GCERF Strategy for Investment in the Philippines

2026 – 2028 (3 years)

ED.08.25/DEC.01/DOC.01/Annex A

This document is guided by:

- GCERF's original Strategy to Engage Communities and Address the Drivers of Violent Extremism (2017-2020) and Updated Strategy for 2021 – 2025
- GCERF Governance Board decision: Approving the Philippines as a new partner country
- Philippine National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (NAP-PCVE) and the accompanying multi-year implementation plans (including NAP-PCVE 2023-2028)
- Philippines National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (NAP P/CVE) Results Framework and Roadmap
- Philippine National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security
- Philippine National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security
- Bangsamoro Plan of Action on Community Resilience
- Bangsamoro Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security
- ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism 2018-2025[1]
- In-depth consultations with the Government of the Philippines, including the Department of Interior and Local Governance (DILG) and members of the Country Support Mechanism
- Consultations with representatives of Philippine civil society, including GCERF grantees
- Consultations with national and international donors working on P/CVE-related programmes
- Consultations with representatives of GCERF donors
- Additional desk research, including research and reports on good practices
- Reports from Third Party Monitoring conducted by GCERF's Local Knowledge Partner in the Philippines
- Reports from grantees' Outcome Harvesting exercises conducted in 2024 and 2025 as well as current data from grantees' results framework

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[1] [ASEAN-Plan-of-Action-to-Prevent-and-Counter-the-Rise-of-Radicalisation-and-Violent-Extremism-2018-2025.pdf](#)

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Acronyms

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATC	Anti-Terrorism Council
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
BIFF	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
BPA CoRE	Bangsamoro Plan of Action on Community Resilience
BRAVE	Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism
BTA	The Bangsamoro Transition Authority
CBI	Community Based Integration
CBO	Community Based Organisations
CBRR	Community-Based Restoration and Reintegration
CNA	Country Needs Assessment
CoP	Community of Practice
CSPP	Conflict Sensitive Peace Promoting
CSM	Country Support Mechanism
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DILG	Department of the Interior and Local Government
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
EWS	Early Warning Systems
GAP	Global Action Platform
GCERF	Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
GCTF	Global Counterterrorism Forum
GTI	Global Terrorism Index
IAG	Institute for Autonomy and Governance
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
IO	International Organisation
IP	Indigenous People
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGU	Local Government Units
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
NAP	National Action Plan
OPAPRU	Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSCY	Out-of-school Children and Youth
PBSP	Philippine Business for Social Progress
P/CVE	Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism
PCVE PMO	Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Project Management Office

PR	Principal Recipient
PSA	Philippines Institute of Statistics
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
RAP-WPS	Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security
R&R	Rehabilitation & Reintegration
RF	Results Framework
RFP	Request for Proposal
SGA	Special Geographic Areas
SR	Sub-recipient
ToC	Theory of Change
TPM	Third Party Monitoring
VE	Violent Extremism
VEO	Violent Extremist Offenders
VEDR	Violent Extremist Disengagement and Reintegration

Executive Summary

In August 2018, the GCERF Governing Board approved a request by the Government of the Philippines to become a GCERF partner country. GCERF was requested to support the government in addressing the risk of radicalisation to violent extremism, with a focus on prevention and supporting the vital role of local communities.

The first Country Investment Strategy (2019-2022) focused on building tolerance, community agency, positive social and economic alternatives, critical thinking and life skills. It targeted the Youth and children (in-school and out-of-school), the Youth support networks (communities; women; families, including mothers; academic and learning institutions; religious leaders and scholars, including those who studied abroad; and traditional leaders), and Social media users vulnerable to radicalisation to violent extremism (VE). The geographical areas that were covered were Mindanao and Metro Manila. US$ 4.5 Million were invested in 9 grants, supporting 26 CSOs in total, and reaching 200,852 direct beneficiaries (105,696 female and 95,156 male).

The second Country Investment Strategy (2023-2025) focused on inclusive governance, Education (Madaris integration), Livelihoods, Transitional Justice (with Strategic Communications and Peace Education as cross-cutting areas). It targeted the Children outside or at risk of dropping out of school (14-18); Un- or under-employed Youth (young women and men between 19 and 35); Religious, Indigenous and Community Leaders (male and female); Governance Actors (Local Authorities, Security and Justice Actors, male and female). The geographical areas that were covered were Mindanao and Metro Manila. US$ 5.5 Million were invested in 7 grants, supporting 24 CSOs in total.

Following these two rounds, GCERF will launch its third round of investment in the Philippines from 2026 to 2028, building on previous programming to deepen impact and ensure sustainability. This strategy focuses on addressing the root causes of violent extremism (VE) in fragile and conflict-affected areas, particularly in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), and adjacent provinces.

While Transitional Justice, Livelihoods will remain key focuses, it will not be the case for Education (madaris integration) and community agency. The past rounds of funding have allowed to improve social cohesion, peace education, digital literacy skills, among others. More precisely, grounded in national frameworks such as the NAP on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, GCERF's programming will support the following objectives:

I.   To support community-based rehabilitation for returnees and for the victims of violent extremist groups and their families, including access to mental health support services
II. To increase access to economic opportunities for people from vulnerable or marginalised communities
III. To enhance access to credible and transparent transitional justice mechanisms
IV. To support female leadership in PVE

Peace education and improving local governance will be included as cross cutting activities.

Table 1 below outlines GCERF's proposed approach:

WHAT: *Consolidate prevention of violent extremism and resilience-building at community and state level*	
WHO:	**WHERE:**
• Returnees, former fighters and their families (male and female) • Children outside or at risk of dropping out of school including IDPs (14-18) • Un- or under-employed Youth including IDPs (young women and men between 19 and 35)	VE affected and vulnerable areas in: • Mindanao, specifically in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), and outside of the BARMM, the provinces of Sulu, Lanao del Norte, South Cotabato and Sarangani (complete list of

• Religious, Indigenous and Community Leaders (male and female) • Governance Actors (Local Authorities, Security and Justice Actors, male and female)	provinces and municipalities in Annex 2: Geographic coverage)

HOW: Providing grants to Philippine CSOs to prevent violent extremism, support rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees and victims of violent extremist groups, support female leadership in PVE as well as access to livelihood and transitional justice mechanisms.

Peace education and improving local governance will be included as cross cutting activities.

Table 1: Summary of GCERF's Philippines Country Investment Strategy

This next phase will sustain and expand the impact of successful models developed by local partners. By anchoring prevention efforts in community and Local Government Units (LGU) ownership, GCERF aims to build long-term resilience and institutional trust in areas most at risk of violent extremism.

1.   Guiding Principles

The following principles will guide GCERF's investment in the Philippines:

• National Ownership

• Making countries safer from the threat of radicalisation to VE and terrorism.

• Complementing efforts of other international organisations and aid agencies such as the United Nations in their efforts to support communities in resilience-building and returnees in rehabilitation and reintegration;

• Planning gender responsive, intersectional programming;[2]

• Conflict sensitive approaches that follow the Do No Harm[3] principle to identify potential negative consequences, taking steps to prevent them whenever possible, and proposing corrective actions when necessary;[4]

• Ensuring that programming contributes to and is aligned with good practices and recommendations of the Global CounterTerrorism Forum (GCTF,) notably the GCTF Recommendations for Funding and Enabling Community Level P/CVE[5] and other key actors in the P/CVE space;[6]

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[2] [Global Counterterrorism Forum. The Gender and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Policy Toolkit. GCTF, 2022](#)

[3] [Do No Harm | Peacebuilding & Conflict Sensitivity | World Vision International (wvi.org)](#)

[4] [GCERF's Approach to Conflict Sensitive Programming](#)

[5] https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/GCTF%20FundEnable%20Recommendations_ENG.pdf

[6] Including: Memorandum on Good Practices in Strengthening National-Local Cooperation in Preventing Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism (2020); Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders (2016) and its addendum (2020); The Hague-Marrakech Memorandum on Good Practices for More Effective Response to the FTF Phenomenon (2016) and its addendum (2020); Good Practices on Addressing the Challenge of Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (2018).

- Meeting the requirements of the principles of providing 1) Durable solutions without harm, 2) Access to effective remedies, and 3) Co-operation and monitoring as fundamental principles of return by OSCE;[7]
- Contributing to the implementation of principles on rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees according to the Madrid Guiding Principles by the United Nations Security Council Counterterrorism Committee[8] and in line with the GCERF Approach to Rehabilitation & Reintegration.[9]

2. GCERF Positioning

Rationale

Historical and conflict background

The roots of VE in the Philippines lie in the country's long-standing internal conflicts, particularly in Mindanao. The Moro separatist movement began in the 1970s in response to perceived historical injustices including land dispossession, underdevelopment, and marginalisation of the Muslim minority by a predominantly Christian central government. Over the decades, insurgent movements splintered, and extremist factions such as Abu Sayyaf and the Maute Group emerged, often fusing criminal enterprise with ideology.[10]

Mindanao remains one of the poorest and least developed regions in Southeast Asia. The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) historically recorded poverty rates between 40% and 49%. Lanao del Sur, future site of the 2017 Marawi siege, had a poverty incidence of 71.9% in 2015. However, it is notable that the BARMM's poverty incidence significantly declined to 23.5 percent in 2023. Despite this, socioeconomic inequalities persist and make Muslim Mindanao particularly vulnerable to VE recruitment.[11]

The 2017 Marawi siege by Islamic State-affiliated groups became a turning point. It highlighted the capability of local extremist cells to coordinate a large-scale urban conflict and attract foreign terrorist fighters. While the siege was overcome, the destruction of the city and the slow rehabilitation process created lingering grievances and a volatile environment for radicalisation.

As of 2025, the Philippines ranks 20th on the Global Terrorism Index (GTI), a slight improvement from 19th in 2024. This ranking, however, continues to reflect the country's ongoing vulnerability to violent

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[7] Guiding Principles on Human Rights in the Return of Trafficked Persons, OSCE, 2014.
https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/c/8/124268.pdf

[8] Madrid Guiding Principles, UNSC CTC, 2015.
https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil.ctc/files/files/documents/2021/Jan/madrid-guidin$g-principles_en.pdf

[9] GCERF's Approach to Rehabilitation & Reintegration

[10] Violent Extremism in the Philippines: A Country Needs Assessment," Stabilisation Network, 2019

[11] 2024 Recap: BARMM's Key Wins and Achievements - BARMM Official Website

extremism (VE) and terrorist attacks, particularly in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Despite declarations of some provinces being free from extremist groups, communities across the Bangsamoro region continue to experience frequent violence. Armed clashes, ambushes, and politically motivated attacks are still reported almost daily, indicating that instability persists. These recurring incidents highlight the fragile peace and the ongoing vulnerability of many local populations to recruitment, displacement, and further conflict[12].

Despite efforts to dismantle them, groups like Abu Sayyaf and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) remain active.

While the Philippines' security strategy increasingly emphasises a "whole-of-nation" approach to counter VE domestically, the country's focus on emerging external threats in the Asia-Pacific region also shapes its broader security landscape.

Amid growing geopolitical tensions, particularly in the South China Sea, the Philippines has strategically reoriented aspects of its national security policy toward addressing potential external threats. This shift involves strengthening alliances with nations such as the United States and Australia, expanding maritime capabilities, and focusing on regional stability. This emphasis on external threats can indirectly affect domestic security, as resources and attention may be redistributed towards protecting borders and enhancing Defence partnerships. With this focus on external security, maintaining sufficient resources and policy attention for internal security challenges like VE becomes more complex, especially in regions like BARMM, where socio-economic conditions remain fragile and where extremist groups continue to exploit community grievances.

The upcoming 2025 BARMM elections[13] are a critical milestone in the peace process, marking the transition from interim governance to a fully elected parliamentary system. However, this period is expected to be volatile due to multiple challenges. Political rivalries between former rebel groups, traditional political families, and new candidates heighten competition, increasing the risk of electoral violence. Frustration is also growing within communities, as many feel that the promised benefits of the peace process have not materialised, and issues with normalisation and transitional justice remain unresolved.

Challenges in the normalisation process, such as the slow decommissioning of combatants and delays in economic reintegration programs, exacerbate feelings of neglect and vulnerability. The absence of robust transitional justice mechanisms leaves many grievances unaddressed, fuelling mistrust and dissatisfaction. Additionally, the developing governance structures in BARMM face obstacles, as mature institutions and fair representation mechanisms are still emerging. This electoral phase will be pivotal for long-term stability in BARMM, with successful elections signalling strengthened democratic processes, while disruptions could risk reversing peacebuilding gains and further eroding trust in the peace process.

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[12] No Respite in Violence in the Bangsamoro: January 2024," International Alert Philippines.

[13] In October 2025.

Drivers of Violent Extremism

Multiple and overlapping factors drive VE in the Philippines:

A. Identity-based Conflict and Political Rivalry

Conflict Alert recorded that over 40% of all violent incidents in BARMM from 2021–2023 were rooted in identity and political competition, particularly among clans, traditional political families, and former rebel groups vying for political power ahead of the 2025 BARMM elections.[14] The convergence of politics, identity, and intergenerational clan feuds (rido) fosters a volatile environment ripe for violent mobilisation.

B. Climate-Induced Displacement and Fragility

Climate shocks have exacerbated community vulnerability. In 2024 alone, more than 110,000 families were displaced due to flooding and armed clashes, mainly in Maguindanao del Sur and Special Geographic Areas (SGA) in North Cotabato. These displacement events create social and economic stress that VE groups can exploit for recruitment and legitimacy.[15] In a Survey, 66 percent of respondents reported psychological or emotional stress, 63 percent experienced disruption to education, and 41 percent faced loss of employment or job opportunities due to conflict[16].

C. Youth Marginalisation and Radical Influences

IAG's 2022 study on youth vulnerability revealed that economic hardship, disillusionment with peace dividends, and the influence of persuasive recruiters in madaris and universities have made young people particularly susceptible to recruitment. Nearly 72% of respondents in the study were aware of VE narratives, and some admitted knowing recruiters in their communities.[17]

D. Weak Governance and Fragile Institutions

The slow rollout of the normalisation process has led to rising dissatisfaction, particularly combatant decommissioning and economic reintegration programs. Many former combatants and communities feel the peace dividends are too slow or absent, eroding trust in both the BARMM and national government.[18]

E. Historical Grievances and Perceived Injustices

Generational grievances continue to inform narratives of injustice, including land dispossession, state neglect, and historical military abuses under Martial Law. The destruction of Marawi in 2017,

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[14] Appeasing Violence, Conjuring Peace: Conflict Alert 2021-2023 Report," International Alert.

[15] Displacement and Conflict: June-July 2024," International Organization for Migration.

[16] https://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/CS-YOUTH-CLIMATE-PEACE-Philippines-2.pdf

[17] Youth Vulnerability to Violent Extremism," Institute for Autonomy and Governance (IAG), 2022.

[18] IAG PCVE Brief," January 2024

lack of full rehabilitation, and continued internal displacement have left thousands in limbo, with youth particularly vulnerable to extremist narratives.[19]

3.   GCERF Added Value

As an apolitical global fund, GCERF currently supports national governments and local communities in 25 countries across three continents to enable effective PVE responses. Its programming has generated a wealth of expertise, lessons learned, and the development of effective practices. This spans the P/CVE spectrum, and this knowledge is shared with all partners through Regional and Global Communities of Practice and the Global Action Platform (GAP). Following its Global Capacity Strengthening Guideline along with local authority actors, and the Country Support Mechanism (CSM) as required, GCERF provides extensive support and capacity building to local partners, including small Community Based Organisations (CBOs) with existing relationships in marginalised communities, using a consortium-based approach.

  GCERF's approach translates global, regional, and national P/CVE strategies and Nation Action Plans into context-specific priorities. The following approaches guide GCERF Philippines' engagement:

• Share what does and does not work well in the Philippines context through National and Global Communities of Practice;

• Promote country ownership, bringing together government, civil society, the international community, and the private sector, in support of priorities identified by the Government of the Philippines and P/CVE coordination at all levels, to ensure contextualised, sustainable P/CVE programming, as described in GCERF's Strategy 2025[20];

• Ensure inclusivity, with girls, boys, women, and men represented in activities that meet their specific, identified needs, as per GCERF's Guidelines on Inclusivity;

• Ensure programme design is focused on achieving sustainable and effective outcomes measured through robust M&E frameworks, outputs and indicators.

• Mainstream the Conflict Sensitive Peace Promoting (CSPP) framework and approach to ensure conflict sensitivity, as per GCERF's Approach to Conflict Sensitive Programming[21];

• Coordinate closely with other donors and existing and proposed programmes through GCERF's Manila-based national advisor;

• Strengthen the operational and financial management and P/CVE capacity of grantees to enable them to become P/CVE experts as per GCERF's Global Capacity-Building Guidelines; and

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[19] Violent Extremism in the Philippines: A Country Needs Assessment," Stabilisation Network, 2019.
[20] GCERF-Strategy-2025-English.pdf
[21] Available upon request

- All programming is in line with GCTF best practice and uses the toolkits developed by the Forum[22] (for full details please see hereunder).

GCERF and GCTF Good Practices

GCERF uses the Global Counter Terrorism Forum's identified good practices, with a particular focus on the Memorandum on Good Practices on Strengthening National-Local Cooperation in Preventing And Countering Violent Extremism Conducive To Terrorism [23]:

- **Good Practice 5:** Invest in local actors, frameworks, and programmes.
- **Good Practice 6**: Build and strengthen trust.
- **Good Practice 7:** Facilitate appropriate information sharing between C/PVE conducive to terrorism actors while protecting privacy.
- **Good Practice 8:** Enable and promote effective coordination, communication, and collaboration among national and local stakeholders relevant to the design and implementation of a P/CVE conducive to terrorism NAP or other relevant national frameworks
- **Good Practice 9:** Balance national leadership and local ownership.
- **Good Practice 10:** Encourage sustainable funding to support local implementation of national P/CVE conducive to terrorism frameworks.
- **Good Practice 11:** Provide or otherwise support tailored training and other capacity-building.
- **Good Practice 13**: Enable the effective and sustained monitoring and evaluation of national and local P/CVE conducive to terrorism initiatives.

Lessons Learned and Good Practices

The last five years of programming in GCERF partner countries have been monitored both quantitively and qualitatively through rigorous monthly activity monitoring by our local national advisors, quarterly monitoring by the Secretariat, external mid-line and end-line evaluations, and third-party monitoring. GCERF will consider the lessons learned across its portfolio for ensuring high quality programming in the Philippines. Some of the main findings and lessons that we have gathered from funding projects across 25 countries are the following:

❖ **P/CVE is a long-term investment.** All the main objectives for GCERF's engagement in Indonesia are multi-year initiatives. Therefore, the first round of investment is divided up in-between R&R, the creation of an enabling environment to prevent violent extremism, and supporting individuals

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[22] For a full list, please see here: GCTF - Key documents. Among others: Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism (English).
[23]GCTF Memorandum on Good Practices on Strengthening National-Local Cooperation in PCVE.pdf

released from prison work. The initial engagement is planned for 48 months in Indonesia (this is inclusive of the set-up phase).

❖ **Rehabilitation and Reintegration work needs to be complemented with PVE work**. R&R initiatives may be less effective or even counter-productive if they are not done in tandem with PVE activities. PVE efforts ensure that continued drivers that led people to join VE and terrorist groups in the first place are being addressed to avoid re-radicalisation or radicalisation to VE of others. In addition, PVE efforts are necessary to ensure an enabling environment for the (re)integration of returnees (children and youth) into their communities.

❖ **There is a need to do more work around mental health and psycho-social support for returnees as well as frontline workers (psychologists, social workers, teachers, and municipal workers, who engage with returnees).** Although the returnees go through psychosocial support at the transit centres during the initial rehabilitation phase, further support is much needed once they get to communities. Moreover, those who directly engage with returnees also require psychosocial support.

❖ **In a context of limited economic opportunities, addressing structural risk factors such as poverty and unemployment is an effective way to prevent violent extremism.** With increasing research suggesting a strong link between economic vulnerability and recruitment into violent extremist groups in Indonesia, the need to intervene in this domain has become much apparent.

❖ **Livelihood activities must be focused in specific geographic areas and must be implemented as mid- to long-term programme activities** i.e. part of area-based programming instead of being scattered around in many communities to make a larger impact.

❖ **Livelihood and income generating activities should focus on specific risk groups e.g. young people out of the formal education system for more than a few years without alternative skills for livelihood**. A recent portfolio level evaluation in Mali revealed that specific targeting can generate a far larger impact than targeting 'youth' or 'women' in general.

❖ **A risk/vulnerability reduction monitoring approach** is essential to better understand the longer-term impact of income generating activities and their relation to addressing the loss of livelihood.

❖ **Setting the definition of who is "at-risk" of violent extremism at the onset of the program is a critical component of design.** The question of who is at risk of violent extremism is a highly debated one without a consensus[24.] Nonetheless, having a clear definition at the inception of the programme relevant to every community and set by community leaders is essential for the conceptualisation and results measurement. It also forms the base for beneficiary selection, especially for activities that seek to target individuals like income generation activities. This definition should be multi-dimensional and context specific, with emphasis on the factors that predispose people into violent extremism.

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[24] Glazzard, A. and Zeuthen, M., 2014. Violent extremism. *Reading*. Violent-extremism_RP.pdf (gsdrc.org)

GCERF will also consider the lessons learned in the previous rounds of funding in the Philippines.

5. Philippines Portfolio Objectives

GCERF's Country Investment Strategy is aligned with the NAP P/CVE 2025-2028, which main objective is *"to prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism through a whole-of-nation approach or the convergence of the government, civil society organisations, religious sector and other key stakeholders"*.

The NAP P/CVE 2025-2028 specific objectives are the following:

1. Institutionalise P/CVE strategies from the national down to the grassroots levels;
2. Involve the different stakeholders across the broadest spectrum of the society in implementing P/CVE programs;
3. Apply a comprehensive and people-centred approach to address the different drivers of radicalisation;
4. Ensure that P/CVE strategies are inclusive and culture- and gender-sensitive; and
5. Ensure that P/CVE strategies uphold the rule of law, international human rights law, and international humanitarian law[25].

Based on all five specific objectives, GCERF's Portfolio objectives for 2026 to 2028 will be the following:

I. To support community-based rehabilitation for returnees and for the victims of violent extremist groups and their families, including access to mental health support services.
II. To increase access to economic opportunities for people from vulnerable or marginalised communities.
III. To enhance access to credible and transparent transitional justice mechanisms.
IV. To empower Women and Girls as leaders in PVE.

Peace education and improving local governance will be included as cross cutting activities. Finally, the Strategy focuses can be summarised as in Figure 2 hereunder:

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[25] The National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (NAP P/CVE). Please see in annex 4 attached.

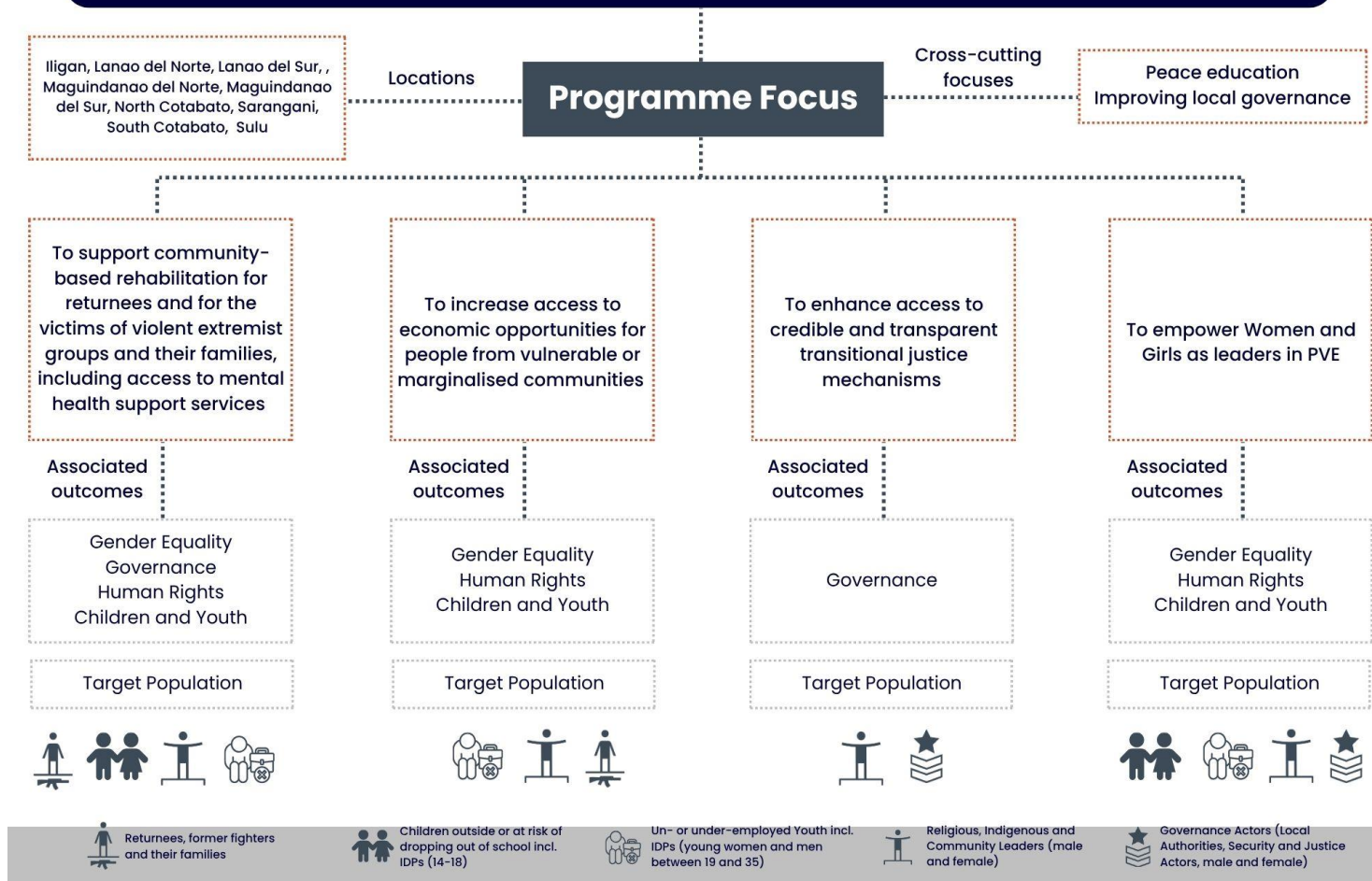**THE PHILIPPINES COUNTRY INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2026-2028**

Locations
Iligan, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, , Maguindanao del Norte, Maguindanao del Sur, North Cotabato, Sarangani, South Cotabato, Sulu

Programme Focus

Cross-cutting focuses
Peace education
Improving local governance

To support community-based rehabilitation for returnees and for the victims of violent extremist groups and their families, including access to mental health support services

To increase access to economic opportunities for people from vulnerable or marginalised communities

To enhance access to credible and transparent transitional justice mechanisms

To empower Women and Girls as leaders in PVE

Associated outcomes
Gender Equality
Governance
Human Rights
Children and Youth

Associated outcomes
Gender Equality
Human Rights
Children and Youth

Associated outcomes
Governance

Associated outcomes
Gender Equality
Human Rights
Children and Youth

Target Population

Target Population

Target Population

Target Population

Returnees, former fighters and their families

Children outside or at risk of dropping out of school incl. IDPs (14-18)

Un- or under-employed Youth incl. IDPs (young women and men between 19 and 35)

Religious, Indigenous and Community Leaders (male and female)

Governance Actors (Local Authorities, Security and Justice Actors, male and female)

Figure 2: Philippines Country Investment Strategy Concept Map

Geographic focus

Geographic priorities in this Strategy were drawn based on mixed methodologies. First, they are deducted from Armed Conflict Location & Event Data's (ACLED)[26] quantitative evidence of reported violent incidents and related fatalities: each province was ranked by the absolute number of violent events and, in cases where these counts were comparable, by total fatalities for the period between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2024. Then, they have been compared to an analysis of the information gathered from extensive consultations with local CSO partners, GCERF's Country Support Mechanism, and with donors. Geographically, GCERF's support will focus on Mindanao, in the BARMM and outside of the BARMM[27] :

Province (BARMM)	Province (Non-BARMM Areas)
Lanao del Sur (Marawi City)	Iligan City
Maguindanao del Norte	Lanao del Norte
Maguindanao del Sur	Sarangani
Special Geographic Area (North Cotabato)	South Cotabato
	Sulu

Mindanao remains one of the most fragile regions in the Philippines, shaped by a long history of violent conflict, political marginalisation, and chronic poverty. While the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) marked a significant milestone in the peace process, many areas within and surrounding the BARMM continue to experience violent extremism, clan violence, political rivalries, and land-related disputes. GCERF's continued investment in these provinces—both within and outside BARMM—is essential to addressing the root causes of radicalisation and ensuring that peace gains are sustained and inclusive.

In the **BARMM**, **Lanao del Sur** continues to experience the residual effects of the Marawi siege, with VE groups still active and youth at risk of radicalisation. Slow rehabilitation, unresolved land claims, and elite political rivalries have created a sense of exclusion among many residents.

In **Maguindanao del Norte**, security threats persist alongside political uncertainty, as disputes over governance structures undermine stability. These conditions leave many young people disenfranchised and vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups., the **SPMS Box in Maguindanao del Sur,** a cluster of towns, composed of Shariff Aguak, Pagatin (Datu Saudi Ampatuan), Mamasapano, and Shariff Saydona Mustapha, remains one of the most volatile areas in the region remains a critical hotspot for violent extremism, where groups like the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and Dawlah Islamiyah maintain operational capacity. Political rivalries among clans and disputes over land—especially in areas affected by displacement—exacerbate fragility.

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[26] (ACLED) is a disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping initiative. ACLED collects information on the dates, actors, locations, fatalities, and types of all reported political violence and protest events around the world. The ACLED team conducts analysis to describe and explore conflict trends.

[27] Please also see Annex 2 Geographical Coverage hereunder for a detailed list of the municipalities covered.

The **Special Geographic Area (SGA) of North Cotabato** comprises communities that are in a transitional governance phase, with several newly created municipalities, recently formalised under BARMM. This transition brings institutional challenges, including limited-service delivery, lack of established administrative systems, and overlapping jurisdictional claims. Demographically, the SGA includes diverse Moro and Indigenous Peoples (IP) communities, many of whom continue to experience land-related tensions, intercommunal distrust, and political marginalisation. Longstanding Moro–IP conflict, coupled with unresolved ancestral domain claims and clan dynamics, have led to contributes to fragile peace and increases vulnerability to violent extremism and social unrest.

Meanwhile, in **Sulu**, while Abu Sayyaf has been significantly weakened, the province's historic decision to vote against inclusion in the BARMM which was reaffirmed by the Supreme Court in 2024 reflects a deeper political and cultural rift. Many residents feel alienated from the regional government, making it crucial to continue peacebuilding work that bridges this divide and addresses unresolved clan conflict and land insecurity.

Outside BARMM, surrounding provinces also demand attention. **Iligan City** serves as a hub for displaced families from Marawi and remains a recruitment ground for extremist groups due to limited livelihood opportunities and unresolved tensions between host and displaced communities. **Lanao del Norte**, with its mix of Christian and Moro communities, plays a strategic role in bridging divides but continues to face rido,[28] political violence, and identity-based grievances.

In **Sarangani** and **South Cotabato**, violent extremism is less overt but not absent. Historical recruitment, exclusion of indigenous and Moro groups from political and economic systems, and periodic displacement due to land grabbing and commercial interests remain flashpoints. These areas are also characterised by high youth unemployment, lack of inclusive development, and weak civic engagement—conditions that allow extremist narratives to take hold quietly and gradually.

Across all these areas, economic inequality and exclusion are persistent and systemic. Marginalised youth often face limited access to quality education, sustainable livelihoods, and meaningful participation in decision-making. Land conflict, poor service delivery, and political patronage further alienate communities, making VE not just a security problem but a developmental crisis.

GCERF's model—anchored in national ownership, local partnerships, community-led resilience, and inclusive governance—is uniquely suited to address the multi-layered challenges in the areas above. By continuing to invest in these areas, GCERF can help ensure that peace is not just negotiated at the political level, but felt at the grassroots—through empowered youth, safer communities, and societies where dignity and opportunity outweigh the appeal of violence.

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[28] Rido refers to clan feuding or violent conflict between families, kinship groups, or communities, in the context of Bangsamoro communities in Mindanao, Philippines. These conflicts often arise from disputes over land, political rivalries, honour, resources, or past grievances, and can span multiple generations if unresolved.
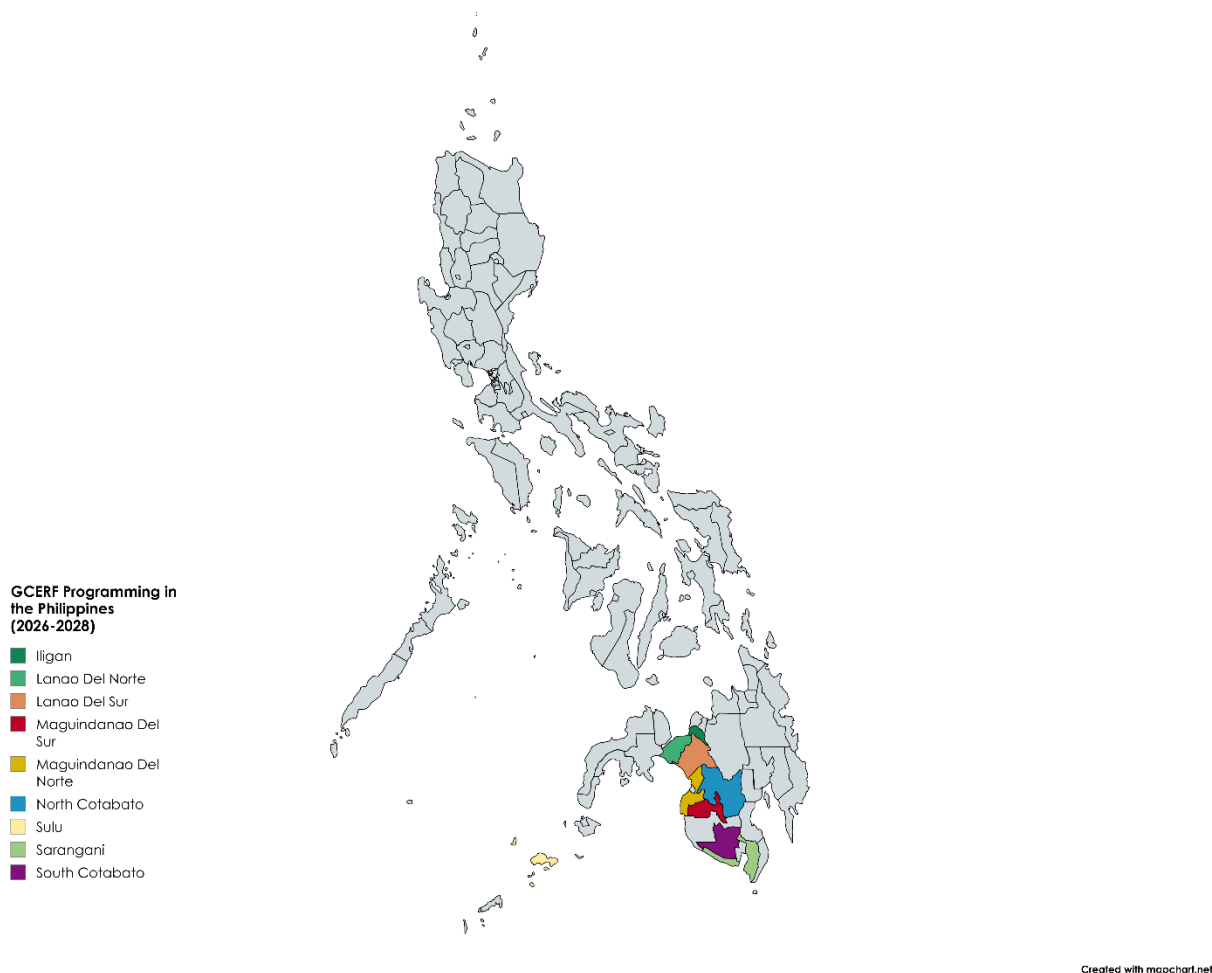
GCERF Programming in the Philippines (2026-2028)

- Iligan
- Lanao Del Norte
- Lanao Del Sur
- Maguindanao Del Sur
- Maguindanao Del Norte
- North Cotabato
- Sulu
- Sarangani
- South Cotabato

Created with mapchart.net

Fig 1: Map of the areas of intervention

Demographic Focus

As well as focusing on people identified as directly "at risk" in PVE programming, GCERF's evaluations demonstrate that there is also a critical need to amplify protective factors (positive peer environments, formal support mechanisms, etc.). Creating "fertile ground" for PVE programming requires a whole-of-community approach. GCERF therefore proposes focusing on the following beneficiary categories to implement its approach:

a) **Priority Focus:**
- Returnees, former fighters and their families (male, female)
- Children outside school or at risk of dropping out, including IDPs (14-18)
- Un- or under-employed Youth, including IDPs (young women and men between 19 and 35)

b) **Cross-cutting Focus:**

- Religious, Indigenous and Community Leaders (male and female)
- Governance Actors (Local Authorities, Security and Justice Actors, male and female)

A. Returnees, former fighters and their families

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meeting on September 20, 2017, adopted the "Manila Declaration to Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism emphasized deradicalisation in rehabilitation and reintegration programs[29]. Rehabilitation Programs are a wide range of interventions aimed at restoring Violent Extremist Offenders (VEO) to a status of being law-abiding and nonviolent citizens while encouraging them to desist from violent activities.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), through the Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Project Management Office (PCVE PMO), has been developing the Community-Based Restoration and Reintegration (CBRR) Framework since 2019. This initiative is aligned with the NAP PCVE Roadmap 2023–2028, which underscores the importance of people-centred, locally driven interventions in addressing the root causes of violent extremism. The reintegration of former fighters is key to a sustainable peacebuilding. Their families often suffer from stigmatisation, lack of livelihoods, and are processing their own trauma.

GCERF has been supporting rehabilitation and reintegration of former fighters, notably through psychosocial support provided by aftercare programs[30]. After introducing it in its previous round, GCERF intends to expand these interventions.

Lessons learned from 30 years of violent extremist disengagement and reintegration (VEDR)[31] around the world show that:

• VEDR programming and processes must be designed to account for **individuals' motivations for involvement** as well as their skills and desires

• Programming must also be **context-specific** and responsive to the historical and political factors relevant in a society and the wider community into which individuals will reintegrate.

• **Forced disengagement** without reintegration fails to address key problems in society and only subdues violence in the short term

• **Stigmatisation** impedes employment opportunities and the development of pro-social ties and a pro-social identity. Policy and practitioner discourse may contribute to and reify stigmatising identities.

• **Familial and civil society networks, entrepreneurship,** and **community sensitisation** measures may help foster acceptance

• **Vocational training or education** is more likely to lead to one's economic and social reintegration

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[29] Quoted in the Philippines National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (NAP P/CVE) 2025-2028.

[30] According to the UNODC Introductory Handbook on the
Prevention of Recidivism and the Social Reintegration of Offenders (2012), aftercare "refers to the support that follows a structured intervention. It is sometimes also defined as a process of reintegrating an offender, on a voluntary basis and after final release from detention back into the community, in a constructive, planned and supervised manner." This also applies to terrorist surrenderees who will reintegrate to society. Quoted in the Philippines National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (NAP P/CVE) 2025-2028

[31] Dr Mary Beth Altier. *Violent Extremist Disengagement and Reconciliation,* Resolve Network, March 2021, https://doi.org/10.37805/vedr2021.1 .

than short-term cash assistance

- **Women and children** face additional barriers to reintegration that must be addressed. Their involvement is often de-politicised and de-securitised and children especially lack agency in their reintegration. For men, reintegration programming and the language around ex-combatants often reify, rather than undermine, "militarised masculinities."
- **Psychosocial support** is essential to process the trauma that some suffered while involved and the vacuum-like experience of disengaging from a social role and related relationships.
- Individual **risk assessments** should be ongoing and inform program design. Focusing on community-based reintegration in risk assessment circumvents an overreliance on recidivism rates and increases program applicability to those not directly involved in violence.

B. Children outside of or at risk of dropping out of school, including IDPs (aged 14-18)

While elementary dropout rates had decreased slightly in recent years, secondary school dropout rates increased slightly. By sex, dropout rates have been consistently more pronounced among boys than girls. Using the average of rates from 2010 to 2017, males in secondary school recorded a dropout rate of 11 percent, whereas females of the same level recorded only 8 percent, raising issues of generations of under-educated boys that is likely to translate to social imbalance as well as providing ongoing vulnerability to recruitment[32]. Compared to all regions in the Philippines, parts of Mindanao have traditionally had the highest shares of out-of-school children and youth (OSCY).

This was confirmed in 2024. According to the Philippines Institute of Statistics (PSA), nearly 11 million children and young Filipinos are not attending formal school or 25 percent of the youth aged 5- to 24-year-old are OSCY[33]. The 15 to 19-year-old age group is next with 15.6 percent of OSCYs.

The data is based on the 2020 Census of Population and Housing. Of the 10.7 million OSCYs, more than half or 51.3 percent are males, while 48.7 percent are females. The BARMM has the lowest school attendance percentage at 64.5 percent. In other words, 35.5 % of the youth in the BARMM is out of school.

Nationwide, this share is highest in BARMM, where over 20 percent of all 16-24 years old are OSCY. The most common reasons young people give for not attending school include having completed schooling, employment, lack of personal interest, marriage and high cost of education/financial problem[34].

Adolescents who are disengaged from formal education are especially vulnerable to harmful ideologies, identity-based marginalisation, and cycles of poverty. In BARMM, school attendance among children aged 5–24 remains the lowest nationwide at 78.1%, compared to over 84% in other regions, with dropout rates more pronounced among boys.[35] Conflict-affected areas such as Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur face additional barriers to education, including displacement, insecurity, and disrupted services.

By targeting this group through **peace education, psychosocial support, and digital literacy**, GCERF can help reduce long-term vulnerability to violence, promote critical thinking, and support reintegration into learning

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[32] https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32508/Investing-in-Skills-to-Promote-Inclusive-Growth-in-Mindanao.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

[33] Nearly 11 million children, youth not in school – PSA | Philstar.com

[34] 7.9M Filipinos opted out of school in SY 2022-2023 → Context.ph

[35] Four out of Five Children Aged 5 to 24 Years Were Attending School for School Year 2022 to 2023 | Philippine Statistics Authority | Republic of the Philippines

and community environments. Furthermore, the PSA reported that in 2017, about 9% of the estimated 39.2 million Filipinos aged 6 to 24 years were classified as out-of-school children and youth (OSCY).

C.   Un- or under-employed Youth, including IDPs (young women and men between 19 and 35)

While the Philippines economy has been fast growing in recent years, Mindanao is likely to remain at a disadvantage with the proportion of youth and young adults (16-24), including former combatants, returnees, and survivors of conflict, facing chronic underemployment, limited livelihood options, and disrupted social support systems due to decades of internal conflict that have weakened its education and health institutions and constrained industrial development. Most economic activity in the region remains informal, offering limited income and lacking decent work conditions. As labour force participation in BARMM increases, there is an urgent need to improve worker productivity through skills development and shift employment toward more sustainable, higher-productivity sectors.[36]

Prolonged economic exclusion increases vulnerability to violence, both directly and through intergenerational poverty. Targeted investment in livelihoods, skills-building, and reintegration for vulnerable youth—especially those directly affected by terrorism—will offer pathways to healing, dignity, and social reintegration.

Latest available data indicates that 80,300 individuals (16,070 families) remain displaced in Marawi City and in surrounding municipalities in Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte.[37] Communities in and surrounding Marawi continue to experience the residual effects of the Marawi siege (2017), with VE groups still active and youth at risk of radicalisation. Slow rehabilitation, unresolved land claims, and elite political rivalries have created a sense of exclusion among many residents. GCERF has been supporting them in this complex and protracted situation during the previous rounds, and will continue during the next one, before considering a transition at the end of this Strategy.

D.   Religious, Indigenous and Community Leaders (male and female)

Religious, tribal, and grassroots leaders are often the first responders to conflict and recovery. In areas where victims and returnees reside, these leaders play a vital role in fostering trust, guiding spiritual healing, and mediating reintegration efforts. In many Mindanao communities, they are also central to resolving long-standing disputes related to land, identity, and inter-clan conflict—many of which underpin recurring cycles of violence. Their influence shapes social norms, facilitates inclusive dialogue, and supports reconciliation processes critical to sustainable peace. Violent extremist actors have historically exploited social fragmentation and religious narratives to fuel division.

By equipping local leaders with tools in peace education, psychosocial support, transitional justice, and digital PVE, GCERF will enhance their role as agents of healing, reintegration, and durable conflict resolution. Women—including those who are survivors of terrorism, caretakers of returnees, or widows of conflict—hold unique positions within their communities as nurturers, mediators, and informal leaders. Yet they remain underrepresented in PVE decision-making and peace processes. Their involvement in WPS programming, trauma response, and economic recovery is vital to sustainable reintegration and long-term peace. Supporting women leaders will expand the reach and credibility of GCERF interventions, enabling more inclusive, community-driven solutions to violence and inequality.

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[36] International Labour Organization (ILO). *Labour Market Trends and Policy Gaps in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao: Chapter 3 – Women and Youth in the Labour Market.* 2023. barmm-labour-market-report-chapter3-2023-en.pdf

[37] UN OCHA, 'Philippines: Mindanao Displacement Snapshot' (June 2025)

E. Governance Actors (Local Authorities, Security and Justice Actors, male and female)

Governance structures in conflict-affected areas often face deep-rooted legitimacy challenges, especially in communities affected by terrorism and protracted violence. Rebuilding trust in public institutions requires consistent access to transparent, accountable, and responsive services. In the BARMM and surrounding provinces, ongoing issues such as political patronage, clan influence, and uneven justice delivery continue to impede inclusive recovery. To ensure long-term impact, it is critical that local governance actors actively integrate and institutionalise the programmes and mechanisms piloted by GCERF grantees—including those related to reintegration, psychosocial support, transitional justice, and community-based prevention. Embedding these initiatives within government systems will help sustain results, improve coordination, and reinforce trust between citizens and state institutions. Strengthened local leadership will also be vital in delivering inclusive services that address trauma, reduce grievances, and build resilience against future cycles of violence.

Programmatic Focus

GCERF-funded programming in 24 other countries has shown the importance and effectiveness of CSO initiatives in PVE. However, such initiatives are often led by large, capital-based CSOs and IGOs. Local CBOs do not take part in larger strategic conversations on PVE and often lack the thematic and operational capacity to be implementing partners of the governments' PVE strategy. However, local CBOs have the most access and are trusted actors in the community who could have the largest sustainable impact.

GCERF work in the Philippines in the two previous funding rounds has demonstrated the relevance of working in consortia mixing large NGOs and local CBOs.

GCERF will aim to build on this experience, to **empower local CSOs** and enhance their capacity to work on PVE in a coordinated manner with government institutions and Local Government Units.

I. To support community-based rehabilitation for returnees and for the victims of violent extremists groups and their families, including access to mental health support services

GCERF will prioritise comprehensive, community-based rehabilitation interventions for individuals and families affected by violent extremism—including returnees and survivors. GCERF's approach to reintegration and rehabilitation is rooted in the principles of community ownership, trauma-informed care, and the meaningful participation of returnees and of affected communities. Programming will adopt a multi-dimensional model that links psychosocial healing, social acceptance, and sustainable livelihoods, while leveraging local leadership and existing support systems to promote dignity, agency, and inclusion.

Future programming will integrate mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) as a core element, ensuring that trauma, grief, and stigma are addressed alongside economic and social reintegration. Community health workers, religious leaders, and local service providers will be capacitated to deliver culturally appropriate psychosocial services and refer cases needing specialised care. Returnees will be supported not only through reintegration planning but also via structured community dialogues and restorative justice approaches to rebuild trust. Particular attention will be paid to victims and affected families, ensuring access to legal support, counselling, and compensation mechanisms as part of a survivor-centred approach.

Research highlights that sustainable reintegration requires multi-sectoral support that addresses mental health, livelihoods, and stigma (Derluyn et al., 2015; IOM, 2019). The GCERF's experience on rehabilitation and reintegration also emphasises community buy-in and trust-building as essential for preventing re-radicalisation and fostering resilience.

II. To increase access to economic opportunities for people from vulnerable or marginalised communities

Future programmes will scale up inclusive and market-responsive livelihood opportunities in areas of high deprivation and risk. GCERF will support youth and women from marginalised neighbourhoods, including returnees and survivors of conflict, through vocational training, entrepreneurship development, job placement services, and cooperatives. Economic interventions will be tailored to the needs of conflict-affected communities, including urban informal settlements and rural barangays in BARMM and surrounding provinces. Programmes will include mentorship, digital skills training, and access to microfinance to increase long-term sustainability and resilience.

III. To enhance access to credible and transparent transitional justice mechanisms

GCERF will invest in community-based and formal transitional justice efforts that restore trust, address intergenerational grievances, and reduce the appeal of retaliatory violence. Programmes will strengthen local mediation bodies (e.g., barangay justice systems), while also supporting communities to engage in national mechanisms such as reparation and compensation programs. Training and support will be provided to justice actors, community leaders, and victims' associations to ensure fair, inclusive, and gender-sensitive access to justice. Documentation, legal accompaniment, and public awareness campaigns will reinforce confidence in peaceful conflict resolution. GCERF will also support efforts to institutionalise and scale measures that address land conflict in the Bangsamoro region, including mediation, mapping, and legal reform initiatives that contribute to durable peace and reduce grievances rooted in ancestral domain disputes.

IV. Empowering Women and Girls as Leaders in PVE

GCERF will expand programming that empowers women and girls as leaders, peacebuilders, and frontline responders to violence and extremism. Investments will focus on developing women's leadership skills, enhancing their participation in local governance, and supporting women-led networks for early warning and mediation. Female survivors and caregivers of affected individuals will receive psychosocial support, economic empowerment, and pathways for civic engagement. Programmes will also work to shift community norms by increasing visibility of women in leadership and amplifying their voices through media, advocacy, and intergenerational dialogue.

Crosscutting focuses

V. To Strengthen Peace Education

Future programming will embed peace education into both formal school systems and community learning spaces to promote critical thinking, tolerance, and civic engagement. GCERF will partner with local education authorities and CSOs to co-develop modules on peace, human rights, pluralism, and digital literacy. Teachers and religious educators (including madrasa instructors) will receive training on delivering inclusive and

nonviolent learning. Out-of-school youth will be engaged through community-based workshops, creative arts, and peer education initiatives to strengthen their resilience against polarising narratives.

VI.   To improve Local Governance

GCERF will support initiatives that strengthen good local governance in fragile and at-risk communities to ensure that citizens—especially those in conflict-affected and marginalised areas are better connected to responsive, inclusive, and accountable government institutions. Future programming will promote participatory governance by encouraging local governments to co-design, adopt, and institutionalise peacebuilding and PVE-related programmes implemented by GCERF grantees. Activities will include participatory planning and budgeting processes, civic education, and mechanisms for community feedback and accountability. Efforts will target barangay and municipal governments and will prioritise partnerships with local development councils, peace and order councils, and sectoral bodies. Special emphasis will be placed on strengthening access to public services for youth, women, and conflict-affected populations, fostering stronger trust between state and society and reducing grievances that fuel violent extremism in fragile and at-risk communities, ensuring that citizens—especially those in conflict-affected and marginalised areas—are better connected to responsive and accountable government.

6. Theory of Change

All grants funded under this strategy will be aligned with the following Country-Level Theory of Change (ToC), which allows GCERF to evaluate the cumulative effect of its programming. All proposed grantee programming should be able to be reflected in the ToC and should use a selection of the country-level indicators included below.

Problem statement

In the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and surrounding provinces, groups exploit vulnerabilities of community members in the region, stemming from high unemployment[38], untreated conflict trauma and inadequately addressed grievances from active and past violence, especially within Lumad and in Muslim communities[39]. Partially implemented recommendations on land, reparations, and youth inclusion[40], coupled with school disruptions and limited peace education,[41] leave adolescents vulnerable to violent extremist narratives. Furthermore, male-dominated decision-making forums exclude

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[38] Philippine Statistics Authority, Regional Statistical Services Office VI. (2025, January 24). *2023 annual labour market statistics in Western Visayas* (Preliminary results) (Special Release No. 2025-SR02).

[39] [39] International Organization for Migration. (2023, June 22). Six years since siege, IOM and Korea strengthen Marawi's resilience: Fostering community collaboration and restoring safe spaces. *IOM Philippines*. Retrieved from https://philippines.iom.int/news/six-years-siege-iom-and-korea-strengthen-marawis-resilience-fostering-community-collaboration-and-restoring-safe-spaces

[40] Refaeil, N., & Moner, Y. (2024, July). *Independent study on the status of the implementation of the 2016 recommendations of the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission*. Peace and Human Rights Division, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs & Embassy of Switzerland in the Philippines.

[41] Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack. (2024). *Education under Attack 2024: Country profiles: The Philippines*. Retrieved from https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/eua_2024_philippines.pdf

crucial female perspectives essential for effective peacebuilding.[42] These interconnected livelihoods, psychosocial, justice, educational, and gender-participation gaps foster an environment where recruitment and radicalisation by violent extremist groups remain appealing; thus, community resilience is inconsistent, and the prospects for lasting peace are precarious.

Response (Core programmatic priorities)

Response to this requires a multifaceted strategy, which GCERF conceptualises as:

IF GCERF supports accredited, market-oriented livelihood programmes in conflict-affected Mindanao, which are co-designed and delivered by local CSOs in collaboration with public or private recognised training and finance providers and builds pathways to micro-funds and local buyer networks;

IF GCERF enables partners to support the provision of trauma-informed psychosocial services that combine licensed mental health practitioners, faith or culture-based counsellors, and trained youth peers to reach displacement sites, community venues and at-risk households;

IF GCERF supports inclusive, community-led mechanisms such as gender-balanced barangay truth-telling circles that document violations and empower claimants to pursue redress, while also facilitating access to formal reparation pathways;

IF GCERF funds CSO partnerships with the relevant authorities in education and youth to embed peace-building and analytical-thinking content in formal and informal secondary education, including training of teachers, curricula, and peer support groups;

IF GCERF-supported programme secures meaningful participation of women, especially for leadership roles, to project steering bodies and facilitation teams;

AND if the following assumptions are true during the investment cycle:

a. The national, BARMM and provincial/local governments and their line agencies for skills training, education, justice and security remain committed to the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, especially the Annex on Normalisation,[43] with a newly elected BARMM parliament and maintaining a well-resourced administration that welcomes CSO partnership, upholds peace-process milestones, and allows gender-balanced participation in PVE and transitional justice work.

b. Religious (ulama and church leaders), indigenous and barangay councils accept women's leadership participation, endorse peace-education content and support truth-telling circles.

c. Labour demand, value chains and culturally appropriate micro-finance remain strong enough to absorb participants of GCERF-supported livelihood programmes, while health facilities and schools stay open and staffed to sustain psychosocial and peace-education services.

d. No major resurgence of armed clashes, terrorist incidents or pandemic-scale emergencies disrupts field travel, market access, or community gatherings; roads and digital networks remain passable so mobile psychosocial teams, trainers, and community mentors can move between Mainland and Island provinces in Mindanao

e. GCERF can select and fund consortia capable of leading and implementing projects in these different domains while being cognisant of P/CVE objectives.

THEN,

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[42] Sanguila, J.-A. P. (2024, October 31). Advancing the women, peace, and security agenda in BARMM. *Diplomatic Courier*. Retrieved from https://www.diplomaticcourier.com/posts/advancing-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda-in-barmm

[43] Government of the Republic of the Philippines & Moro Islamic Liberation Front. (2014). *Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro*. Uppsala Conflict Data Program. Retrieved from https://ucdpged.uu.se/peaceagreements/fulltext/Phi%2020140327.pdf

The following **outcomes** are likely to be achieved:

1. Targeted programme participants' increased economic resilience, demonstrated by enhanced income and capacity to absorb economic shocks and stresses.
2. Enhanced psychosocial well-being of adult and child survivors in target areas, with barangay health and social-welfare units maintaining integrated referral pathways beyond project close
3. Increased access to transitional justice pathways for survivors of VE and conflict, shown by documented claims advancing to mediation or reparations through the regional redress mechanisms
4. Increased peace-literacy proficiency and school retention among returnee and at-risk adolescents in target districts,
5. Enhanced gender-responsive leadership in PVE, with women holding steering committee roles, and greater public confidence in women as peacebuilders.

RESULTING in a high-level impact:

At the end of the cycle, various communities and at-risk populations, including survivors and families, have become demonstrably more resilient to violent extremist group appeal, and there are clear signs of sustainability of the work supported by GCERF.

Metrics for Results Measurement

Outcome Area	Metric for measurement
Outcome 1: Increased economic resilience	**Outcome** 1. % of participants with earnings ≥ the PSA regional living-wage line (proxy of World Bank "adequate employment" metric) 2. Ability to recover from stresses and shocks index[44] **Output** 1. # of participants who received various support on livelihoods
Outcome 2: Improved mental-health and wellbeing	**Outcome** 1. % of participants with an improvement in PTSD severity scale (PCL-5 for adults; Child PTSD Symptom Scale for 8-17 yrs)[45] 2. General Self Efficacy index of survivors and their families [46] **Output** 1. # of participants who received various psychosocial interventions
Outcome 3: Access to justice/reparations	**Outcome** 1. % of survivor-victims who can accurately identify at least three key elements (e.g., where to file, required information, and expected response time) of the grievance-redress mechanism. 2. % of survivor-victims of violence who formally sought redress and whose case reached the redress mechanism[47] **Output** 1. # of participants who received support to request redress regarding their case

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[44] https://www.fsinplatform.org/sites/default/files/paragraphs/documents/FSIN_TechnicalSeries_5.pdf

[45] APA/VA gold-standard trauma scales

[46] Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M. (1995). *Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale* [PDF]. In J. Weinman, S. Wright, & M. Johnston (Eds.), *Measures in health psychology: A user's portfolio. Causal and control beliefs* (pp. 35–37). Windsor, UK: NFER-NELSON. Retrieved from https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/26768/1/General_Self-Efficacy_Scale%20(GSE).pdf

[47] Employing SDG standard indicator for the purposes of cross-learning and comparison

Outcome Area	Metric for measurement
Outcome 4: Peace-literacy & school retention	**Outcome** 1. Net lower-secondary drop-out rate for participants supported by the program 2. % of participants in the educational and community settings with critical thinking skills[48] **Output** 1. Number of participants receiving various educational support as a result of GCERF's assistance.
Outcome 5: Women's leadership & public confidence	**Outcome** 1. % of women in decision-making roles in project bodies (steering committees, facilitator cadre)[49] 2. % of community respondents who agree that "women are effective peacebuilders"[50] **Output** 1. Number of women supported by the project to exercise leadership role on PCVE and peacebuilding
Cross-cutting indicators	**1.** Number of unique persons reached because of GCERF's investment in the country **2. Programme sustainability index, measured with the PSAT tool[51]**

Impact Indicator: Resilience to violent extremism index, measured using the Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism (BRAVE) measure[52] or another equivalent index (e.g. ARIS, SyfoR, etc.).

7. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

GCERF's approach to monitoring results, programme evaluation and learning is guided by inclusivity, context-relevance knowledge and evidence-driven adaptive management. The approach is multilayered, with differing levels of verifying results and enhancing learning. In areas with complexity and fragility (as in the case of BARMM and environ regions), the approach is modified to provide timely and useful information to support ongoing adaptive programming. Under this investment strategy, GCERF will develop measurement systems during grant making, management and evaluation as follows:

GRANT MAKING:

1. **Theory of change development:** During grant making, all grants will receive guidance to develop theory of change in line with the local needs and the priorities set under this strategy.
2. **Results framework:** In defining areas results areas for measurement, GCERF will co-develop results framework with selected grantees. This will be at both the output and outcome level. Selected grantees will have some of the standard indicators incorporated into their respective results framework (as appropriate with the program).

GRANT MANAGEMENT:

1. **Baseline and Midline Assessment:** Program implementation will be preceded by a comprehensive baseline assessment. Grantees will be supported to employ a robust approach in designing,

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[48] The exact tool to be decided, but examples could be the application of Bloom taxonomy, standardised critical thinking tests, or one developed based on UNICEF frameworks.

[49] The numerator is the number of women and denominator is the total number of committee members

[50] Afrobarometer/Asia Foundation social-norm item

[51] Programme sustainability tool https://sustaintool.org/

[52] https://resilienceresearch.org/home-brave/

calculating sample sizes and reporting findings from these assessments. For grants exceeding two years, a midline assessment will be performed. This assessment will be mainly qualitative with a focus on learning.

2. **Capacity Building:** At the heart of GCERF's approach is strengthening capacity, which is based on grantees' needs. This will be one of the key activities during the grant management period. Through these, it is expected that the grantees will have increased capacity to define measures of success, collect quality data to assess performance and programmatically adapt their approach whenever needed.

3. **Third party monitoring:** To verify the effectiveness and quality of activities implemented by grantees, GCERF will commission an independent third-party monitoring. This is expected to occur in the middle of grants implementation.

END OF GRANT:

1. **Endline assessment:** End of each grant will be preceded by an endline assessment. This assessment will mainly be conducted by the grantees with technical support from GCERF. It will focus on assessing progress made in relation to indicators set at baseline. This assessment aims to enhance learning and strengthening grantee's organisational effectiveness.

2. **Independent Evaluation:** Following the end of grant endline assessment, GCERF will commission an independent country level criteria-based evaluation to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of both the investment strategy and grants. To assess unintended positive and negative results, complexity-aware evaluation methods (such as outcome harvesting) will be incorporated.

8. Country Alignment and Coordination

A. Alignment with the National and local Frameworks

GCERF aligns its programming in the Philippines with the outcomes and guiding principles of the National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (NAP-PCVE), which emphasises a convergence approach to addressing the drivers of violent extremism, especially among the most vulnerable groups. GCERF's work in the Philippines is closely aligned with the 2023–2028 Results Framework and Roadmap of the NAP-PCVE.

The NAP PCVE outlines three strategic outcomes:

1. Localisation of PCVE action plans across all 17 regions;
2. Broad-based engagement of stakeholders across government, civil society, and vulnerable sectors in PCVE implementation;
3. Development of comprehensive, people-centred programs that are responsive to the drivers of violent extremism.

To achieve these outcomes, GCERF grants integrate and complement programmes identified in the roadmap:

- Developing enabling policies and a national research and advocacy agenda;
- Building the capacity of LGUs and civil society for PCVE-sensitive planning and budgeting;
- Establishing and operationalising **Early Warning Systems (EWS)**;
- Mainstreaming PCVE in local development plans;

- Designing and delivering rehabilitation, reintegration, and aftercare programs for individuals affected by violent extremism;
- Institutionalising a **Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL)** framework.

GCERF's investments in the Philippines are gender-transformative and align closely with the NAP WPS, which emphasises women's participation in peacebuilding, protection from violence, and promotion of women's rights in conflict-affected areas. They strive to achieve the following outcome:
GCERF-supported programmes have secured meaningful participation of women, especially for leadership roles, to project steering bodies and facilitation teams.
More specifically, they will endeavour to:
- Support women-led CSOs in conflict-affected communities;
- Promote women's participation in local peace and security mechanisms;
- Fund programs that address the intersection of gender inequality and violent extremism, particularly in the Bangsamoro region;
- Ensure that all interventions are gender-sensitive and inclusive, in line with national WPS commitments and GCERF's global gender strategy.

This approach reinforces NAP WPS outcomes related to prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery, and recognises the critical role of women as peacebuilders and community leaders.
Recognising the unique context of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), GCERF ensures its programming is directly aligned with:
- 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, especially the Annex on Normalisation[53],
- The Bangsamoro Plan of Action on Community Resilience (BPA CoRE), a comprehensive framework adopted by the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) to strengthen community resilience against *multi-dimensional* risks – not only natural disasters but also human-induced crises like armed conflict, violent extremism, and health pandemics. Notably, BPA-CoRE integrates **peacebuilding** and **good governance** as central themes, recognising that resilient communities require inclusive institutions and sustained peace.
- The Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (RAP-WPS), which outlines gender-responsive peacebuilding, protection of women in conflict settings, and promotion of women's leadership within the BARMM context.

GCERF grantees work closely with BTA ministries, local government units, local CSOs, and community leaders. By aligning with BARMM's regional frameworks, GCERF ensures cultural relevance, legitimacy, and sustainability of its investments.

B. Institutional Coordination through the Country Support Mechanism (CSM)

GCERF anchors its country engagement through an active Country Support Mechanism (CSM), composed of key national and regional stakeholders:

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[53] Government of the Republic of the Philippines & Moro Islamic Liberation Front. (2014). *Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro*. Uppsala Conflict Data Program. Retrieved from https://ucdpged.uu.se/peaceagreements/fulltext/Phi%2020140327.pdf

- Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG)
- Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU)
- Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)
- Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)

- Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC)
- Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA)
- Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP)
- Institute for Autonomy and Governance (IAG)
- Development partners: *Australia and New Zealand*

This mechanism facilitates policy alignment, stakeholder coordination, and sustainability of GCERF investments.

C.   Coordination with the Government of the Philippines

GCERF will work in coordination with the following ministries and Government bodies:

I.Country Support Mechanism Members:
- Department of the Interior and Local Government
- Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity
- Department of Social Welfare and Development
- Armed Forces of the Philippines
- Anti-Terrorism Council-Program Management Council

II.Non-CSM Members:
- Department of Education
- National Commission on Muslim Filipinos
- Technical Education Skills Development Agency
- Philippine Commission on Women

- Department of Agriculture
- National Commission on Indigenous Peoples
- Others included in the NAP PCVE clusters as may be needed

III.BARMM Parliament and Ministries:
- Ministry of Interior and Local Government
- Ministry of Public Order and Safety
- Ministry of Basic Higher and Technical Education
- Ministry of Social Services and Development
- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Agrarian Reform
- Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs
- Bangsamoro Human Rights Commission

IV. Local Government Units in Program Implementation Areas (Provincial to Barangay level)

D.   Convening National Communities of Practice (CoPs)

GCERF regularly organises national Communities of Practice (CoPs) to bring together government agencies, CSOs, and development partners. These platforms:
- Promote alignment with the NAP PCVE and related national action plans (NAP WPS and NAP YPS);
- Enable sharing of lessons learned, emerging trends, and challenges;
- Support capacity building for local actors and implementers;
- Provide a forum for strategic coordination and convergence.

GCERF also participates in the government-led NAP PCVE cluster meetings to ensure coherence of its civil society investments with official priorities.

9 . Funding and Investment Phases

Table 1: Investment phases

Phases	Level of Funding	Geographic Locations	Programmatic Focus	Target populations
1	USD 2 million	BARMM: Lanao Del Sur Maguindanao del Norte, Maguindanao Del Sur, Marawi, North Cotabato	1. To support community-based rehabilitation for returnees and for the victims of violent extremists groups and their families, including access to mental health support services 2. To increase access to economic opportunities for people from vulnerable or marginalised communities 3. To enhance access to credible and transparent transitional justice mechanisms 4. Female leadership in PVE	Returnees, former fighters and their families; Un-and under-employed youth (male and female; Community leaders (male and female); State actors (male and female)
2	USD 3 million	Non-BARMM: Iligan City, Lanao Del Norte Sarangani, South Cotabato, Sulu	1. To support community-based rehabilitation for returnees and for the victims of violent extremists groups and their families, including access to mental health support services 2. To increase access to economic opportunities for people from vulnerable or marginalised communities 3. To enhance access to credible and transparent transitional justice mechanisms 4. Female leadership in PVE 5. Local governance	Returnees, former fighters and their families; Un-and under-employed youth (male and female; Community leaders (male and female); State actors (male and female)
3	USD 4 million	BARMM and Non-BARMM: Illigan City, Lanao Del	1. To support community-based rehabilitation for returnees and for the victims of violent extremists groups and their families, including access to mental health support services	Returnees, former fighters and their families; Un-and under-employed

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Phases	Level of Funding	Geographic Locations	Programmatic Focus	Target populations
		Norte Sarangani, South Cotabato, Sulu	2. To increase access to economic opportunities for people from vulnerable or marginalised communities 3. To enhance access to credible and transparent transitional justice mechanisms 4. Female leadership in PVE 5. Local governance	youth (male and female; Community leaders (male and female); State actors (male and female)

10. Capacity Building, Learning and Sustainability

Sustainability

GCERF is committed to ensure that Sustainability measures are included in all its Country Investment Strategies. After 10 years of investment across all portfolios, in a shifting funding landscape, GCERF acknowledges that its programmes must have defined durations, for a better visibility and sustainability.

In the Philippines, GCERF's work has focused on the following:

The first Country Investment Strategy (2019-2022) focused on building tolerance, community agency, positive social and economic alternatives, critical thinking and life skills. The geographical areas that were covered were Mindanao and Metro Manila.

The second Country Investment Strategy (2023-2025) focused on inclusive governance, Education (Madaris integration), Livelihoods, Transitional Justice (with Strategic Communications and Peace Education as cross-cutting areas).

This Strategy 2026-2028 is furthering previous interventions in rehabilitation and reintegration, livelihoods and transitional justice. It reinforces female leadership in PVE. Peace Education and Local Governance will permeate all layers of programming.

The 2026-2028 funding cycle will lead to a transition of GCERF Programming towards a different form of collaboration with the Philippines CSOs and Government. Subsequently, GCERF will pilot a Local Ownership project in 2026. One Local Government Unit will be chosen in collaboration with the PCVE stakeholders. A diagnosis of the local ownership of PVE interventions will be established and solutions proposed and implemented in 2027. Impact of these solutions will be measured. In 2028, alongside the end of programme evaluations, Local Ownership Recommendations will be collected in a document to serve as guidelines for a transition.

Tailored Capacity Building for Local CSOs

Capacity building of local CSOs and existing community structures will be a key aspect of upcoming GCERF-funded programmes. A capacity assessment and building tool will be developed to evaluate the current capacities of CSOs and community structures and provide them with tailored trainings and on the job support. GCERF plans to collaborate with the members of the international community such as the EU and FCDO to assess current capacities and develop a capacity building tool. The capacity building assessment is an ongoing process. GCERF will review the quarterly narrative and financial reports of grantees and the quarterly monitoring visits of the advisor to assess progress.

Thematic and Technical Trainings

GCERF will facilitate capacity building for its grantees and sub-grantees by linking global, regional, and national experts to local practitioners and actors in interactive workshops. Trainings will cover both thematic and technical topics. Depending on grantee need, these topics can include communications, security and risk analysis and mitigation, programme management, finance and compliance, and monitoring and evaluation, as well as thematic trainings such as psycho-social support for rehabilitation and CBI. GCERF will also roll out a digital literacy in P/CVE training programme that will be made available to grantees in Indonesia.

GCERF will plan to offer grantees in Indonesia at least 2-3 thematic trainings during their first year of implementation. When needed, GCERF will likely start off grantees with some general training on PVE, conflict sensitivity, and gender inclusivity.

Global and Thematic Knowledge Sharing

In addition to trainings, GCERF also organises global and thematic **Communities of Practice** (CoPs) where GCERF partners from the region will meet either online or in person to share challenges, lessons learned, and good practices. CoPs sometimes take the form of trainings as mentioned above or are more reflective workshops to learn from and build on each other's work in the region or on a particular theme.

In addition, GCERF at the global level organises quarterly virtual Global Communities of Practice. GCERF invites all grantees and other stakeholders to attend its Global CoPs which allow grantees from around the world to share insights, raise challenges and suggest solutions to common problems related to VE.

The Global Action Platform (GAP) has also launched working groups to connect its grantees and sub-grantees across the world on the topics of livelihood support, rehabilitation, community-based integration, and social cohesion.

Philippines grantees will join Bangladesh, Indonesia and Sri Lanka grantees and former grantees in the Digital PVE Working Group of the Global Action Platform.

GCERF's Independent Review Panel, a group of P/CVE practitioners and experts from around the world, supports the Secretariat with proposal review, learning events, and capacity strengthening of partners. The IRP Chair also serves as a member of GCERF's Governing Board. The IRP supports the grant making review process to ensure quality, impact, value for money, and alignment with national strategies and provides direct support to CSM members and grantees through structured inputs and capacity building.

Timeline

The timeline for implementation is January 2026 through December 2028.

Annexes

ANNEX 1 Philippines Strategy Summary (See in attachment)

ANNEX 2 Geographical coverage detail

The CSOs will not have to cover all the cities, they must choose their areas of operations among them.

Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)		
Province/ Independent City	*Component Municipalities/Cities*	
1. Cotabato City		
2. Lanao del Sur	1. Amai Manabilang 2. Bacolod-Kalawi 3. Balabagan 4. Balindong 5. Bayang 6. Binidayan 7. Buadiposo-Buntong 8. Bubong 9. Butig 10. Calanogas 11. Ditsaan-Ramain 12. Ganassi 13. Kapai	14. Lumba-Bayabao 15. Lumbaca-Unayan 16. Lumbatan 17. Lumbayanague 18. Madalum 19. Madamba 20. Maguing 21. Malabang 22. Marantao 23. Marogong 24. Masiu 25. Mulondo 26. Pagayawan 27. Piagapo 28. Poona Bayabao 29. Pualas 30. Saguiaran 31. Sultan Dumalondong 32. Tagoloan II 33. Tamparan 34. Taraka 35. Tubaran 36. Tugaya 37. Wao 38. Bumbaran 39. Maguing
3. Maguindanao del Norte	1. Barira 2. Buldon 3. Datu Blah T. Sinsuat 4. Datu Odin Sinsuat	5. Kabuntalan 6. Matanog 7. Northern Kabuntalan 8. Parang 9. Sultan Kudarat 10. Sultan Mastura 11. Sultan Sumagka (formerly Talitay) 12. Upi
4. Maguindanao del Sur	1. Ampatuan 2. Buluan 3. Datu Abdullah Sangki 4. Datu Anggal Midtimbang 5. Datu Hoffer Ampatuan 6. Datu Montawal 7. Datu Paglas 8. Datu Piang	9. Datu Salibo 10. Datu Saudi Ampatuan 11. Datu Unsay 12. General Salipada K. Pendatun 13. Guindulungan 14. Mamasapano 15. Mangudadatu 16. Pagalungan 17. Paglat Talayan 18. Pandag 19. Rajah Buayan 20. Shariff Aguak 21. Shariff Saydona Mustapha 22. South Upi 23. Sultan sa Barongis
5. Marawi City		
6. Special Geographic Area (North Cotabato)	1. Pahamuddin 2. Kadayangan 3. Nabalawag	4. Old Kaabakan 5. Kapalawan 6. Malidegao 7. Tugunan 8. Ligawasan

Non-BARMM Areas			
1. Iligan City			
2. Lanao del Norte	1. Bacolod 2. Baloi 3. Baroy 4. Kapatagan 5. Kauswagan 6. Kolambugan 7. Lala 8. Linamon	9. Magsaysay 10. Maigo 11. Matungao 12. Munai 13. Nunungan 14. Pantao Ragat 15. Pantar 16. Poona Piagapo	17. Salvador 18. Sapad 19. Sultan Naga Dimaporo 20. Tagoloan 21. Tangcal 22. Tubod
3. Sarangani	1. Alabel 2. Glan	3. Kiamba 4. Maasim 5. Maitum	6. Malapatan 7. Malungon
4. South Cotabato	1. Banga 2. Lake Sebu 3. Norala 4. Polomolok	5. Santo Niño 6. Surallah 7. T'boli	8. Tampakan 9. Tantangan 10. Tupi
5. Sulu	1. Banguingui 2. Hadji Panglima Tahil 3. Indanan 4. Jolo 5. Kalingalan Caluang 6. Lugus	7. Luuk 8. Maimbung 9. Old Panamao 10. Panglima Estino 11. Pangutaran 12. Parang 13. Pata	14. Patikul 15. Siasi 16. Talipao 17. Tapul 18. Tongkil (Banguingui) 19. Panamao

ANNEX 3 Risks and Mitigation Measures (please see in attachment)

ANNEX 4 Philippines National Action Plan to prevent and Counter Violent Extremism (please see in attachment)