



Designing and delivering people-centred justice and security



Quick reference guide



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.



Learn from real-world programming examples from across UNDP's global experience.

This quick reference guide provides a concise overview of ***Designing and Delivering People-Centred Justice and Security: A UNDP Programming Guide*** (the Guide).

It outlines the Guide's structure and content, highlights its key features and tools, and offers practical orientation for users.

What is the Guide?

The Guide is a practical resource to help UNDP teams design and deliver justice and security programming that supports systems to be more responsive and accountable to people's rights, needs and experiences. It explains how to apply the UNDP people-centred approach to justice and security (the approach) across different contexts and stages of the programme cycle. Drawing on UNDP's global experience, the Guide translates the approach into actionable steps, tools and strategies to inform the design, implementation and adaptation of projects, programmes and portfolios. It serves as both a toolkit and a source of inspiration, whether teams are new to the approach or building on existing efforts.

Recognising that justice and security are interconnected in people's lives, the Guide supports integrated, people-centred strategies that advance UNDP's goal of systems transformation, ensuring that justice and security systems are not only efficient and effective but also fair, accessible and accountable to the people they serve.

The Guide helps UNDP teams to:

Why does it matter?

Justice and security are public goods that the State is responsible for providing to all people, grounded in its obligation to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. They are core components of the social contract and essential for peace and sustainable development. Yet when the systems responsible for delivering them are weak, inaccessible or unresponsive to people’s rights and needs, progress on all development goals is undermined.

The Guide offers a structured approach to programming that works with justice and security systems as they are, engaging the range of State, hybrid and non-State actors that people rely on for their justice and security needs. It supports programming that is guided by people’s rights, needs and experiences, not just institutional mandates, and is focused on delivering tangible improvements in people’s lives through inclusive, integrated and outcome-focused interventions.

Who is it for?

The Guide is primarily for UNDP teams engaging with justice and security issues across different contexts. It is relevant to governance, rule of law, justice and security teams, as well as colleagues working in connected areas such as gender, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, stabilization, early recovery, environmental governance, and climate, peace and security. Justice and security are cross-cutting development issues that arise in sectors including health, livelihoods and education. Applying the approach means engaging across this wider landscape to support more coherent and integrated programming.

When to use it?

The Guide is relevant at the project, programme and portfolio levels and at all stages of the programme cycle, including diagnosis, design, implementation, adaptation and scaling. It applies across the full range of contexts where UNDP works, from crisis prevention, response, and recovery to long-term development. The Guide enables inclusive, rights-based responses across the Humanitarian–Development–Peace (HDP) nexus and supports prevention by addressing the root causes of injustice and insecurity. In crisis and recovery settings, it helps ensure that efforts to meet people’s immediate justice and security needs are not disconnected from the systemic changes required to address underlying drivers of injustice and insecurity.

Seven design principles for people-centred justice and security programming

People-centred programming is guided by seven core design principles that shape every aspect of design, delivery and impact. They apply at all stages of the programme cycle and should be revisited regularly as programming evolves.



Start with people’s justice and security needs

Understand how people experience injustice and insecurity.



Design with people, not for them

Co-create solutions with the people most affected by the problem.



Work with the ecosystem

Engage the system of State, hybrid and non-State actors that people rely on.



Focus on relationships, not just institutions

Build trust through fair, accountable and responsive services.



Strengthen people’s agency and voice

Support empowerment, participation, action and accountability.



Measure what matters to people

Track improved processes and outcomes for people.



Adapt as you go

Test, reflect and learn, and adapt based on what works for people.



See **Section 3.2** of the Guide for detailed explanations of the principles.

What’s in the Guide

The Guide is structured in seven chapters:

About this Guide

Introduces the Guide’s purpose, scope and structure.

UNDP’s people-centred approach to justice and security

Explains the approach and its core elements, benefits and key messages.

Introducing the three-step programming approach

Presents the three-step process for applying the approach.

Step 1: Identify and understand the problem

Explains how to understand people’s needs, analyse systems and diagnose the problem.

Step 2: Design and test solutions

Describes how to identify entry points, co-create and test solutions, and apply people-centred MEL.

Step 3: Adapt and evolve interventions

Sets out how to reflect, learn, adapt and scale interventions.

Conclusion

Reinforces the Guide as a practical resource for adaptive, context-specific programming.

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

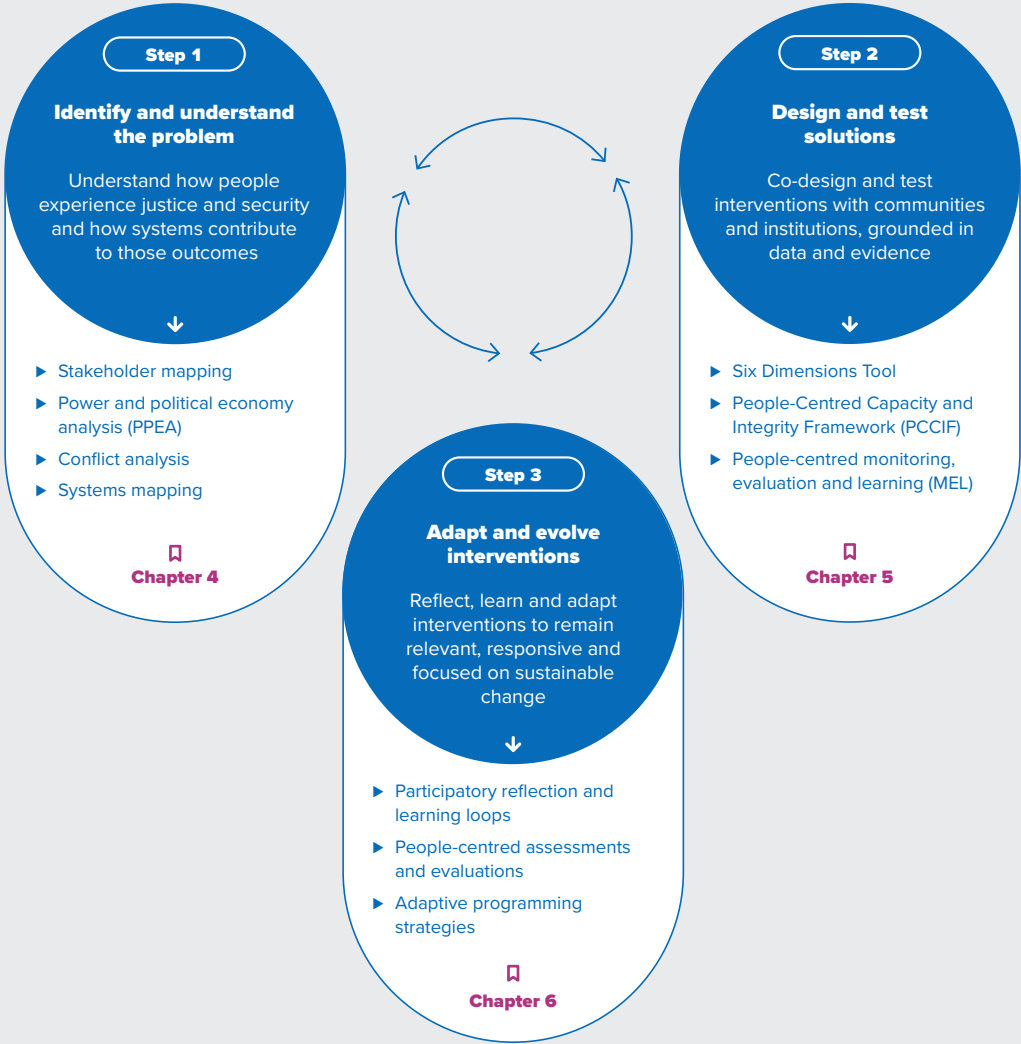
Chapter 6

Chapter 7

The three-step process:
putting the people-centred approach into practice



The Guide provides a structured, three-step process to help teams translate the approach into action. These steps are not linear. They are flexible, iterative and mutually reinforcing, designed to support continuous reflection, learning and adaptation as programming evolves. Each step is supported by practical tools and approaches that guide analysis, design and adaptation.



Where to find what in the Guide

Use this table to quickly find key sections of the Guide based on common programming questions.



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

How to navigate the Guide

The Guide is modular and designed for practical use. Users can start with the section most relevant to their context or stage of programming.

Each section includes design elements that support practical application and reinforce key messages:

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Connectors
highlight links between concepts or sections of the Guide.

Examples
draw from UNDP programming across diverse contexts.

Boxes
provide focused insights that reinforce key messages.


Resources
point to additional tools, readings, and guidance.

Guiding questions
support critical reflection at different stages of programming.


Common pitfalls to avoid
share lessons from UNDP’s experience for more effective decision-making.

Programming tips
offer practical strategies to enhance implementation and impact.


Where to go next



For the complete Guide, see:
**Designing and delivering people-centred justice and security:
A UNDP programming guide (2025)**



For the UNDP policy framework, see:
**The UNDP people-centred approach to justice and security:
A policy framework for justice and security programming (2025).**

 For more UNDP resources, visit: <https://www.undp.org/rolhr>

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