

BACKGROUND

Returnees from conflicts abroad also known as Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (RFTFs) are a manifestation of violent extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), exacerbated by the complex socio-political landscape, marked by the nineties conflict, ongoing national and ethnic divisions, and socio-economic challenges. These factors have highlighted the urgent need for effective response to prevent violent extremism.

BiH became a GCERF partner country* in 2021. To date, GCERF has invested USD 740,000 in the country. Over the past years, GCERF's work in BiH has made significant progress through the grant to the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Atlantic Initiative (AI) to establish and strengthen mobile teams working on rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R) at the state, federal and local level. Promoting constructive media coverage of R&R and preventing violent extremism (PVE) and strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs), in addition to case management of some of the most marginalised cases of RFTFs and their family members.

The programme's focus on R&R, strategic communication and public awareness is crucial in this context, as it aims to mitigate stigma and foster a community environment that is conducive to reintegration.

Central to the programme's approach is the use of local capacity and networks. By working with government agencies, NGOs, educational institutions, and professionals across different sectors, the programme ensures that interventions are grounded in local expertise and realities.

GCERF'S STRATEGY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The primary objective of GCERF's investment is to develop and scale up a systemic and balanced approach to R&R and P/CVE of all forms of radicalisation and violent extremism by working with local P/CVE and R&R actors including government institutions, frontline workers, CSOs, and other local community actors. The objective is to bridge existing gaps in thematic knowledge, operational capacity, and coordination mechanisms, with the ultimate aim of implementing prevention, protection, rehabilitation and resocialisation.

Three are the main drivers of violent extremism in BiH:

1. Socio-economic factors including a sense of isolation, marginalisation in rural areas, high rates of poverty and unemployment
2. Lack of trust in institutions and limited dialogue between state and local government
3. Political unrest and mis/disinformation

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



WHERE

- Sarajevo
- Tuzla
- Zenica-Doboj
- Una-Sana
- Central Bosnia

WHO

- National and local institutions and R&R frontline workers
- Local and community based CSOs and grassroots organisations
- Returnees, including male and female adults and children
- Frontline workers such as social workers, educators, and law enforcement personnel

KEY RESULTS

cumulative from March 2022 until June 2025

200

professionals, including teachers, psychologists and social workers, were trained in rehabilitation and reintegration through workshops, study visits and modules to strengthen their capacities and ensure effective support for returnees and their families

18

mobile teams among local and cantonal level have been established



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.



GCERF
Preventing Violent Extremism
and Terrorism

Find out more about becoming an investor, our work, and the collective impact we make at:
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