GCERF
Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund



INVESTING TODAY TO PROTECT TOMORROW

The Case for Investment in Preventing Violent Extremism 2025-26

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INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE FOR INVESTMENT

by Dr Khalid Koser,
Executive Director, GCERF



Despite trillions of dollars spent on armed responses to terrorism over the past two decades, the world is not a safer place. Severe social tensions caused by ethnic strife, the economic hardship caused by climate change and cynical, regional power struggles have ignited an increasing number of armed conflicts, which, in turn, threaten to radicalise population groups, and spread violent ideologies and violence into communities that are not yet affected. In addition to its terrible impact on victims and their families and friends, violent extremism is reducing progress towards numerous 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets.

2024 marks ten years since the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) was launched. **It is the world's only dedicated tool to prevent violent extremism (PVE) and has developed a unique and targeted model for multilateral investment in effective prevention efforts.** It does so by funding localised efforts inside communities at risk, in countries where violent extremism is a constant threat or could take root and spread.

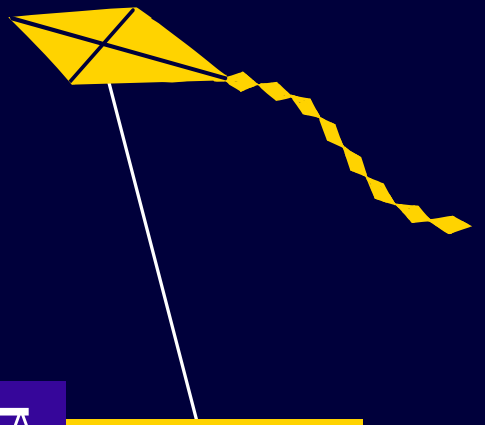
Over the past decade, GCERF has proven that prevention can reduce tensions and strengthen vulnerable communities against the force of violent extremist ideologies. Based on a decade of investing and learning, GCERF is entering a new investment cycle with a set of ambitious, specific, and smart investments in areas and approaches that have proven to be effective over the past ten years. Often these are painstaking, customised solutions, for example to develop conflict resolution at community level, to integrate former extremist families back into communities, to foster dialogue across diverse religions and engage faith leaders as agents for more peaceful communities—to name just a few of the innovations supported.

Across 25 countries and thousands of communities, GCERF's investment to date signal the opportunities that exist for a more peaceful future, when the right (often modest) resources are brought to bear. **As this Case for Investment makes clear, GCERF's return on investment is remarkable – on average GCERF provides sustainable support to young people at risk for for an average of only USD 40 per person.**

A fully funded Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund will help implement the Pact for the Future by sustaining community resilience, encouraging national responsibility, and integrating peace, security, and development support for local communities. We have defined specific priorities for an investment of USD 80 million in the period 2025-26 (Page 4).

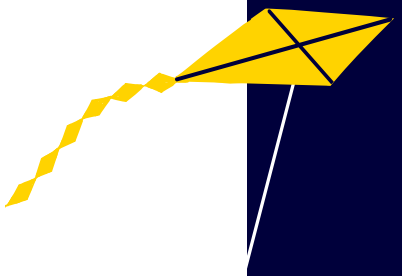
INVESTING TODAY TO PROTECT TOMORROW

With a new investment of USD 80 million, over the next two years, GCERF will:



- Consolidate recent investments in new partner countries including Indonesia, Iraq, Mozambique, and Yemen
- Reinvest in partner countries and regions where the threat of violent extremism is severely undermining security and development, such as the Sahel, or where re-investment is needed to secure hard-earned gains, such as the Philippines and Somalia
- Expand strategically and regionally in Central Asia as a bulwark against the threat emanating in Afghanistan, and the Gulf of Guinea to stem the risk of spillover from the Sahel
- Provide better alternatives to at least 500,000 young people in communities at direct risk of radicalisation
- Support the rehabilitation and reintegration of at least 20,000 returnees from camps in Northeast Syria and their families
- Invest in civil society organisations of which at least 40% are led by women and youth
- Put in place sustainable structures to enable a transition out of at least one country
- Promote sustainable community resilience, national responsibility, and global coherence in preventing violent extremism

RETURN ON INVESTMENT



Over our first decade, GCERF has invested around USD 160 million to provide better alternatives for almost 4 million young people at direct risk of radicalisation and recruitment, representing an average of about **USD 40 per person** at risk. **In this way GCERF has demonstrated how preventing violent extremism (PVE) represents a far more cost-effective means of confronting violent extremism than reactive security responses.** A commitment to PVE is also a commitment to the international rules-based order, in the face of competing narratives for responding to the terrorist threat.

Since 2019, the number of GCERF partner countries has trebled and the number of direct beneficiaries doubled, while our budget has increased by only 30%, and operating expenses have consistently remained below 15%. A further investment in GCERF of USD 80 million to USD 100 million will scale up the impact of prevention efforts as shown in Box 1.

BOX 1: EFFICIENT SCALE-UP

	USD 80M	USD 100M
Number of current partner countries benefitting from re-investment	**14**/25	**18**/25
Number of new partner countries	At least **3**	At least **5**
Number of additional direct beneficiaries	**1.5** million	**2** million

	USD 80M	USD 100M
Number of people directly receiving rehabilitation and reintegration support	**20,000**	**25,000**
Number of frontline workers trained	**5,000**	**6,500**
Number of young people supported with digital education	**50,000**	**75,000**

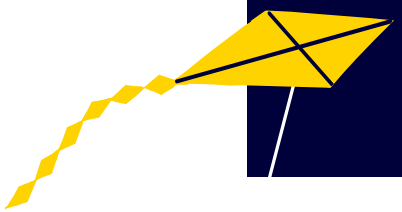
In our first Case for Investment (2021), GCERF made some ambitious commitments, each of which has been achieved or are expected to be achieved (Box 2). GCERF will continue to demonstrate a strong return on investment.



BOX 2: RETURN ON INVESTMENT TO DATE

	2021 COMMITMENT		END-2024 ESTIMATED TOTAL
Expand to new partner countries	10	↗	13
Number of returning foreign terrorist fighters and their families supported through rehabilitation and reintegration programmes	1,000	=	> 1,000
Number of community and religious leaders trained	25,000	=	25,000
Number of youth peace clubs established	1,250	↗	1,500

RESILIENCE AT RISK



Today's global environment is more conducive to violent extremism than at any point since the Arab Spring. ISIS-K is demonstrating its global ambition from Afghanistan and ISIS affiliates across sub-Saharan Africa; the Sahel is at a tipping point; around 45,000 former terrorist fighters and their families remain in camps in Northeast Syria; and the ongoing crisis in Gaza risks radicalising a generation of youth. **The risk today is more diverse, disseminated, and disparate**: while violent extremist groups incorporate global ideological discourses, their origins and strategies are highly localised. **Concurrently, the global reach of violent extremist and terrorist groups to potential recruits is proliferating, especially online.**

Yet around the world the scale and impact of violent extremism has remained stable, despite accelerating drivers of radicalisation and more potent recruitment.

> The global investments made by GCERF over the last three years are one important reason why radicalisation and recruitment to violent extremism and terrorism has been neutralised (Box 3).

Of 14 GCERF partner countries ranked in the top 50 on the Global Terrorism Index, three rose on the index between 2022-23, two were ranked the same, and nine fell down the index, out of the 'Very High' and 'High' risk categories.

BOX 3: INVESTING IN RESILIENCE

Over the last three years, GCERF has built resilience to radicalisation and recruitment by:

Working in 20 countries where the risk is high or very high, directly engaging civil society, local authorities, and governments to support community-led action.

Funding programmes that have directly reached 1.5 million people in communities at risk of radicalisation and recruitment, of whom almost 50% are women.

Supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration into their communities of hundreds of terrorist fighters and their families from Northeast Syria.

Helping to established more than 500 peace clubs globally and training more than 11,000 community and religious leaders to deal with conflict and violent extremism.

The resilience we are building is increasingly at risk, however. Within the communities we support, there is a growing sense of abandonment, for example in the Sahel, and an increased sense of injustice, especially over Gaza. In Tunisia, for example, there has been a sharp increase in violent behaviour in schools.

Climate change is also impacting livelihoods far more quickly than predicted. The long-term consequences of the pandemic, especially on adolescents, remain stark. And in many cases social and economic disparities remain and are widening.

> Now is the time to double down on our investments in resilience, to protect our future from violent extremism.

RESOLVING A WICKED PROBLEM

Violent extremism is an archetypal wicked problem. The aims of violent extremist groups lack clarity. Its impacts are complex and interconnected – undermining the potential for development, exacerbating humanitarian emergencies, and posing a direct security threat to states and citizens. Solutions are subject to real-world constraints, which hinder risk-free attempts to find a solution.

Over the last ten years, GCERF has piloted a new approach to preventing violent extremism. Our model has enabled donors to pool security, development, and humanitarian funds; this pooled fund enables risk-sharing, delivering money in contexts outside the usual reach of bilateral donors. Our world-leading monitoring and evaluation system which includes systematic external evaluation has proven to be effective.

ADVANTAGES OF A MULTILATERAL GLOBAL FUND MODEL

FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

Unrestricted funding allows GCERF to allocate resources where they are most needed. For instance, it allowed GCERF to respond quickly to emerging challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. GCERF has also been able to implement tailored interventions across different regions, adapting our strategies to the unique contexts and needs of each area, such as expanding existing programmes in Kenya or in the Western Balkans.

EFFICIENCY

Our funding model reduces administrative burdens and constraints, allowing the Secretariat to focus more on programmatic impact to generate economies of scale.

SUSTAINABILITY

Unrestricted funding supports long-term planning and sustainability, ensuring that successful initiatives can be maintained and scaled over time, such as in Bangladesh or any other countries graduating from GCERF investment.

INVESTING IN NATIONAL SECURITY



There are powerful reasons to increase investment in prevention: **to preserve the gains that have been made in reducing the global impact of terrorism and violent extremism; to guard against future risks; to transmit knowledge; and to realise the significant potential of global initiatives that have already been established.**

Equally, sustaining global investments in countering violent extremism are critical to achieve national security goals in donor countries.

First, the command and control of specific geographies by violent extremist groups poses a threat that goes beyond their borders. Safe havens have been used as springboards to plan, train and execute terrorist attacks overseas. **Avoiding the creation of these spaces is paramount to global and national security.**

Second, the source of violent extremist threats is transnational, even when it manifests itself locally. An example is the spread of violent ideological propaganda, which is proliferating through online radicalisation. **Initiatives that seek to engage religious leaders, promote non-violent ideologies, or empower youth to resist radicalisation are attempting to respond to this challenge at its source and are therefore relevant beyond their specific context.**

Third, just as violent extremist and terrorist threats to national security may be transnational, so domestic interests are increasingly defined beyond national boundaries. Trade, aid, investment, tourism, international security, and development all put significant numbers of citizens, resources, and reputation at risk. **Global PVE interventions can protect national interests, while also benefiting the host economy.** There is also a significant opportunity cost where states and corporations cannot sustainably invest or operate in particular countries or sub-regions because of the threat of violent extremism and associated insecurity.

PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM TO ADDRESS THE DRIVERS OF MIGRATION

In GCERF's extensive experience, preventing violent extremism can be an integral component of addressing the drivers of migration.

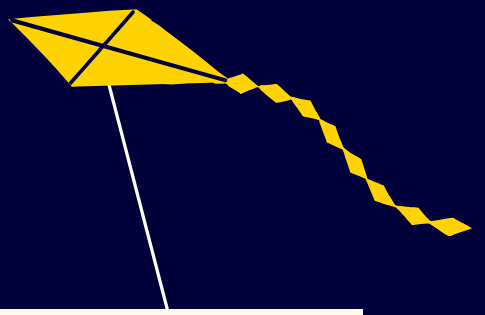
First, PVE interventions stabilize communities and reduce incentives to migrate by providing positive social and economic alternatives.

Second, violent extremist groups often profit from migrant smuggling and people trafficking, and PVE interventions undermine their legitimacy and disrupt financing.

There is also a significant risk of rebound or radicalisation among failed asylum seekers and irregular migrants who are returned home, which community-based PVE interventions can address.

PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Crisis Prevention, Stabilisation and Peacebuilding



The political significance of violent extremism far outweighs its numerical significance. While the number of violent extremists worldwide is relatively small (and hard to define), and their direct impact in terms of lives lost is limited (though devastating), the wider impact of their ideology is critical. **Terrorism is the most asymmetric threat to the security of citizens and international stability and prosperity.**

According to the 2024 Global Terrorism Index, **over 90% of terrorist attacks and 98% of terrorism deaths in 2023 occurred in conflict zones, underscoring the strong link between conflict and terrorism.** Separate research demonstrates that when one or more of the conflicting parties has a strong ideological stance, conflicts are less likely to end and more likely to recur.

WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

When women and girls are given opportunities, they emerge as effective leaders of PVE efforts and agents of change, including when they renounce their own allegiances. GCERF facilitates their participation in prevention efforts by supporting organisations that provide awareness-raising, leadership training, psycho-social support, and skills building for women and girls.

Over one-third of the organisations receiving grants from GCERF are led by women and youth, with a commitment to increase the proportion to 40% by 2025.

1/3

'My brother left to join al-Shabaab five years ago. The family was in shock. I could not just sit around. With a GCERF grant I started an organisation that educates women like me about how to engage with their family members and talk about the dangers of joining terrorist groups. My organisation helps women regain their voice in their families and speak out against the dangers of violent extremism but also to recognise early signs of radicalisation. When my brother learned what I was doing, he got in touch with the elders in our village. He managed to escape. He has repented. Today, he is one of our biggest advocates. Men and women, we work together for peace in Somalia.'

Faduma, 24 years old, Beled Hawo, Somalia

GCERF's experience demonstrates how interventions to prevent violent extremism can directly contribute to crisis prevention, stabilisation, and peacebuilding.

FIRST

PVE is an effective means to de-escalate tension and prevent conflict. In Mali and Nigeria, for example, GCERF has established peace committees between farmers and herders, with the legitimacy to adjudicate complaints and deliver fair judgements; in Kosovo we have supported multi-ethnic reconciliation efforts within divided communities.

SECOND

In Yemen, we have supported the reintegration and rehabilitation of former fighters focusing on child soldiers, with the goal of reducing the number of active combatants and stabilising their communities.

THIRD

In the Philippines, we have reduced the legitimacy of the Abu Sayyaf and Maute groups within communities, impacting their ambitions to be spoilers in the peace process (Box 4).



BOX 4: PREVENTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND PEACE PROCESSES

Peace processes are essential for achieving lasting peace but face challenges from violent extremist groups, which make conflicts harder to resolve and more likely to recur. Preventing violent extremism provides a non-kinetic approach that can complement these processes, undermining the legitimacy of violent extremist groups by reducing the disparities that form the basis for their appeal, and thus curtailing their role as peace spoilers.

PVE can also support disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) by reintegrating former violent extremists, enhancing the effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives. Within GCERF's portfolio, the most notable example is in the Philippines, where our grants support interventions to strengthen the Bangsamoro peace process and local governance while diminishing the appeal of violent extremist groups.

GCERF'S EDGE

The Right Thing:

GCERF has moved beyond theory to demonstrate in practice how prevention works, building resilience to radicalisation and recruitment in thousands of communities across the world. Because of the results we have demonstrated, governments in our partner countries have incorporated prevention in their national strategies. In Albania, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, and the Philippines, civil society partners supported by GCERF have become active participants in national policymaking.



GCERF'S APPROACH TO PVE

GCERF has defined a response to the emerging field of preventing violent extremism. We respond to the threat where it is prevalent, for example our programming across the Sahel. We prevent violent extremism where the risk is still low but emerging, for example in response to the risk of spillover from the Sahel to Ghana. And we secure gains against violent extremism for example through the peace process in Mindanao in the Philippines, in newly liberated areas in Somalia, or through the rehabilitation and reintegration of former terrorist fighters in the Western Balkans.

At the Right Time:

GCERF has fine-tuned our funding model to respond swiftly to emerging violent extremist risks, operating along a risk spectrum from emergency responses to sustainable community resilience.

RESPONDING TO THE EMERGENCY IN NORTHERN GHANA

Ghana became a GCERF partner in May 2023. As a repercussion of insecurity and terrorist attacks in southern Burkina Faso, thousands of refugees entered Ghana, increasing the strain on host communities. The government of Ghana requested GCERF to respond in August, and by the end of September an emergency grant was established with the generous support of Japan, providing social and economic support to hundreds of host and refugee women and digital literacy skills to young people to prevent terrorist and violent extremist groups exploiting social tensions.

In the Right Places:

GCERF has tested iteratively its methodology for identifying communities at risk of radicalisation and recruitment, combining quantitative and qualitative methods.

MAPPING VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES IN NIGERIA

Selecting target locations for PVE interventions is complex due to the interplay between individual, community, and broader macro-level factors influencing radicalisation and recruitment. While GCERF utilises third-party needs assessments to analyse patterns and stakeholders to craft its investment strategy and decide where and in what it invests, GCERF seeks to enhance these insights with additional tools. GCERF has developed a ‘vulnerability index’ for Nigeria, combining various indicators to map community risks and susceptibility to violent extremism at a granular level. The index is a tool that combines different indicators to map out community risks, vulnerability, and susceptibility to violent extremism in Nigeria. This composite index has three main analytical pillars and 12 sub-pillars, uses 40+ survey data, social media content, and indicators from 15 distinct data sources to map out community risks and vulnerability at 1km2 grid. This index informed GCERF’s decisions for our third round of investments in the country.

In the Right Way:

GCERF's model is testament to the potential of localisation. We provide grants to civil society organisations, co-designing with them projects to ensure relevance to the local context, and promoting their active participation in the national policy planning process. We are also increasingly promoting local expertise in monitoring and evaluation.



LOCAL KNOWLEDGE PARTNERS

As part of our strategic cycle 2021-2024, GCERF launched a pilot project to support local knowledge-based organisations, because a society is only resilient when knowledge is integral to its toolkit to deal with challenges and decisions. The local knowledge partner supports GCERF and its partners in three areas: First, capacity strengthening on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for GCERF partners. Second, third-party monitoring and evaluation of the projects, for which they are best placed to facilitate access to communities. Finally, operational research of direct relevance to the GCERF portfolio. GCERF currently has two local knowledge partners: in the Sahel and in the Philippines, providing grantees training on monitoring, evaluation, data, and specific evaluative approaches such as outcome harvesting. In the Philippines they enabled GCERF to use quasi-experimental designs to evaluate two projects in the Philippines – a type of design still rarely used in PVE. Coupled with third-party monitoring, the local knowledge partner in the Sahel conducted exploratory research on communities' perceptions of the nexus of violent extremism and climate change.

DELIVERING RESULTS AROUND THE WORLD

As of December 2024

25
Countries

4M
People

132
Grants Signed

395
Local Partners



1
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA 2022
1 grant
$0.7m committed
1 local partner

2
KOSOVO 2017
10 grants (3 active)
$7.3m committed
26 local partners

3
NORTH MACEDONIA 2021
2 grants
$1.8m committed
9 local partners

4
ALBANIA 2020
6 grants (3 active)
$4m committed
13 local partners

5
TUNISIA 2019
10 grants (4 active)
$4.3m committed
19 local partners

6
MAURITANIA 2023
4 grants
$3m committed
13 local partners

7
MALI 2016
13 grants (3 active)
$11.3m committed
47 local partners

8
BURKINA FASO 2021
4 grants
$3.75m committed
10 local partners

9
GHANA 2023
4 grants
$3m committed
11 local partners

10
NIGERIA 2016
11 grants (3 active)
$13.7m committed
24 local partners

11
NIGER 2022
4 grants (3 active)
$3m committed
11 local partners

12
CHAD 2024
3 grants
$2.06m committed
7 local partners

13
MOZAMBIQUE 2024
3 grants
$4m committed
14 local partners

14
KENYA 2018
14 grants (4 active)
$13m committed
46 local partners

15
SOMALIA 2021
5 grants (4 active)
$5m committed
12 local partners

16
YEMEN 2024
2 grants
$1.9m committed
7 local partners

17
IRAQ 2024
8 grants
$6.9m committed
13 local partners

18
TAJIKISTAN
Starting in 2025

19
UZBEKISTAN
Starting in 2025

20
KAZAKHSTAN
Starting in 2025

21
KYRGYZSTAN 2024
2 grants
$2m committed
7 local partners

22
BANGLADESH 2016-2024
9 grants
$10.9m committed
41 local partners

23
SRI LANKA 2021
1 grant
$1.8m committed
14 local partners

24
INDONESIA
Starting in 2025

25
THE PHILIPPINES 2019
16 grants (7 active)
$10.1m committed
50 local partners



SETTING GLOBAL STANDARDS FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E) IN PVE

GCERF operates a multi-level and multi-layered M&E system that tracks global, national/regional, and grant levels results. At the grant level, each project is guided by a theory of change and a results framework with outcome and output indicators, requiring grantees to collect baseline data, report quarterly, and conduct final assessments. Beyond grantees' efforts, GCERF conducts M&E activities, including regular visits by its Secretariat and national advisors. GCERF also regularly commissions external assessments/evaluations of these grants, which can occur during implementation, at the end of the grant period, and in some cases one year after grant completion.

From 2021 to mid-2024, GCERF commissioned 13 evaluations covering 36 grants, covering a substantial proportion of our global portfolio (averaged 44 active grants - 2021-2024). Additionally, GCERF assesses national, regional, and international achievements, including through portfolio evaluations, and has commissioned an external evaluation for its 2021-2024 strategic period. GCERF has been positively evaluated by an external review commissioned by the Swiss Confederation in 2022 and by an external evaluation by the European Union (EU) in 2024.

GCERF'S MULTI-LAYERED MONITORING AND EVALUATION APPROACH

1. Global level

Development of Global Objectives and KPIs
GCERF develops a Strategic Management Plan which translates GCERF Strategy into goals, indicators, and targets.

Measurement and Annual Reporting
Progress in each indicator is reported every year, tracking achievement towards targets.

Review of GCERF Strategy (including External Evaluation)
GCERF reviews the results of its Strategic cycle, which includes the commission of an external evaluation to assess GCERF itself.

2. National/Regional level

Investment Strategy with Theory of Change /Indicators
Objectives, Theory of Change, and standard indicators are developed for each country or regional portfolio.

Measurement Throughout Implementation
Country-level indicators are incorporated into grants, and measured at different stages of the grants implementation.

Country/Regional Evaluation
GCERF might commission an evaluation of the portfolio and its investment strategy.

Country/ Regional Board Report
GCERF consolidates the results reported by grantees and any external exercise into a final Board report.

3. Grant-level

Due Diligence
Potential grantees' M&E capacities are assessed as part of the selection process for funding.

Theory of Change & Results Framework (RF)
GCERF supports local partners in developing Theory of Change, and RF with indicators and targets.

Baseline Assessment
Comprehensive assessment of the situation by gathering baseline data before implementation.

Third-party Monitoring
GCERF often commissions a third party to assess and evaluate the actual implementation of the project.

Advisor, Secretariat Visits
Various parties such as GCERF National Advisors and the Secretariat monitor programming on the ground using a structured national monitoring tool.

Quarterly Reporting and Review
The grantees report quarterly progress, which GCERF reviews against the programme objectives.

End-line Assessment
At the end of the project, grantees conduct exercises to gather final data on the outcomes and assess the results.

Completion Report
Grantees submit a final report to GCERF, including the achievement of the project outputs and outcomes.

End-of-grant Evaluation
GCERF commissions a third party to evaluate the results of the project, often using OECD-DAC evaluation criteria.

Ex-post Evaluation
GCERF might commission an evaluation to assess the sustainability of project outcomes. It would occur one year or more after the project's completion.

REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION

Over the last three years, GCERF has supported the rehabilitation and reintegration into their communities of origin of hundreds of former terrorists and their family members from Al Hawl and Al Roj camps in Northeast Syria, in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Indonesia, Iraq, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, and the Philippines. This will also be a priority for new investments in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

We have pioneered a comprehensive, holistic case management system that creates an enabling environment for reintegration, and directly engages returnees in the process. The outcomes are to reduce the risk of recidivism among returnees and mobilise their experiences to counter the risk or radicalisation and recruitment among other community members, making rehabilitation and reintegration an integral component of preventing violent extremism.

GENDER AND CONFLICT-SENSITIVE HOLISTIC CASE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

- Awareness-raising – (re)humanisation
- Capacity strengthening of frontliners
- Preparation of communities for returnees
- Preparation of schools for returnee children

ENGAGEMENT OF RETURNEES

- Pre-departure support
- Assessment of case files
- Rehabilitation (2-6 months)

COMMUNITY-BASED (RE)INTEGRATION

- Psychosocial support
- Livelihood support
- Private sector engagement
- Pro-social skills
- Family involvement
- Local authority involvement for service provision

The results in Kosovo and Albania demonstrate the success of projects supported by GCERF in directly supporting returnees, fostering an enabling environment, and capacitating frontline workers.

Averaged across projects, a significant

79%

of frontline workers reported that they now have sufficient knowledge and capacity to deliver services

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This increase in local capacity has led to

85%

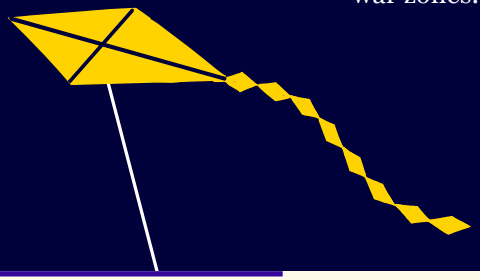
of returnees reporting a positive outlook in life and sense of reintegration in communities, representing an average

24%

increase from the baseline.

One project in Kosovo reported that 86% of community members perceived returnees were integrating well. Another reported that 92% of returnee children showed positive socialisation and behaviour among their peers. 95% of parents/caregivers also reported that they are now well-equipped to help their children.

In Albania, one project reported that 64% of community members feel that returnees and their families have become an integral part of their communities, and 59% of religious leaders reported providing assistance and services to integrate returnees in their communities. At the policy level, one project supported the government in improving policies and standards regarding the rights of children returning from war zones.



PRE-DEPARTURE SUPPORT

GCERF has launched a pilot initiative to support the pre-departure phase for third-country nationals from Albania, Indonesia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and the Philippines who are currently in the camps in Northeast Syria. Children and wives of former IS fighters are receiving pre-departure support in a safe space, including recreational activities, strengthened pro-social skills, and informal education. The women discuss their priorities and expectations of return, learning specific livelihood skills such as sewing, hairstyling, cooking, and basic electricity so they can become self-reliant once they return home.

'We can finally have a safe space to exchange. The camp is dangerous; we are not allowed to interact much. But here we know, we are all motivated by one thing: to go home after five years and provide our children with a better future. This programme gave us hope, and we know the world did not forget about us.'

Alina, 23 years old, Al Roj Camp, Syria



GCERF also supports people who disengage from terrorist and violent extremist groups and either have been given amnesty or are going through prosecution. For example, in Mali GCERF supports former terrorists currently in prison to learn pro-social and income generating skills.

Community-based integration can help large number of returnees when there is no scope for individual case management. Here communities define their priorities and people in need benefit from it, including but not exclusively returnees. GCERF supports community-based integration in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Somalia.

'MY DREAMS ARE REAL AND ATTAINABLE'

'I was 8 years old when I was brought by my mother and father to Syria. Those years were very complicated. But the most difficult was losing my father and my brother and what came after in the camp. We had nothing to eat, nothing to do. We could not go to school. It was boredom and hopelessness. But one day we were called to go home, back to Albania. After 7 years in Syria, I hardly remembered my grandparents. I did not know what to expect. I have never dreamt to receive all the good I got. I could go to school, learn how to read and write. I have new friends. Finally, I have dreams to support myself and my family. My dreams are real and attainable.'

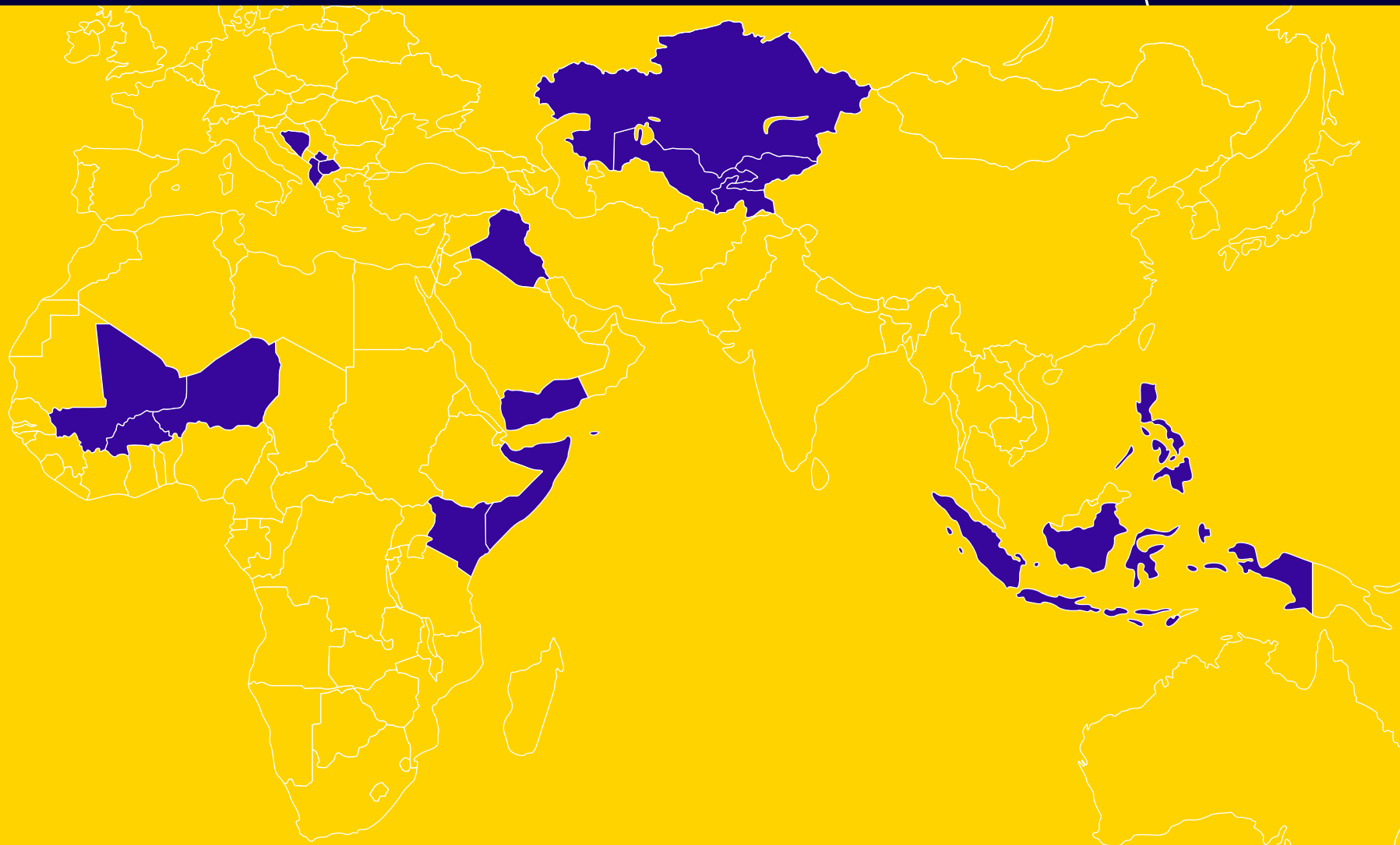
Badr, 15 years old, Tirana, Albania

RETURNING HOME TO IRAQ

'When I came back to Anbar from AL Hawl (a camp in Northeast Syria for former IS affiliates), I was depressed and full of anxiety. I did not think my extended family would accept me back. But I knew it was the right thing to do to return to Iraq. A local NGO launched a trauma-healing support programme for us. I was with 27 other returnee women who had similar issues. After spending several days together and being helped with various methods to overcome my fears, I feel so much more confident to speak about my trauma with my family. I am grateful to the NGO for equipping me with self-confidence.'

Leila, 22 years old, Al Anbar Governorate, Iraq

COUNTRIES ENGAGING IN REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION



17

out of 25 countries
support R&R
as part of PVE

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

In the last ten years, GCERF has invested in community-led resilience at significant scale (Box 5).



BOX 5: GCERF AT SCALE

57,000

GCERF has provided livelihood opportunities to more than 57,000 people

400,000

Over 400,000 young girls and boys have participated in cultural and sport activities to promote tolerance and pluralism

35,000

GCERF engaged with 35,000 religious leaders from Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Muslim faiths in conflict resolution and peace-building

585,000

These faith leaders engaged over 585,000 people in inter-faith and inter-community dialogues

33,000

GCERF partners trained 33,000 young people on information and communication skills and digital literacy

> Over the next two years, our investment will focus on the sustainability of such initiatives, through accelerating our support for technical, organisational and institutional capacity.



Technical capacity strengthening is already underway across all GCERF grantees, on issues such as gender mainstreaming, community-based integration and conflict-sensitive PVE programming. There has been a particular focus on strengthening online resilience (Box 6). **An estimated 87% of the final recipients of GCERF grants have never before received international funding, therefore, organisational capacity-building is critical, for example financial, project, and consortium management.**

Finally, many GCERF grants have resulted in the organic evolution of new platforms and networks, some of which are becoming institutionalised through official registration.

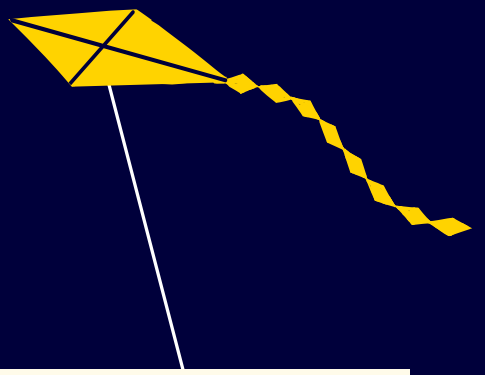
BOX 6: DIGITAL RESILIENCE

Misinformation and disinformation leading to online radicalisation is a growing issue, affecting millions of young people. To contribute to tackling the problem, in 2022 GCERF launched a multi-year partnership with Mythos Lab to train GCERF's grantees in: (1) How to use social media for PVE; (2) Media and Information Literacy for PVE; (3) Monitoring and Evaluation in Digital PVE and; (4) Artificial Intelligence in PVE.

The collaboration involved developing specialised training modules, training grantees, and providing six months of follow-on mentorship support to grantees in developing and monitoring the effectiveness of social media campaigns for PVE. In total, 327 grantees received training and the modules are open-source products for our grantees to adapt to their local context. Over 50% of active GCERF grants involve training of young people on misinformation and disinformation.

GCERF has subsequently launched the Global Action Platform (GAP) working group on Digital PVE to keep grantees connected and engaged. The working group is currently comprised of nine grantee organisations and is expected to grow to more than 30 organisations in 2025, especially once our new online digital platform on "discord" is launched at the grantee level.

STRENGTHENING NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY



> An investment in GCERF is an investment in national responsibility.

In every partner country, the national government establishes a Country Support Mechanism (CSM), a consultative process that brings together relevant government agencies, civil society, and international donor representatives, to provide strategic direction and ensure results, and progressively inherit ownership for funding community-level PVE.

REINFORCING LEGAL PROTECTION

Because of the Marawi siege in 2017, tens of thousands of people lost their homes and as of 2024 still 30,000 people live in internally displaced camps. Women are disproportionally affected. They are often the main bread winners in the families where the husbands were killed or disappeared. Through targeted livelihood projects survivor women are engaged by GCERF projects in addressing land ownership issues. This is crucial to recover land, ensure sustainable income generation, and prevent people from being drawn into terrorist groups. The Marawi Advocacy Accompaniment (MAA) meetings revitalised discussions on dignified return for internall displaced persons (IDPs) and the Marawi Compensation Law.

Survivor women are sensitised about their rights and provided comprehensive livelihood support:

'I had no hope. I have been in the camp for 6 years. I lost my husband, my brother, and an older son. My papers were lost during the siege. I was hardly surviving and unable to properly look after my three younger children. I thought of many things including joining the groups in the jungle. I had no hope until MAA came to us and told me I can get my land back and I can learn new skills. There are no words that can describe the joy I feel after being hopeless for years.'

Jojo, 42 years old, Marawi, The Philippines

Over time, partner countries graduate from GCERF funding, based on clear strategic parameters. These include an assessment that GCERF has left in place sustainable community structures for PVE, confirmed through an ex post facto evaluation; the maintenance of CSMs or similar initiatives; and the continuation of government participation on the GCERF global Governing Board.

Bangladesh was GCERF's first graduating partner, and during the next two-year period GCERF will transition from at least one more partner country. This process not only promotes national ownership, but also demonstrates responsible stewardship of donor funds, permitting GCERF to invest limited resources where they are most needed and can be most impactful.

> National responsibility confers obligations on the whole of society, not just governments.
>
> GCERF grantees have contributed to and at times led the development or review of national strategies and policies in Albania, Kenya, Kosovo, Mali, and the Philippines. Over the next two years GCERF will also encourage the private sector to assume its responsibility for peace and security.



MAKING THE SUM GREATER THAN THE TOTAL OF THE PARTS

> We are the world-leader in building community resilience against violent extremism, but sustaining resilience requires a consolidated effort.

GCERF recognises that we cannot secure our precarious future alone. At the global level, GCERF partners with the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF) and other GCTF-inspired institutions, as well as relevant United Nations (UN) agencies and regional organisations at both headquarters and country level, to promote a whole of society response to prevention. Over the next two years, we will drive forward this partnership, for example in the field of Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration in Central Asia.

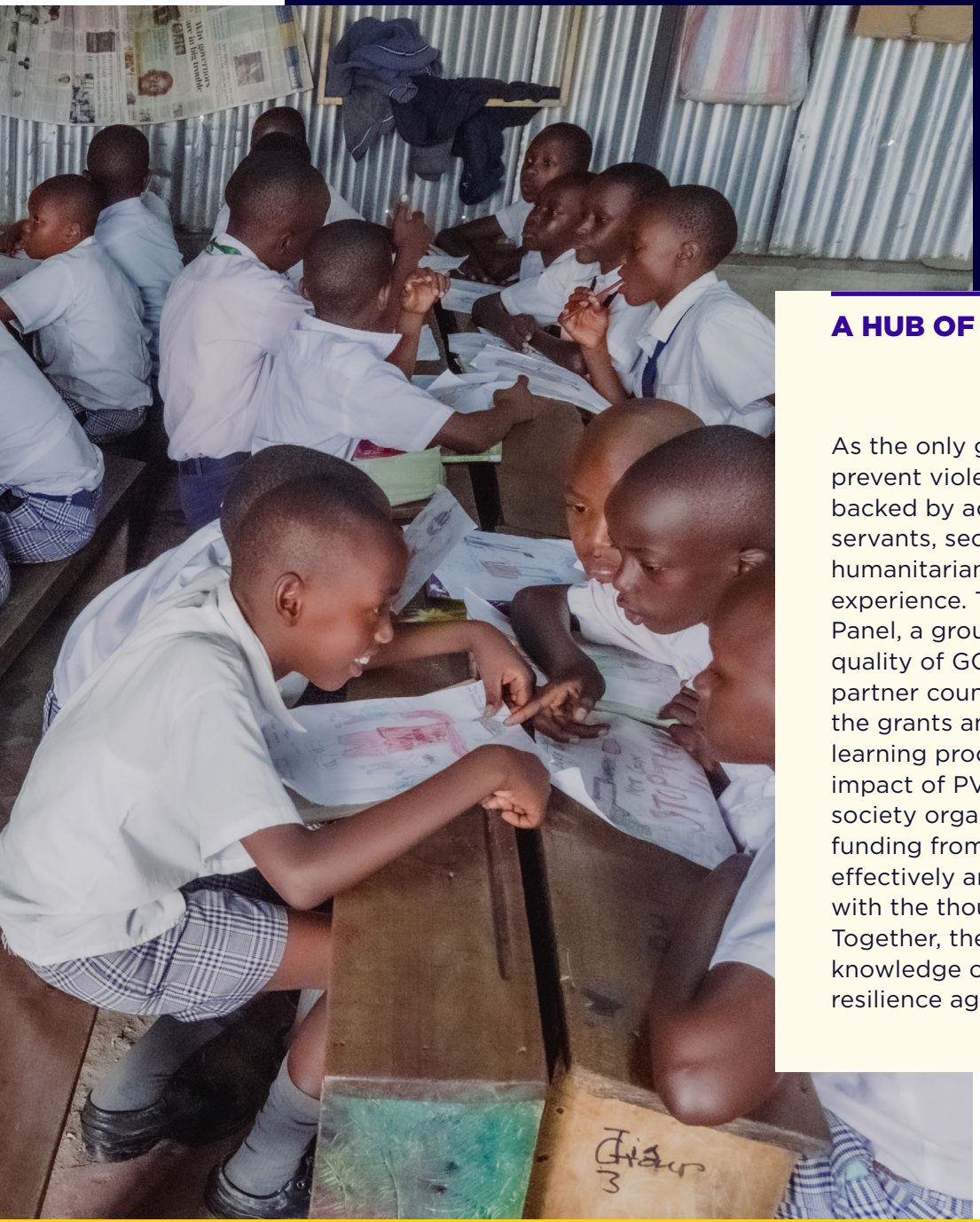
We will also accelerate the partnership between our grantees, and between them and other community-based organisations confronting similar challenges (Box 7).

BOX 7: GCERF'S GLOBAL ACTION PLATFORM (GAP)

GCERF is a global conveyer and facilitator of knowledge sharing and expertise. We have been incubating the Global Action Platform (GAP) since 2023. This platform is a hub for collaboration among the more than 360 local and grassroots organisations that have received grants from GCERF across 25 countries on three continents. The GAP enables them to strengthen their capacity and enhance their PVE programming. Through online and in-person exchanges, and local, regional, and global communities practice, a series of topics such as rehabilitation and reintegration, case management, de-colonisation of programming, and gender mainstreaming in PVE have been discussed and debated. Through the six technical working groups on pertinent issues such as PVE and social cohesion, climate, digitalisation, community-based integration, radicalisation in detention centers, and engagement with people from Northeast Syrian camps, world-class knowledge products and training materials are now being produced by civil society organisations for civil society organisations.

'GCERF is much more than a donor. They bring us together. We are all connected and learning from each other's experiences. I loved hearing that grantees in the Philippines have similar challenges regarding the engagement of female religious leaders as we do in Tunisia. I would have never thought we had anything in common, yet they struggle with the same issue.'

Wahiba, 33 years old, Kasserine, Tunisia



GCERF also facilitates both local and global communities of practice to further sustainable partnership through knowledge exchange, and recently published a Guidance Document on community-based reintegration with UNDP, the Folke Bernadotte Academy and Elman Peace and Human Rights Center.

A HUB OF WORLD-CLASS EXPERTS

As the only global fund mandated to prevent violent extremism, GCERF is backed by academics, practitioners, civil servants, security professionals, and humanitarian workers with tremendous experience. The Independent Review Panel, a group of experts, ensures the quality of GCERF's engagement in partner countries. The Secretariat delivers the grants and, through a continuous learning process, keeps increasing the impact of PVE programmes. The civil society organisations which receive funding from GCERF, innovate to effectively and sustainably engage with the thousands of communities. Together, they constitute the backbone of knowledge on strengthening community resilience against violent extremism.

'GCERF grantees in the Western Balkans just produced a significant knowledge product about how to provide mental health and psychosocial support for people returning from Northeast Syria. It was authored by dozens of frontline workers, including psychologists, case managers, teachers, and social workers. GCERF is more than just a donor giving grants. They are real champions of knowledge and expertise sharing.'

A Government Official from North Macedonia

The solution to violent extremism requires concepts and expertise beyond the narrow field of PVE. Over the next two years, GCERF will continue to lean into other public policy fields to inform our results, including criminology and public health.



BOX 8: AT THE NEXUS OF PVE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

GCERF is pioneering projects at the climate change – violent extremism (VE) nexus in the Liptako-Gourma region in the Sahel, where 25% of respondents to a recent survey attributed climate change as a driver for youth joining VE groups. One project is working with herders and farmers to restore land, establish waterways and form cooperatives to improve livelihoods, also helping communities form local committees to manage resources sustainably. As a result: 253 hectares of land have been rejuvenated, 124 farmer cooperatives formed, 50 land resource management committees established, and nine recorded conflicts resolved. GCERF's Global Action Platform – a global alliance of every GCERF grantee – has established a working group on climate change to replicate these successes in other contexts, for example in Southern Iraq. GCERF is also leading an initiative on climate change and PVE for the Global Counterterrorism Forum, co-chaired by Germany and Kenya.

We will also continue to elaborate the interactions between violent extremism and other global challenges, including displacement, organised crime and climate change.

GCERF
Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund

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