

UZBEKISTAN

CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

GCERF invites Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Uzbekistan to apply for funding to implement programmes that promote rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children returnees from Northeast Syria and Iraq, building on the previous work by other like-minded organisations and the Government of Uzbekistan.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 28 September 2025 – 11:59 PM (Tashkent time)

Background

The Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) was established in 2014 to build community resilience against radicalisation and recruitment by violent extremist and terrorist groups. GCERF is a nonprofit Swiss foundation that supports local, community-level initiatives that address the local drivers of violent extremism.

GCERF has rolled out programming in Uzbekistan in 2025 following the establishment of the Country Support Mechanism (CSM) in April 2025 and approving of the Country Investment Strategy in August 2025.

In Uzbekistan, GCERF will prioritise improving further rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R) of women and children who returned from Iraq and Syria; as well as other vulnerable people in immediate communities. These priorities were identified through the Country Needs Assessment (CNA) conducted by GCERF in May 2025 and laid out in the Uzbekistan Investment Strategy (2025–2028) approved by the GCERF Governing Board in August 2025. GCERF will invest in preventing violent extremism (PVE) work in communities at risk and provide them with much-needed services to promote social cohesion and more equal access to economic and social opportunities. Based on lessons learned and good practices in rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R) from GCERF work over the last seven years, the Investment Strategy outlines the following specific priorities in the coming 24 months:

- i. The rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children repatriated from Iraq and Northeast Syria.
- ii. Capacity strengthening for frontline workers, psychologists, social workers, parents, religious leaders, staff of educational institutions, and local and national authorities in medium- and long-term dedicated casework and referral, stigma-free and trauma-informed support services.
- iii. Creating an enabling environment for return, rehabilitation, resocialisation, and reintegration in target communities.

Call for Expressions of Interest (EOI)

Grant Funding Structure

GCERF's grant funding mechanism primarily supports Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in a **consortium model**, wherein initiatives for the rehabilitation and reintegration of repatriated women and children from Northeast Syria and Iraq are implemented.

In this context, the grant is managed by a **Principal Recipient (PR)**, who serves as the legal recipient of GCERF funds. The PR then assumes the responsibility for sub-disbursing funds and providing technical and operational support to partner organisations, referred to as **Sub-Recipients (SRs)**. Both PRs and SRs are considered **Recipients** within the framework of a consortium grant. This option is preferred.

In exceptional and duly justified cases, GCERF can provide funding to **Direct Grantees**, i.e., legal recipients operating without a consortium.

The purpose of this call for Expressions of Interest (EOI) is to invite applications for funding from civil society organisations, which meet GCERF's prerequisites and have sufficient technical, managerial and administrative experience to effectively implement their proposed activities that seek to address the issues outlined below.

Received application forms will be evaluated against standardised criteria, and applicants will be duly informed whether their proposals will move to the next stage of evaluation. This stage will include working with GCERF on a detailed grantee package which includes workplan, budget, theory of change, results framework, narrative proposal and other documents. This work typically takes about two months. In the case of Uzbekistan, all grants must be signed before the 15th December 2025. Therefore, organisations committing to work with GCERF must be ready to undertake on-time and dynamic grant preparation work.

As per GCERF's Investment Strategy for Uzbekistan (2025–2028) and in support of Uzbekistan's National Strategy on Countering Extremism and Terrorism for 2021–2026, the focus of our funding will be as follows:

Beneficiaries (may include but are not limited to the following):

- **Women and children repatriated** from Iraq and Northeast Syria
- **Vulnerable women and children** in the immediate communities where returnee women and children live, such as, but not limited to, survivors of gender-based violence, women raising their children alone, women migrant workers, and their children left unsupervised, among others
- **Community and family members** of returnee women and children in targeted mahallas
- **Mahalla** activists
- **Frontline workers**, including social workers, teachers, psychologists, medical personnel, and religious leaders
- **Authorities** at local and national levels (hokimiyats)

Target locations:

- All the Republic of Uzbekistan

Objectives

GCERF seeks to fund local civil society organisations to implement programmes that support further rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children returnees and other vulnerable groups in immediate communities. To ensure the safety and effectiveness of all activities, these programmes

require trained personnel and expertise to meet the specific needs of this population. The applying organisation must demonstrate the necessary capacity in its proposal.

We intend to support a programme that will fulfill two key objectives and will be based on needs assessment of target beneficiaries and a baseline survey supported by grant awards:

Objective 1: Strengthening Local Capacity for Community Resilience and Sustainable Reintegration of Returnee Women and Children from Iraq & Northeast Syria

Enhance government and community-based mechanisms for R&R by leveraging best practices to address the medium- and long-term needs of returnee women and children from Iraq and Northeast Syria, in their reintegration journey.

Strategy 1: Enhance Capacity for Coordinated Support

Bolster the professional skills of frontline workers and key community stakeholders by building on existing government-led case management and R&R mechanisms. Ensure all individuals possess the updated skills needed for effective case management and sustained support, strengthening local capacity for long-term R&R.

Proposed activities can include, but are not limited to the following:

- Strengthen the capacity of frontline workers and community actors to identify and address the specific needs of returnees.
- Improve mahallas' coordination and referral mechanisms at local and community levels to address the needs of the returnees and the most vulnerable populations.
- Strengthens community ties and fosters collective ownership of reintegration and development.
- Support community dialogues and civic engagement activities to reduce stigma and promote the reintegration of individuals into society.

Objective 2: R&R Support for Returnee Women and Children from Iraq, Northeast Syria and Most Vulnerable Women and Children in Immediate Communities

Address the medium- and long-term needs of returnees and their communities by building on existing government-led mechanisms. Reduce socio-economic vulnerability and provide direct support to individuals, ensuring durable reintegration and fostering resilient communities.

Strategy 1: Boost Economic Stability and Social Integration of Returnee Women and Children from Iraq and Northeast Syria

Build on the initial reintegration phase by providing vocational, educational, and entrepreneurial opportunities. This will reduce socio-economic vulnerability and foster durable social integration, which contributes to lasting stability and indirectly addresses the root causes of social instability.

Under this strategy, most vulnerable women and children from the immediate community are encouraged to be included.

Proposed activities can include, but are not limited to the following:

- Provide direct economic and educational opportunities for returnees and the most vulnerable women and children in the immediate community, including vocational training, micro-grants, and apprenticeships.
- Partner with private employers to offer internships, apprenticeships and job placements.
- Provide ongoing coaching and mentoring for reintegrated individuals in employment or business.

- Provide life skills education: decision-making, critical thinking, and civic participation
- Increase positive engagement between returnee women and children, frontline workers, and mahalla residents.

Strategy 2: Deliver Child-Centric Support for Returnee Children and Most Vulnerable Children in Immediate Community

Supplement government-provided systems with flexible and inclusive learning environments to ensure the long-term well-being of repatriated children. Promote their long-term development and successful social integration.

Proposed activities can include, but are not limited to the following:

- Support educational and social reintegration by providing comprehensive assistance to returnees and the most vulnerable children in immediate communities through an integrated programme that includes extracurricular and recreational activities, scholarships, and tutoring.
- Provide trauma-informed well-being and therapeutic support by establishing a safe, structured programme for trauma recovery and well-being through professionally facilitated peer support groups, art therapy, and other play-based learning activities to help children safely express trauma.
- Incorporate a well-being curriculum focused on emotional regulation and conflict resolution and promote safe parent-child dialogues to strengthen family bonds.

Note: This list is non-exhaustive, and this EOI is open to other innovative R&R programme proposals.

Requirements

Applicants should refer to the 'Guiding Principles' of the Investment Strategy for Uzbekistan (attached). **Applicants should demonstrate understanding of:**

- The main issues that women and children returnees and other vulnerable groups face that increase their risk of marginalisation;
- How and why proposed activities will address these issues; and
- What knowledge, experience and/or networks your organisation has that make you best placed to implement this programme.

Proposals should demonstrate knowledge of previously established or existing R&R mechanisms, platforms and capacities of communities and authorities and how these will be built on or improved. In addition, proposed activities should demonstrate linkages to [Uzbekistan's National Strategy on countering violent extremism and terrorism for 2021-2026](#).

The safety and security of any staff or programme participants/beneficiaries should be considered in programme design. **We encourage applicants to think innovatively in response to current needs and priorities, while building on existing R&R good practices, structures, and systems.**

Grant Size and Duration

The proposed programme should cover a period of **24 months**. We intend to issue grants to civil society organisations (consortia preferred) for a maximum of **500,000 USD**, over the duration of the grant period.

Grantee

Each consortium should be led by a Principal Recipient that will be responsible for providing subgrants to other consortium members.

Prerequisites and Required Capabilities

The purpose of an Expression of Interest is for an applicant for GCERF funding to demonstrate that it meets GCERF's established prerequisites and that it possesses the required capabilities to be a Principal Recipient of GCERF funding.

PREREQUISITES
(i) Appropriate legal registration in the Republic of Uzbekistan.
(ii) Willingness to accept and fulfil the role of a Principal Recipient <u>if applying in a consortium</u> .
REQUIRED CAPABILITIES
(i) Established relationships and credibility with target populations identified in the Call.
(ii) Previous experience and capacity in programme design and management, and project cycle management.
(iii) Experience and capacity in financial management and in the management of and accounting for international donor grant funding.
(iv) Experience and capacity in working within a consortium and/or managing sub-recipients for those choosing to form a consortium.
(v) Experience and capacity in community-level initiatives that address the local drivers of violent extremism and strengthen resilience against violent extremist agendas.
(vi) Experience on referral services to the most vulnerable women and children at the community level.
(vii) Experience in providing educational and economic empowerment services to the most vulnerable women and children at the community level.
(viii) Experience in rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children repatriated from Iraq and Northeast Syria.
(ix) Proposals must be submitted in English.

How to Submit an Expression of Interest

All Expressions of Interest must be duly filled in and submitted electronically to call.centralasia@gcerf.org by **28 September 2025**. The email should be marked as 'EOI- UZBEKISTAN- [Organisaton name]' in the subject line. Shortlisted applicants will be contacted to take part in a due diligence assessment.

Please ensure that your application includes the following documents:

- Completed Application form with Annex A (Past Projects)
- Copies of organisation's registration documents
- Latest Audit/financial examination Reports
- Proposed organisation chart for the project (not for your organisation)
- Completed Annex B (Theory of Change in GCERF template)
- Completed Annex C (Proposed budget)

If any part of the form or process is unclear, please email requests for clarification or further detail to contact.centralasia@gcerf.org until 20 September 2025.

We plan to hold an online information session on **16 September 2025 at 3 pm Tashkent time**. If you are interested, please join the session using this link: <https://meet.google.com/bxu-gpwd-uxd>
Following the review of submissions, shortlisted applicants will be contacted for due diligence.

Selection Process and Contracting

Eligibility Check

Within three working days after the deadline, our regional grants team will check all applications to ensure they meet the basic requirements.

Committee Evaluation

A Selection Committee will then meet to review all eligible applications. During this process, we take special care to ensure that all committee members are free from any conflicts of interest.

Scoring and Next Steps

Each application will be evaluated based on the criteria for evaluating EOI. Only those who score 70 or above will be considered for the next stage. Please note that meeting the minimum score does not guarantee a grant.

Award Decision

The Selection Committee will then evaluate the highest-scoring applications to determine which one offers the best value. Depending on the quality of the applications received, one or more grants may be awarded. If necessary, we may enter negotiations with the most promising applicants before making a final decision.

GCERF reserves the right to fund some or none of the applications received.