**GCERF in the Western Balkans**

GCERF partners build the capacity of governmental and non-governmental actors in the prevention of violent extremism (PVE) and rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R); provide direct assistance to returnees from conflict zones covering medical, psycho-social, educational, administrative and livelihood support; contribute to reducing the stigmatisation of returnees and promote inter-religious and ethnic tolerance and social cohesion.

### Portfolio overview as of August 2023

**Active grants**

- **Advocacy Training and Resource Centre (ATRC), Kosovo**
  - 2023-2024 | Principal Recipient with 1 sub-recipient

- **Atlantic Initiative (Ai), Bosnia and Herzegovina**
  - 2022-2024 | Direct grantee

- **Counselling Line for Women and Girls, (CLWG), Albania**
  - 2021-2024 | Principal Recipient with 3 sub-recipients

- **Community Development Fund (CDF), Kosovo**
  - 2021-2023 | Principal Recipient with 1 sub-recipient

- **Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM), Albania**
  - 2021-2023 | Principal Recipient with 2 sub-recipients

- **Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC), North Macedonia**
  - 2021-2024 | Principal Recipient with 4 sub-recipients

- **Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA), North Macedonia**
  - 2021-2024 | Principal Recipient with 3 sub-recipients

- **Terre des Hommes Albania**
  - 2023-2024 | Principal Recipient with 2 sub-recipients

**Investment Focus**

- **Community-based rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees**
  - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Kosovo, North Macedonia

Returnees from conflict zones; men, women, children in receiving communities; frontline workers and other R&R actors, religious leaders.

- **2020-2024 (WB), 2023-2026 (Kosovo)**

In coordination with the Coordination Center for Countering Violent Extremism in Albania; The Ministry of Security in Bosnia and Herzegovina; the Ministry of Internal Affairs’ Prevention and Reintegration Division in Kosovo; the National Committee for Countering Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism in North Macedonia.

### Violent Extremism in Western Balkans: Drivers

- **Returnees from foreign conflict zones:**
  - Over 461 people returned to Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia from foreign conflicts, particularly from Syria and Iraq.

- **Post and pre-conflict context:**
  - Political instability and inadequate reconciliation caused by previous conflicts have polarised communities along ethnic, religious, and cultural lines.

- **Socio-economic drivers:**
  - High unemployment, limited trust in institutions, and established crime networks contribute to violent extremist narratives.
Current Programming: Systems Approach

**National:** Capacity building of central level government R&R and PVE institutions and actors through technical support and trainings. Facilitation of coordination.

**Municipality:** Capacity building of local level government R&R and PVE actors through development of guidelines, provision of trainings, and facilitating coordination.

**Community:** Reducing the stigmatisation towards returnees; increasing inter-religious and inter-ethnic tolerance; building capacities of communities on PVE and early identification.

**Individual:** Providing direct support to returnees and vulnerable people including medical, psycho-social, educational, administrative and livelihood support.

**Key Outputs**
- December 2020 – December 2022

- 132 Journalists benefitted from the AI training on R&R
- 30 mayoral debates held with all Mayoral candidates broadcast on prime-time on National TV.
- 543 participants in meetings with community leaders
- 55 actions were done to promote access to social services intervention and advocacy

**Total beneficiaries**
- November 2017 – August 2023
- Direct: 71,148

**Key achievements**
- October 2021 – August 2023

- MYLA held training sessions on “Providing Psychosocial Support and Coping with Trauma” for professional backgrounds including social workers, psychologists from Centres of Social Work, psychologists and pedagogues from schools across 11 cities.
- Atlantic Initiative supported the Interagency Working Group (IRRG FBiH) in refining laws aligned with the Protocol for rehabilitating individuals from Syria and Iraq.
- Workshops on Art Therapy, designed for 70 children from RFTFs and non-RFTFs backgrounds, conducted in schools. They addressed a range of physical, emotional, and spiritual challenges faced by these children, fostering their well-being and growth.
- To ensure continuity in RRR efforts, GCERF partners in Albania support religious leaders by better equipping them with the skills to create alternative narratives and provide support for rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

On May 9–10, 2023, ATRC and CBM representatives participated in a two-day workshop titled “Managing the Needs of Child Returnees” in Paris, organized by the Radicalisation Awareness Network. The workshop covered various aspects, including an overview of France’s institutional framework for Return and Reintegration (R&R). This framework encompassed elements such as the justice system, mental health support, national and local mechanisms. Additionally, the workshop featured interactive sessions, including roundtables with frontline workers and a reflection period on how the practices observed in France could be applied in the context of the Western Balkans.
Story of Change

Artan, 41 years old, resident of the city of Mitrovica, lives in a rented flat with his wife and his 2 children. The interview was conducted in the gym that GCERF funded and which Artan now proudly runs. He starts the conversation with stories about the lives of his 2 children. He says that everything he’s been through seems like a dream, he says that after serving his sentence, life was not easy for him.

"After my release, even though the whole of Mitrovica knew me, no one wanted to take me at work, and not even the friends I grew up with have agreed to hang out with me".

After the first approach from the Division after his release, he says that he did not believe the promise that his lifelong dream of running a boxing club was to become a reality. He applied for the financial support and it was only when he started to receive the gym props that it begun to dawn on him that he actually needed to find a place to open his club. The beginning was quite difficult for him, but thanks to his great desire for this sport, he says that in the morning he worked various jobs to ensure income, while in the afternoon he exercised his activity with his club. He says that for various reasons he has had to change location several times and this has brought difficulties for his club, but he says that the motivation has been very high and that he now has managed to create regular customers that are satisfied with the work at his club.

Artan keeps cleaning the props on display as he proudly confides to us “I love seeing them clean”.

He tells us that he wishes to register his club in the Kosovo Boxing Federation and that his biggest desire is to create young Kosovo champions. Finally, he says that he “feels at peace with people”.

P/CVE and R&R stakeholder meeting. May 18th, 2023. Pristina. Psycho-social counselling sessions, CDF

GCERF’s Added Value

GCERF’s consortium model and capacity-building approach enables us to work in remote areas

Communities are at the forefront of project design and implementation, and the programme works with existing community structures for sustainability

GCERF invests in building a PVE-focused community of practice with CSOs, government agencies, and experts

GCERF focuses on building institutional capacity e.g. CSOs, government agencies, and community engagement forums

All project design and implementation are done in coordination with nationally-aligned, locally-led programmes

Find out more about becoming an investor, our work, and the collective impact we make at: www.gcerf.org contact.wb@gcerf.org