

Albania

CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

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GCERF invites Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to apply for funding focused on strengthening national referral mechanisms for the identification of at-risk individuals and returnees and referral to service providers, building the capacities of relevant P/CVE and R&R actors and supporting Local Public Safety Councils

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 15 February at 23:59 PM CET

1. Background

The Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) is an independent Swiss foundation established to serve as the first global effort to support local, community-level initiatives aimed at strengthening resilience against violent extremist agendas. Operating at the nexus of security and development, GCERF is committed to working in partnership and consultation with governments, civil society, and the private sector in partner countries to support national strategies to address the local drivers of violent extremism. GCERF strengthens community resilience by supporting local community-level initiatives to address the drivers of violent extremism that promote social cohesion, community agency, equal access to opportunities, and individuals' sense of purpose.

Albania became a GCERF partner in 2019 as part of the Western Balkans regional expansion to support countries in the region with Rehabilitation and Reintegration of returnees from Northeast Syria. After becoming a partner country, GCERF signed the first grants in Albania in 2020. These programmes have been focused on the strengthening R&R process in the country, specifically through providing case management support to returnees, creating an enabling environment for RFTFs and their families, building capacities of P/CVE actors, as well as ensuring the sustainable transition of services.

Since January 2023, Albania's Ministry of Interior constituted a Technical Support Mechanism (TSM) to guide GCERF's grant-making and grant-management work in Albania. The TSM comprises members of multiple government agencies including interior, security, health, education, and social welfare, as well as members of civil society, the private sector, and international partners. As of 2023, GCERF funded three distinct

grants in Albania for upwards of USD 2mIn. In November 2023 GCERF's Investment Strategy for Albania was approved by GCERF's Governing Board. This call for expressions of interest is meant to serve as the second investment in the Albania strategy (2024-2027) and funding for Albania for up to 36 months.

After engaging in discussions with GCERF partners, the Technical Support Mechanism, and Albania's Ministry of Internal Affairs, it has been recognized that strengthening the national referral mechanism for identifying at-risk individuals and returnees and facilitating their referral to service providers—whether through the implementation of new approaches or the utilization of existing protocols and systems—is crucial. Similarly, it is vital to ensure that Local Public Safety Councils are operational and equipped to identify, refer cases, offer services, and facilitate coordination with local stakeholders to effectively address challenges related to P/CVE and R&R processes. According to the GCERF Needs Assessment conducted in 2023, the LPSC is acknowledged as an effective tool for preventing radicalization, yet there is a demand for increased capacity and specialized institutions. Challenges include a shortage of trained personnel, insufficient funding for activities, and the necessity for better coordination with both central and international organizations. The engagement of media, civil society, and the community is deemed crucial for success, and there is a recognized need for specialized services for reintegration¹.

Lastly, equally important is the need to strengthen the capacity of local multi-agency bodies, first responders, and government institutions. GCERF strives to ensure the continuation of achievements in R&R in Albania. GCERF partners emphasize the growing need for delivering R&R services within communities, in particular within detention centers. Key institutions, including schools, municipalities, and prisons, have dedicated efforts to prevent violent extremism over the years. Civil society organizations have played a crucial role through direct interventions at the institutional level, targeting specific groups and communities. Security officers in schools emphasize the necessity to enhance their capacities further, given their pivotal role in prevention. Additionally, they highlight the importance of improved collaboration with teachers, psychologists, and social workers within the school environment.² In moving forward with the rehabilitation and reintegration efforts for RFTFs, ensuring sustainable case management interventions is imperative. Religious leaders, multi-agency local bodies, frontline workers, and women and girls should continue to enhance their knowledge and awareness regarding PCVE and R&R. Additionally, it is recommended to ensure sustainable case management while collaborating with the Radicalisation Assessment Unit, the security sector, as well as supporting the second phase of the Multi-Agency Center³.

¹ GCERF Country Needs Assessment 2023.

² GCERF Country Needs Assessment 2023.

³ Consultations with the Technical Support Mechanism Members, December 2023.

3. Country Alignment and Coordination

During the last years of investment in Albania and the Western Balkans region, GCERF has strengthened collaboration with key stakeholders. Alignment and coordination with the Government of Albania's Strategy for P/CVE and CT as well as programmes implemented by other donors or CSOs are ensured through:

- The Technical (Country) Support Mechanism (TSM) was established by GCERF and the Ministry of Interior in January 2023. The Terms of Reference and membership of the TSM is attached. It is a highly active group with a strong mix of frontliners, political appointees, members of civil society, and the private sector.
- A **Regional Advisor** based in Pristina (Kosovo) strengthens coordination and consultations with in-country donors and other stakeholders.
- **GCERF partners' involvement in drafting the new Albania strategy for P/CVE and CT** will ensure that they are recognised partners and that their work is aligned with the strategy.

GCERF has demonstrated a commitment to aligning its work with the Government of Albania's Strategy for P/CVE and CT and collaborating with other stakeholders to achieve shared goals. The mechanisms and initiatives mentioned above reflect this commitment to effective coordination and collaboration.

4. Call for Expression of Interest

GCERF, in collaboration with the CSM of Albania, is pleased to announce a call for expressions of interest for CSOs in Albania to form a consortium and become a Principal Recipient (PR) of GCERF funding. GCERF will fund consortia of CSOs to achieve the following objectives:

- I. Strengthening the National Referral Mechanism: Building on an existing local referral mechanism
- II. Strengthening capacities of Multi-Agency Local Bodies, first responders and Government institutions to deal with P/CVE and R&R
- III. Facilitate the establishment and strengthening of LPSC to address P/CVE and R&R challenges in Albania

Consortium grants are managed and supported by the PRs, who are the legal recipients of GCERF funding and provide funding to other consortium members or "Sub-Recipients" (SR).

GCERF intends to grant from 1 to 2 awards out of this call for expression of interest. The first grant may contribute to strengthening the existing Local Referral Mechanism for the identification of at-risk individuals and returnees and referral to service providers in Albania. **The second grant** may facilitate the establishment and strengthening of LPSC to address P/CVE and R&R challenges, as well as strengthen the capacities of Multi-Agency Local Bodies, first responders and Government institutions.

In line with the **Investment Strategy for Albania** and **Country Needs Assessment**, the focus of the investment will be:

Who:

- National/local institutions and frontline workers
- Local and community based CSOs/ grassroots
- At-risk groups and individuals, children, and youth, including returnees.
- Returnees and their family members or legal guardians

Where:

Elbasan, Gramsh, Korca, Vlora, Fier, Lushnje, Mat, Kruja, Mirdite, Lezha, Puke, Shkodra, Has, Pogradec, Tirana, Librazhd, Bulqize, Cerrik, Kukes, Diber, Kavaja.

What:

A balanced approach to R&R and P/CVE of all forms of extremism through capacity building, reinforcing mechanisms and mitigating polarisation.

How:

CSOs and local institutions are provided the tools and support to work towards a sustainable and coordinated approach to tackling P/CVE and R&R.

Grant size

GCERF plans to sign grant agreements with CSOs by April 2024. GCERF will fund up to 2 grants out of this round of funding, with a possibility to top up awards after 18 months based on need and grant performance. Grants up to USD 1 million will be considered.

Grant duration

The grant duration should be 24–36 months (about 3 years).

Grantee

Each consortium should be led by a Principal Recipient (PR) responsible for providing subgrants to other consortium members (Sub-Recipients). Priority will be given to consortia whose members have experience implementing socioeconomic and governance programmes, specifically in the context of preventing violent extremism. Experience with implementing rehabilitation and reintegration programming is also highly desirable. Women-led and Youth-led (under the age of 35) are strongly encouraged to apply. Organisations with experience partnering with the private sector are also highly encouraged to apply.

Expressions of Interest

Applicants are asked to demonstrate that they meet GCERF's established prerequisites and possess the required capabilities to be a PR of GCERF funding.

PREREQUISITES

- (i) Appropriate legal registration of the consortium lead in Albania.
- (ii) Willingness and capacity to accept and fulfil the role of a PR (as described above).

CAPABILITIES

- (iii) Established relationships and credibility with the relevant national and local authorities, institutions and front liners (e.g. LPCs, CSOs, municipalities, social workers, schools, psychologists, and international organizations, etc.), and other stakeholders involved in R&R of FTFs and their families.
- (iv) Minimum three years of experience with programme management centered on community engagement, coordinating with multiple stakeholders and addressing various forms of extremism.
- (v) Experience in managing consortiums and providing capacity support to small grassroots organisations.
- (vi) Experience in managing sub-recipients and assessing and enhancing their capacities.
- (vii) Ability to manage community-based partners and implement multiple grants out of a consortium grant.
- (viii) Experience and capacity in financial management and in the management of and accounting for donor grant funding.
- (ix) Willingness and capacity to engage international partners as sub-recipients and service providers.

GCERF's planned activities in collaboration with grantees in Albania following key areas:

1. Support to Local Public Safety Councils (LPSC):

- Collaborate with local institutions to implement and enhance the capacity of multidisciplinary teams.
- Develop and disseminate locally tailored standard operating procedures (SOPs).
- Provide thematic training on P/CVE, disengagement, and community engagement.
- Deliver practical training sessions for efficient case management and response.
- Monitor the progress, accountability, and sustainability of LPSC.
- Offer technical support and training to relevant national institutions.
- Organize coordination meetings among local P/CVE and R&R actors, including

LPCs, CSOs, municipalities, and international organizations.

2. Strengthening capacities of Multi-Agency Local Bodies, first responders and Government institutions to deal with P/CVE and R&R:

- Offer capacity building on trauma treatment and trauma informed care for tertiary prevention practitioners (prison officers, probation services, psycho-social counselors).
- Develop and conduct professional and/or life skills programmes to support the employment prospects of vulnerable prisoners susceptible to radicalization.
- Creating re-entry programmes on deradicalization of juveniles and young prisoners, facilitating their community reintegration.
- Design a protocol for soft Information sharing, the administration and the integration of it for rehabilitative purposes for prisoners on an individual level.
- Strategic Communication and Online Counter Narratives for Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalism: Develop specific programs tailored to address identified needs for countering violent extremism and radicalism and utilize strategic communication and online counter-narratives aimed at disrupting the appeal of extremist ideologies.
- Establish a framework for monitoring social media about expressions of violent extremism, radicalism leading to violent actions, indoctrination, propaganda, recruitment, and analysing the preparation and development of counter-narratives and positive messages.
- Provide capacity building on Exit from violent extremism programs.
- Prepare assessment reports on the progress of the reintegration process for families returned from high-risk areas.
- Conduct training of teachers on identifying signs of radicalization and reporting, including the creation of a network for teacher coordinators for VE and radicalization.
- Implement a comprehensive school-based management program to identify and address students who may be susceptible to radicalization and extremism.
- Establish collaboration between pre-university educational institutions, the Ministry of Education and Sport, and vocational schools under the Ministry of Finances and Economy.
- Train prison and probation officers and other professionals dealing with the reintegration of radicalized prisoners and ex-prisoners, to facilitate the operationalization of existing methodologies and tools.
- Implement rehabilitation programs for RFTFs within the penitentiary system, addressing the needs of radicalized prisoners.
- Analyze and assess security criteria for protecting critical infrastructures against potential risks of violent extremism and terrorism.
- Advocate with the Government of Albania for the provision of autonomy for the returned families through economic empowerment and mentorship programs.
- Develop the concept of regional coordinators by defining their responsibilities, procedures, and reporting formats to enhance the role of regional coordinators in addressing issues of violent extremism and radicalism within police stations and

Local Government Units throughout the territory. This initiative aligns with an already signed PM's Order in Albania.

- Conduct meetings with the network of coordinators and actors involved in the issues of prevention of radicalization and violent extremism.
- Infrastructure Enhancement and Capacity Building: Improve infrastructure and enhance the skills of public institution employees engaged in the implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration programs.
- Develop and implement pilot projects for deradicalization and reintegration, focusing on targeted interventions in problematic areas.
- Work closely with the Radicalisation Assessment Unit (RAU) to develop a new Radicalisation Management Protocol (RMP).
- Provide capacity building on Multidisciplinary and Interagency work models for members of multi-agency bodies.
- Engage with religious communities and leaders to promote awareness about P/CVE and R&R.
- Implement gender mainstreaming and empowerment programs for women and girls, considering women as victims/promoters of VE/promoters of peace and cohesion.

3. Strengthening capacities of the Local Referral Mechanism (LRM) members

- Conduct capacity strengthening training for members of the LRM, particularly case managers and local stakeholders at the municipal level on effectively identifying, assessing, treating, and referring at – risk cases of youngsters.
- Offer mentoring and coaching to optimize LRM operationalization: Engage one or two experts to provide technical assistance in proper case management, senior-level feedback and counseling for the State Agency for Children's Rights and Protection (ASHDMF) during the LRM implementation at the municipal level.
- Develop legal frameworks on referral mechanisms, protocols and SOPs for the referral pathway/process.
- Once the mechanisms and protocols are established, collaborate with ASHDMF staff to train teachers, educators, school staff, community actors, parents, and youngsters. This training aims to ensure proficiency in following referral protocols and making informed judgments based on suggested indicators and signs of at-risk cases.
- Work with GCERF's partners and to set up multifunctional centers in hotspot municipalities to provide services for families, returnees, and at-risk individuals, offering support to those susceptible to recruitment or radicalization and violent extremism.

How to Submit an Expression of Interest

Please see below Annex 1.

All Expressions of Interest must be duly filled out and submitted electronically by **15 February at 23:59 PM CET** to call.albania@gcerf.org. The email should be marked as 'EOI-Albania' - in the subject line - and specifying in which country your organisation is applying for grant funding.

Shortlisted applicants will be contacted for a due diligence assessment.

Question and Answer Session

GCERF will host an online Q&A session for potential applicants on **17 January at 11 am Geneva time at** the following link:

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_N2UxM2UzYTgtNGViMC00ZmRjLTg2NTEtMTVmZDhiMzliMWI5%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22618c8c5d-e4d4-4859-abf9-c60a590a2ec7%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22af28a48c-e227-462a-b01b-e3a1d3a5b983%22%7d

Please ensure that your application includes the following documents (provided in attachment to this EOI):

- Completed Annex A - application form
- Completed Annex B - Past Projects
- Completed Annex C- Budget
- Completed - Theory of Change
- Audited consolidated financial report for the years 2021 and 2022

The application must be submitted in English. The annexes will be available only in English.

If any part of the form or process is unclear, please send requests for clarification or further details to call.albania@gcerf.org.