

BACKGROUND

Albania has registered one of the highest per capita rate of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) in Europe that joined the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Lack of employment, poverty, and low levels of education further contribute to vulnerability to violent extremism. GCERF has successfully supported the rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R) of 37 female and youth returnees from Northeast Syria, while strengthening the capacity of frontline workers (government and non-governmental) to provide specialised case management support.

Albania became a GCERF partner country* in 2019. To date, GCERF has invested USD 4 million in the country, with three active grants to support R&R and prevention programmes.

The main areas of interventions are immediate psycho-social and family counselling, longer term economic reintegration through training to create income generating opportunities and mentoring in building and disseminating alternative narratives.

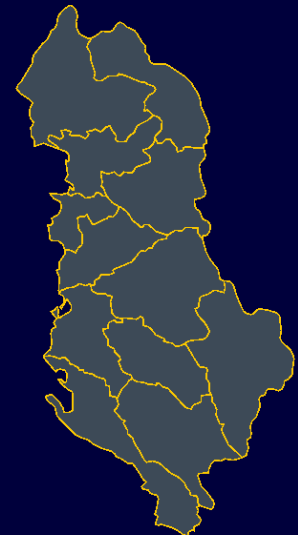
GCERF'S INVESTMENT STRATEGY IN ALBANIA

GCERF's investment is focused on sustainability through establishing a National Referral Mechanism for prevention counterterrorism violent extremism (P/CVE) and R&R.

Strengthening local government structures to identify and address cases of potential radicalisation and recruitment, and support service delivery through a municipally-managed, multi-use, multi-agency centre, are the other pillars of the GCERF funded projects.

The three main drivers of violent extremism in Albania are:

1. The role of modern technologies in the dissemination of extremist views.
2. Albania's strategic geographical location, coupled with ethnic-driven tensions in neighbouring areas.
3. Limited employment opportunities and social exclusion.
4. Security challenges from domestic and external sources.



WHERE

- Tirana
- Durrës
- Korce
- Diber
- Kukës
- Shkoder
- Elbasan
- Berat
- Vlore

WHO






- Returnees from conflict zones; women and children
- National and local institutions and frontline workers
- Local authorities, local and community based CSOs and other R&R actors






*Partner countries are those in which GCERF funds civil society organisations to implement initiatives aimed at preventing violent extremism.

CURRENT GRANTS



 IMPLEMENTED BY		 PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES	
<p>Principal Recipient: Counseling Line for Women and Girls</p> <p>Sub-recipients: Albanian Helsinki Committee, International Association for Solidarity; Center Media for Social Issues</p>		<p>Change violent extremist views and behaviour of returning foreign terrorist fighters and their families, through disengagement and deradicalization.</p> <p>Strengthen the newly established national and regional referral mechanism for PVE and offer R&R services and activities to returnees.</p>	
 AREAS OF IMPLEMENTATION		 GRANT AMOUNT	 PERIOD OF THE GRANT
Lezha, Dibra, Kukës, Vlorë, Korçë, Fier, Berat, Gjirokastra, Shkodër, Elbasan, Durrës, Tirana		USD 300,000	October 2024 – August 2025

 IMPLEMENTED BY		 PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES	
<p>Principal Recipient: Initiative for Social Change ARSIS</p> <p>Sub-recipients: Albanian Center for Population and development</p>		<p>Strengthen coordination mechanisms for P/CVE and R&R through the establishment of an online server.</p> <p>Implement awareness-raising initiatives to promote community resilience through the engagement of religious leaders and journalists.</p> <p>Provide case management services for returning children and their families to facilitate their reintegration into Albanian society.</p>	
 AREAS OF IMPLEMENTATION		 GRANT AMOUNT	 PERIOD OF THE GRANT
Vlorë, Fier, Kavajë, Cërrik, Pogradec and Tirana		USD 500,000	August 2024 – July 2026

 IMPLEMENTED BY		 PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES	
<p>Principal Recipient: Terre des Hommes Albania</p> <p>Sub-recipients: Tirana Legal Aid Society, IANS – Instituti për Aktivizim dhe Ndryshim Social</p>		<p>Ensure case management support to returnees and vulnerable populations.</p> <p>Support sustainable transition case management services to government led facilities.</p> <p>Ensure community resilience, inclusion, and tolerance building activities contributing to reintegration of returnees and at-risk individuals and prevention of violent extremism.</p>	
 AREAS OF IMPLEMENTATION		 GRANT AMOUNT	 PERIOD OF THE GRANT
Tirana Municipality		USD 910,000	July 2023 – December 2025

STORY OF CHANGE

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Rebuilding Lives: Arta's Journey from Syria to Stability

Arta, a woman in her early thirties and a mother of four, has faced extraordinary challenges. After spending years in Syria, she was repatriated to Albania with her children and now lives in Tirana, where they receive ongoing support through the Terre des Hommes Albania's rehabilitation and integration programme.

Arta's story began in 2013 when she followed her husband, Amir, to Syria, seeking a fresh start. Over the next eight years, the family moved through cities like Haleb, Rraka, and Derizur. During this time, Arta gave birth to three children in Syria – Hana in 2015, Miri in 2017, and Val in 2019 – while also caring for Alisa, her first daughter, born in Albania. In 2019, life took a devastating turn when Amir disappeared from the Al-Hol camp, leaving Arta pregnant and without any support. Despite the harsh conditions, she gave birth to Val in October 2019 and persevered, driven by hope for a better future for her children. Upon their repatriation to Albania, new challenges arose: the children born in Syria had no legal documentation, as their births were never registered. Without official recognition, they faced barriers to accessing basic rights like education and healthcare.

Empowering Women Through Vocational Training

A survivor of trafficking, a participant in the soap production training programme, began her journey with low confidence and little hope for the future. Living in a shelter with limited opportunities, she struggled to see a way forward.

Everything changed after she completed the training. She not only gained practical skills but also rediscovered her sense of self-worth and independence. With support from the programme mentors, she is now creating high-quality artisan soap and selling it locally—building a sustainable income for herself.

Her success is more than personal; it's inspiring other women in the shelter to believe in their own potential. Together, they are fostering resilience and reducing vulnerability within their community.

Thanks to the unwavering efforts of Terre des Hommes and TLAS, Arta's children's legal identities were secured. TLAS lawyers navigated complex judicial processes, representing Arta in court to certify the births of her three youngest children. After months of delays and hurdles, the court officially recognised them as Albanian citizens.

Today, all four of Arta's children have legal identities, unlocking their access to essential services and opportunities. Reflecting on her journey, Arta shares her gratitude for the support that has helped her rebuild her family's future.

"When I returned to Albania, I felt lost and overwhelmed. But thanks to the support of Terre des Hommes and TLAS, I found hope again. Registering my children as citizens gave us a sense of belonging. Now, I can see a future for them—a chance to grow up in peace."

- Arta



Vocational Training

KEY RESULTS

Cumulative from 2021 to March 2025

3,890

individuals, including youth, parents, educators, and local leaders were engaged through awareness campaigns and trainings to foster inclusive dialogue and promote positive, community-driven counter-narratives

37

returnees received psychosocial, education and enrollment support for their sustainable reintegration into society

20

returnees received legal support, essential for their reintegration

GCERF'S VALUE PROPOSITION

GCERF'S UNIQUE MODEL OF INVESTMENT PRIORITISES:

Community-ownership and localisation: We invest in trusted grassroots civil society organisations that prioritise the needs and grievances of communities most affected by violent extremism. Many of these organisations have never received international funding before.

Sustainability: Our programmes involve all groups of society and strengthens trust between government, civil society and community members to build stronger, more resilient societies. This ensures that initiatives and structures continue to be relevant and effective.

Robust monitoring and evaluation processes: Our multi-layered monitoring and evaluation system, operating locally and globally, provides continuous feedback on programme effectiveness, identifies areas for improvement, and ensures objectives are consistently met.

Knowledge sharing: Our global network of civil society organisations working on PVE facilitates the exchange of good practices and lessons learned, fostering collaboration and enhancing the effectiveness of interventions. We also share our experiences through our participation in various conferences, publishing of articles and research papers in reputed journals to advance the understanding of PVE.

Capacity strengthening: We strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations to manage large-scale grants and implement effective initiatives, while also enhancing government capacity to develop comprehensive, holistic strategies to prevent violent extremism.