



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 two 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
- Durres
- Korce
- Diber
- Kukues
- Shkoder
- Elbason
- 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: 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
Vlora, Fieri, Kavaja, Cerriku, Pogradeci 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 per Aktivizem 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 – June 2026



Participants group picture during the extracurricular activities for promoting the engagement of the most at-risk students in the targeted schools and communities; © Initiative for Social Change Arsis

STORY OF CHANGE

WHEN STUDENTS BECOME AMBASSADORS OF INCLUSION AND HUMAN RIGHTS – INITIATIVE ARSIS

When Students Become Ambassadors of Inclusion and Human Rights

Between November and December 2025, the programme supported a series of youth-led awareness-raising initiatives implemented by students trained by the NGO Nisma për Ndryshim Shoqëror ARSIS in the municipalities of Kavajë and Cërrik. These activities formed part of the socio-educational and extracurricular interventions, aimed at reducing youth vulnerability to violent extremism by strengthening inclusion, critical thinking, and a sense of belonging within school and community environments.

Following earlier capacity-building and mentoring sessions, student groups from the “Mehmet Babamusta” and “Rilindja” secondary schools in Kavajë, as well as from the “Mehmet Bajraktari” and “Tomorr Sinani” high schools in Cërrik, took the lead in designing and implementing their own awareness-raising actions. Through creative and participatory approaches, including art exhibitions, poetry and essay writing, inclusive sports games, symbolic marches, and community interviews, students addressed themes such as human rights, equality, religious tolerance, and peaceful coexistence.

One particularly impactful example was observed at “Mehmet Babamusta” Secondary School in Kavajë, where a group of students organized a school-wide awareness activity focused on human rights and inclusion. Using self-prepared banners and messages, students carried out a symbolic march around the school area, engaging peers and teachers in open discussions on dignity, respect, and equality. The activity created a safe space for expression, allowing students who are often quieter or marginalised to participate actively and feel heard.

These youth-led actions are directly connected to the programme’s P/CVE objectives, as they address key risk factors such as community resilience, stigmatisation, and lack of belonging, which can increase vulnerability to extremist narratives. By empowering students to become facilitators of dialogue and positive messaging, the programme strengthened protective factors including peer support, civic engagement, and trust within school communities.



Participants group picture during the extracurricular activities for promoting the engagement of the most at-risk students in the targeted schools and communities, © Initiative for Social Change Arsis

KEY RESULTS

cumulative from 2021 until June 2025

4,970

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

1,540

front-line workers, including psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers, have been trained on trauma-and-violence informed care (TVIC) and Reintegration & Rehabilitation services

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.