

BACKGROUND

The threat of terrorism and violent extremism have worsened in recent decades, become increasingly pronounced in the Central Sahel region of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. The security challenges inherent in the sub-regional context, resulting from the increase in asymmetric threats and their various forms of manifestation as well as the outbreak of social tensions, have resulted in the advent of transitional regimes in the three countries of the Central Sahel and the creation of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) in 2023.

Niger became a GCERF partner country* in 2021. To date, GCERF has invested USD 3 million in the country, with active grants worth USD 1 million currently supporting one local civil society organisation (CSO), NGO Garkua.

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).

GCERF in Niger is working with the government, through the country support mechanism, and bilateral and multilateral donors to ensure a coordinated approach to prevention. GCERF works with the Nigerien government to support the implementation of its national action plan and invests in local organisations that design and run programmes contributing to stability and resilience.

GCERF'S INVESTMENT STRATEGY IN NIGER

GCERF intervention in Niger is part of the wider Sahel strategy that engages with intergovernmental bodies to promote regional cooperation in the nexus of development and security. Our programming in the region covers Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, and our engagement directly bolsters the implementation of National Action Plans of the five countries working in partnership with local, national, regional, and global partners.

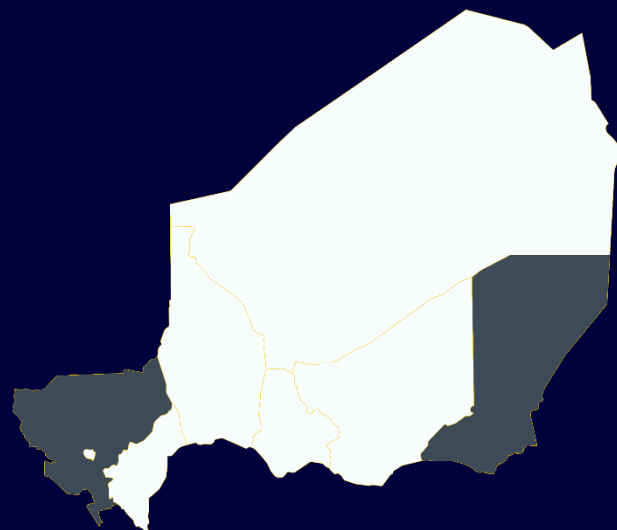
GCERF's strategy for engagement in the Sahel region is built around two strategic objectives:

- To contribute to improvements in the social ecology to create conditions conducive to prevention and resilience-building
- To facilitate community-led rehabilitation, disengagement, and (re)integration, including people disengaging from criminal, non-state armed, and violent extremist groups.

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



Repentees receiving judiciary exemption certificates.
Photo by Garkua.



WHERE

- Tillabéri (region)
- Diffa (region)

WHO

- Unemployed men and women and early school dropouts (15–25 years old)
- Local authorities
- Customary and religious leaders
- Repentants (including their families)
- Local peace committees
- Departmental Security Councils
- Community-based Radio Stations
- Internal Displaced Persons

STORY OF CHANGE

The story of « Yusuf », a former Boko Haram fighter

“My name is Yusuf (not his real name). I am 22 years old and was born in Abadam Françà, in the commune of Bosso. I am a former Boko Haram fighter. I lived within the group for over 10 years, having joined at a very young age under Imam Abubakar Ashekawi, a leader of the Jama’at Ahlis-Sunna Lid-Da’awati Wal-Jihad group, commonly known by the acronym JAS.

Before the Government of Niger launched the voluntary surrender and amnesty programme, we lived in the deep bush, under extremely harsh and inhumane conditions. Everything around us was desolate, dried up, and soaked in despair. Poverty ruled our lives, and survival was a daily battle. We were poorly clothed and constantly exposed to danger, oppressed by leaders who had neither faith nor moral compass—true barbarians by nature.

Young people, like myself, were the most frequently conscripted into combat or suicide missions. We were the most exposed to death, leaving us with little hope for the future. Death could strike at any moment. And there was no more terrifying or bloody battle than the one against the defense and security forces—trained, disciplined, and heavily armed.

As a young man, I felt my future was completely blocked. There seemed to be no way out.

When the Government of Niger called for voluntary surrender, I decided to respond. I escaped and surrendered myself to the authorities in Bosso, along with some of my brothers. From there, we were taken to Diffa, and then transferred to the deradicalization center located a few kilometers outside the town of Goudoumaria (in the Goudoumaria department).

It was there that I discovered the PAIRSIP project, which from that day forward became the cornerstone of our new lives. After our time at the center, we were promised income-generating activity (IGA) kits tailored to our individual choices—and that promise was fulfilled.

Today, thanks to PAIRSIP’s support, we are living in dignity. We are thriving. We no longer worry about survival, and our lives have changed dramatically. We have strong hope for the future. Our businesses are running well, and we can meet all our needs. Beyond that, we are able to support our families and relatives.

“Today, we are living proof that change is possible. We are a tangible example for those who doubt that repentant fighters can reintegrate. We live our lives with purpose and utterly reject any ideology that promotes violent extremism”



Yusuf in his business

KEY RESULTS

2,989

Community members trained in conflict resolution or mediation mechanisms to resolve grievances that make them vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremist groups

2,970

Individuals at risk of radicalisation and ex-combatants received livelihood support, strengthening their resilience against the financial incentives used by violent extremist groups to recruit

1,218

Community members engaged through interfaith, intercommunity, intergenerational dialogues to foster solidarity and reject false narratives often used by violent extremist groups

1,782

community members reached by prevention campaigns to reduce the risk of recruitment by violent extremist groups

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 strengthen 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.