

## **UZBEKISTAN**

### **CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

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#### **Prevent Violent Extremism Online Among Youth and At-Risk Groups, Including Labour Migrants**

*GCERF invites Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Uzbekistan to apply for funding to implement programmes that prevent violent extremism online among youth and at-risk groups, including labour migrants, and promote community resilience against radicalisation, building on the previous work by the Government of Uzbekistan.*

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: Wednesday 15 October 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 approval of the Country Investment Strategy in August 2025.

Youth are a crucial demographic for PVE efforts in Uzbekistan due to a combination of socioeconomic vulnerabilities and their high engagement with digital platforms. Youth unemployment and limited educational and economic opportunities can create feelings of disenfranchisement, making them susceptible to extremist narratives that promise a sense of purpose, identity, and belonging. Extremist groups exploit this disillusionment by using platforms like Telegram to disseminate propaganda and recruit, effectively creating online echo chambers that accelerate the radicalisation process. Given that youth under 30 represent a significant portion of the population and are often the most frequent perpetrators of extremism-related crimes in the country, a demographic focus on this group is essential for building long-term community resilience and preventing social instability.

In Uzbekistan, GCERF will prioritise preventing vulnerable populations, including youth and labor migrants, from becoming radicalised and provide them with much-needed services to promote social cohesion and more equal access to economic and social opportunities. These priorities were identified through the Country Needs Assessment (CNA) commissioned by GCERF in May 2025 and laid out in the Uzbekistan Investment Strategy (2025-2028) approved by the GCERF Governing Board in August 2025. Under Objective 3 in the Uzbekistan Investment Strategy, the following specific strategies are outlined for implementation in the coming 24 months:

### Objective 3. Enhance Youth Resilience against Online Radicalisation

Proactively engage Uzbek youth to resist extremist ideologies by empowering them with critical thinking skills and media and digital literacy, fostering a strong sense of civic identity, and equipping them to navigate and resist online radicalisation.

#### Strategy 1: Direct Youth Empowerment and Positive Engagement

Provide youth with the tools to critically evaluate online content and engage them through positive, relatable narratives, identify propaganda, and understand the tactics used for online radicalisation.

#### Strategy 2: Develop and Disseminate Alternative Narratives and Positive Role Models

Creating compelling awareness campaigns that address root causes of violent extremism, emphasising family values, cultural heritage, and opportunities for positive engagement with peers, parents and communities. These campaigns should be delivered through various channels, including online platforms, youth-friendly media, and community initiatives, featuring diverse and relatable role models.

#### Strategy 3: Empower Community and Youth Leaders as Agents of Prevention

Train local mahalla activists, educators, youth workers, religious leaders, and community leaders in root causes of radicalisation and violent extremism and to engage with youth effectively. These leaders will be equipped to facilitate discussions, provide mentorship, and implement life skills programmes that build family and social cohesion and offer positive pathways for youth development and empowerment, both offline and online.

*Note: This list is non-exhaustive, and this EOI is open to other innovative, objective-related programme proposals. The Uzbekistan Investment Strategy for 2025-2028 can be accessed at <https://www.gcerf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/GCERF-Strategy-for-Investment-in-Uzbekistan-2025-2028.pdf>*

## Grant Funding Structure

GCERF's grant funding mechanism primarily supports Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in a **consortium model**, wherein initiatives for the prevention of violent extremism among youth and labour migrants 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. Each consortium should be led by a Principal Recipient that will be responsible for providing subgrants to other consortium members. 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, given that their proposals are based on the quality, relevance, and potential impact.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit well-structured, impactful, and cost-effective proposals, as the quality of the submission will significantly influence funding decisions.

## Call for Expressions of Interest (EOI)

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 15<sup>th</sup> 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):

- Youth
- Labour migrants
- Community and family members in targeted mahallas
- Frontline workers, including mahalla activists, parents, educators, religious leaders, and social workers among others.
- Media professionals and social media influencers

### **Target locations:**

- All the Republic of Uzbekistan

### **Objectives**

GCERF seeks to fund local civil society organisations to implement prevention programmes combating extremist narratives and radicalisation among youth and at-risk groups, including labour migrants, thereby strengthening long-term community resilience and preventing social instability.

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 aim to support a programme that will achieve the EOI objective and strategies, based on needs assessments of target beneficiaries and a baseline survey supported by grant awards.

### **Requirements**

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

- The main issues that youth and most-at-risk groups, including migrants face that increase their risk of marginalisation and radicalisation;
- 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 PVE 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 PVE 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 minimum of **250,000 USD** or a maximum of **500,000 USD**, over the duration of the grant period. Only **one or two grants** will be awarded.

### Theory of Change

All proposals must include activities and a selection of country-level indicators that align with the Theory of Change (ToC) framework. GCERF will work with shortlisted applicants during the grant development stage to strengthen and refine activities in line with the ToC model, ensuring alignment with programme objectives and measurable impact.

### 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 the 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 in working with youth and at-risk groups, including labour migrants at the national and community level.
(vii) Experience in youth empowerment.
(viii) Experience in developing and disseminating alternative narratives, programmes, and initiatives on empowering role models and leaders.
(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](mailto:call.centralasia@gcerf.org) by **15 October 2025**. The email should be marked as '**EOI-UZ-PVE-[Organisation 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)
- Completed Annex B (Theory of Change in GCERF template)
- Completed Annex C (Proposed budget)
- Copies of organisation's registration documents
- Latest Audit/financial examination Reports
- Proposed organisation chart for the project (not for your organisation)

**If any part of the form or process is unclear, please email requests for clarification or further detail to [contact.centralasia@gcerf.org](mailto:contact.centralasia@gcerf.org) until 10 October 2025.**

We plan to hold an online information session on **30 September 2025 at 3 pm Tashkent time**. If you are interested, please join the session using this link: <https://meet.google.com/nuq-wfie-jqn>

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.**