



**GCERF**

Global Community Engagement  
and Resilience Fund

**GCERF Strategy for Investment in  
Albania  
2024 – 2027**

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## **This document is guided by:**

- GCERF’s original “Strategy to Engage Communities and Address the Drivers of Violent Extremism (2017- 2020) and Updated Strategy for 2021 – 2025.
- Government of Albania strategy for P/CVE and action plan.
- GCERF’s Investment Strategy for the Western Balkans (2019) and updated Investment Strategy for the Western Balkans (2021).
- Consultations with Albania’s Ministry of Internal Affairs.
- Consultations with GCERF partners.
- Additional desk research on the current situation in Albania.
- EU’s Joint Action Plan on Counterterrorism for the Western Balkans.
- GCERF’s Country Needs Assessment for Albania (2023)
- Consultations with the Technical Support Mechanism in Albania

## Acronyms

AFP	Accelerated Funding Panel
CBO	Community–Based Organization
CoP	Communities of Practice
CSM	Country Support Mechanism
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EU	European Union
GCERF	Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
GCTF	Global Counter–Terrorism Forum
IGC	Intergroup Contact
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
LPSC	Local Public Safety Council
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co–operation in Europe
P/CVE	Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism
PR	Principal Recipient
PYD	Positive Youth Development
RFTFs	Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters
RNA	Regional Needs Assessment
R&R	Rehabilitation and Reintegration
SR	Sub-recipient
ToC	Theory of Change

# Executive Summary

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. At the time, Albania emphasized an interest to engage civil society in R&R programming. After becoming a partner country, GCERF signed the first grants in Albania in 2020 with an exclusive focus on R&R efforts. As of 2023, GCERF funded three distinct grants in Albania for upwards of USD 2mln, and through these grants to civil society partners, GCERF has successfully supported the R&R of 37 female and youth returnees from Northeast Syria while strengthening the capacity of frontline workers (government and non-governmental) to provide specialized case management support. It is now time to focus GCERF's investment in Albania toward sustainable transition of R&R efforts to a national referral mechanism, local government structures to identify and address cases of possible radicalization and recruitment, and support service delivery through municipally managed multi-use, multi-agency centres.

This project document presents a comprehensive strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) in Albania, considering the current challenges and opportunities. It begins by providing a nuanced understanding of the socio-political context in Albania, recognizing the importance of this context in shaping P/CVE strategies.

The document then delves into a comprehensive threat assessment, examining the complex factors underpinning violent extremism. This analysis serves as a crucial foundation for the subsequent strategic approach.

In a global context, the document positions GCERF as a pivotal player in Albania's P/CVE efforts, emphasizing its support and catalytic role in these initiatives.

It explores both past and ongoing P/CVE initiatives and collaborations within Albania, highlighting the interplay between governmental and civil society approaches, essential for navigating the complex P/CVE landscape.

In addition, through consultation meetings conducted with key national and local actors in the sector, many gaps have been emphasized, that will be addressed by GCERF grantees in Albania, such as the lack of a national mechanism for rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R) and prevention, lack of capacities of professionals to deliver properly R&R and prevention services, the need 'new' targeted sustainable service models that better meet the needs of these vulnerable populations and the necessity

to enhance community engagement in early identification of radicalization and treatment and response.

The proposed approach is intricately detailed, encompassing thematic and programmatic focus areas. The use of concrete program indicators ensures effective progress measurement. Geographic and demographic considerations, along with gender mainstreaming and conflict sensitivity, form an integral part of the strategy.

The document underscores the alignment of P/CVE efforts with the national context, emphasizing coordination among diverse stakeholders as essential for the success of a comprehensive national strategy.

- (i) GCERF objectives and support from 2022
- (ii) Referral national mechanism gaps
- (iii) Programs and sustainability

## Current Context

### Project Context and Threat Assessment

Considering the evolving landscape surrounding Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) in Albania, a comprehensive desk research effort was undertaken to gather essential insights from strategic documents that guide institutional endeavours for the years 2022–2023. Notably, between 2012 and 2015, approximately 144 Albanian citizens became involved in conflicts in Syria and Iraq, a number that subsequently dwindled to zero by the end of 2015.<sup>1</sup> However, in 2021, the Albanian police referred ten cases of terrorist acts and funding, involving eleven suspects, to specialized prosecutorial bodies, resulting in no convictions related to terrorism<sup>2</sup>. In response to this challenge, the Albanian government initiated and enacted legislative amendments to the Criminal Code (Article 265/a, b, c)<sup>3</sup> to address the engagement of citizens in foreign armed conflicts.

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<sup>1</sup> Desk Research Need Assessment in Albania, GCERF & PVN Albania 2023

See also Center on Terrorism and Counterterrorism (CTC), West Point. "Foreign Fighters from the Western Balkans in Syria." <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/foreign-fighters-from-the-western-balkans-in-syria/> (accessed on 29 October 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Desk Research Need Assessment in Albania, GCERF & PVN Albania 2023

<sup>3</sup> Albania Criminal Code, "Article 265/a, b, c," in 1995 Criminal Code as Amended in 2015, [https://www.warnathgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Albania\\_CC\\_1995\\_am2015\\_en.pdf](https://www.warnathgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Albania_CC_1995_am2015_en.pdf).

Capacities of primary duty bearers have been challenged to simultaneously address the R&R aspects of RFTFs, but also prevention responsibilities and services for at-risk groups to Violent extremism. The law Nr. 139/2015 "On the local self-governance" assigned municipalities with responsibilities for servicing vulnerable target groups in their community and establishing and managing the social centres providing such services but were not provided with appropriate means and support to do so<sup>4</sup>.

Smaller municipalities are particularly challenged to extend services foreseen by law to citizens. Furthermore, the level of complexity in interventions for R&R of RFTFs and their families and PVE of at-risk groups to radicalization requires efficient dedicated mechanisms for specialized and holistic delivery of services and the respective guidance, models, and trainings in parallel to the efficient identification and referral mechanisms. Budgetary means have been also a barrier in R&R processes in the country until now compensated by the support of international donors. Despite the engagement and political will to provide the appropriate means to the holistic response required, further efforts are needed to ensure **sustainable solutions** and **mechanisms** maintained by the system **at the local and national levels**.

Frontline service providers are often not sufficiently trained nor have sufficient human and financial resources to address all these areas of support promptly. In addition, the communities where returnees move back to may require support in improving their understanding of the rights of returnees and the R&R process to increase their acceptance towards returnees and alleviate their concerns.

The dominant concern then, revolves around the process of **de-radicalization and reintegration** of these returning individuals. These returnees represent potential risks due to their possible affiliations with extremist factions in Europe or the broader region, connections to radicals in conflict zones, and their adeptness in using social media to recruit and disseminate extremist ideologies.

## **Drivers of Radicalization**

Limited employment opportunities, social exclusion, perceived corruption, and security challenges from domestic and external sources, are the root causes of radicalization in Albania, requiring a comprehensive approach to address them.

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<sup>4</sup> Desk Research Need Assessment in Albania, GCERF & PVN Albania 2023

### **Factors that contribute to the emergence of violent extremism in Albania:**

- Albania's strategic geographical location, coupled with ethnic-driven tensions in neighbouring areas, making it susceptible to external influences.
- The potential exploitation of free movement of citizens, which allows extremists to move across borders and propagate radical beliefs.
- Concerns related to individuals with extremist views entering Albania under the guise of regular immigration, introducing and perpetuating extremist ideologies.
- The role of modern technologies in the dissemination of extremist views.

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

**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.

**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.

### **Guiding principles**

The following principles will guide GCERF's investment in Albania:

- Supporting sustainable approaches, focusing on strengthening structures and capacities of committed frontline workers and members of civil society.
- Supporting Government-led strategies and action plans on the transition period.
- Gender responsive, intersectional programming<sup>5</sup>;
- Conflict sensitive approaches that follow the Do No Harm<sup>6</sup> principle to identify potential negative consequences, prevent them, and propose actions.
- Ensure that programming contributes to and is aligned with good practices and recommendations of the GCTF<sup>7</sup>
- Supporting R&R and sustainability of programs in Albania.

<sup>5</sup>Global Counter-Terrorism Forum. *The Gender and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Policy Toolkit*. GCTF, 2022.

<sup>6</sup><http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/do-no-harm-local-capacities-for-peace-project/>

<sup>7</sup>Including: Memorandum on Good Practices in Strengthening National-Local Cooperation in Preventing Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism (2020); Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders (2016) and its addendum (2020); The Hague-Marrakech Memorandum on Good Practices for More Effective Response to the FTF Phenomenon (2016) and its addendum (2020); Good Practices on Addressing the Challenge of Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (2018).

## Returnees from foreign conflict in Syria, Iraq & Ukraine

Albania had one of the highest per capita rates of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) in Europe with an estimated 144 Albanians joining the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) between 2012 and 2015.<sup>8</sup>

This number represented approximately 0.005% of Albania's population. The number of Albanians joining ISIS has declined since 2015, with no Albanian citizens reported to have joined the group in 2021. However, the Albanian government remains concerned about the threat of terrorism, both from domestic and foreign actors. The information about the number of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) per capita in Albania is available in several sources, including:

- **The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2022** is a comprehensive report that measures the impact of terrorism on countries around the world. The GTI 2022 found that Albania had a score of 2.85 on the GTI index, which is a "medium" level of terrorism impact. This score was based on several factors, including the number of FTFs, the number of terrorist attacks, and the number of deaths caused by terrorism. The GTI 2022 found that Albania has the 10th highest rate of FTFs per capita in Europe.
- **The Combating Terrorism Centre at West Point** is a leading research institution on terrorism and counterterrorism. It has published several reports on the threat of terrorism in Albania, including one that estimates that 144 Albanians joined ISIS between 2012 and 2015.

During the periods of October 2020, August 2021, and May 2022, 37 individuals, 9 adult women and 28 minors, have returned to the country from camps in Syria. They are being provided by our grantee, TDH (Terre des hommes), and other organizations with necessary rehabilitative and reintegrative services. Thus, the project will continue to support the 37 returned individuals, while improving the R&R mechanisms and services. All identified and referred individuals are aided with the package of services for R&R and prevention, including mental health, economic empowerment, education, legal assistance, family resilience, resocialization.

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<sup>8</sup> The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2022, published by the Institute for Economics and Peace:

<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-terrorism-index-2022>

The Combating Terrorism Centre at West Point: <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/>

The Albanian government's National Action Plan to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism (P/CVE):

[https://www.rcc.int/p-](https://www.rcc.int/p-cve/download/docs/Albanian%20National%20Strategy%20on%20Countering%20Violent%20Extremism.pdf/eca873b0e6bd733938a73f957471a75c.pdf)

[cve/download/docs/Albanian%20National%20Strategy%20on%20Countering%20Violent%20Extremism.pdf/eca873b0e6bd733938a73f957471a75c.pdf](https://www.rcc.int/p-cve/download/docs/Albanian%20National%20Strategy%20on%20Countering%20Violent%20Extremism.pdf/eca873b0e6bd733938a73f957471a75c.pdf)



## Perceived Threats

- **Online Radicalization:** The pervasive influence of the Internet and online propaganda materials that target and recruit young individuals.
- **Cyber Terrorism:** The use of technology to undermine national security, compromise sensitive information, and disrupt critical infrastructure.
- **Irregular Migration Routes:** Exploitation of Albania's geographic position along migratory paths by foreign terrorist fighters.
- **Foreign Nationals with Contested Allegiances:** Foreign individuals residing in Albania for humanitarian reasons who may harbour dissent against their home countries.
- **Terrorist Activities on Home Soil:** The threat of terrorism stemming from within Albania, involving dormant cells, sympathizers, and individuals motivated by radical beliefs.

Addressing and mitigating these threats of radicalization and VE, potentially leading to terrorism, is a top priority for Albania. This issue aligns with EU recommendations for Albania in annual progress reports and is a key focus during Albania's tenure as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2022–2023.

### Addressing and mitigating the threats of radicalization and VE in Albania:

- **Strengthen community engagement and resilience:** This includes empowering communities to identify and counter early warning signs of radicalization and providing support to vulnerable individuals and groups.
- **Promote education and critical thinking:** This includes raising awareness of the dangers of extremist ideologies and developing critical thinking skills to resist radicalization.
- **Address underlying root causes:** This includes addressing socio-economic factors that may contribute to radicalization, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of education.
- **Enhance law enforcement and security capabilities:** This includes developing and implementing effective strategies to detect, disrupt, and prevent terrorist attacks.
- **Promote international cooperation and collaboration:** This includes working with other countries to share information and best practices, and to coordinate efforts to counter violent extremism.

## Regional and international influence and impact

The context of violent extremism in Albania cannot be viewed in isolation from the rest of the region. The European Union has expressed concern about Russia's influence and attempts to destabilise the Western Balkans.<sup>9</sup>

## GCERF Positioning

In 2020 GCERF developed a Regional Strategy for Investment in the Western Balkans to include Albania and North Macedonia. GCERF established a Regional Accelerated Funding Panel (RAFP) to support investment in the wider Western Balkans region. The Regional Strategy focused on facilitating rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R) of RFTFs and their families through capacity building to relevant institutions, direct assistance to returnees and their families, and reduces stigmatisation to enable re-socialisation.

GCERF actively participates in the Regional Network of National Coordinators (RNNC) for C/PVE in the Western Balkans. This network serves as a platform where national coordinators from the region come together to exchange best practices and coordinate their efforts in these critical areas. The RNNC has been a significant driving force behind promoting cooperation in the Western Balkans regarding P/CVE and R&R. For instance, the RNNC has developed a Regional Action Plan on CVE, offering a structured approach to joint action in the region. Furthermore, it has facilitated the sharing of valuable information and best practices among national CVE and PVE coordinators. GCERF's membership in the RNNC empowers it to actively contribute to the development and implementation of regional strategies for P/CVE and R&R. It also allows GCERF to draw inspiration from the experiences of neighbouring countries in the region, which can be adapted to GCERF programs and services.

In 2019, Albania became a GCERF partner with the goal of supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R) of returnees from Northeast Syria. At the time, Albania emphasized the importance of engaging civil society in R&R programming. After becoming a partner country, GCERF signed its first grants in Albania in 2020, with an exclusive focus on R&R efforts. It is worth noting that GCERF grantees are the sole civil society partners responsible for providing service delivery to returnees. As of 2023, GCERF has invested over USD 2 million across three distinct grants in Albania. These grants to civil society partners were instrumental in facilitating the successful R&R of

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<sup>9</sup>European Parliament. *Russia's Influence in the Western Balkans*. European Parliament, 6 July 2022.

37 female and youth returnees from Northeast Syria, while also strengthening the capacity of frontline workers (both government and non-governmental) to provide specialized case management support.

### **Lessons Learned<sup>10</sup>:**

- The case management approach effectively bridged the gap between an exceptionally vulnerable group of beneficiaries and those in authority who lacked the necessary knowledge and resources to address the returnees' complex needs. This prioritization by the Albanian government and local authorities should be sustained, even in the face of limited resources and capacities.
- Capacity building programs have empowered professionals dealing with returnees, equipping them with a better understanding of rehabilitation and reintegration practices, problem-solving, and analytical thinking.
- Professionals have shifted towards a more human and culturally sensitive approach to the rehabilitation and reintegration process, moving away from a securitized and bureaucratic mindset.
- The projects have yielded substantial changes in the returnees' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. They have expressed a desire to embark on a new life journey, despite the traumas, losses, and hardships they have endured. Their ability to communicate with peers and integrate into the broader community has significantly improved.
- The projects led to increased engagement and acceptance among youth participants involved in community-based activities, fostering positive interactions among them. These findings underscore the transformative impact on both returnees and youth, demonstrating the effectiveness of the comprehensive approach.

### **GCERF's current role through CLWG in establishing the national referral mechanism for at risk and vulnerable populations**

GCERF's support for the establishment of the national referral mechanism (NRM) is part of its broader commitment to promoting community-led resilience to conflict, violence, and forced displacement. GCERF believes that communities are best placed to identify and address the root causes of radicalization and violence, and to support those who are at risk.

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<sup>10</sup> Reports from the GCERF grantees in Albania.

GCERF is supporting the CLWG to develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation system for the national referral mechanism. This system will track the progress of at-risk and vulnerable individuals and will identify areas where the referral mechanism can be improved. As such, GCERF is supporting the CLWG to advocate for the use of the referral mechanism among government agencies, NGOs, and civil society organizations. This advocacy work is essential to ensuring that the referral mechanism is widely used and that at-risk and vulnerable individuals can access the services they need. The referral mechanism will help to ensure that at-risk and vulnerable individuals have access to the services they need to prevent radicalization and violence, and to reintegrate into society if they have been involved in extremist activities<sup>11</sup>.

It's crucial to highlight that the Syria Pre-departure support program<sup>12</sup>, currently in development, is integrating Albanians as part of its pilot initiative. This program, supported by GCERF, aims to enhance access to pre-departure, rehabilitation, and reintegration information and support for Albanian returnees and their families. It equips frontline workers, local partners, and stakeholders with the necessary skills and processes for a comprehensive approach to pre-departure, return, and reintegration. The ultimate goal is to enhance the Third Country Nationals' readiness and willingness to effectively rehabilitate and reintegrate individuals into their respective countries of origin.

It is now time for GCERF to shift its focus in Albania to support the sustainable transition of R&R efforts to a national referral mechanism, local government structures to identify and address cases of possible radicalization and recruitment and support service delivery through municipally managed multi-use, multi-agency centres.

The new strategy is updated by the lessons learned from the previous rounds of funding, the third-party monitoring reports (TPMs)<sup>13</sup>, as well as the current needs and priorities of the Albanian government and civil society.

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<sup>11</sup> Information retrieved from the CLWG reports shared with GCERF.

<sup>12</sup> The Terms of Reference developed for the Syria pre-departure support pilot project.

<sup>13</sup> The third party monitoring report is annexed to this Strategy, Agency for Peacebuilding, 9 February 2023.

## Institutional framework

Albania has established a comprehensive and robust institutional framework for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) and rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R). The Action Plan for the Prevention of Radicalization 2023–2025 outlines the roles and responsibilities of various government entities, including the Ministry of Interior, the CVE Centre, the Albanian State Police, and local self-government units. While Albania has implemented pilot R&R programs for repatriated individuals, there is a pressing need for more comprehensive and coordinated efforts.

The CVE Centre, established in 2018, plays a central role in coordinating P/CVE and R&R efforts in Albania. It adopts a multi-disciplinary approach, involving experts from various fields, and aims to provide comprehensive support to returnees. Similar institutions exist in neighbouring countries, such as Kosovo and North Macedonia, facilitating regional cooperation on these issues.

Albania has developed a comprehensive **strategic framework** for countering violent extremism (CVE). This framework is outlined in the following key documents:

- **National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2021–2030 (NSDEI 2021–2030)**: This strategy outlines several policy objectives related to CVE, such as developing a preventative approach through an early warning system and increasing institutional capacities to reduce the consequences of violent extremism and terrorism.
- **Cross-sectoral Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and the Fight against Terrorism 2022–2025**: This strategy is the main strategic document encompassing Albania's obligation to fight violent extremism, terrorism, and all forms they may take. It combines the national agenda of EU integration with sustainable economic and social development, including the connection with the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Joint Action Plan Countering Terrorism in the Western Balkans 2023–2024**: This plan sets out Albania's commitments to work with other Western Balkan countries to counter terrorism.

These documents complement each other, forming a comprehensive framework for CVE in Albania. Notably, the Cross-sectoral Strategy for 2022–2025 is a milestone, as it is the first strategic document to address terrorism and violent extremism in a unified manner. This underscores Albania's recognition of the interconnected nature of these two threats.

**The CVE Centre** plays a pivotal role in implementing Albania's strategic framework for CVE, primarily through utilizing the Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs) as a mechanism for prevention, rehabilitation, and reintegration. LPSCs, established at the local level, are consultative and decision-making bodies at the local level that address a wide spectrum of security concerns, including countering terrorism and violent extremism.

The Cross-Sectoral Strategy on Community Safety for the period 2021-2026 mandates the establishment of LPSCs in all 61 municipalities throughout Albania.

Nevertheless, Albania's faces challenges in CVE implementation due to coordination issues between the CVE Centre and other government agencies, high staff turnover in key institutions, and dependency of donors.

## Current state of affairs

- **Standard Operating Procedure for Reintegration:** The Albanian CVE Centre has developed a vital Standard Operating Procedure for the initial reintegration of individuals returning from conflict zones in Syria and Iraq.
- **Collaboration with GCERF:** The creation of the Technical Support Mechanism (TSM) in 2023 and efforts to establish a multi-agency centre in Tirana demonstrate a structured approach to monitoring GCERF's interventions in Albania.
- **Advanced Data-Driven Approach:** The CVE Centre, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), is developing the ICRS system, an electronic database tailored for individuals returning from conflict zones.
- **Engagement with Prison Authorities:** The CVE Centre engaged in productive discussions with the General Directorate of Prisons in early 2023, focusing on developing a data management system to identify and monitor cases with radical or extremist tendencies in prison settings.
- **Role of Local Safety Councils:** LSCs in Albania play a vital role in P/CVE. Their mission includes enhancing preventive capacities.
- **Introduction of AKTE:** The Agency against Terrorism and Extremism in Albania (AKTE) signifies a shift from addressing violent manifestations to tackling extremist ideologies at their roots, with an inclusive and nuanced approach.
- **Local Vigilance through KRPRKEDH:** The establishment of Regional Committees for the Prevention of Radicalism and the Fight against Violent Extremism (KRPRKEDH) in each district demonstrates Albania's decentralized approach.
- **New Competencies under the State Ministry for Local Government:** Starting in September 2023, the Albanian Government is establishing a new State Ministry for Local Government, enhancing cooperation between central and local government.

## Programming in Albania

The involvement of local organizations in Albania is vital for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) and rehabilitating and reintegrating individuals returning from conflict zones. These organizations collaborate with government agencies, international partners, and communities, contributing significantly to Albania's efforts to prevent radicalization and reintegrate returnees.

Specifically:

- **Terre des Homme (TDH):** Is fostering resilience to violent extremism by providing quality services, strengthening the capacities of service providers, and offering rehabilitation and reintegration support for returned children and mothers.
- **Counselling Line for Women and Girls (CLWG):** This organization actively addresses violent extremism through capacity-building, research, and engagement with at-risk communities. They have established an Info-call centre for violent extremism and are engaged in rehabilitation and reintegration efforts for women and children returning from conflict zones.
- **Institute Democracy and Mediation (IDM):** IDM has developed practical guidelines for frontline workers, government officials, and local self-governing units to support the rehabilitation and reintegration processes for returning individuals from conflict zones.

These initiatives, supported by GCERF, have played a crucial role in local communities, raising awareness, building capacity, and implementing community-based programs.

## Updated Needs Assessment

GCERF needs assessment report for Albania is the most recent comprehensive needs assessment report for Albania regarding PVE (Preventing Violent Extremism), CVE (Countering Violent Extremism), and R&R (Rehabilitation and Reintegration). The primary goal of this assessment is to identify the needs and challenges associated with preventing violent extremism (PVE) and the repatriation and rehabilitation of individuals engaged in extremist activities in Albania. The assessment employs the effective methods such as i) desk research to analyze the current political and security landscape, ii) in-depth interviews with pertinent institutions and individuals, on site focus groups comprised of teachers, child protection unit officers, psychologists and

social workers and iii) a survey to collect quantitative data regarding the drivers of violent extremism and community concerns regarding safety security<sup>14</sup>.

Current desk research findings indicate that Albania's geographic position is significant and unique, considering its proximity to areas with ethnic driven tensions. Albania faces threats such as online radicalization, cyber terrorism, irregular migration routes, to name a few. The assessment is focused on mapping the primary actors and agencies involved in the PVE in Albania. Lastly, it is focused on analyzing Albania's legal and strategic frameworks for combating terrorism to find out the degree of the alignment of the national legal frameworks with the international norms and frameworks. The assessment is currently in progress. The inception report, prepared by the GCERF partner PVN Albania, has been completed, and the PVN team has initiated the data collection phase<sup>15</sup>.

**Context and Vulnerable Groups:** Albania faces a complex socio-economic environment, characterized by high unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion, particularly among youth. The rise of online radicalization and the spread of extremist ideologies present significant challenges for prevention efforts. Youth, particularly those experiencing social exclusion, unemployment, and limited opportunities, are at increased risk of radicalization. Returnees from conflict zones require tailored support for their reintegration and rehabilitation. Women and girls may encounter specific vulnerabilities linked to gender-based violence, discrimination, and limited access to education and employment. The needs assessment highlights the necessity for a coordinated and comprehensive approach to P/CVE and R&R in Albania. This approach should prioritize addressing the root causes of radicalization and enhancing the capacity of local organizations and institutions.

## Continued needs of RFTFs and their families

Efforts to support RFTFs and their families have yielded significant results, particularly in trauma-informed care. Social and economic reintegration into communities is a crucial component of this support. Approximately 22 Albanian citizens, including women and children, are still awaiting repatriation from Syria<sup>16</sup>. These individuals are primarily family members of Albanian foreign fighters who joined extremist groups in the region. The Albanian government has been working with international partners to

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<sup>14</sup> PVN Inception Report for the Needs Assessment 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Desk Research Need Assessment in Albania, GCERF & PVN Albania 2023

<sup>16</sup> Data from GCERF meetings with stakeholders and the US Embassy in Tirana.



facilitate the repatriation of its citizens from conflict zones. The Albanian government has expressed its commitment to repatriating its citizens and providing them with the necessary support for rehabilitation and reintegration. Support measures include psychosocial assistance, trauma healing, vocational training, and livelihood opportunities. The government is also working to address the stigma and discrimination that repatriated individuals may face upon their return.

## Correctional and Probation Service

The Correctional and Probation Service (CPS) in Albania plays a vital role in the P/CVE and R&R ecosystem. It is responsible for the implementation of several programs and initiatives designed to prevent and counter radicalization and violent extremism among offenders, both in prison and in the community. The CPS is responsible for the supervision and rehabilitation of offenders, including those who are at risk of radicalization or have been convicted of terrorism-related offenses.

### **The CPS implements several programs within the CVE, PVE, and R&R ecosystem:**

- The CVE and PVE Training Program for Prison Staff is designed to train prison staff on how to identify and respond to radicalization and extremism among offenders.
- The CVE and PVE Program for Offenders is a voluntary program that provides education and awareness programs on the dangers of radicalization and extremism to offenders.
- The R&R Program for Offenders is a voluntary program that provides education, training, and employment opportunities to offenders who have been involved in violent extremism.
- The CPS also works closely with other government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector to implement CVE, PVE, and R&R programs and initiatives.

### **Challenges**

The CPS in Albania faces challenges in implementing CVE, PVE, and R&R programs and initiatives due to limited resources, a lack of coordination among government agencies, and a negative stigma associated with radicalization. These challenges hinder effective program development and implementation. To address these challenges, there is a need to build the capacities of CPS staff in Albania on P/CVE and

R&R enabling them to identify and assess radicalization risks among offenders and implement effective R&R plans.

## Proposed Approach

### Thematic focus

- **Prevention and Rehabilitation:** Emphasizing programs and initiatives aimed at preventing individuals from radicalizing to violence, as well as rehabilitating and reintegrating those who have been involved in violent extremism.
- **Community Engagement:** Strengthening community resilience through engagement with local communities, civil society organizations, and LPSCs to address the root causes of radicalization and promote tolerance, diversity, and social cohesion.
- **Promote local ownership and sustainability:** Empower local communities and organizations to take ownership of the program and develop strategies for sustaining it beyond external support. This includes building local capacity, fostering partnerships, and promoting community-based resource mobilization.
- **Integrate sustainability principles:** Incorporate sustainability principles into all aspects of program design and implementation, considering environmental, social, and economic impacts. This ensures long-term viability and positive impact.
- **Establish exit strategies and transition plans:** Develop clear exit strategies and transition plans to ensure a smooth handover of responsibilities and continued program operation once external support ends. This includes identifying local partners, securing sustainable funding sources, and building local capacity.

### Programmatic Focus Areas for Albania:

GCERF has successfully supported to Albania in its efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate returnees from Syria through three grants. This support involved strengthening the capacities of frontline service providers through specialized training and case management support.

Looking forward, GCERF's programmatic focus needs to shift toward ensuring the sustainability of R&R efforts. This will be achieved by supporting the development of a

national referral mechanism and enhancing service delivery through multi-agency local bodies, including the Tirana multi-agency center, LPSC and probation services.

**The two main components of the proposed sustainability-enhancing approach are:**

**1. Establishing National Referral Mechanism:**

**Objective:** Develop a national referral mechanism for the identification of at-risk individuals and returnees and referral to service providers. (either new or utilizing the current protocols and systems in place)

**Key actions:**

- Establish a pilot local level referral mechanism supported by the central level through the CVE Centre.
- Strengthen the Identification and referral mechanism for R&R of returnees as well as for at-risk groups by supporting the development of protocols and SOPs for the referral pathway/process.
- Development of a vulnerability assessment tool (categories and indicators) to assess vulnerability to radicalization and violent extremism.
- Establish a prevention mechanism for radicalization and violent extremism by providing a mandate and guidelines for the referral mechanism experts to raise awareness and prevent of VE.
- Create a structured process for identifying and referring individuals at risk of radicalization or those in need of support services.
- Support and promote the replication of the local referral mechanism and pathways in hot spot municipalities.
- Advocate for national budget support to the hotspot municipalities, ensuring the development of dedicated services for R&R and P/CVE of at-risk groups.
- Advocate for local-level budget allocation in the hotspot municipalities for R&R and PVE.

**Outcome:** Central and local level CVE multi-agency bodies have the financial means and the capacity to ensure that returnees and at-risk individuals are referred to service providers through established pathways.

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

**Objective:** Enhance the capacity of local multi-agency bodies, first responders and government (security sector) institutions to deliver effective P/CVE and R&R services.

**Key actions:**

- Provide capacity building on Multidisciplinary and Interagency work models for members of multi-agency bodies.
- Offer capacity building on trauma treatment and trauma informed care for tertiary prevention practitioners (prison officers, probation services, psycho-social counselors).
- Deliver capacity building on the Program on Non-Violent Communication for preventive work with at-risk individuals.
- Provide capacity building on Exit from violent extremism programs.
- Conduct training of teachers on identifying signs of radicalization and reporting, including the creation of the network for teacher coordinators for VE and radicalization.
- 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.
- Support the community reintegration of radicalized ex-prisoners.
- Advocate with the Government of Albania for the provision of autonomy for the returned families through economic empowerment and mentorship programs.
- Implement gender mainstreaming and empowerment programs for women and girls, considering women as victims/promoters of VE/promoters of peace and cohesion.

**Outcome:** Multi-Agency Local Bodies, first responders and Government institutions provide an effective, coordinated response to P/CVE and R&R in Albania and create an effective, self-sustained system for preventing and countering violent extremism while ensuring the successful reintegration of individuals previously involved in extremist activities.

### **Proposed support for the continuation of activities:**

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

**Objective:** Facilitate the establishment and strengthening of **LPSC** to address P/CVE and R&R challenges in Albania.

#### **Key Actions:**

- 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.

**Outcome:** Strengthening the capacity of Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs) and national institutions to address P/CVE and R&R challenges through increased capacity, coordination, and cooperation.

## **2. Tirana Municipal Multiuse – Multiagency centre (First Phase)**

**Objective:** Piloting in Tirana Municipal Multiuse Multiagency centre the Referral Mechanism for the prevention of VE & radicalization as part of the model of services designed, in coherence and synergy with the National Mechanism supported by the Counselling Line for Women and Girls

### **Key Actions:**

Outreach work to identify cases of individuals at risk of violent extremism and radicalization and case management support to returnees and vulnerable populations by:

- Direct assistance for basic needs
- Psycho-social and mental health support
- Administrative assistance
- Catch up classes and afterschool support for children
- Mentoring and counselling for economic empowerment opportunities
- Social support for community reintegration and resocialization

**Outcome:** High-quality case management services to returnees and vulnerable populations, reduce the risk of violent extremism, and support the reintegration of returnees into the community.

## **2. Tirana Municipal Multiuse – Multiagency center (Second Phase)**

**Objective:** Support sustainable transition case management services to government led facilities funded by government budgets

**OTPB 1:** Design and establishment of the model for R&R and prevention services at the center:

- Support and actively participate in the development of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) (as part of the working group established by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in close cooperation with the CVE center and the Counselling Line for Women and Girls to ensure the design aligns with the model).
- Conduct consultations with key stakeholders on the design of the model for R&R and prevention services at the Tirana Municipal Multiuse Multiagency Centre (3 workshops/FGD).
- Design of the model/guiding document for the Tirana Municipal Multiuse Multiagency center for R&R and prevention of VE.

**OTPB 2:** Capacity building and training of government personnel:

- Provide training for professionals managing and delivering services at the center on the model of service provision.
- Offer on-job coaching and mentoring for frontliners working at the center.

**OTPB 3:** Piloting and institutionalizing the model of the Tirana Municipal Multiuse Multiagency Centre:

- Prepare the physical facility for providing services as per the designed model and services (reconstruction and refurbishment of an existing building).
- Support the piloting of the model through technical guidance, additional resources and leveraging lessons learned.
- Institutionalize the Tirana Municipal Multiuse Multiagency center through a Decision of the Municipal Council, including the respective budget.
- Conduct a mid-term evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the Tirana Municipal Multiuse Multiagency center model.

**OTPB 4:** Handover of the multi-use center and services to the Municipality of Tirana:

- Design the handover plan with the Tirana Municipality, CVE, MoHSP
- Implement the handover plan.
- Report the progress and outcomes of the handover implementation to the CSM.

## **Logic of Strategy and Programme Indicators**

All grants funded under this strategy will be aligned with the Country-Level Theory of Change (ToC), which allows GCERF to evaluate the cumulative effect of its programming. All proposed grantee programming should be able to be reflected in the ToC and should use a selection of the country-level indicators included below.

**Problem statements:** central and local institutions lack the resources and capacity to fully decentralise the rehabilitation and reintegration processes in a sustainable manner, to continuously address the systematic drivers of radicalisation to violent extremism in society.

**Response:**

- **IF** GCERF works closely with National/local institutions, frontline workers, Local and community based CSOs and builds their capacities.
- **IF** GCERF works towards a goal of sustainability and enables the in-country stakeholders.
- **IF** GCERF supports the strengthening of education institutions to make safe spaces for children and youth.
- **IF** GCERF supports the mitigation of polarisation among youth and fosters intergroup contacts among different groups.
- **IF** GCERF supports the linkage and inclusivity among governance actors, CSOs and community-based mechanisms.

**AND** the following assumptions hold true:

- Accountability and sustainability are key for effective R&R and PVE
- Decentralisation of R&R responses is critical in addressing radicalisation to violent extremism and polarisation.
- Greater integration and implementation of LPSCs leads to efficient and sustainable responses on R&R and PVE
- Education institutions are vital in fostering resilience among children and youth.
- Increasing diversity and inter-community exchanges leads to a less polarised environment.

**THEN,**

Government institutions, community -based mechanisms and CSOs have the tools and capacity to continue addressing R&R and various forms of extremism **with reduced international support**. Local ownership, coordination between the national and local levels will be strengthened, and joint responses will continue to be implemented in a changing violent extremism context beyond the lifespan of GCERF's investment.

This overarching ToC will lead to the following:

**Programmatic Outcome:**

- Central and local level PVE and R&R multi-agency structures (institutions, coordination mechanisms, etc.) become more accountable, and financially sustainable to operate the national referral mechanism.

- Multi-Agency Local Bodies, first responders and Government institutions (including (security actors, prison officers, probation services, teachers, psycho-social counselors) provide an effective, coordinated response to P/CVE while ensuring the successful reintegration of individuals previously involved in extremist activities.
- Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs) are functional and capable of identifying, referring cases, providing services; and facilitating coordination with the local level actors to address P/CVE and R&R challenges.
- Returnees and vulnerable, at-risk populations and their families/caregivers receive professional support for rehabilitation and reintegrate into the community through the provision of the services under Municipal Multiuse - Multiagency centre.
- Indicators

### **Outcome Indicators/Metrics**

1. % of programme indicators on sustainability that achieved their target.
2. % of municipalities that have a functional referral mechanism for identifying and referring individuals at risk of radicalization or those in need of support services.
3. % of the multi-agency local bodies, first responders and institutional staff (including (security actors, prison officers, probation services, teachers, psycho-social counselors) who can deliver quality R&R services and prevention work preventive work with at-risk individuals.
4. % of members of LPSCs can work effectively in R&R and PVE.
5. % of returnees, their families, caregivers who report psycho-social wellbeing through the services provision under Municipal Multiuse - Multiagency centre.

### **6. Output Indicators/Metrics**

1. # of municipalities with a functional referral mechanism established
2. # of the Municipal Multiuse - Multiagency centre established and operationalized
3. # of the multi-agency local bodies, first responders and institutional staff trained on delivering R&R and P/CVE services
4. # of LPSC members supported
5. # of the returnees, at-risk individuals received services through the centre.

In developing their programmes and results frameworks, grantees will be required to select indicators from the list above that link to the activities, outputs, and outcomes of their proposed programmes. After the grant-making process is done and the first round of baseline data collection of the programmes is realised, the GCERF plans to



complement those indicators with targets (for quantitative and qualitative indicators), so GCERF can monitor and evaluate the achievement of its goals.

## **Conflict sensitivity**

GCERF applies a conflict-sensitive approach in Albania, emphasizing a "Do No Harm" principle to minimize potential negative impacts on participants, project staff, and the broader community. Furthermore, GCERF objectives contribute to social cohesion, empowerment of communities and organisations to maintain capacity building tools and sustainability of programs. This approach involves the following steps:

- **Lesson learned and need assessment interventions:** Before initiating any programming, GCERF conducts a thorough context analysis and risk assessment to gain a comprehensive understanding of the local situation, including political sensitivities, social dynamics, and potential conflict triggers. From lessons learned in Albania, we have conducted a needs assessment with target groups, and locations to better understand the context of ALB and program challenges, and interventions the GCERF 2023–2027 strategy will be focused.
- **Preventing Marginalization and raising awareness in communities:** GCERF's approach to tackling violent extremism (VE) and raising awareness in local communities, by working with different stakeholders such as religious leaders, media, local safety councils (LPS), mayors and municipalities. Through such activities, the GCERF approach is focused on building counter-narratives against violent extremist groups in the Albanian context.
- **Adaptive Programming and Flexibility:** GCERF recognizes that contexts and needs can evolve, so it emphasizes adaptive programming and flexibility. This involves maintaining a transparent feedback loop with local partners and communities to gather insights, identify challenges, and adapt interventions accordingly.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** GCERF continuously monitors and evaluates its programs to assess their effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that interventions are aligned with GCERF objectives. The developed monitoring and evaluation system is shared with GCERF partners.

## 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.

## Funding and Investment Scenarios

In Albania, the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) is committed to supporting initiatives that promote community resilience, prevent violent extremism, and foster a peaceful and inclusive society. The organization's funding and investment scenarios in Albania focus on:

### **Capacity Building**

GCERF's focus on capacity building is essential for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). Local organizations, institutions, and individuals are best placed to understand the root causes of violent extremism in their communities and to develop effective solutions. GCERF will partner with the Global Action Platform (GAP) working groups to develop and deliver capacity building programs to frontline workers and CSOs on specific P/CVE topics, such as gender-responsive P/CVE, youth engagement, and social media literacy.

This initiative will include implementation of digital literacy training for the local population, specialized R&R training, conducting monitoring visits to assess progress and provide feedback, and the establishment of quarterly reporting mechanisms for evaluating the project's performance and effectiveness. GCERF also considers developing a capacity building toolkit and creating a community of practice for frontline workers and CSOs.

**Addressing Emerging Threats:** GCERF is committed to addressing emerging threats to peace and security. The organization supports research and development of materials on these topics to raise awareness and understanding among stakeholders. Additionally, GCERF funds programs that counter extremist narratives and promote inclusive and tolerant communities.

To implement these strategic priorities, GCERF is pledging **USD 2mln** through 2027. This funding will be channelled through several consortium-led grants, ensuring a collaborative and inclusive approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities in Albania.

## Monitoring and evaluation

GCERF recognises that effective monitoring and evaluation M&E (monitoring & evaluation) is challenging given the complexity of programming towards P/CVE. GCERF PRs (Principal Recipients) in Albania have developed strong M&E systems throughout the previous rounds of funding and aim to pass this on to their SRs (Sub Recipients). GCERF provides guidelines, virtual support throughout the grant development and management, as well as in-country visits by the Country Manager, Regional Advisor and GCERF Secretariat. The role of the Regional Advisor is to conduct quarterly visits to grant recipients in Albania, overseeing their on-the-ground initiatives, interviewing beneficiaries of the GCERF program, offering suggestions for improvement, and fostering effective collaboration with partners and stakeholders.

The core elements that GCERF supports its PRs with is developing:

- Theory of Change in line with GCERF's Strategy for Investment.
- Results Framework (RF) including Outcome and Output design and indicator target estimation.
- Data collection and analysis plans to produce RF indicator values.
- Research design for the Outcome indicators to support claims of project/grant achievements.

- Data Quality Assurance (DQA) to ensure project/grant indicator values are reliable and valid.

The GCERF Performance & Impact Unit works closely with the GCERF Portfolio Management and Finance Units to develop these five elements in prospective grant recipients' concept papers and subsequent grant proposals. The implementation timeline spans from January 2024 to February 2027.

## Transition Strategy

GCERF determines that its support to a country is no longer required either when the GCERF model (locally driven, community focused PVE practices linked directly to national level policies) is integrated into domestic PVE responses, or when local actors are otherwise demonstrably capable of building community resilience and implementing effective PVE programmes independently of GCERF. Transition from a country may also be triggered by low performance and/or lack of support or engagement from state or non-state partners.

GCERF has designed this strategy with a clear focus on sustainability and capacity building to facilitate the transition out of Albania. This involves building capacities at national and local levels and preparing actors to pass on knowledge. The new round of investment in Albania aims to foster sustainable PVE capacities and empower actors to respond to future challenges.

The following criteria have been identified to assess GCERF's ongoing support for in-country programming:

- 1) **Ineligibility:** A country becomes ineligible for GCERF funding, either because there is no longer a need, or it is no longer feasible, or the country becomes ODA ineligible.
- 2) **Value adds and complementarity:** GCERF's approach adds value and complements existing efforts (including national and donor supported PVE programming).
- 3) **Grantee performance:** Quarterly Grant Performance Assessments enable the GCERF Secretariat to assess improvements in grantee capacity and determine when no further support is required.
- 4) **Government support:** GCERF's model has been effectively adopted by state-level actors and the CSM has become a sustainable coordination mechanism for community-led P/CVE programming.

- 5) **Donor support:** GCERF donors want to continue investing in the country (this is considered along with all other indicators above to ensure relevance).
- 6) **Outcomes/Impact:** Programming continues to contribute to achieving GCERF's stated country-level objectives.
- 7) **Policy development:** Clear national PVE policy (or a plan to adopt one) and increasing openness to CSO participation in PVE.

GCERF's next round of funding will focus on a sustainable transition of R&R efforts by supporting the development of a national referral mechanism and service delivery through multi-agency local bodies.

Criteria	Assessment of Albania's progress against indicators
Eligibility	Albania remains eligible for GCERF funding.
Value-add and complementarity	This strategy has been designed in close coordination with the MIA; ensuring additional GCERF support is complementary to support funded initiatives by the IOM, USAID, EU, NL, and UK.
Grantee Performance	Grantee performance assessments to date have demonstrated that current Tirana-based CSO partners have medium to high capacity. However, local organisations outside of the capital need additional support both operationally and thematically.
Government support	Coordination with the MIA has been consistently effective and productive. While programming in Albania is currently supported by the Regional Accelerated Funding Panel, GCERF is considering reinvigorating the TSM for Albania to ensure a sustainable transition.
Donor support	Donor support exists for GCERF to remain in Albania.
Outcomes/Impact	GCERF funded programmes have focused largely on the R&R of returnees from foreign conflicts. While objectives have been largely achieved, support is needed to further localise support for returnees. A focus on R&R, both by GCERF and institutions, has neglected P/CVE efforts to deal with its more urgent crisis. Additional support is needed to improve P/CVE capacities on all forms of extremism.
Multi-stakeholder coordination approach to PVE	Albania's MIA has been a key partner in ensuring multi-stakeholder coordination. Coordination can still be improved; GCERF will continue efforts to share information closely with similar projects funded by IOM, UK, EU, and NL.
Policy development	Policy development in PVE has taken place at the national level; however, more sustained investment is needed to ensure

	sustainable progress on PVE programming is being made at the local community level. The current strategy of the Government of Albania envisions larger responsibilities at the municipal level and GCERF funded projects will support building their capacity to implement these tasks.
Gender	When it comes to R&R and C/PVE programs in Albania, a thoughtful approach that considers gender is crucial. Understanding that gender roles are pivotal factors in the recruitment strategies and internal operations of extremist groups is essential. Further, religious leaders need to actively include women in their narratives and discussions. This approach ensures that these programs are customized to address the needs that arise from the gendered experiences of individuals returning from conflict zones.

*Annex 1 Inception Report PVN - Albania*

*Annex 2 Desk Research Need Assessment in Albania – PVN Albania*

*Annex 3 Third Party Monitoring Report Albania – Agency for Peacebuilding*