecting data with people, not just about them. Engaging justice and security service users, communities, and civil society in monitoring and evaluation processes strengthens both the quality of evidence and the legitimacy of the results. Participatory methods help ensure that the indicators, learning and decisions reflect what matters to those most affected.

See **Section 5.2**: Co-creation and local ownership.

Participatory tools such as community consultations, focus group discussions or community scorecards can be used to refine indicators and gather feedback from affected communities and service users. This helps ensure that services are not only implemented efficiently, but also experienced as fair, respectful and responsive.

See **Box 8** for how Jamaica used community scorecards to improve justice services.

Participatory MEL also means working with institutional counterparts to co-define goals, review monitoring findings, and jointly reflect on and adapt ways of working.

Example | **Palestine**

In Palestine, UNDP has supported the development of standardized M&E training in collaboration with the National School of Administration, which is helping justice institutions to better understand the use of monitoring and data for institutional responsiveness.

When institutions take ownership of MEL processes, they can embed them in routine practice. For example, a police station commander might hold regular community sessions to understand issues affecting community trust and adjust internal staff performance metrics to reflect respectful treatment or perceived fairness. This creates a feedback loop between community engagement and institutional performance.

Inclusive MEL requires disaggregation of data. As the UNDP people-centred policy framework highlights, "persistently weak data disaggregation nationally and within justice and security programmes means that many people remain excluded from or totally invisible in data" (p. 32). Disaggregated analysis is essential to uncover who is being reached, who is being left behind, and how different groups experience justice and security services. It helps ensure the interventions are inclusive, equitable and responsive to diverse needs.

Programming tip:
Disaggregate data for both reporting and learning

UNDP's Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF), indicator A.2.2.2 on access to justice services requires disaggregation by sex, age, income level, disability, displacement status and ethnicity. Disaggregated data helps teams understand which groups are being reached and whether justice outcomes are equitably experienced; the data enables teams to tailor programming accordingly.

By embedding participatory and inclusive approaches in MEL systems, teams gain deeper insight into people's everyday experiences, strengthen transparency and accountability to communities, and ensure that evidence drives change in ways that reflect the voices and realities of those most affected. This includes investing in the capacities of communities and civil society to meaningfully engage in monitoring and learning, and making data accessible so people can hold duty bearers and development actors accountable. Participation empowers communities, builds trust, and fosters local ownership of results across communities, civil society and institutions.

5 Embed structured learning and cultivate a culture of adaptation

MEL systems are not just about collecting data. They also require systematically creating space for teams and partners to reflect, learn, and adapt in real time.

See **Chapter 6**, **Step 3**: Adapt and evolve interventions.

Integrating structured learning processes into an MEL plan help teams make sense of evidence, test assumptions and adapt programming in response to evolving dynamics and learning.

In Yemen and Palestine, teams use regular learning sessions, feedback loops, and after-action reviews (AARs) to refine their interventions. These processes help identify unintended consequences, early signs of change (such as improved responsiveness by justice providers) and areas where course correction is needed. They contribute directly to increased programming relevance and effectiveness.

See **Section 6.2** for more on how to reflect and learn.

Effective learning must be planned and resourced. Teams should budget for learning activities, allocate time for joint reflection, and designate roles to coordinate and document insights. Simple tools such as quarterly learning reviews, reflection sessions, sensemaking workshops or partner debriefs can generate valuable insight when used consistently. These can be tailored to context and purpose, from weekly internal team check-ins to more in-depth participatory sessions with partners and communities.

Learning processes need to be backed by an internal culture of learning. In Yemen and Palestine, programme, M&E, operations, and finance colleagues were all involved as partners in project MEL. This helped ensure that procurement and finance systems enabled adaptation, and that evidence was treated as a strategic asset rather than only a reporting obligation. Leadership plays a critical role by modelling openness to feedback, setting expectations, and allocating time and space for evidence-based reflective practice.

Example | **Yemen**

In Yemen, monthly project progress meetings with the Resident Representative, along with monthly programme meetings with the Deputy Resident Representative, created formal mechanisms to review progress and address programming challenges as part of the MEL system.

Strategic learning enhances UNDP's credibility and influence. In both Yemen and Palestine, robust learning systems positioned the programmes as hubs for evidence, insights and good practice, reinforcing relationships with national partners, civil society, UN partners and the donor community. By codifying and sharing lessons, teams not only improved their own results but also reinforced UNDP's role as a trusted, adaptive partner in complex settings.

Learning also creates the foundation for scaling. By continuously refining interventions based on what works, for whom and in which contexts, teams generate evidence for broader adaptation and transformation. Step 3 focuses on how evidence from monitoring and learning is used to adapt, evolve and scale interventions and embed people-centred change within justice and security systems.

Guiding questions

- What will success look like from the user's perspective?
- Are we collecting data that reflects people's experiences, not just project activities?
- How are we using learning and feedback to adapt our interventions?
- Are we engaging communities and institutional partners in reviewing the data and reflecting on its meaning?
- Do we have regular, structured moments for learning and decision-making?
- Are the signals of change we are tracking helping us understand what is working, for whom and why?

Common pitfalls to avoid:

- Using MEL only for compliance. Treating MEL as a reporting requirement rather than a learning tool limits its value for strategic decision-making and improved programming and impact.
- Lack of harmonized indicators and baseline data. The absence of standardized indicators and baseline information undermines the ability to measure change and make evidence-informed adaptations.
- Tracking outputs but not outcomes. Counting activities does not show whether behaviours, perceptions or systems are changing, nor does it support learning or adaptation.
- Collecting data without follow-up. Failing to use data and feedback to inform decisions or adjust programming underutilizes MEL resources, limits learning and can weaken trust with communities and partners.
- Excluding local actors from MEL. Designing and reviewing MEL without national or community input weakens ownership and relevance.
- Failing to disaggregate data or analyse reach. Without understanding who is accessing services and who is excluded, MEL cannot support equity, inclusion or Leave No One Behind.
- Failing to prioritize and embed MEL across the programme cycle. Without early and sustained investment in MEL capacities, staffing and resources, MEL is unlikely to be meaningfully integrated into project design and implementation. This weakens its ability to generate insights, support learning, and maintain the quality and credibility of programming.

STEP 3

ADAPT AND EVOLVE INTERVENTIONS

This step positions reflection, learning and adaptation as core programming practices that support long-term change. It focuses on using data, evidence and experience to assess progress, adjust interventions and scale what works. Step 3 provides practical strategies to embed people-centred approaches in systems, strengthen sustainability, and ensure programming remains responsive to evolving needs, power dynamics and contextual shifts.

Key messages

- **Learning, reflection and adaptation are integral to delivering people-centred justice and security.**
- **Programming operates in complex and dynamic environments that require adaptive responses.**
- **Data, feedback, and evidence support real-time decision-making and strategic course correction.**
- **Institutionalization strategies help embed change in systems and strengthen sustainability.**
- **Scaling focuses on deepening impact and responsiveness, not just expanding reach.**

CHAPTER 6

6.1 INTRODUCTION

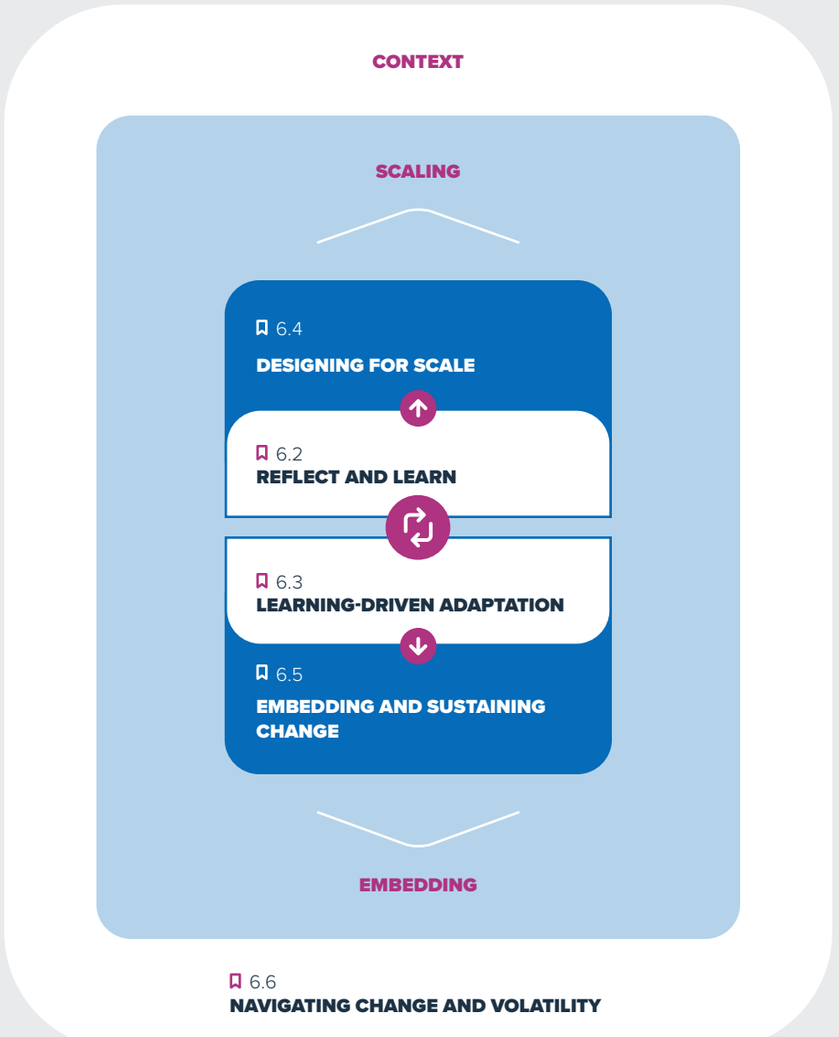
People-centred justice and security programming is not static; it must evolve as needs shift, contexts change and new insights emerge. Step 3 focuses on how teams can use evidence and experience to adapt interventions, scale what works, and embed change within justice and security systems.

In this approach, adaptation is not just a technical adjustment; it is how systems become more inclusive, fair and responsive to the people they serve. While Step 2 focused on establishing the infrastructure for learning through testing, Step 3 turns that learning into action: making real-time improvements, ensuring adaptations are locally relevant and sustained, and embedding change that can last.

This step explores five aspects of adaptation, visualized in Diagram 7: Step 3 at a glance—Adapt and evolve interventions:

- **Reflect and learn** (Section 6.2): How teams can use structured reflection and learning, including through community engagement and evaluations, to assess progress, challenge assumptions and generate new insights to guide programming.
- **Learning-driven adaptation** (Section 6.3): How to adjust interventions in response to evidence, evolving needs and shifting context, while remaining focused on long-term people-centred outcomes.
- **Designing for scale** (Section 6.4): How to identify what works, assess readiness for scale, and expand, deepen, or institutionalize impact in ways that reinforce people-centred principles.
- **Embedding and sustaining change** (Section 6.5): How to institutionalize people-centred principes and practices in institutions, structures, behaviours and relationships across the system to support lasting transformation.
- **Navigating change and volatility** (Section 6.6): How to stay responsive in complex, uncertain and rapidly changing environments through adaptive, politically informed programming.

Diagram 7: **Step 3 at a glance—Adapt and evolve interventions**



These elements are not sequential. They form part of a continuous cycle of learning, reflection and adaptation that helps programming remain effective, inclusive and responsive over time. Together, they support justice and security systems to evolve in ways that better serve people, especially the vulnerable, marginalized and those most at risk of being left behind.

6.2 REFLECT AND LEARN

Reflection is the foundation of adaptive, people-centred programming. It involves critically examining what happened, how it happened and why, drawing on the experiences of implementation and the perspectives of diverse stakeholders. It helps reveal tacit knowledge, identify blind spots and assess how contextual changes may influence results. Reflection allows teams to question assumptions and make informed course corrections. It is an essential ingredient for learning and continuous improvement.

Learning builds on reflection by generating and using insights to shape future decisions. It is about not only identifying what worked but also understanding for whom, in what conditions and why. Learning enables teams to adapt interventions in ways that are grounded in evidence and shaped by experience.

People-centred programming encourages reflection at multiple levels: within teams, with partners and with affected communities. It focuses on whether interventions are improving people's experiences of access, fairness, trust and safety, and considers shifts in behaviour, relationships, capacities and institutional processes as signals of systemic change.

Teams should build in regular opportunities to reflect and learn throughout the project cycle. Three approaches that commonly used within UNDP and are particularly useful are structured internal reflection, participatory feedback and community engagement, and people-centred evaluations.

Structured internal reflection

Tools such as AARs, reflection sessions and sensemaking help teams assess what is changing, why it matters and how to respond. These tools support real-time learning and cultivate a culture of adaptation.

- **AARs** are typically used after specific events or activities. They help teams to ask: What was planned? What actually happened? What worked well? What could be improved next time? They are practical and fast (lasting between 30 and 60 minutes) and help improve day-to-day implementation and delivery.
  - For tips on how to run an AAR, see resources from BetterEvaluation, indeed, or NASA Appel Knowledge services.
- **Reflection sessions** offer a broader look at progress, assumptions, and strategic direction. These sessions help teams to answer broader questions: Are we seeing the change we hoped for? What is emerging in the context? Are we still doing the right thing in the right way for the right people? Reflection sessions are most valuable when they include a diverse range of project-related stakeholders. They provide an opportunity to reflect on what is actually happening in the work, discuss unexpected developments and agree on next steps.
- **Sensemaking** can deepen these processes by helping teams identify patterns and interpret emerging data, especially in complex or uncertain environments. It can be used in light-touch formats (e.g., a short discussion using guiding questions) or as a structured workshop, such as UNDP's portfolio sensemaking approach. When used regularly, sensemaking helps connect individual observations to create shared insight and supports more coherent and adaptive decision-making.

Example | **Palestine**

In Palestine, UNDP used sensemaking workshops to understand how individual projects can fit into a larger programme and to identify new programming opportunities. This laid the foundation for systems transformation training, which helped the team challenge assumptions and shift from a narrow focus on youth-inclusive agri-food value chains to a broader problem space of inclusive economic development. By mapping projects across this shared problem space, the team identified gaps, overlaps and opportunities for more integrated and adaptive programming that can better engage with systemic challenges.

See **Annex 8** for tips on how to run reflection sessions.

Participatory feedback and community engagement

When participatory feedback and community engagement processes are well documented and reflected upon, they provide insight into what is changing, for whom and why. This evidence can then feed back into programme learning and adaptation.

- **Participatory processes** help teams hear directly from affected communities, co-interpret findings and understand how interventions are experienced in people's daily lives. They help teams identify blind spots, improve relevance and adapt in real time. Examples of participatory processes include:
  - Feedback sessions with community members during or after interventions.
  - User feedback tools, such as surveys or mobile platforms, to gather perspectives on access to justice or perceptions of community safety.
  - Structured listening exercises to capture evolving concerns.

UNDP, Stakeholder Engagement: Guidance Note, Social and Environmental Standards (SES) (2022).

- **Community engagement processes** such as community conversations and dialogues are designed to strengthen trust, promote participation and inclusion, and support collaborative problem-solving among local communities and authorities. While they are not monitoring tools per se, they can reveal valuable insights into how people experience justice and security systems, what is changing, and where adaptation may be needed.

Examples | **Somalia** | **Ukraine**

In Somalia, community conversations enabled community-led discussions to identify, reflect upon and find local solutions to shared issues of justice, security and land use. Communities identified common concerns, including GBV issues, high rates of crime, land disputes, and the lack of effective and trustworthy local justice and police services.

In Ukraine, a dialogue process called "Dialogues of Victory" created space for meaningful discussions about youth needs and visions for the recovery process, and empowered youth councils to engage in local decision-making.

See **Section 5.5** for examples of participation and inclusion-focused interventions.

People-centred evaluations

While continuous reflection and adaptation are essential throughout the project cycle, evaluations provide a structured opportunity to step back and assess progress. Mid-term and end-of-project evaluations are important tools, especially when used to generate learning rather than simply meet accountability requirements. Outcome, portfolio, participatory and impact evaluations are also critical for understanding deeper change, testing what works, for whom and why, and informing strategic decisions. When designed and used effectively, evaluations support learning, strategic adaptation and the advancement of the people-centred approach.

According to the UNDP Evaluations Policy (2019) and accompanying guidelines, evaluations should be:

- People-centred, focusing on how interventions enhance people's capabilities, choices and rights of all people.
- Useful and timely, feeding into planning and decision-making processes.
- Inclusive and participatory, incorporating feedback from affected communities, institutional partners and stakeholders.

United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), *Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System* (2005).
UNEG, *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations* (revised 2024).
UNEG, *Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation* (revised 2020).

A people-centred evaluation asks not only "Did it work?" but also:

- "For whom did it work?"
- "Why?"
- "How did it change people's justice and security experience?"

Evaluations can strengthen results and promote adaptive management when:

- They are embedded in programme cycles as opportunities for learning, adaptation and strategic decision-making.
- Their timing aligns with key decision points.
- They focus on generating insights, not just accountability.
- Findings are shared, discussed and absorbed by teams and partners.
- Lessons inform strategy revisions, programme redesigns or the next phase of implementation.

However, many evaluations in justice and security programming do not fully assess outcomes or impact. They often focus on outputs (what was delivered) or processes (how well the intervention was implemented) without sufficiently examining the results that matter most to people, such as improved access to justice, increased trust in institutions or reduced violence. A people-centred lens shifts the focus towards understanding what changed, for whom, and whether those changes are contributing to a more inclusive, just and secure society.

See **Annex 9** for programming tips on applying a people-centred lens across the six OECD-DAC criteria.

Impact assessments can help fill this gap. They offer a flexible way to examine whether interventions are contributing to meaningful short- and medium-term change. While not always designed to prove causality, they can assess whether people are experiencing improved access to justice, feel safer or more empowered, or view institutions as more responsive or fair. Used alongside output and outcome monitoring, they provide timely insights to support adaptation, learning and evidence-based decision-making.

Impact assessments can include or overlap with impact evaluations, which use specific designs to assess causal effects. They can also draw on participatory or empowerment evaluation methods that place people's voices at the centre of inquiry and build local ownership of evidence. Impact assessments can be used in a variety of ways, including to establish a baseline, explore emerging outcomes (such as behavioural change, improved relationships or increased confidence in services), or assess intermediate outcomes emerging during implementation. This requires adequate resourcing and capabilities, including skills, time and funding to design and deliver people-centred and impact-oriented assessments and evaluations.

Example | **South Sudan**

In South Sudan, an impact assessment explored whether UNDP's justice and security interventions had improved the ability of vulnerable groups to access justice and enhanced the confidence of rule of law actors to deliver justice and security services. It also examined legal awareness and perceptions of safety among community members. Using a mix of data collection methods, the assessment captured both institutional change and people's perceptions and experiences of justice and security, generating practical recommendations for future programming.

Programming tips for learning:

- **Design evaluations with people-centred principles in mind**. Focus on people's experiences and outcomes, not just institutional performance. Include questions on access to justice and safety, fairness, agency and empowerment, trust, and participation in the evaluation terms of reference.
- **Use participatory methods**. Apply tools such as community scorecards, user feedback loops, legal needs surveys or community-defined indicators. Engage communities and partners in defining what success looks like and how it should be measured.
- **Disaggregate data and apply inclusive methods**. Ensure evaluations capture diverse experiences across gender, age, ethnicity, disability and displacement status, helping identify who benefits and who is left behind.
- **Examine power, participation and accountability**. Is there evidence of shifts in behaviour, norms or power relations? Consider whether communities had meaningful opportunities to shape interventions. Did institutions become more transparent, accountable or responsive?
- **Link evaluations with real-time learning loops**. Use reflection sessions, AARs or sensemaking throughout the project cycle to complement evaluations. View evaluations as tools for learning that can concretely inform programme decision-making.
- **Prioritize uptake, communication and engagement**. Communicate evaluation findings in accessible and actionable formats to those who participated, including communities and partners. Support stakeholder-led reflection on findings and encourage follow-up actions. People-centred evaluations are most powerful when they are used, not just conducted.

6.3 LEARNING-DRIVEN ADAPTATION

Reflection helps teams pause, make sense of complexity and deepen their understanding of context. Turning reflection into action is a key part of the adaptive, people-centred approach.

People-centred justice and security challenges are embedded in complex systems—that is, systems with many interacting parts, unpredictable dynamics and non-linear change. This means it is not fully possible to predict outcomes of interventions from the outset. As interventions unfold, new dynamics emerge, and the original programming assumptions may no longer hold. Adaptation is necessary to stay effective.

Adaptation is a deliberate and evidence-based response to changing needs, shifting contexts or increased understanding. Adaptation may involve shifting the programming approach or focus, changing the target group or intervention location, redesigning or dropping activities, or adding new partnerships. It can include adjustments to ongoing interventions and decisions about where and how to expand programming areas in response to what is being learned. While outputs and activities may shift, the intended outcomes and impacts remain the anchor. Adaptation helps identify more effective, inclusive and contextually relevant pathways to achieve them.

> **Adaptation is about strengthening what works while not losing sight of intended outcomes and required accountability.**

To adapt effectively, teams must translate learning into action. This begins with identifying what implications a new lesson has for the theory of change or the project. Does it challenge an existing assumption? Reveal a gap? Signal an opportunity? The answers to such questions can help teams determine what programming shift is required.

Once the implications of learning are identified, teams should clarify: Who needs to know about and make decisions based on learning? How should information be presented to support decision making? And who will be responsible for implementing the decision? Documenting and sharing learning and the rationale for proposed adaptations is essential for engaging implementing partners, senior management, donors and others throughout the adaptation process. Regular updates, joint reviews

and shared reflection spaces can foster shared ownership, enable timely feedback and strengthen trust. They can also support capacity building of partners to more effectively deal with complex problems.

Transparent communication helps ensure that adaptation is seen not as a sign of project failure, but as a strategic response to learning and complexity. For example, adaptation that is evidence-based, transparent, responsive to people's experience and well documented is often welcomed by donors who want to see impact for their investment.

Examples | **Palestine** | **Yemen**

In Palestine, the Sawasya II MEL system was effectively leveraged to provide regular, high-quality information and advice to guide donor decision-making, contributing to the programme's credibility as an expert partner. The MEL system supported discussions with donors, government counterparts and civil society around policy direction shifts in response to changing realities on the ground.

In Yemen, the MEL system allowed the justice and security project to remain on track and elevate its results based on evidence and learning that is well-documented and shared with relevant partners.

Adaptation enables programmes to remain relevant and effective in dynamic contexts. As learning is applied and interventions evolve, opportunities often emerge to expand what works and to anchor successful approaches within systems. The next sections explore how teams can scale effective practices and embed lasting change through institutionalization.

Guiding questions

- What new information have we gathered that challenges our original assumptions or plan?
- What additional data or evidence do we need to inform adaptation and decision-making?
- Have we engaged communities and stakeholders in interpreting findings and shaping decisions?
- Are our current approaches delivering meaningful results for people?
- What specific adjustments should we make to strengthen impact or reduce harm?
- How are we documenting and communicating adaptations to stakeholders and decision-makers?

Common pitfalls to avoid:

- Delaying necessary changes. Rigid workplans or fear of donor reaction can prevent timely, evidence-based course correction, undermining programming effectiveness and impact.
- Adapting without consultation. Failing to engage affected communities or partners in decisions regarding adaptation risks eroding trust, reducing relevance and missing critical perspectives.
- Not documenting what changed and why. Failing to track changes and their rationale, especially when adaptations are frequent or reactive, can undermine learning, weaken institutional memory and reduce the effectiveness of future programming.

6.4 DESIGNING FOR SCALE

Scaling builds on adaptive learning. Once promising approaches emerge through experimentation and adaptation, the next step is to consider how to expand, deepen or institutionalize their impact.

Scaling is not just about reaching more people. It is about amplifying impact, embedding what works, and strengthening justice and security systems in ways that are sustainable, inclusive and locally owned. In this context, scaling must go beyond expanding coverage (e.g., more model police stations) or increasing service numbers (e.g., greater numbers of people accessing legal aid). It must also focus on improving the quality of justice and security services and shifting systems to become more accessible, inclusive, fair and accountable, especially for those most at risk of being left behind.

This section explores how people-centred justice and security programming can design for scale in a way that supports system transformation. It examines different types of scaling, how to assess readiness for scale and pitfalls to avoid. It offers practical guidance for teams to embed a scaling mindset into the design of any justice and security intervention. This means planning from the outset for how promising approaches can evolve into broader, deeper and more sustainable change.

Programming tip:

This section directly informs the "Sustainability and Scaling Up" section of the UNDP project document template.

UNDP defines scaling though the HRBA, which emphasizes both the outcomes (availability, accessibility, and quality of justice and security services) and processes (participation, non-discrimination and accountability) that make formal and informal justice and security mechanisms legitimate and sustainable.

> **"Scaling up is about ensuring the quality of a development impact, reaching out to those 'left behind' and ensuring the sustainability and adaptability of results. It is not about just replicating successes to cover larger groups or populations."**
>
> UNDP, *Guidance Note: Scaling Up Development Programmes*, p. 7.

Designing for scale includes identifying what conditions will enable impact to grow, what capacities and partnerships (both local and international) are needed to support it, and how implementation can adapt to different contexts. It also requires thinking systemically about how to shift mindsets, influence rules and behaviours, and build the coalitions and feedback loops needed to sustain transformation over time.

Designing for scale begins with clarity on what type of change is sought and how it contributes to a more people-centred justice or security system.

6.4.1 Scaling as a strategy for system change

Scaling should be seen as a way to embed people-centred principles across justice and security systems—within formal institutions, community-based mechanisms, and the relationships between them. Accomplishing this requires adopting the following approaches.

Embed fairness, accessibility, inclusion and accountability at all levels
People-centred principles must shape how justice and security are experienced in everyday life. They should inform not only laws and policies but also the daily practices of justice and security actors. These include local dispute resolution practices, oversight mechanisms, community safety initiatives, and interactions with paralegals, safety committees, traditional authorities, and others. People-centred principles help ensure that justice and security systems are not only effective but also trusted, responsive and grounded in the realities of the communities they serve.

Ensure institutions and actors can respond to diverse justice and security needs
Challenges vary by context and community. Effective response requires that actors, from police to paralegals, elders to civil society, have the space and capacity to adapt. This may include resolving disputes through dialogue or working across formal and

informal systems. At the same time, all actors (whether State, non-State or hybrid) must uphold basic rights and be accountable to both their institutions and the communities they serve.

Shift systems to prioritize conflict prevention, rights protection and trust-building
In contexts where State legitimacy is weak or contested, justice and security institutions may be seen as sources of fear or discrimination. Scaling people-centred approaches means investing in prevention and trust-building; promoting rights-based policing and accountability; and recognizing the long-term value of legitimacy through trustworthy, fair, and accountable actions, over short-term rules enforcement and control. Systems must be built to serve all people fairly, not just to enforce law and order.

Expand impact in ways that reinforce local ownership and legitimacy
In many settings, people access justice and security through a mix of formal and informal pathways, such as customary courts, religious leaders or community safety groups. Scaling requires engaging with these existing practices; understanding which contribute to or undermine accessibility, fairness, and accountability; and identifying opportunities for reform. This helps to avoid imposing external models that may be seen as foreign or illegitimate, and strengthens alignment with community values, needs and expectations.

UNDP, Guidance Note: Scaling Up Development Programmes (2013).
Akshara Baru et al., "Scaling Innovation: It Takes an Ecosystem", *Medium*, 4 August 2020.

6.4.2 Types of scaling

Scaling can take multiple forms, depending on the goals, context and systems involved. Understanding these pathways from the outset helps teams design interventions that are both scalable and impactful.

In a people-centred approach, scaling goes beyond replication or "going national." It may involve expanding to new locations, influencing national policies or deepening impact where work is already under way. Scaling becomes transformational when it embeds people-centred principles into how systems operate, and drives shifts in norms, behaviours and power relations.

The complex nature of justice and security systems means what works in one part of the system may not work elsewhere. Scaling should therefore be seen as a flexible, ongoing process, that combines different strategies or types of scale depending on the context.

There are four main types of scaling:

Horizontal scaling (scaling out). This type of scaling involves achieving greater reach by expanding a tested approach to new locations or population groups. An example of horizontal scaling would be expanding mobile courts, legal aid clinics or restorative justice forums to underserved areas.

Example | **Pakistan**

In Pakistan, women-responsive desks were scaled to 67 model police stations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Each desk is staffed by a trained woman officer and offers a safer, more accessible space for women to report violations. The desks have increased community trust in police. In Chitral, where suicide rates among women who experienced GBV were high, the desks resolved over 100 cases in just three months, with a notable drop in suicide rates.

Vertical scaling (scaling up). This involves institutionalizing a successful approach through laws, policies, budget allocations or institutional mandates. An example would be adopting a national legal aid strategy based on lessons from pilot projects.

Example | **Tajikistan**

In Tajikistan, UNDP has supported the government to institutionalize legal aid. The creation of a state legal aid agency, the piloting of new delivery models and the adoption of a law on free state legal aid have enabled the nationwide expansion of legal aid services through 40 state legal aid centres. By 2024, the government had assumed full responsibility for funding the system.

Functional scaling. This type of scaling focuses on deepening or improving the function and performance of an existing intervention by enhancing its quality, inclusion, sustainability or efficiency. An example would be upgrading judicial processes to reduce case backlogs, increase accessibility or improve service responsiveness.

Example | **Kenya**

In Kenya, UNDP strengthened its existing support to the Small Claims Courts by integrating them into a mobile E-Judiciary application. The app allows users to track cases, access judgments and receive court notifications, enhancing efficiency, transparency and accessibility and enabling the courts to serve more users more effectively.

Transformative scaling (scaling deep). This seeks to shift social norms, behaviours or power relations across systems and communities. It often requires a combination of tailored interventions and scaling strategies that adapt to local contexts, needs and opportunities. An example would be transforming police services by shifting institutional culture, values and behaviours to promote trust, inclusion and community-oriented policing.

Example | **Iraq**

In Iraq, the model police stations project combined horizontal scaling (expansion to new regions), vertical scaling (integration into policing policy), and functional scaling (improved service delivery, integrated specialized units, and community feedback mechanisms). It became transformational by shifting the culture, norms and mindset of the Iraqi police from a militarized force into a civilian, people-centred service.

Example | **Latin America and the Caribbean**

In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP has supported the institutionalization of people-centred, evidence-based approaches to citizen security, enabling more responsive and accountable policing practices and policy. The InfoSegura programme has strengthened institutional capacity across the region to collect, analyse and use disaggregated, gender-sensitive crime and violence data for planning and policymaking. It has improved the quality and comparability of regional security statistics and fostered intergovernmental coordination. The programme has helped shift institutional mindsets from crime control to human security, and catalysed deeper change in how police institutions define security, use data, and engage with gender and communities. The CariSECURE programme supported the scaling of the Police Records Management Information System (PRMIS), a digital platform for standardized, real-time collection and analysis of crime and violence data. Piloted in model police stations and rolled out across police services in the region, PRMIS has improved police data quality and enhanced efficiency and accountability. The initiative is helping embed more evidence-based and people-centred practices into daily policing operations, supporting a shift from reactive law enforcement to proactive citizen security and preventive policing.

6.4.3 Readiness for scaling

Not every promising initiative is ready to scale. Before investing in scale, teams should assess whether the necessary foundations are in place.

Scaling should be guided by the foundational principles of people-centred justice and security: human rights, inclusion and participation, empowerment, local ownership, and accountability. These serve as benchmarks for assessing whether an intervention is ready for scale and whether scaling will reinforce its people-centred impact.

Scaling should not be automatic or assumed. It must be strategic and grounded in evidence. Interventions should only be scaled when they have demonstrated meaningful results and show clear potential to deliver sustainable, inclusive and locally owned impact at scale.

Factors to be considered when assessing readiness for scaling include:

- **Impact:** Has the initiative demonstrated meaningful and sustained outcomes, especially for those most at risk? Has the intervention improved access, trust, safety or accountability?
- **Institutional demand:** Is there political backing and technical capacity to adopt or absorb the intervention? Is there support and commitment from ministries, institutional leadership, local authorities or judicial bodies?
- **Feasibility:** Are there enabling conditions or champions for scale? Could it provoke resistance from power holders or entrenched interests? Is there political leadership and commitment to sustain change across political cycles?
- **Adaptability:** Can the intervention work in diverse contexts without losing its people-centred focus? Has it been tested in different contexts (urban/rural, stable/volatile, formal/informal)?
- **Inclusion and accountability:** Will scaling strengthen or undermine inclusion, trust and rights? Could scaling reinforce harmful practices?
- **Sustainability:** Are there mechanisms to ensure quality control, learning and institutionalization? Can community engagement be maintained over time?
- **Integration:** Can the approach be sustained by UNDP or in partnership with other UN agencies or development partners? Are there opportunities to combine or align with other activities working on similar issues or engaging the same stakeholders?
- **Resourcing and funding:** Are sufficient financial resources available, or is there a clear strategy to mobilise them? Will the intervention remain viable if external funding declines?

Effective scaling lays the groundwork for sustaining change. Section 6.5 explores how to embed people-centred approaches into the rules, incentives, behaviours and capacities of institutions, ensuring that progress endures and systems continue to evolve in response to people's needs.

Common pitfalls to avoid:

- Focusing on expansion instead of transformation. Scaling is not just about reaching more people with more services. If it does not improve fairness, trust or accountability, it risks replicating underlying problems at a larger scale.
- Replicating technical models without addressing social norms or power dynamics. When interventions focus only on technical inputs without seeking to shift institutional behaviour or policy, they are unlikely to achieve lasting or meaningful change.
- Scaling without political will or institutional ownership. When key institutions lack commitment or capacity, even well-designed models can fail to take root or be sustained. Without government support, local ownership and stakeholder engagement, scaling is unlikely to succeed.
- Applying the same model everywhere. Uniform "one-size-fits-all" approaches that are not adapted to local political, cultural and social contexts risk being ineffective, causing harm or undermining sustainability.
- Losing people-centred values as programmes grow. As initiatives scale, they can become bureaucratized, disconnected from communities or overextended, undermining service quality or impact.

6.5 EMBEDDING AND SUSTAINING CHANGE

Embedding change ensures that what works is not just scaled but becomes part of the system's architecture. It means incorporating people-centred principles and practices into the structures, rules, routines, relationships, and values that shape institutions and behaviour across the system. It requires working with the full ecosystem of justice and security providers, including State institutions, community-based actors and hybrid mechanisms, recognizing that all contribute to people's experiences of justice and security.

Where transformative scaling seeks to deepen and expand system-level change, embedding ensures that change survives beyond projects, personalities or external funding cycles. Embedding change ensures that transformation becomes "how the system works."

This means moving beyond temporary projects or donor-driven activities to build sustainable public functions and community-based practices that are owned and led by national or local actors. It requires translating tested approaches into laws, policies, mandates, budgets, institutional cultures and local practices, in partnership with government and community actors. It also involves embedding people-centred ways of working into daily practice, ensuring that fairness, dignity, participation and accountability are reflected in how justice and security are delivered, whether by State institutions, community-based actors or hybrid arrangements.

Justice and security systems are not simply technical structures, but complex social systems rooted in relationships and power dynamics. Sustaining change across a system requires people. Transformative reforms take root not just through policies and procedures, but through the behaviours, relationships and shared values of those who enact them:

- When institutional leaders, community authorities, and other influential actors model people-centred principles in their daily work, they reinforce trust and signal that these values are core to institutional identity and public accountability.
- Change is more likely to stick when it is shaped by those who live it: reforms that respond to people's experience, leverage local knowledge and are co-designed with affected communities tend to be more legitimate, resilient and adaptive over time.
- People-centred systems change is rarely driven by a single actor. It is sustained through networks of individuals (change agents, champions and connectors) who span institutions and communities. These networks foster shared purpose and help align behaviours across diverse parts of the system. Supporting such networks can help embed change even as leadership or political conditions shift.

> **"Embedding" means supporting and enabling people within the system to drive change from the inside.**

Institutionalizing people-centred approaches means embedding not just specific practices, but also the core principles that underpin them. They serve as practical benchmarks for assessing whether institutionalization is truly people-centred. Each principle is illustrated below with examples of how it can be embedded in practice.

- **Human rights**: Embedding rights protections into laws, service charters, or codes of conduct and strengthening oversight bodies, grievance mechanisms, and due diligence frameworks that hold private and public actors accountable for the human rights impacts of their actions.
- **Inclusion and participation**: Mandating community participation in planning processes, user feedback in service design, or participatory budgeting for justice and security services.
- **Empowerment**: Institutionalizing paralegal networks in legal aid structures, conducting legal awareness campaigns, or simplifying procedures that help people better understand and navigate justice systems.
- **Local ownership**: Ensuring approaches are embedded in local policies and structures, and are valued, led and adapted by local actors.
- **Accountability**: Integrating community scorecards, complaints mechanisms and external oversight into monitoring and management systems.

There is no single pathway to embedding change. Effective embedding is context-specific and often incremental. It depends on the system's entry points, capacity and openness to change.

See **Section 5.3** for identifying entry points using the Six Dimensions Tool.

Practical strategies for embedding include the following:

Translating learning into formal systems. Integrate successful innovations into laws, policies, mandates, standard operating procedures, training curricula or budget lines, such as embedding paralegal networks into national legal aid structures.

Strengthening institutional capacity. Build the integrity and capacity of institutions and the people in them to deliver people-centred services aligned with human rights and service orientation.

Example | **Malaysia**

In Malaysia, the judiciary and UNDP partnered to produce the IFCE Report, a framework for identifying entry points for judicial reform. Described by the then Chief Justice of Malaysia, Tan Sri Richard Malanjum, as a "medical report for the judiciary," it gathers self-assessments in seven areas of court functioning: leadership and management, planning and policies, resources, proceedings and processes, client needs and satisfaction, affordable and accessible court services, and public trust and confidence.

See **Annex 6**: The People-Centred Capacity and Integrity Framework.

Aligning incentives and human resource systems. Embed people-centred principles into institutional hiring practices, performance evaluations, training requirements and promotion pathways.

Embedding community engagement into institutional practice. Institutionalize mechanisms that ensure justice and security institutions routinely engage the people they serve—for example, mandating public consultations in security strategies or participatory budgeting for local justice services.

Example | **Sierra Leone**

In Sierra Leone, Local Policing Partnership Boards are a formal part of the community policing strategy designed to ensure that citizens are involved in defining and solving local security problems. This community-based initiative has been sustained because both police services and the community consider the boards important to local safety and security.

Embedding monitoring and accountability mechanisms. Incorporate user feedback mechanisms into court or police oversight structures. Institutionalize perception surveys, citizen scorecards, complaints mechanisms, or open performance data that enable public trust-building and transparent, responsive management.

Working with community-based mechanisms. Support community and hybrid mechanisms to institutionalize the practices they value and are willing to sustain. This includes building on customary or community mechanisms where they align with human rights standards.

Linking micro-level change with macro-level reform. Use data, learning and policy engagement to link community-based innovations to national reforms, connecting bottom-up insights with top-down change.

Supporting networks and coalitions for change. Support networks of reformers, change agents and community stakeholders who can collectively embed people-centred approaches into the system. Support convening, learning platforms, and informal collaboration spaces between justice and security providers and users to build shared understanding, trust and responsiveness.

Embedding is not a one-time achievement but part of an ongoing process. Justice and security systems are dynamic. They are constantly evolving in response to internal shifts, political changes and external pressures. Embedded practices and norms can erode, distort or be co-opted if they are not maintained through continued engagement, reflection and adaptation. Supporting the emergence of people-centred systems requires sustained commitment, not just to institutionalize practices and principles, but also to nurture the conditions that allow them to take root, evolve and endure over time.

Embedding is ultimately about building a constructive and accountable relationship between society (including people, communities, civil society and the private sector) and the State. When embedding is successful, it fosters mutual accountability: Justice and security institutions become more responsive to communities, and communities in turn gain greater voice and trust in the system. Over time, this helps cultivate a culture where justice and security are seen not as tools of State control, but as shared public goods rooted in fairness, human rights, accountability and responsiveness to people's needs. This shift is at the heart of the people-centred approach.

See **Section 2.1** to understand how the approach strengthens the social contract.

Common pitfalls to avoid:

- Focusing only on State institutions. Overlooking the non-State or hybrid mechanisms that many people turn to for justice and security weakens relevance and sustainability.
- Treating institutionalization as a technical exercise. Ignoring the role of relationships, legitimacy, incentives and political will within institutions and communities undermines long-term change.
- Imposing models that do not fit. Approaches that disregard local norms, power dynamics or capacity are unlikely to take root or be sustained.
- Assuming uptake means ownership. When an intervention is adopted without being genuinely valued or supported by institutions or communities, it risks superficial implementation or eventual rejection.
- Separating embedding from adaptation. Failing to adapt over time can make embedded practices outdated, reducing their relevance and effectiveness as systems and needs change.

6.6 NAVIGATING CHANGE AND VOLATILITY

Justice and security programming takes place in environments marked by complexity, uncertainty and constant change. Volatility, whether driven by conflict, political transitions, social unrest, economic shocks or environmental threats, is not an occasional disruption but a persistent condition. For people-centred justice and security programming to be effective, it must be able to adapt, respond and evolve alongside the shifting realities it seeks to influence.

Navigating change and volatility is not merely a question of managing risk; it is a strategic necessity for sustaining relevance, legitimacy and impact. This requires a deliberate shift from conventional, linear planning to adaptive, learning-driven and systems-informed approaches that can work with complexity rather than against it.

Justice and security systems operate within complex environments. They involve diverse actors, interdependent relationships, competing interests and often contested legitimacy. Change within these systems rarely follows a predictable path. Programming must therefore be flexible and responsive, with the capacity to adjust based on evidence, feedback and evolving context.

UNDP, *Development at Risk: Protecting Gains and Unleashing Opportunities amid Crisis* (2025).

Adaptive programming offers a practical pathway to navigate volatility. It emphasizes learning by doing, iterative decision-making, and responsiveness to emerging challenges and opportunities. In practice, this means working politically, understanding power dynamics, incentives and resistance, and adapting strategies to navigate constraints while maintaining a clear focus on people's rights, needs and expectations. UNDP's work in contexts such as Somalia, Yemen, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Guatemala has shown how adaptive approaches can strengthen the relevance of, trust in, and impact of justice and security programming, even amid significant constraints. It highlights that there are no blueprint solutions. Effective responses are discovered through ongoing analysis, experimentation and learning.

The following strategies offer practical ways to navigate change and volatility.

- Integrate power and political economy analysis into everyday programming. Use PPEA to understand power dynamics, anticipate shifts and identify opportunities to influence change. This includes regular, informal analysis by teams in close contact with the context.

See **Section 4.6** for tips on undertaking PPEA.

- Apply scenario planning as part of strategic foresight to explore different possible futures, test assumptions and develop flexible strategies for action. This supports anticipatory decision-making and helps programmes navigate uncertainty with greater confidence and adaptability.
- Build strategic capacities within teams to detect early signals, assess risks and opportunities, and respond effectively. This includes strengthening political intelligence, adaptive leadership and risk management.
- Design for flexibility in activities, partnerships and monitoring frameworks. Leave space to adjust who is involved, how interventions are delivered, and which actions are prioritized as the context evolves. Engage donors early and throughout implementation to align expectations, build trust, and ensure that programme adjustments remain supported and transparent.
- Work through diverse partnerships to remain agile. Avoid reliance on any single institution or actor. Engage both State and non-State partners who can help sustain action under changing conditions.

See **Section 4.6.2** for tips on stakeholder mapping.

Use adaptive management approaches to test and refine solutions. Start with smaller-scale interventions, monitor feedback and scale up what proves effective. Adaptation should be purposeful, informed by evidence and clearly documented.

See **Sections 6.3** and **6.4** for tips on adaptation and scaling.

Invest in resilient information systems to generate timely data and feedback. Real-time information supports faster learning, better decisions and greater responsiveness. For example, UNDP Lebanon's Tensions Monitoring System captures real-time data on tensions across communities to inform programming.

Support agency and co-creation by empowering local actors (State and communities) to adapt and lead justice and security responses, which strengthens resilience and promotes ownership.

See **Section 5.2** for tips on co-creation and local ownership.

See **Section 5.5** for examples of participation-focused interventions.

UNDP, *Foresight Manual Empowered Futures for the 2030 Agenda* (2018).
UNDP, *Choosing Your Tomorrows: Using Foresight and Anticipatory Governance to Explore Multiple Futures in Support of Risk-Informed Development* (2023).

This way of working reflects a wider shift in development practice. Adaptability, participation, trust and learning are not just features of good programming; they are essential capabilities for navigating risk and delivering fair justice and security outcomes in complex and changing environments.

Navigating volatility requires strategic discipline and a commitment to learning. Programmes should create space for structured reflection and adjustment throughout implementation, including tracking context changes, documenting decisions, and communicating transparently with partners and communities. These practices help ensure that programming remains responsive, grounded in real-time needs, and able to deliver meaningful results even in the face of disruption and uncertainty.

See **Section 6.2** for more on structured reflection and learning tools and approaches, including sensemaking.

Programming tip:
Calibrating reflection and learning to the context

In volatile or uncertain settings, teams may need to hold more frequent reflection sessions and adjust workplans as needed. In more stable contexts, reviews can be less frequent. Tailor not just the timing but also the depth of reflection: regular check-ins can help refine day-to-day implementation, improve specific activities or solve immediate problems. Less frequent but more in-depth sessions can support strategic adjustments based on questioning assumptions, testing different strategies or rethinking what success looks like. Both types of learning are important and should be planned intentionally.

Common pitfalls to avoid:

- Treating volatility as an exception, not the norm. Programming that assumes stability risks becoming irrelevant, unfeasible or unsustainable in contexts of constant change.
- Relying on a single partner or entry point. Narrow partnerships reduce flexibility and adaptability when political conditions shift or entry points close.
- Confusing adaptation with improvisation. Without strategy and evidence, adaptation can become reactive, incoherent and less effective.
- Delaying course correction. Waiting for formal evaluations or end-of-project reviews can miss critical windows for adaptation and learning.
- Ignoring political and institutional dynamics: Failing to regularly scan for emerging risks, resistance or shifts in power can weaken implementation and undermine strategic planning.

CONCLUSION

As emphasized throughout the preceding chapters, this Guide is not a blueprint, but a practical resource to support inclusive, effective and adaptive people-centred justice and security programming.

The three-step process that lies at the heart of the Guide supports a context-specific response that is tailored to the justice and security needs of different communities and settings. It helps teams analyse those needs and understand why systems do or do not meet them. Grounded in co-creation, it enables teams to work with, not for, people, and to adapt and scale interventions based on what works in practice. The Guide is informed throughout by lessons from UNDP's global experience and supported by practical tools and real-world examples.

Together, these elements form a flexible and strategic foundation for programming that is grounded in people's rights and needs, that strengthens trust between communities and institutions, and that adapts to complex and changing realities. The Guide is relevant across contexts—from crisis-affected settings to longer-term development—and supports teams working on issues that intersect with justice and security across governance, peacebuilding and development.

The approach enables teams to work with complexity, navigate risk and uncertainty, and support systems that are inclusive, responsive and accountable to the people they serve. The people-centred approach is not simply a way of programming. It is a strategic approach to rebuilding trust and strengthening the social contract by making justice and security systems more responsive and accountable to people's rights, needs and experience.

ANNEX 1

THE APPROACH AS AN ENABLER OF THE UNDP STRATEGIC PLAN, 2026–2029

The people-centred approach functions as a systems-based, inclusive and politically informed strategy that helps UNDP achieve its strategic objectives more equitably and sustainably. It ensures that justice and security are not siloed or limited to traditional governance and rule of law areas, but are embedded in development pathways, in line with the transformative ambition of Agenda 2030. The table below illustrates how the people-centred approach aligns with and can concretely support the achievement of UNDP's four strategic objectives and three enablers.

Strategic Objectives			
Prosperity For All	**Healthy Planet**	**Effective Governance**	**Crisis Resilience**
Enhancing legal empowerment so that vulnerable people, including women, youth and displaced populations, can claim their rights (e.g., land, employment, access to social services). **Addressing barriers** that prevent vulnerable and marginalized groups from entering the formal economy and accessing productive assets and services (e.g., obtaining legal identity to register businesses, apply for microfinance, access government support schemes). **Supporting alternative dispute resolution and community-level justice mechanisms** to reduce the economic and social costs of unresolved conflicts or injustices, enabling participation in local economies and contributing to social stability.	**Promoting environmental justice mechanisms**, including access to effective remedies for environmental harms, particularly for vulnerable and indigenous communities. **Linking justice to climate resilience and climate security** through systems that uphold rights and enable participation in decision-making (e.g., land tenure security, dispute resolution over natural resources). **Strengthening inclusive, rights-based policies and institutions** to ensure land and natural resource governance reflects people's rights, needs and participation.	**Ensuring accountable, people-centred and rights-based justice and security systems** by prioritizing people's rights, needs and experiences in the design and delivery of justice and security services. **Embedding transparency, participation and fairness in justice and security** institutions, including through digital solutions that expand access, responsiveness and accountability. **Addressing legal and institutional barriers** that reinforce exclusion and structural inequality (e.g., through measures such as legal aid for securing land rights and legal identity, and support for women's economic empowerment). **Supporting inclusive community security and peacebuilding mechanisms** that address grievances, restore trust and lay the groundwork for legitimate, inclusive, rights-based justice and security systems.	**Preventing conflict escalation** by addressing root causes of injustice and insecurity; supporting accessible, legitimate and accountable local justice and security responses; and building trust in institutions. **Enabling a development response during crisis** by identifying sub-national entry points for engagement when national institutions are fragmented or contested. **Restoring trusted, accountable and responsive justice and security services** in crisis-affected areas that support trust-building, rule of law and social cohesion. **Enabling the meaningful participation, voice and protection of women, girls and youth** in identifying, shaping and responding to their justice and security priorities. **Empowering oversight mechanisms** (e.g., communities, NHRIs) to monitor rights violations as early indicators and predictors of conflict trends.

Enablers		
Digital and AI Transformation	**Gender Equality**	**Sustainable Financing**
Harnessing digital and AI tools for legal empowerment and more accessible, responsive and accountable justice and security systems. **Ensuring technology supports rights and fair justice and security outcomes** through context-specific innovation and community-led design.	**Advancing women's empowerment and leadership** through meaningful participation in justice and security systems and processes at all levels. **Promoting gender equality** within justice and security systems by addressing legal, institutional and social barriers that prevent equal access, protection and accountability.	**Mobilizing and aligning public and development finance** to support inclusive, effective and accountable justice and security systems that people trust and use. **Investing in equitable, cost-effective justice and security approaches** that deliver long-term social returns and reduce costs of injustice and insecurity.

ANNEX 2

HOW THE APPROACH CAN REINFORCE THE HUMANITARIAN–DEVELOPMENT–PEACE NEXUS

The people-centred approach reinforces and complements programming across the Humanitarian–Development–Peace (HDP) nexus by anchoring immediate recovery efforts within a long-term vision of justice and security transformation.

It helps ensure that efforts to restore justice and security systems after conflict are not only responsive to people's immediate needs, but also support systems to be inclusive, accountable and rights-respecting. By addressing both the symptoms and root causes of insecurity and injustice, the approach reduces the risk that recovery efforts unintentionally replicate institutional practices or power dynamics that excluded or harmed people in the past. Instead, it supports institution-building and community recovery in ways that are people-centred, rights-based and locally owned, laying the foundation for more resilient, fairer and more responsive systems over time.

This annex considers how the approach complements UNDP's stabilization programming.

What is stabilization?

Stabilization programming delivers fast, localized results at speed and scale, helping to restore security and essential services in conflict-affected areas.

According to the UNDP Guidance Note on Stabilization Programming, "programmes are implemented in conflict and post-conflict contexts, delivering time-bound, localised, integrated, civilian-led interventions that enhance security, rehabilitate social and productive infrastructure, and provide income support at speed and scale."

Stabilization contributes to:

- Extending State authority to areas previously under control or threatened by armed groups.
- Rebuilding trust between communities and legitimate authorities.
- Restoring a sense of normalcy, enabling returns and preventing protracted displacement.

How can the people-centred approach support stabilization goals?

The people-centred approach helps ensure that stabilization gains are experienced as fair, inclusive and sustainable, strengthening the trust and legitimacy of authorities within affected communities. It can complement the aims of stabilization programming in the following ways:

1 Restoring trust and strengthening the social contract

Both approaches recognize that restoring trust in institutions is critical for stability and sustainable peace.

- Stabilization focuses on restoring security and paving the way for the delivery of core state functions such as justice, security, local governance and basic services.
- The people-centred approach emphasizes that State legitimacy depends not only on the presence of institutions or services, but also on how institutions behave, including whether they are fair, participatory, transparent, accountable and rights-respecting.

2 Placing people at the centre

Both approaches prioritize support to people and communities.

- Stabilization creates conditions for people to return and rebuild their lives by improving security, rehabilitating infrastructure and expanding access to livelihoods.
- The people-centred approach ensures that justice and security efforts are grounded in people's actual needs and experiences. It uses participatory methods to identify local priorities and supports solutions that communities see as legitimate, accessible and relevant.

3 Moving from infrastructure to systems that work

Both approaches recognize that infrastructure alone is not enough. Systems must function and deliver.

- Stabilization supports the return of civil servants, police, justice actors and other public officials to resume basic governance functions.
- The people-centred approach focuses on the quality and integrity of those functions. It promotes justice and security services that are not only present but also trusted, rights-based and accountable even in fragile or transitional contexts.

4 Enabling participation of women and youth

Both approaches acknowledge that inclusive participation strengthens peace and cohesion.

- Stabilization incorporates context-specific inclusion, such as support to returnee women, youth at risk of recruitment by armed actors, and other vulnerable groups.
- The people-centred approach ensures that women, girls and young people are not just beneficiaries but active agents in shaping justice and security responses. It supports their participation in local decision-making, dispute resolution and oversight processes.

5 Bridging humanitarian, development, and peace responses

Both approaches serve as enablers of the HDP nexus.

- Stabilization bridges emergency response with longer-term development.
- The people-centred approach strengthens this link by anchoring short-term gains in longer-term transformation, ensuring justice and security-related responses reflect people's rights, needs and expectations.

6 Promoting adaptive, politically informed, and conflict-sensitive approaches

Both approaches promote context-driven, responsive programming.

- Stabilization emphasizes political awareness, conflict sensitivity, risk management and the importance of local context.
- The people-centred approach complements this by applying systems thinking, power and political economy analysis, and iterative learning. It supports adaptive strategies that reflect local dynamics, respond to feedback and continuously evolve to build trust and legitimacy.

When combined, these approaches:

- Make stabilization not only fast but also fair.
- Shift focus from presence to performance, and from infrastructure to legitimacy.
- Prioritize people's voice, agency and trust at all stages.
- Embed justice and security lenses into transitions from crisis to peace.

Sources:

- UNDP, Guidance Note on Stabilization Programming (2025).
- Independent Evaluation Office, Stabilization and Development, IEO Reflections Series (2025).
- UNDP, The UNDP Approach to People-Centred Justice and Security (2025).

ANNEX 3
THE BENEFITS OF THE APPROACH

Benefits for people

The approach improves people's access to justice and security and strengthens their ability to exercise rights, resolve problems and live in dignity. In particular, the approach:

- Expands access for marginalized and underserved groups by addressing barriers such as cost, distance, language, discrimination and legal exclusion.
- Empowers individuals and communities to understand and claim their rights and participate in shaping justice and security solutions.
- Helps people resolve disputes early, avoiding crises such as homelessness or family breakdown.
- Improves well-being and mental health by reducing the stress of unresolved problems and helping people feel safer, more secure and protected under the law.
- Strengthens protection from violence, exclusion and discrimination, including gender-based violence and rights violations affecting children, minorities and displaced people.
- Builds trust in institutions by making services more responsive, inclusive and accountable to people's needs and rights.
- Supports early and peaceful resolution of disputes through accessible mechanisms (e.g., paralegals, mediation, village courts) that safeguard rights and prevent escalation.
- Enhances social cohesion and economic participation by resolving justice problems that limit mobility, livelihoods and local development.
- Increases access to services through improved civil documentation or legal identity (e.g., birth registration), enabling people to access healthcare, education and social protection.

Benefits for governments

The approach helps governments strengthen legitimacy, improve service delivery and build resilience. In particular, the approach:

- Improves the functioning and fairness of justice and security systems by aligning services, policies and outcomes with people's needs, rights and experiences.
- Restores trust and legitimacy by demonstrating responsiveness to public needs and delivering fair, accessible and quality justice and security services.
- Improves service delivery and policy design through evidence-based analysis grounded in people's rights, needs and experiences, enabling better prioritization and resource allocation.
- Reduces the economic and social costs of unresolved justice and security problems, including loss of productivity, public health burdens and community tensions.
- Increases efficiency in justice processes by addressing factors that drive case backlogs, prison overcrowding and over-reliance on lengthy formal proceedings.
- Builds resilient, adaptive institutions by grounding services in people's needs, strengthening inclusive decision-making and using continuous learning to maintain fair, legitimate and accountable services during crises.
- Advances national development goals, including social protection, gender equality and inclusive governance, by ensuring justice and security are integral to broader development.
- Strengthens compliance with international frameworks, including Agenda 2030 and SDG 16, human rights treaties and peacebuilding commitments, and improves coordination with development and humanitarian actors.
- Enables data-driven decision-making through participatory monitoring, local feedback loops and real-time learning that enhance accountability and adaptive governance.

Benefits for international partners

For international partners, the approach supports risk reduction, effective aid delivery and alignment with global strategies. In particular, the approach:

- Reduces risks to investment and development gains by addressing root causes of instability such as injustice, exclusion, impunity and unresolved grievances.
- Supports resilient, investment-ready societies by strengthening accountable governance and public trust in institutions.
- Aligns with global donor strategies (e.g., EU Global Gateway, Team Europe, Compact with Africa) that balance economic goals with governance, rights and inclusion.
- Delivers value for money through scalable, cost-effective models (e.g., legal empowerment, community mediation, paralegal services) that sustain results locally.
- Strengthens prevention and system resilience, reducing future humanitarian and security spending by resolving disputes (e.g., over land, natural resources or family disputes) before they escalate, which helps maintain social cohesion and mitigate conflict risks.
- Improves aid effectiveness and accountability through strong local engagement, transparency and results tracking that enable better targeting, monitoring and evaluation.

Benefits for UNDP

The approach strengthens UNDP's ability to deliver on its mandate while enhancing its strategic positioning and programme quality. In particular, the approach:

- Reinforces UNDP's mandate to promote human development, dignity, rights, inclusion and agency in justice and security work.
- Enhances programmatic impact and sustainability by embedding justice and security into development pathways that address both root causes and immediate needs.
- Increases UNDP's relevance and influence with governments and development partners through a proven, locally anchored approach that responds to complex challenges and supports long-term transformation.
- Improves strategic coherence across peace, development and humanitarian efforts by integrating justice and security into systems change.
- Strengthens UNDP's role as a convener between State and civil society actors, especially in politically sensitive contexts where trust-building is essential.
- Promotes adaptive, integrated programming by grounding decisions in people's priorities and experience, generating data that captures diverse needs, and using these insights to design rights-based, context-specific solutions that draw on UNDP's comparative advantage across sectors.
- Supports learning and innovation by grounding interventions in local realities, using evidence to refine strategies, and scaling what works in diverse contexts.
- Aligns with global agendas—including the Agenda 2030, the United Nation's Our Common Agenda, the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights, and the New Vision for Rule of Law—that prioritize justice, inclusion and accountable institutions.

ANNEX 4
THE STAKEHOLDER INFLUENCE TOOL

The Stakeholder Influence Tool, developed by Leanne McKay, helps teams assess how different actors are likely to support or resist a proposed change, and how much influence they have over its success.

Stakeholder mapping and political economy analysis help identify who holds power (formally and informally), what interests shape their behaviour, how they are positioned in relation to change and what alliances or resistance may arise.

The Stakeholder Influence Tool helps teams to map how different stakeholders are likely to respond to a proposed intervention and how much influence they have over its success. It focuses on stakeholders' alignment (support, resistance, neutrality) towards a specific change intervention. It builds on stakeholder mapping and draws from power and political economy analysis (PPEA) to support strategic engagement, risk navigation and adaptive programming. The tool can be used at any stage of the programme cycle. It is especially useful when:

- Identifying programming entry points
- Anticipating resistance or risks
- Adapting engagement strategies during implementation

How the tool works

The tool maps stakeholders across two dimensions:

- Level of influence over a justice or security issue (high or low)
- Position on change (supportive, resistant, or neutral)

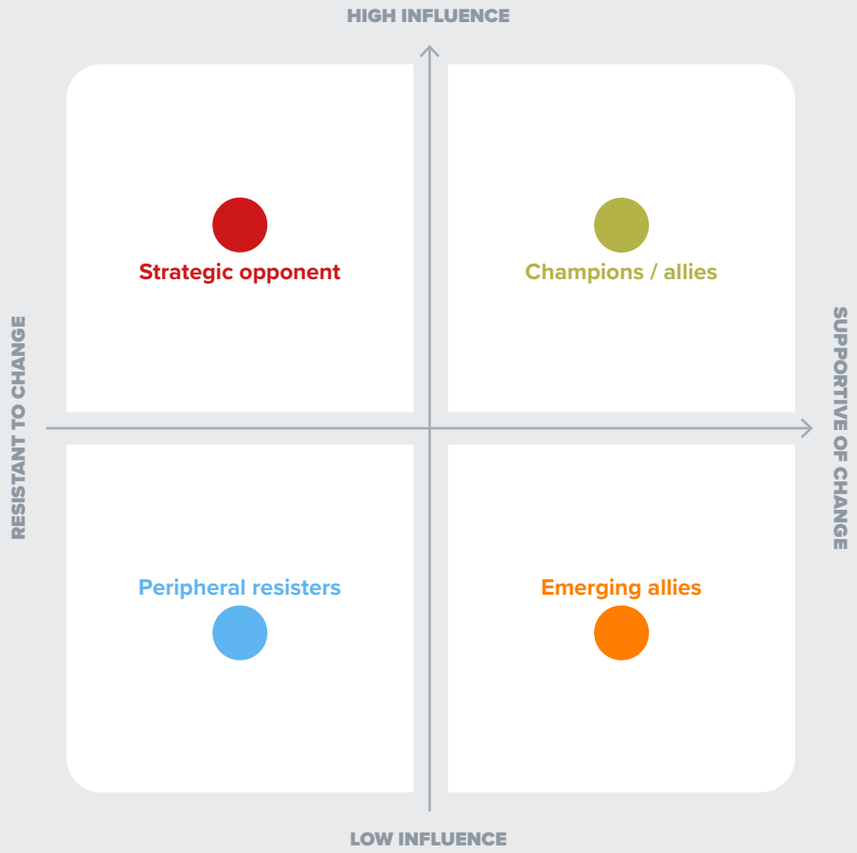
This allows teams to identify:

- Champions or potential allies (high influence, supportive)
- Stakeholders to engage or manage carefully (high influence, resistant)
- Marginalized actors to empower (low influence, supportive)
- Actors with limited impact (low influence, resistant)

The tool supports PPEA analysis by:

- Translating PPEA insights into practical decisions by clarifying where influence lies and how different actors relate to a proposed change.
- Supporting adaptive programming by helping teams reassess relationships and engagement strategies as actors' positions and influence shift.
- Identifying entry points and strategic actors that may otherwise be overlooked.

The Stakeholder Influence Tool



How to use the tool

Refer to your stakeholder mapping. Place each stakeholder into one of the four quadrants based on:

- Their level of influence over the issue (e.g., agenda-setting, gatekeeping, resource control)
- Their position regarding the proposed change (actively supportive, passively supportive, resistant, or neutral)

The quadrants are color-coded:

- The green quadrant is for champions and drivers of reform. Actively engage them and build coalitions.
- The orange quadrant is for emerging allies. Consider empowering them.
- The red quadrant is for active resisters. Consider whether and how to engage or negotiate with them.
- The blue quadrant is for peripheral resisters. Monitor them but be aware that they may not warrant major investment.

Use this analysis to identify:

- Who to engage, when and how
- Who are the champions of change and who are the spoilers
- Where to invest in trust-building, where to offer incentives and where to find shared interests or overlapping goals that allow actors to support the change
- How to monitor shifting alliances or interests

Examples of strategic allies in resistant contexts:

- A technocrat focused on efficiency and institutional performance
- A judge or police officer frustrated with impunity or dysfunction
- A government department seeking international legitimacy or foreign funding

These actors may not share people-centred goals, but their interests may partially align with justice and security reform. Mapping and engaging them can help to expand opportunities for change.

Things to consider when undertaking the analysis

Stakeholders' positions and power:

- What are their interests?
- What potential losses or gains do they associate with change?
- Who do they influence—who could they persuade to support or oppose change?
- What resources or capacities do they have that could be harnessed for change?
- What incentives might shift their position?

Enablers of change:

- Who are the enablers—who has skills, funding or institutional access?
- Who are the influencers—who are the power and authority holders?

ANNEX 5

APPLYING THE SIX DIMENSIONS TOOL TO NON-STATE JUSTICE AND SECURITY ACTORS

Deciding whether and how to engage non-State or hybrid justice and security actors requires careful analysis. The Six Dimensions Tool, developed by Leanne McKay, provides a structured way to navigate this challenge. See section 5.3.1 for a full description of the tool.

In many contexts, especially those affected by conflict, fragility or exclusion, people rely more on non-State or hybrid (neither fully State nor fully non-state) actors than on formal institutions. These may include customary leaders, community-based groups, women's associations, religious authorities, local security or vigilante groups, or informal mediators.

Engaging with these actors can bring opportunities, but also raises political, legal, operational and ethical challenges.

The people-centred approach starts with understanding who these actors are, what roles they play in people's justice and security outcomes, and how they relate to people's needs and rights. It calls for contextual, politically informed and rights-based analysis. These actors may play constructive, harmful or ambiguous roles. Their roles and risk profiles can shift over time. Regular reflection helps teams reassess whether engagement is appropriate and feasible.

See **Section 6.2**: Reflect and learn.

Decisions to engage should:

- Be based on an understanding of actors' actual roles and legitimacy, not on assumptions or state-centric biases
- Be informed by people's experiences, preferences and safety
- Consider how engagement advances or undermines human rights, gender equality, and trust-building

Engagement must not reinforce exclusion, impunity or harmful practices. The aim is to support system shifts towards fairness, accountability and people-centred outcomes. In some cases, the Six Dimensions Tool may support a decision not to engage—for example, when actors lack legitimacy, pose high risks or undermine rights.

The table below guides teams through a structured decision process to determine if, when and how to engage non-State justice and security actors in people-centred programming. Each dimension includes a short takeaway that highlights the implications for engagement.

Dimension	Key questions and considerations
1. Readiness and ripeness	Are there shifts (e.g., peace agreements, decentralization or local innovation) that create space for engagement? Are actors seeking reform, legitimacy or support? Is the State open to plural justice or hybrid arrangements? Could these be institutionalized? Are communities and non-State actors demonstrating collective will for demilitarization or reintegration? Are there signs of inclusion (e.g., women leaders or norm change) that suggest readiness for rights-based engagement? → If any or all of these conditions exist, the moment may be ripe to explore constructive engagement.
2. Receptiveness of actors	Are actors willing to engage on rights-based terms, improve inclusion or collaborate with the State? Do people, especially women, youth or marginalized groups, trust these actors or want reform? Are there existing trusted and legitimate structures (e.g., community councils) that could be strengthened? Can people speak openly about these actors and their performance? Are change agents positioned to influence others, build networks or model practices that can shift wider dynamics? → Receptiveness is a key precondition for engagement. Look for readiness not only among the actors themselves, but also among the communities they serve and key institutional counterparts who would be part of any engagement process.
3. Resistance to change	Could engagement be seen as undermining the state or legitimizing controversial actors? Might backlash come from powerful elites, religious institutions or traditional authorities? Could political sensitivities among donors or government actors block support, or could formal institutions resist sharing authority? Are there legal or bureaucratic barriers (e.g., internal processes) to collaboration? → Resistance may require careful political analysis, quiet diplomacy or indirect engagement (e.g. convening dialogues, joint problem-solving or training through neutral platforms).
4. Risks of engaging	Is there a risk of legitimizing rights-violating practices (e.g., gender discrimination, vigilante justice)? Are safety, reputational or political risks for partners, communities or UNDP manageable? Are safeguards and accountability mechanisms in place? → High-risk contexts may require alternative strategies, such as supporting oversight mechanisms, state regulation or community-based monitoring. UNDP's Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP) must be applied to all planned engagement with State and non-State security actors.
5. People's priority needs	Do people, especially women, youth or marginalized groups, use and trust these actors? Do these actors have community legitimacy? Do they meet people's justice and security needs, or do they reinforce exclusion or coercive norms? Would engagement with these actors help fill urgent justice and security service gaps? → Engagement is only warranted if actors are seen as relevant, accessible and capable of improvement. Otherwise, UNDP risks reinforcing exclusion and entrenched power.
6. Organizational feasibility	Is engagement technically or politically feasible? Can UNDP engage directly or indirectly through partners (e.g., civil society, universities, oversight bodies)? Does engagement align with UNDP's mandate and comparative advantage? Can UNDP engage in a way that is principled (rights-based), politically smart and within its mandate? Could it catalyse positive change (i.e., shifting norms, strengthening accountability or supporting system transformation)? Does UNDP have the trust, neutrality or partnerships to play a constructive role? → UNDP must ask not just whether to engage, but how to engage in a way that is principled and rights-based, effective and catalytic.

Programming tip

Engagement with non-State and hybrid actors can take many forms, including public forums, quiet diplomacy, capacity-building or policy dialogue. Engagement should be tailored to the actor, context and risk profile. Examples of types of engagement include:

- Direct or indirect engagement: Directly training customary leaders on mediation skills, or working through legal aid partners who already engage with community leaders and groups.
- Public or quiet approaches: Convening public forums that include customary authorities alongside formal actors, or holding closed-door meetings to build trust between State and traditional leaders.
- Partnership or convening roles: Partnering with trusted intermediaries, facilitating dialogue between police and local security groups, or supporting government frameworks that regulate and monitor informal justice providers.

These resources offer guidance on context-sensitive strategies to advance people-centred justice by engaging non-State and hybrid actors: Working Group on Customary and Informal Justice and SDG16+, *Diverse Pathways to People-Centred Justice: Report of the Working Group on Customary and Informal Justice and SDG16+* (2023). This report offers practical examples of the spectrum of engagement options possible. ODI, *Taking People-Centred Justice to Scale: The Role of Customary and Informal Justice in Advancing People-Centred Justice* (2023). This policy brief explores how to navigate challenges of engaging customary and informal justice and security actors.

ANNEX 6

THE PEOPLE-CENTRED CAPACITY AND INTEGRITY FRAMEWORK

The People-Centred Capacity and Integrity Framework (PCCIF) helps teams assess institutions across four dimensions and identify strategic entry points for strengthening people-centred capacity and integrity.

Use this tool during institutional assessments, strategy development or stakeholder dialogue to guide reflection on capacity and integrity. It complements tools such as the Six Dimensions Tool and participatory co-design methods.

See **Section 5.2**: Co-creation and local ownership.

The PCCIF was developed by Leanne McKay and builds on the original Capacity and Integrity Framework in UNDP's Vetting Public Employees in Post-Conflict Settings: Operational Guidelines (2006), adapting it to focus on strengthening institutions in ways that are inclusive, accountable and grounded in people's rights, justice and security needs, and experiences.

To capture these dimensions, the framework looks at two core dimensions of any institution:

- The individuals who work within it
- The organization as a whole

It also examines two qualities that are essential across both dimensions for a people-centred approach:

- Capacity—the ability to do the job well
- Integrity—the ability to do the job fairly and in line with human rights and rule of law principles

The result is a 2x2 matrix covering individual and organizational dimensions of both capacity and integrity, summarized below:

The People-Centred Capacity and Integrity Framework

Individual capacity encompasses the knowledge, skills, competence, experience and well-being of personnel.

Individual integrity encompasses the behaviour, ethics, human rights commitment and inclusive mindset of personnel.

Organizational capacity encompasses the institution's structure, systems, resources and information flows for effective service delivery.

Organizational integrity encompasses how institutions uphold public trust through representation (e.g., gender, ethnicity, geographic origin, religion); accountability (e.g., disciplinary and complaint procedures, oversight mechanisms); independence; transparency; and the provision of responsive, quality services.

The PCCIF is designed to support strategic, people-centred interventions.
It helps teams:

- Diagnose an institution's current status, strengths, weaknesses and priority areas for change
- Facilitate dialogue with institutional personnel, government actors, civil society and development partners on opportunities for change
- Identify entry points and design practical, people-centred interventions by using the PCCIF alongside the Six Dimensions Tool
- Track progress over time

It promotes a holistic view of institutional transformation, strengthening both the technical and public-facing sides of justice and security systems so they work better for the people they serve.

The matrix can be used to:

- Understand where strengths and weaknesses lie across technical and normative dimensions
- Identify whether bottlenecks are rooted in people, systems, values or resources
- Prioritize change efforts that improve both functionality and fairness in service delivery
- Align institutional strengthening with people's expectations and rights

The following breakdown unpacks each quadrant of the framework, providing definitions to guide assessment and reflection.

Capacity × Individual

- **Knowledge and skills:** Practical and technical abilities to perform a role effectively.
- **Competence:** Applying knowledge, skills and judgment to meet professional standards.
- **Experience:** Accumulated practical exposure that enhances insight, problem-solving and contextual awareness.
- **Well-being:** Mental, emotional and physical health to support sustainable, ethical and effective work.

Capacity × Organization

- **Structure:** Institutional setup, roles and mandates that define how the organization functions.
- **Infrastructure and resources:** Physical facilities, staffing and financing needed to deliver services.
- **Internal systems:** Policies and mechanisms for internal coordination, management and decision-making.
- **Information flows:** How information is generated, shared, received and acted upon within an organization and with the public.

Integrity × Individual

- **Human rights:** Commitment to uphold dignity, equality and rights of all people.
- **Conduct:** Ethical behaviour and professionalism in how one exercises power and interacts with others.
- **Service orientation:** A mindset focused on meeting people's needs fairly and effectively.
- **Empathy and inclusion:** Understanding diverse experiences and engaging all people fairly and respectfully, especially the vulnerable and excluded.

Integrity × Organization

- **Representation:** Reflecting the diversity and perspectives of the population.
- **Accountability:** Mechanisms for public oversight and participation, and accountability (e.g., complaint handling).
- **Independence:** Freedom from undue political or external influence, upholding fairness and impartiality.
- **Transparency:** Openness and public access to institutional information, processes and decisions.
- **Responsive, quality services:** Delivery of timely, fair, accessible and effective services that meet people's needs.

ANNEX 7

PEOPLE-CENTRED OUTPUT AND INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME INDICATORS

This annex presents a sample set of output and intermediate outcome indicators for common justice and security interventions supported by UNDP. Grounded in the people-centred approach outlined in the Guide, the indicators help teams move beyond activity-based metrics to track tangible changes in people's experiences, agency and outcomes.

The nine dimensions of change introduced in Step 2 support teams to define and measure the types of change that matter for people-centred outcomes: shifts in people's participation, inclusion, agency and access, as well as in institutional behaviour, responsiveness and accountability.

By focusing on what matters to people, such as whether they can access justice, feel safe, are treated fairly and can act when their rights are at risk, these indicators support more meaningful measurement and more accountable people-centred programming.

Intervention Area	Result type	Indicator	People-Centred Dimensions
Legal aid/legal empowerment	Output	% of legal aid services accessed by women, youth, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons or ethnic minorities	Access, Inclusion
Legal aid/legal empowerment	Output	# of legal aid clients referred by community-based or frontline actors (e.g., paralegals, health workers, social workers, teachers, traditional leaders)	Access, Inclusion
Legal aid/legal empowerment	Output	# of legal aid delivery points (e.g., help desks, university clinics, mobile units) co-designed or revised through direct community consultations	Participation, Access
Legal aid/legal empowerment	Output	# of awareness sessions conducted by community paralegals	Access, Agency
Legal aid/legal empowerment	Intermediate outcome	% of community members who report improved understanding of their rights after awareness sessions	Access, Agency
Legal aid/legal empowerment	Intermediate outcome	% of people who report paralegal support helped them understand options and make decisions to resolve a justice problem	Access, Agency
Legal aid/legal empowerment	Intermediate outcome	% of people who report taking specific action to resolve a justice problem within [X period of time] of attending an awareness session/receiving legal advice	Access, Agency
Legal aid/legal empowerment	Intermediate outcome	% of legal aid clients who report overall satisfaction with the legal aid service, regardless of case outcome	Access, Service orientation
Legal aid/legal empowerment	Intermediate outcome	% of legal aid clients who report that their view of the justice system improved after receiving support	Service orientation, Accountability
Legal aid/legal empowerment	Intermediate outcome	% of legal aid clients who report understanding the advice or process after receiving legal aid services	Access, Agency

Community engagement/policing	Output	# of officers trained in community engagement, trauma response or conflict sensitivity	Shifting mindsets and behaviour, Service orientation
Community engagement/policing	Output	# of police-community dialogues held per quarter where community priorities are jointly defined and documented	Participation, Service orientation
Community engagement/policing	Output	# of joint police-community action plans that include priorities raised by women, youth and other excluded groups	Participation, Inclusion, Accountability
Community engagement/policing	Output	# of co-designed (community and police) safety initiatives tailored to women's or youth concerns implemented within X months	Inclusion, Access
Community engagement/policing	Output	# of local/national policy documents that incorporate community policing principles	Embedding in systems
Community engagement/policing	Intermediate outcome	% of local governments or police stations with dedicated budget lines for implementing community policing strategy by end of Financial Year X	Embedding in systems
Community engagement/policing	Intermediate outcome	% of community members who report improved communication and trust with police as a result of police-community collaboration	Service orientation, Accountability
Community engagement/policing	Intermediate outcome	% of community members from vulnerable groups who report having a voice in local safety decisions (disaggregate by group type)	Inclusion, Agency
Community engagement/policing	Intermediate outcome	% of police officers who report increased understanding of community needs after participating in engagement activities	Shifting mindsets and behaviour, Service orientation
Community engagement/policing	Intermediate outcome	% of community members who report being treated with fairness and respect during their most recent interaction with police	Service orientation, Accountability
Institutional reform (justice or security)	Output	# of functional feedback or complaints mechanisms established or improved in justice/security institutions within project period	Accountability and oversight, Embedding in systems, Service orientation
Institutional reform (justice or security)	Output	# of frontline service facilities redesigned to integrate justice, legal aid and social services (e.g., police stations, one-stop centres, justice houses)	Service orientation, Embedding in systems
Institutional reform (justice or security)	Output	# of institutional reforms that incorporate feedback or priorities identified by women, youth or marginalised groups during consultations	Participation, Inclusion, Shifting mindsets and behaviour
Institutional reform (justice or security)	Output	# of inter-agency coordination mechanisms established or strengthened to address justice or security bottlenecks (e.g., justice coordination committees, multisectoral taskforces)	Embedding in systems, Accountability and oversight
Institutional reform (justice or security)	Output	# of staff trained in people-centred service delivery, including trauma-informed, victim-sensitive and inclusive practices (disaggregated by institution and gender)	Shifting mindsets and behaviour, Service orientation
Institutional reform (justice or security)	Intermediate outcome	% of users who report being treated with empathy and respect when interacting with justice/security staff	Service orientation
Institutional reform (justice or security)	Intermediate outcome	% of trained staff who actively participate in formal peer support or mentoring initiatives to promote people-centred practices	Shifting mindsets and behaviour; Embedding in systems
Institutional reform (justice or security)	Intermediate outcome	% of institutions that have adopted performance review systems incorporating people-centred service standards	Accountability and oversight, Service orientation
Institutional reform (justice or security)	Intermediate outcome	% of complaints received by oversight mechanisms that are acknowledged and responded to within 30 days	Accountability and oversight
Institutional reform (justice or security)	Intermediate outcome	% of justice or security institutions that publish annual user satisfaction results for service improvement planning	Accountability and oversight, Embedding in systems, Service orientation

Programming Tip: Using quantitative and qualitative data together

Quantitative indicators are essential for tracking trends, comparing results and demonstrating progress. But in people-centred programming, numbers alone rarely tell the full story. Qualitative methods, such as focus groups, interviews or open-ended survey questions, help uncover how people experience justice and security systems, why certain outcomes occur and what changes matter most to them. Together, these approaches provide a more accurate and actionable picture. Teams should:

- Use quantitative data to track reach, access, satisfaction or perceptions across different groups.
- Use qualitative insights to understand how trust is built, what makes people feel safe or why some groups still face barriers to justice and security.

Combining quantitative data and qualitative insights can help teams adjust programming in real time, ensure relevance and strengthen accountability to vulnerable and marginalized people. For example, quantitative data can show the percentage of users who report being satisfied with the mediation process, while qualitative data offers users' descriptions of what made the mediation process feel fair or unfair.

ANNEX 8
TIPS ON HOW TO RUN REFLECTION SESSIONS

Reflection sessions provide an opportunity to pause, step back and assess whether your programming is on track. They allow teams and partners the space to think differently, to make sense of what's happening, surface assumptions and adapt to context shifts in order to improve outcomes.

Reflection sessions are not the same as formal consultations or validation meetings. Their purpose is structured learning and adaptation. Depending on the objective, they may involve only UNDP personnel or also include partners and stakeholders, but the focus remains on making sense of evidence and context to inform programming decisions.

These sessions help answer strategic questions:

- Are we seeing the change we hoped for?
- What is emerging in the context?
- Are we still doing the right thing, in the right way, for the right people?

When to hold a reflection session

- Regularly—for instance, every six months during implementation (or annually for multi-year projects).
- After major shifts—such as political changes, security incidents or community feedback.
- At least once in the project life cycle—for shorter initiatives, a session should be held to generate learning for future programming or to course-correct if held during implementation.

Tips for running a reflection session

1 Define a clear purpose

Keep it simple and focused. Examples:

- "To reflect on the last six months and identify what's working or not."
- "To understand emerging risks and shifts in context."
- "To decide whether and how to adapt our approach going forward (in consultation with relevant partners)."

2 Create a safe space for honest dialogue

- Set the tone: leaders or managers should model openness and curiosity.
- Focus on learning, not blame.
- Encourage participants to speak candidly about what is really happening, not just what is in the project or donor report.
- Go beyond describing activities or events to explore how and why things happened the way they did.

3 Include diverse voices

- Bring together personnel from different roles, regions or levels.
- Include partners, such as local authorities, civil society or community representatives, where appropriate.

4 Use simple guiding questions

Questions could include:

- "What are we learning from how people are responding to our intervention?"
- "Are we seeing the outcomes we expected? If not, why?"
- "What could be done now to change the outcome?"
- "What has changed in the context?"
- "What resistance or unexpected results have we encountered?"
- "What assumptions no longer hold?"

Tools such as the What So What Now What model can help teams think about an experience, its implications and what that means for the future.

5 Look beyond activities

Encourage discussion not just on what was delivered, but on deeper change. Explore questions such as:

- "Are people's experiences of justice or safety improving?"
- "Is trust or participation increasing?"
- "Are we reinforcing or disrupting harmful norms?"

6 Document and follow up

- Assign someone to capture key insights and recommendations.
- Tools such as the Start, Stop, Continue matrix can help structure discussion and prioritize actions. For example:
  - Start: What should we begin doing to address emerging needs or opportunities?
  - Stop: What is no longer effective or appropriate?
  - Continue: What is working well and should be sustained?
- Share outcomes with decision-makers and reflect changes in workplans or strategies.
- Let session participants know what was acted upon.
- Where appropriate, share back relevant insights or programming changes with partners and communities.

7 Keep it light but purposeful

- A full- or multi-day workshop is not always necessary. A focused short reflection session may suffice.
- Use flipcharts, sticky notes or online tools (e.g. Mural) to keep the session interactive.
- Avoid formal presentations; promote conversation instead.
- Repeat regularly to embed learning into your way of working.

ANNEX 9

PEOPLE-CENTRED EVALUATIONS

UNDP evaluations typically apply the six OECD-DAC criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. These criteria can fully accommodate a people-centred lens by focusing on whether interventions align with people's rights, needs and experiences, and whether they are contributing to more just, inclusive and accountable systems.

Evaluations are also guided by key UNEG (United Nations Evaluation Group) documents, including the *Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System*, the guidance on *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations*, and the *Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation*. These frameworks ensure that evaluations are conducted with rigor, ethical integrity, and attention to human rights and gender equality, while the OECD-DAC criteria provide the structure for assessing performance.

The table below presents examples of how a people-centred lens can be integrated into each OECD/DAC criterion.

Programming tip

When planning evaluations, involve people affected by the intervention in shaping evaluation questions, interpreting findings and identifying lessons. Doing so enhances relevance, accountability and learning.

BetterEvaluation, *"Participatory Evaluation"*.
BetterEvaluation, *"Empowerment Evaluation"*.

OECD-DAC criteria	People-centred lens
Relevance: **Is the intervention doing the right things?**	→ Does the intervention respond to justice and security problems as people experience and define them? → Is it aligned with the needs and rights of those most at risk of exclusion?
Coherence: **How well does the intervention fit?**	→ Does it connect with other efforts across sectors (e.g., rule of law, stabilization, livelihoods, gender, prevention of violence) to address both symptoms and root causes of injustice and insecurity? → Are deliberate efforts made to coordinate across sectors, mandates and institutions to strengthen accessible, accountable and legitimate justice and security systems?
Effectiveness: **Is the intervention achieving its objectives?**	→ Has the intervention improved people's experiences of justice, sense of fairness, sense of safety, or trust in institutions? → Are there observable shifts in participation, power dynamics or access for marginalized groups?
Efficiency: **How well are resources being used?**	→ Does the intervention support locally led, inclusive and cost-effective solutions? → Has it built capacity among institutions and communities to sustain results?
Impact: **What difference does the intervention make?**	→ Has the intervention contributed to change in systems (e.g., behaviours, institutional culture, norms)? → Are institutions becoming more inclusive, accountable and rights-respecting? → Have there been changes in people's lives—for example, changes in how they experience justice and security systems in terms of access, fairness and trust, or how these outcomes have affected their well-being?
Sustainability: **Will the benefits last?**	→ Is there ownership by communities and/or institutions? → Are systems in place for ongoing community engagement, feedback and adaptation? → Is political and institutional commitment likely to continue? → Are the positive changes people have experienced, such as being able to access support to resolve disputes or feeling safer, likely to be maintained over time?

ANNEX 10
THEMATIC SPOTLIGHTS FOR PEOPLE-CENTRED PROGRAMMING

This annex presents thematic spotlights on three UNDP programming areas—Digitalization and E-Justice, Environmental Justice, and Business and Human Rights—that highlight how the people-centred approach informs analysis, design and implementation. Each spotlight provides concrete examples, entry points and additional resources for how UNDP integrates the approach.

Thematic spotlight 1: Digitalization and E-justice

E-justice is more than a tool for efficiency. It is a strategic tool for transforming justice systems to be more effective, accessible and responsive to people's rights and needs, especially the rights and needs of those most at risk of being left behind. A people-centred approach to e-justice means co-designing digital tools with users, ensuring digital inclusion (especially for women, rural communities and persons with disabilities), and embedding safeguards around data privacy and due process. UNDP supports governments and communities to ensure that digital transformation delivers more accessible, fair and accountable justice. For example:

- In Malawi, UNDP partnered with the Malawi Judiciary and Airtel Malawi to roll out an e-court platform that expands access to justice in rural areas and improves coordination between prisons and courts. The digital solution removes geographic and financial barriers that previously delayed justice, enabling timely, local resolution of cases, particularly for vulnerable people. It has reduced operations costs for courts and prisons and improved efficiency, ensuring that individuals no longer wait years for a hearing due to logistical constraints.
- In Kenya, the E-Judiciary mobile application allows people to track case progress, access judgments or receive court notifications. Linked to the roll out of Small Claims Courts, the solution supports the judiciary's efforts to bring justice services closer to people through simplified procedures, expedited proceedings and low-cost access for disputes under 1 million Kenyan shillings. By mid-2024, the courts had resolved over 68,000 cases, releasing approximately US$100 million back into the economy.
- In Syria, a virtual legal aid platform provides Syrians inside and outside the country with access to legal information and advice.
- Across contexts, from Palestine and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Indonesia and Uzbekistan, judiciaries and government entities are using digital technologies to gather and analyse data to detect gaps and improve justice service delivery. For a snapshot of these country examples and lessons learned, see the Independent Evaluation Office's *Evaluation of UNDP's Support to Access to Justice* (2023).

For resources, toolkits and updates on UNDP's support to digitalization and e-justice, see https://www.undp.org/rolhr/justice/digitalization-and-e-justice.

Thematic spotlight 2: Environmental Justice

Environmental harm disproportionately affects marginalized groups, who often face barriers to legal redress. The people-centred approach amplifies their voices, supports communities in claiming environmental rights, strengthens grievance mechanisms and promotes participation in environmental governance.

UNDP's global strategy advances accountability and protection of environmental rights through legal and policy reform, people-centred institutions and legal empowerment. It emphasizes a multidisciplinary approach across sectors, including justice, human rights, environment and climate, and business and human rights.

Examples of UNDP's environmental justice work include the following:

- In Mongolia, a comprehensive approach combined legal reform with community-led action. The government adopted a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, mandating human rights due diligence across sectors, including mining. The national mining association reinforced this step by requiring all member companies to comply with the Responsible Mining Codex. Participatory environmental monitoring committees empowered herder communities, especially women, to jointly monitor mining impacts with companies and

authorities. Communities uncovered unapproved mining activities, restored 3.2 hectares of pastureland degraded by mining and enabled community participation in the renewal of environmental impact assessments. Herders gained legal knowledge, built trust with companies and secured commitments to rehabilitate sacred sites, strengthening accountability and delivering tangible justice outcomes.

- In Georgia, environmental rights are protected by the Constitution. To support the realization of these rights, UNDP conducted the country's first Baseline Assessment on Access to Environmental Justice, mapping legal and institutional barriers to redress for environmental harm, especially for marginalized groups. Broad stakeholder engagement informed actionable recommendations to strengthen environmental accountability. A complementary awareness campaign reached over 326,000 people through online and in-person events. By engaging youth, journalists, activists and human rights defenders, the initiative raised legal awareness and promoted citizen participation, laying a foundation for advancing environmental justice in the country.

For UNDP's strategy and guidance note on environmental justice, see https://www.undp.org/rolhr/justice/environmental-justice.

Thematic spotlight 3: Business and Human Rights

Businesses have a responsibility to respect human rights under the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), a global standard built on three pillars: protect, respect and remedy. These pillars define the respective duties of states and businesses in upholding rights. UNDP engagement includes supporting participatory policymaking processes to advance implementation of the UNGPs, integrating human rights due diligence into public and private sector practices, strengthening non-State grievance mechanisms and improving access to remedy. The people-centred approach enables affected communities to shape how policies and accountability mechanisms are designed and monitored, while addressing practical justice needs—such as secure land tenure, safe working conditions and legal identity for small enterprise registration.

Examples of UNDP's activity in the area include the following:

- In Sri Lanka, awareness-raising led to increased reporting of business-related rights violations and policy changes. Community sessions targeting women-headed households, women-led enterprises and war widows exposed the harms of unregulated microfinance. As a result, over 100 complaints and 1 public interest litigation were filed, and nearly 280 women submitted appeals to the Central Bank. Engagement with the Human Rights Commission, government officials and the Microfinance Practitioners' Association mobilized political support to address illegal practices. A documentary on rural women entrepreneurs supported advocacy that led to new regulations protecting women from exploitation. Over 400 women were trained and organized into a network sustaining advocacy efforts beyond the project.

- In the Asia-Pacific, the Routes2Remedy digital toolkit was developed in response to rising threats by the State or businesses against those reporting business-related rights abuses. The toolkit provides practical guidance and legal resources to help users access remedies and navigate risks. It also supports defenders in documenting abuses, engaging with grievance mechanisms, and advocating for stronger protections against corporate and State reprisals.

For resources, tools and updates on UNDP's support to Business and Human Rights, see https://www.undp.org/rolhr/business-and-human-rights.

United Nations Development Programme