

# 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	<b>Introduction</b>	64
5.2	<b>Co-creation and local ownership</b>	66
5.2.1	Challenges for co-creation	68
5.2.2	Co-creation in the project design	68
5.2.3	Co-creation in implementation	70
5.3	<b>Identifying and prioritizing strategic entry points</b>	72
5.3.1	The Six Dimensions Tool	72
5.3.2	How to use the Six Dimensions Tool	75
5.4	<b>Identifying entry points in constrained political environments</b>	76
5.4.1	Reframe justice and security to unlock space for action	76
5.4.2	Strengthen community-level justice and security solutions	77
5.4.3	Integrate justice and security into other development work	78
5.4.4	Use data and dialogue to influence change	78
5.4.5	Work politically	79
5.4.6	Support State and non-State change champions	79
5.5	<b>Implementing people-centred interventions</b>	80
5.5.1	Adopting a holistic and integrated approach	80
5.5.2	Applying the approach across development contexts	81
5.5.3	Core elements of the approach: People and institutions	81
5.5.4	Enablers of people-centred change efforts	82



Introducing Parts A and B	83
<b>Part A   Empowering people and communities</b>	84
A.1 Participation	85
A.2 Inclusion	86
A.3 Agency	88
A.4 Access	91
A.5 Accountability	95
<b>Part B   Engaging the State and its institutions</b>	97
B.1 Laying the foundation for people-centred institutional transformation	97
B.2 Shifting institutional mindsets and behaviour	103
B.3 Strengthening service orientation	106
B.4 Embedding people-centred practices in systems	108
B.5 Ensuring accountability and oversight	110
<b>5.6 Integration and the portfolio approach</b>	114
5.6.1 Integration in practice	114
5.6.2 Beyond integration: The portfolio approach as a vehicle for systems change	116
<b>5.7 Building a monitoring, evaluation and learning system</b>	118
5.7.1 Responding to complexity	118
5.7.2 Measuring what matters to people	118
5.7.3 Essential elements of an MEL system	120

## 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 5.3.1). These are not technical fixes, but opportunities to shift power, relationships and outcomes for people.

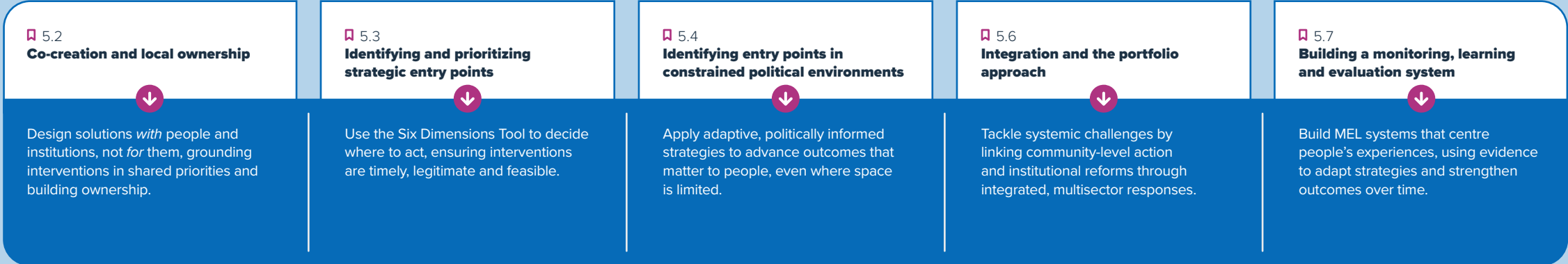
A core element of the approach is the need to strategically combine support at both the institutional and community levels to enable systems change. This holistic approach is essential to shifting outcomes at scale, as neither level can do so alone. In practice, teams may not always be able to engage 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**

**FOUNDATIONS OF DESIGNING AND TESTING PEOPLE-CENTRED INTERVENTIONS**





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.

**5.4 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, thereby 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.



## 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 through 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.



## 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 guidance on power and political economy analysis.

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



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

- **Local ownership.** 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 5.3.1** 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 | Tajikistan | 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.



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:

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
<b>Output indicators</b>	<p>These measure the tangible products that UNDP directly produces or supports.</p> <p><i>Examples: The number of people trained, or the number of legal aid clinics established.</i></p> <p>These are necessary for accountability and implementation monitoring, but are not sufficient to demonstrate whether activities led to real improvements for people.</p>
<b>Intermediate outcome indicators</b>	<p>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.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>
<b>Outcome indicators</b>	<p>These measure the short- to medium-term changes in behaviour, institutional practices, or people's trust and confidence in justice and security systems.</p> <p><i>Examples: Increased trust in police, or the proportion of users who report greater confidence using formal justice systems.</i></p> <p>These indicators verify whether the desired change has taken place.</p>
<b>Impact indicators</b>	<p>These capture longer-term, systemic change in people's lives or society.</p> <p><i>Examples: The overall public trust in justice and security institutions, or the reduction in conflict-related violence in a community.</i></p> <p>Impacts are influenced by many factors, not just a single project, and are often tracked at the national or sector level.</p>



### 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 people-centred 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.