



## BACKGROUND

Despite continuous efforts by a wide range of stakeholders supporting the government of Iraq, violent extremism remains a major threat to Iraq's national security and stability. Iraq adopted a national strategy for preventing and countering violent extremism and has put in place action plans at the level of the governorates through the countering violent extremism sub-committees. Iraq also faces another major challenge posed by the camps in North-East Syria (NES) containing Iraqi nationals. Beyond their threat to national, regional, and global stability, Iraq is committed to the return, rehabilitation, and reintegration of large numbers of Iraqi families coming from these camps.

Iraq became a GCERF partner country in 2023. To date, GCERF has invested USD 7 million with active grants supporting 13 civil society organisations. These grants are funded by GCERF's unrestricted resources and USAID-funded holistic case management programme.

GCERF pioneers a unique model of investment designed to promote a whole-of-society approach and ensure the sustainability of our programmes. Under this model, in each partner country, we support national governments in establishing a steering committee called the Country Support Mechanism (CSM).

In Iraq, the CSM is chaired by the President of the National Committee to Combat Violent Extremism (NCCVE) under the office of the National Security Advisor (ONSA). In addition to engaging NCCVE that brings together relevant government agencies and CSOs, GCERF also engages donor representatives. This mechanism provides strategic direction for the programmes, ensure results and progressively inherit ownership of funding community-level efforts to prevent violent extremism.

## GCERF'S INVESTMENT STRATEGY IN IRAQ

GCERF's investment strategy outlines a comprehensive approach to address the drivers of violent extremism (VE) and guides civil society organisations in designing their programmes. According to GCERF's needs assessment and consultations with relevant stakeholders, there are two main drivers of violent extremism in Iraq:

- 1. Inter-ethnic and religious conflicts:** VE groups exploit existing and emerging conflicts to increase their grip on communities.
- 2. Partial reintegration of returnees from liberated areas and Northeast Syria:** Returnees from the areas formerly held by VE groups and families associated with VE groups face a challenge in reintegrating with the original communities.

The primary objective of GCERF's investment is to strengthen the coordination and capacity of CVE local sub-committees, enhance an enabling environment for rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees, and improve community-security relationships.

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



## WHERE

- Anbar
- Ninewa
- Salaheddin
- Kirkuk
- Diyala
- Babylon

## WHO

- Returnees from Northeast Syria (children and women)
- Children, juveniles, and adolescents between the ages of 5 and 18 years, Women especially mothers and female-headed households,
- Frontline Workers: Social workers, members of the local authority, teachers, psychologists,
- Influential members of host communities, women (mothers, single woman-headed households), Local and Informal Authorities, Religious leaders, Vulnerable members among internally displaced people
- Civil Society Organisations

# CURRENT GRANTS



 <b>IMPLEMENTED BY</b>	 <b>PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES</b>	
<p><b>Principal Recipient:</b> Ashour Iraqi Foundation for Relief and Development (ARD)</p> <p><b>Sub-recipient:</b> Hebaa Foundation for Sustainable Development (HFSD)</p>	<p>Fostering the VE and PVE knowledge production and sharing with PVE stakeholders in civil society, education, and government.</p> <p>Local CSO (Civil Society Organisation) technical skills are increased.</p> <p>Market-oriented skills and access to livelihood opportunities for at-risk youth and women are increased in VE affected areas.</p> <p>Community (including host and returnees) acceptance towards co-existence is strengthened.</p>	
 <b>AREAS OF IMPLEMENTATION</b>	 <b>GRANT AMOUNT</b>	 <b>PERIOD OF THE GRANT</b>
<p>Ninewa, Babylon, Diyala</p>	<p>USD 999,981</p>	<p>January 2024 – June 2026</p>

 <b>IMPLEMENTED BY</b>	 <b>PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES</b>	
<p><b>Principal Recipient:</b> Aid Gate Organisation (AGO)</p> <p><b>Sub-recipients:</b> Dream Organisation, Human Line Foundation (HLF)</p>	<p>Returnees have enhanced capacity to re-integrate into communities of return.</p> <p>Youth and community stakeholder action on PVE and reintegration is increased.</p> <p>Community resilience and acceptance of returnees are improved.</p>	
 <b>AREAS OF IMPLEMENTATION</b>	 <b>GRANT AMOUNT</b>	 <b>PERIOD OF THE GRANT</b>
<p>Diyala, Anbar, Ninewa</p>	<p>USD 999,999</p>	<p>January 2024 – December 2026</p>



Returnee women from Al-Hol detention camp participating in vocational training, Diyala, "Community Resilience and Reintegration" programme © Aid Gate Organisation (AGO)



Building resilience against violent extremism through sports, teamwork, and community spirit in the newly rehabilitated Youth and Sports Center, Ninewa, "Tazeez" programme © Ashour Iraqi Foundation for Relief and Development (ARD)



MHPSS session for a returnee woman in Ba'aj hospital, Ninewa, "Returning with Hope" programme © Iraqi Institution for Development (IID)



School activities, including recreational and awareness sessions, for Al-Hol detention camp returnees, Salaheddin, "Returning with Hope" programme © United Iraqi Medical Society (UIMS)

# Returning with Hope

In partnership with the US Department of State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs



 <b>IMPLEMENTED BY</b>	 <b>PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES</b>	
<p><b>Principal Recipients:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aid Gate Organisation (AGO)*</li> <li>Iraqi Institution for Development (IID)</li> <li>United Iraqi Medical Society (UIMS)</li> <li>Tadhamun Iraqi League for Youth</li> <li>Ashour Iraqi Foundation for Relief and Development (ARD)</li> </ol> <p><b>Sub-recipient:</b> Soqya</p>	<p>This programme is funded in partnership with US State Department, aiming to support a holistic case management to promote successful return from Northeast Syria to the areas of origin through the Al-Amal (Jada'a l) transition centre.</p> <p>The programme is divided into 5 grants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– One (1) umbrella grant tackling comprehensive case management with Aid Gate Organisation,</li> <li>– Three (3) grants on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and Educational Services provision in Ninewa, Salaheddin, and Anbar with the Iraqi Institution for Development, United Iraqi Medical Society, and Tadhamun Iraqi League for Youth,</li> <li>– One (1) grant on media and communication campaigns to support the enabling environment for return with Ashour for Relief and Development.</li> </ul>	
 <b>AREAS OF IMPLEMENTATION</b>	 <b>GRANT AMOUNT</b>	 <b>PERIOD OF THE GRANT</b>
Ninewa, Anbar, Salaheddin	USD 3.9 million	July 2024 – January 2026 <i>*AGO's programme ended in December 2025.</i>

## STORY OF CHANGE

Helping a returnee family overcome exclusion after return  
 (Aid Gate Organisation, *Returning with Hope* programme)

*After years of displacement, a young returnee mother in northern Iraq is beginning to stabilise her family's situation. Support provided by Aid Gate Organisation through the US-funded "Returning with Hope" programme has enabled progress towards legal documentation and psychological recovery for her children.*

### Constant displacement and insecurity

Z., a 26-year-old mother of four from Al-Shirqat, spent several years moving between displacement sites, including Al-Hol camp in Syria. Living conditions in the camp were extremely harsh, marked by shortages of food, water, and basic services. The affiliation of her brothers with non-state armed groups placed the family under suspicion and constant security pressure.

### Return and legal exclusion

After returning to Iraq, Z.'s husband was arrested following accusations from members of the local community, leaving her as the sole caregiver for her children. Compounding the family's vulnerability, her marriage was not officially registered, meaning her children lacked civil documentation and were unable to access education or healthcare.

### Referral and legal support

Through the "Returning with Hope" programme, Aid Gate Organisation assessed Z.'s case and referred it for specialised support. She and her children received psychological counselling through the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which led to an improvement in the children's emotional well-being. Legal assistance was also initiated, with a lawyer assigned to work on establishing lineage, formalising the marriage, and starting procedures to issue unified national identification cards.

With legal processes now underway, Z.'s priority is to secure official documents for her children and regain access to essential services. While her situation remains fragile, Aid Gate Organisation support has helped stabilise the family and laid the foundation for longer-term reintegration and recovery.



# KEY RESULTS

Cumulative from January 2024 to June 2025

## 1,965

benefited from PVE, conflict sensitivity, conflict resolution, and early warning skills including 120 leaders, 50 security actors

## 520

Returnees benefited from counselling and psycho-social support

## 156

awareness and sensitisation campaigns on PVE and reintegration of returnees

## 150

returnees engaged through vocational skills training to improve their livelihoods and 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.



**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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