GCERF Country Strategy for Re-investment in Nigeria
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Executive Summary

GCERF’s vision for its investment in Nigeria over the next three years is to: (1) scale up its programmes to build community resilience to violent extremism in the North Central region of Nigeria – where ISIS affiliate the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA) has been launching assaults; and (2) explore the need to expand its preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) efforts to neighbouring states, such as Kano and Kaduna – where Boko Haram has been active. New programming will be embedded in the larger framework of GCERF’s “Strategy to Engage Communities and Address the Drivers of Violent Extremism (2017-2020),” while responding to the Federal Government of Nigeria’s “Policy Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Partnering for Safer and Resilient Communities.” GCERF’s re-investment plan for Nigeria is based on the detailed contextual analysis contained in Annex 1.

In 2017-2019, GCERF will build and share knowledge, strengthen community-level efforts, and ensure that responses are aligned to the local context and needs. To empower community members who are vulnerable to recruitment and radicalisation that leads to terrorism, and to address the drivers of violent extremism, GCERF grantees will build on GCERF’s four priority leverage points (social cohesion, community agency, equal access to opportunities, and sense of purpose) in the following ways:

- building tolerance, where violent extremists recruit the marginalized;
- community agency, where violent extremists exploit weak governance;
- positive social and economic alternatives to what violent extremists claim to offer; and
- critical thinking and life skills to resist violent extremist recruitment.

The different tendencies of women, girls, boys, and men will also be prioritised in new P/CVE programming. GCERF proposes a strategy for re-investment in Nigeria to build and expand on positive results. To create a ring of prevention around the North East region, new investment of at least USD 5 million per year is needed in the North Central region of Nigeria.

To move GCERF’s Nigeria re-investment plan forward, GCERF will need to address or put in place plans to mitigate certain key risks – both at the programmatic and institutional levels – that could threaten this strategy’s implementation. Ultimately, however, the impact of this strategy in Nigeria will also depend on the scale of GCERF’s intervention in Nigeria. Maintaining current funding levels will help to build capacity for prevention of violent extremism efforts in the North Central states, while increased funding levels would enable GCERF to scale up programmatically and geographically. Monitoring and evaluation is essential to operations, as reflected in GCERF’s core principle of Accountability and Learning. At a country portfolio level, GCERF will consider the reach, coverage, alignment, and relevance of GCERF funding to national efforts and local communities, taking into account the sustainability of achievements, and with the view to generate and share useful evidence and learnings.

The states of North Central Nigeria where GCERF grantees are operating have witnessed an increase in violent extremist recruitment, coupled with new eruptions of violence (primarily rooted in ethnic and cultural differences, economic inequalities, and resource constraints). These existing conflicts, when mixed with prevailing socio-economic conditions, create a potent mix of push, pull, and enabling factors that can lead the groups most vulnerable to radicalisation – youth and women – to participate in or support violent extremism. As reported in a 2017 article by the
A number of donors are supporting development or humanitarian programmes that may include P/CVE-related or -relevant activities in country. As Nigeria’s Policy Framework has now been launched, the government’s Office of the National Security Advisor (ONSA) is bringing all P/CVE actors together to improve coordination.

Currently, GCERF’s total investment in Nigeria is USD 4.1 million over three years and focuses on the North Central states of Kogi, Benue, Plateau, and Nasarawa, as specified by the GCERF Governing Board. Working with key populations: community, religious, and traditional leaders; farmers and herders; local authorities; youth; and women, the key objectives of current GCERF-funded programming are to: (1) raise awareness on radicalization and effective responses; (2) promote community engagement; and (3) provide positive social and economic alternatives to what terrorists claim to offer. Current programming has yielded encouraging preliminary results. In the future, GCERF will build on these positive results, as well as on updated Community Needs Assessments (CONA) and Baseline Studies, and needs assessments for new geographical areas of intervention. Further details of GCERF’s current portfolio in Nigeria are contained in Annex 2.

This GCERF Nigeria re-investment plan addresses the priorities laid out in the Policy Framework and National Action Plan. Specifically, it identifies four priority components: (i) strengthening institutions and coordination of P/CVE programming; (ii) strengthening the rule of law, access to justice and human rights; (iii) engaging communities and building resilience; and (iv) integrating strategic communications in P/CVE programming. All GCERF-funded programming will fall into the third component of engaging communities and building resilience, given GCERF’s focus on communities and individuals. GCERF’s proposed strategy will also contribute to the first component of building institutions and coordination of P/CVE programming; and the fourth component of integrating strategic communications in P/CVE programming, as grantees support counter messaging initiatives in their work. GCERF’s work with local organisations and their further work with community groups will help to build the capacity of civil society engaged in P/CVE. In addition, the CSM and GCERF Community of Practice (COP) efforts will contribute to coordination of P/CVE programming at state, regional, and national levels.

GCERF Positioning

Inspired by GCERF’s “Strategy to Engage Communities and Address the Drivers of Violent Extremism (2017-2020)” (the GCERF Strategy) and the Federal Government of Nigeria’s “Policy Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Partnering for Safer and Resilient Communities” (National Policy Framework) – and considering the current situation in Nigeria – GCERF’s vision for its intervention in Nigeria is to continue to build community resilience to violent extremism in the North Central region of Nigeria over the next three years. GCERF seeks to expand coverage in the four North Central states in which its grantees are currently operating (and where ISWA has orchestrated a series of attacks), to ensure
that all affected Local Government Areas are covered by P/CVE programming. GCERF will also explore the need to expand its P/CVE efforts to the neighbouring North West states of Kano and Kaduna (where Boko Haram has been more active). The map below highlights the current states covered by GCERF programming in blue and the proposed new states in yellow.¹

In Nigeria, the threat of violent extremism comes from multiple sources and continues to change and transform over time.² These changes were highlighted during the GCERF Secretariat's May, July, and October 2017 field visits and consultations in Abuja with donors, civil society, and the Nigeria Country Support Mechanism (CSM). During the CSM meetings, members agreed that the context in Nigeria has changed since GCERF first began working in country.

In addition to Boko Haram, ISIS has a foothold in Nigeria. According to Nigerian news reports in January 2018, the Government of Nigeria confirmed the operational link between ISIS and the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA), revealing that ISWA: is operating as a unit in Nigeria; was behind recent attacks in Benue State, where GCERF grantees have been working for nearly two years; and is using foreign (e.g. Francophone) terrorists and recruiting young Nigerians to fight and kill civilians to exacerbate tensions along Nigeria's ethnic, religious, and regional fault lines. Citing these news reports, a February 2018 commentary by the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, highlighted that ISIS has successfully evolved a tactic of exacerbating tensions between farmers and herders: "Immediately after the attacks, rhetoric between Christians and Muslims heightened. Social media platforms were flooded with vilifying comments, wild allegations and graphic pictures of supposed attacks by both sides. The confrontation reached an alarming level when national leaders became embroiled in the rhetoric."

Further, other violent extremist groups, including what one international development agency in Nigeria described as "violent Salafist groups," have begun operating throughout the country (not just the North East) and are actively recruiting young people. Some sources state that during the first half of 2017, there was an increase in active recruitment in the North Central states, and

¹ If funding is available, GCERF would consider expanding programming into the North West states of Kano and Kaduna. As centres of religious and Islamic scholarship, and as border states to the volatile North East region, working in these two states could have an important impact in prevention of VE.

particularly in Kogi State, whereas others highlighted Nasarawa State as being a known breeding ground for violent extremists. As the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) explained, there is a real fear in the development community that the intense focus on the North East is like putting out a forest fire: Much of the attention is on the main fire, but no one is putting out the dangerous cinders that are flying to neighbouring parts of the forest. Working in the North Central region is helping ensure that the violence is stemmed.

Some CSM members emphasised the importance of maintaining a presence in the North Central region, as it is an often overlooked area for the development and humanitarian community. Compared with the North East, the number of development, humanitarian, and P/CVE actors in the North Central region is low. The UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) mentioned that as current peacebuilding programmes come to an end in the North Central region – and as this funding will not be renewed – there will be a real vacuum in the region. In this way, GCERF-funded programming in the North Central region is filling a gap that is likely to expand. Equally important, under the current grants, GCERF grantees are building up expertise in prevention activities in the region. Maintaining the momentum and reinforcing the prevention work in the North Central region, therefore, will have more of an impact than adding another actor to humanitarian response efforts in the North East region.

Country Alignment and Coordination

The Nigeria CSM has played an important role in the first years of GCERF’s investment. Hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the CSM is comprised of multiple constituencies, with donor representatives as a majority. Other contributing members come from civil society, including representation from Partnership Against Violent Extremism (PAVE) and the private sector. Among federal government entities, the MFA has played the most significant role; however, multiple branches of government were involved in preliminary meetings, including ONSA. The country’s approach to P/CVE has evolved over the years, starting in 2013 with the Terrorism Prevention Act and subsequently in 2014 with the adoption of the National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST), the Counter Terrorism Act (CTA), and the National Security Strategy (NSS). These policy and legislative frameworks were the precursors to the recently adopted Policy Framework and National Action Plan for P/CVE, and their main purpose was to guide the actions of both state and non-state actors in response to terrorism and violent extremism. These policies also gave ONSA the mandate and responsibility to coordinate counterterrorism and P/CVE programmes and activities. Beginning in 2015 and further developed in the National Policy Framework, all government ministries, including the Ministry of Defence are expected to implement CT and P/CVE relevant activities.

Within this context, the role of the CSM will need to be re-evaluated. According to the national framework, three distinct coordination mechanisms are meant to be put in place: (1) the Counter Terrorism Centre, led by a Coordinator, will be responsible for providing strategic coordination and for overseeing the implementation of the National Policy Framework, as part of the CTC; (2) the PAVE network is a national platform for civil society organisations, and will be responsible for ensuring coordination between the government agencies and civil society actors; and (3) the Forestall Implementation Board, also a part of the CTC, will be responsible for continuing to institutionalise and mainstream P/CVE across the ministries. ONSA, in consultation with the CSM and its members, will need to determine where the CSM best fits in the coordination architecture for Nigeria.
GCERF Global Agenda

GCERF’s Nigeria re-investment plan fits squarely within the GCERF Strategy. Given the complexities of violent extremism in Nigeria and the populations that are most affected, GCERF programmes will aim to support communities through: building tolerance, where violent extremists recruit the marginalised; community agency, where violent extremists exploit weak governance; positive social and economic alternatives to what violent extremists claim to offer; and critical thinking and life skills to resist violent extremist recruitment. As described in the GCERF Strategy, depending on the local context, responses will be tailored to the needs of the local communities, and the relevant components will be implemented as needed; however, all four are expected to be needed in some combination in Nigeria.

Proposed Approaches

GCERF will base proposed approaches on a theory of change grounded in the understanding that more resilient communities at the local level are critical in preventing violent extremism, and that the best solutions to local problems should be proposed and developed by the communities themselves. GCERF will build and share knowledge, strengthen community-level efforts, and ensure that responses are aligned to the local context and needs. New programming will be built on the preliminary results of current programming, updated Community Needs Assessments (CONA) and Baseline Studies, as well as new needs assessments for the new geographical areas of intervention. GCERF will consider reinvesting in high-performing Principal Recipients (PRs) that are able to: show results from its current P/CVE programming; propose a comprehensive project design; and have demonstrated an ability to effectively manage a consortium of sub-grantees (i.e., Sub-Recipients or “SRs”).

New programming will build on what the current consortia are already implementing, but with the intention of accessing what is working well and building on good practices and lessons learned in the focus communities. Proposed PRs, whether current or new, will be called to work closely together and to create a strong COP. This may include conducting joint assessments and monitoring visits, and conducting programme peer reviews. As the PRs deepen their knowledge, they will be able to expand the role of the COP to other organisations and other regions – to extend the scope and impact of the COP activities beyond the confines of GCERF programming.

Gender

While most terrorist leaders and operatives are men, women and girls can play a significant role both in preventing and contributing to terrorism. Mothers, for example, are often in a position to spot the indicators of radicalization in their children more quickly than others can, as well as to influence their children’s thoughts and actions. On the other hand, women may be drawn to join or support terrorist groups for any number of reasons. And, in more complex circumstances, a woman may be married to a terrorist while maintaining inscrutable personal allegiances and motivations.

In Nigeria, GCERF’s new programming will continue to strive to offer more equal opportunities to women, to make their own choices in the identification of needs and the proposed interventions to respond to those needs.
Engaging the Private Sector and Social Entrepreneurs

Despite the recent slowdown of the economy in Nigeria, many analysts believe that the economy has turned the corner to more positive performance. New programming will seek to benefit from an improved economy through public-private partnerships. The Government of Nigeria and the private sector are keen to advance these types of partnerships not only to rebuild Nigeria, but also to invest in people. GCERF PRs will be encouraged to seek out social entrepreneurs who can facilitate innovative approaches to improve access to opportunities (for youth, in particular). Youth unemployment continues to be a challenge, but partnerships with the private sector and social entrepreneurs will provide new opportunities that will, as described by Mrs. Ibukun Awosika, Chairman of First Bank Group, “improve the social and economic well-being of entire families, communities, and nations.”

Priority Programming Areas

**Building Tolerance where violent extremists recruit the marginalised**

Community solidarity is widely considered a key asset for Nigeria, but various factors have weakened this asset in recent years, including recurrent conflict and unequal distribution of power and influence. Social cohesion will be fostered through the promotion of dialogues, religious collaboration, and tolerance in the communities, and through the development of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. Women and youth will be called to play an active and important role in building social cohesion.

**Community Agency where violent extremists exploit weak governance**

Local governance structures are critical entry points for development initiatives, especially given Nigeria’s strong administrative and traditional local governance structures. Decentralised services – like the education, health, and justice departments and their leaders – work closely with traditional and local structures, like chiefs and religious authorities. Community agency will be strengthened through engagement with state governments, LGA governments, community and traditional leaders, and local authorities. It will also be strengthened by encouraging community members (especially women and youth) to engage in advocacy against violent extremism, and to become role models for their peers and family. While seeking to improve community agency for all members of society, including youth, new programming will strive to ensure the genuine participation, leadership, and empowerment of women.

**Positive Social and Economic Alternatives to what violent extremists claim to offer**

Over the years, poor and unequal access to economic and educational opportunities has been intricately linked to feelings of marginalisation and a reduction in social cohesion and sense of purpose (particularly amongst youth in communities). Providing youth with entrepreneurship and digital skills, livelihoods opportunities, and linkages to financial institutions is essential to improve their ability to achieve their aspirations. This may include working with old or new partners that implement innovative approaches to youth empowerment, including how social media may play a role in improving access to opportunities. Public-private partnerships with

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technical companies or mobile providers, and other social entrepreneurs, will play an important role in improving access to opportunities.

**Critical Thinking and Life Skills** to resist violent extremist recruitment

Perceived or real marginalisation, and lack of opportunities for self-improvement, negatively impact the sense of self of many in Nigerian society. GCERF programmes will enhance individuals’ sense of purpose through psychosocial support and training on life skills; confidence-building for a positive sense of self; and improved formal, informal, and peace education. Proposed new programmes in North West Nigeria, which is the centre of Islamic study in the country, will need to work closely with educational and religious leaders to ensure that sense of purpose is addressed in both formal and informal educational contexts. These efforts will be undertaken while ensuring that the students of the focus educators are actively engaged in other programming activities, to improve their agency and access to opportunities.

**Youth and Gender**

The different tendencies of women, girls, boys, and men will be prioritised in new P/CVE programming. GCERF will continue to focus on youth and gender issues at the community level, by targeting activities that are relevant. In particular, it will be important to engage youth by leveraging social media, and innovative approaches and technologies. As Nancy Payne points out in “Everyday Technologies Can Help Counter Violence and Build Peace,” appropriate technology can present a valid solution and, “applied the right way, these same utilities can scale up for much greater reach.”

Partnering with the private sector to incorporate these new technologies will also help to scale up interventions that youth will find engaging and relevant.

**Funding Scenarios**

To move this Nigeria re-investment plan forward, GCERF will need adequate funding to maintain the positive gains of current programming and to extend the reach of new programming. Two possible funding scenarios will impact programme implementation if the necessary financial resources are available.

**Scenario 1: Funding levels for Nigeria remain stable**

In this scenario, Nigeria continues to receive USD 5 million for additional three-year grants that overlap with the current funding in 2018, and then subsequent new rounds of funding in 2019 for the same amount. No geographic expansion is possible in this scenario. GCERF will conduct in-depth and quality evaluations of the current programmes and the consortia. Based on these assessments, GCERF will continue to work with the consortia implementing the most impactful work and in the most vulnerable zones. GCERF will work closely with the CSM and ONSA to elaborate an appropriate exit strategy for the consortia that do not meet selection criteria. PRs and SRs that are discontinued will be absorbed by existing networks, such as PAVE, so that their work may continue in a supported environment.

In this scenario, GCERF will strengthen the P/CVE capacity in the North Central states. High performing PRs will continue to build P/CVE capacity in the region through their impactful work.

To expand its reach for little investment, GCERF will expand the COP by including more P/CVE actors from the North Central region in COP activities. Through this system, GCERF will direct capacity-building efforts through the expanded COP; these efforts may appeal to donors and the

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private sector. The North Central and Northern states have lost over USD 42 million of development funding in the last few years, as governance and peacebuilding programmes come to a close; therefore, an expanded COP will help to ensure that gains made under these projects remain rooted at the local level.

Scenario 2: Funding levels for Nigeria increase moderately
In this scenario, new annual funding for Nigeria is increased to USD 7.5 million in 2018 and in 2019 through a second round for the same amount. GCERF will strategically expand geographic coverage to include the North West states of Kano and Kaduna – where Boko Haram has been more active. To ensure programming impact, GCERF will complete a needs assessment in the new states, and will conduct in-depth and quality evaluations of the current programmes and the consortia. Based on these evaluations, GCERF will compare the new needs assessments with the current programmes, and then select consortia implementing the most impactful work and in the most vulnerable zones. GCERF will work closely with the CSM and ONSA to elaborate an appropriate exit strategy for the consortia that will not continue, and will ensure that these PRs and SRs are absorbed in existing networks, such as PAVE, so that their work may continue in a supported environment. An expanded COP will also be pursued in this scenario, as above. At the end of 2019, GCERF will conduct a comprehensive review of the programmes, to evaluate programme impact before committing new funding.

Operational Implications

Potential Risks and Mitigation Strategies
To move this Nigeria Reinvestment Plan forward, GCERF will need to address or put in place plans to mitigate certain key risks that could threaten its implementation. As explained below, there are risks at both the programmatic and institutional levels.

Programmatic Assumptions and Risks
The table below includes possible programmatic risks, but is not exhaustive. Identified risks will be monitored and reviewed on a quarterly basis.

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<tr>
<th>Potential Risk</th>
<th>Mitigation Strategies</th>
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| Unintended and harmful consequences, such as an increase to women and girls’ time burden, or participants targeted because of participation in programme activities | • Conduct gender specific research and evaluation with PR and SRs.  
• Ensure that women, girls, boys, and men are included in all phases of project design and implementation; in particular, help communities to identify where, when, and how those directly affected by project activities perceive and experience risks related to the P/CVE related activities.  
• Monitor for unintended and harmful consequences. |
| Worsening of the security situation                                           | • Routinely monitor and assess security threats, and encourage PRs and SRs to do the same at their local level.  
• Capacity building for grantees on security.                                  |

Based on in-country consultations with donors.
Electoral violence

- Routinely monitor and assess security threats and encourage PRs and SRs to do the same at their local level.
- Ensure programme implementation plans consider the timing of elections.
- Ensure programme flexibility in programmes to adapt activities as necessary to account for violence in focus communities.

Return of former Boko Haram combatants to North Central States

- Coordinate closely with ONSA and the National Steering Committee.

Lack of capacity of PRs to deliver expected outcomes and outputs and to manage and oversee grant implementation effectively and efficiently

- Rigorous due diligence process put in place to select PRs who have the capacity to deliver expected outcomes and outputs.
- Consider adapted models to allow for direct grantees and/or closer technical support.
- Routinely monitor grantees through visits, virtual meetings and joint risk analysis.
- Capacity building for grantees on grant management including monitoring and evaluation and finance and compliance.
- End of project evaluations and regular financial examinations.

Do No Harm

GCERF will encourage programme grantees to monitor Do No Harm principles to identify potential negative consequences, take steps to prevent them whenever possible, and propose corrective actions when necessary. These elements will be included in the development of proposals and will be monitored on a regular basis. This includes conducting CONA before programme start up. Any activities with potential negative impacts will not be pursued or promoted.

Institutional Risks for the GCERF Secretariat

Contextual Risks

General elections are planned for early 2019, and the electoral campaign season and the election period itself will present a number of new risks to GCERF’s operational context. In particular, new security risks will need to be considered during this time period. A specific security plan relating to the elections will be developed to guide Secretariat travel to and within Nigeria. Similarly, GCERF will work closely with PRs to ensure that they have mitigation strategies in place for any disruptions linked to the elections.

Security Risks

While local partners are at the forefront of GCERF’s intervention in country, certain security risks remain for the Secretariat staff responsible for grant management. In particular, physical security while on mission in Nigeria, particularly on field visits, would need to be addressed. As programming expands into new regions, travelling distances will increase, and with them additional road security issues. Other insecurity issues related to some of the proposed zones of
intervention including abduction, civil unrest, and armed conflict will also need to be addressed. To mitigate this risk, in addition to soliciting information from PRs, local authorities, and other stakeholders, a security plan will be developed for each intervention area.

Financial Risks
When funding portfolios grow, the financial risks may grow accordingly. There is a risk that revenues decrease or expenses increase unexpectedly. The fluctuation of the Nigerian Naira against the U.S. dollar over the last year, and the rampant inflation in Nigeria, are unlikely to change in the near future and as such, these add new financial risks that will need to be addressed as the strategy is rolled out. To mitigate this risk, GCERF will continue to work closely with grantees to better analyse these financial risks and make changes to the work plans and budgets on a regular basis.

Fiduciary Risks
As with all funding, there is a risk that funds entrusted to the grantees are not used for the intended purpose and/or in compliance with applicable principles and legal requirements including through fraud and/or unreliable reporting on use of funds. GCERF has applied its usual mitigating mechanisms processes embedded in its grantee selection, proposal development, grant agreement development and grant management processes to the first group of grantees in Nigeria. Although anti-fraud management processes are generally satisfactory. Through its ongoing support and monitoring and the results of the external financial examinations carried out at the end of 2017, GCERF has found that grantees in Nigeria have so far faced particular challenges in budget planning, documentation control, financial reporting and oversight, and in the management of sub-recipient financial operations. To mitigate this risk, GCERF will continue to evaluate the fiduciary assessments conducted for prior rounds and ensure that these assessments continue to be conducted for future grants. Additionally, GCERF has updated financial guidelines that will be shared with grantees, and will continue to work with grantees on risk assessment and analysis, regular control activities, including utilising an external audit firm to conduct financial examinations. Furthermore, a resource person based in Nigeria is being sought to support the grantees more directly to comply with GCERF’s requirements and yearly community of practice meetings will be organised around the specific areas of fiduciary risks.

Reputational Risks
Although GCERF is ultimately invited by the Federal Government of Nigeria to implement its programmes, and GCERF will roll out this strategy under the larger umbrella of the Government’s own national Policy Framework and Action Plan, this association is not without some risk. The CSM is currently hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but as noted above, the ONSA is ultimately responsible for the national Policy Framework. GCERF’s association with the Government of Nigeria may pose a challenge for GCERF in certain participating communities. To mitigate this risk, through the CSM Review process, GCERF will provide the CSM with Terms of Reference (including clear roles and responsibilities).

While risks are an important consideration to ensure the proper implementation of this strategy, ultimately, the impact of this strategy in Nigeria will also depend on the scale of GCERF’s intervention in Nigeria. Given Nigeria’s size and the breadth of the issues, GCERF will need to invest significant funding to have a real impact in P/CVE at scale. GCERF will coordinate with other P/CVE implementers in the region in order to ensure complementarity.
Monitoring and Evaluation

GCERF recognises the complexity of strengthening community resilience and relies on continuous learning and feedback mechanisms. As such, monitoring and evaluation is essential to our operations. Lessons learned from our programmes contribute to good practices in this nascent, complex, and challenging field. This is reflected in GCERF’s core principle of Accountability and Learning: Our work is anchored in evidence and learnings. We develop and adapt methodologies and tools to monitor and evaluate results, learn from experience, and continuously improve performance.

GCERF’s business model is designed to improve the evidence base around strengthening community resilience. The investment cycle allows GCERF to review the understanding of the drivers of violent extremism, and provides a dynamic and long-term perspective.

The Secretariat will monitor and report on progress against plans and milestones on a regular basis to our Governing Board and other stakeholders. At the community level, PRs and SRs will be responsible for monitoring project implementation, and they will provide regular progress updates. In addition, PRs will share qualitative insights on progress and revise risks and mitigation plans according to the local context.

GCERF will provide technical capacity strengthening and oversight to grantees to improve their monitoring and reporting capabilities. GCERF may also utilise third-party monitoring to validate information. At a country portfolio level, GCERF will consider:

- Reach and coverage of GCERF funding in communities identified for support;
- Degree to which a country portfolio addresses the drivers of violent extremism identified in the national and community needs assessments;
- Degree to which the achievements of a country portfolio are sustained beyond GCERF funding;
- Alignment and relevance of GCERF funding to the objectives of national action plans; and
- Usefulness of the evidence and knowledge generated and shared by GCERF with local, regional, and global actors.

Monitoring of financial and fiduciary risks presented by each grant is undertaken through regular reporting requirements (minimum of two semi-annual financial reports), monitoring visits (at least twice yearly), and external financial examinations (“audits”) conducted a minimum of two times over the course of the grant. The cash disbursement process also helps to assess how funds are being used by the GCERF recipients. At the community level, PRs and SRs will be responsible for monitoring project spending, and they will provide regular financial reports. The Secretariat will monitor and report on progress against budgets on a regular basis to the Governing Board and other stakeholders.

GCERF will provide financial and compliance technical capacity strengthening and oversight to grantees to improve accountability and compliance capabilities. Capacity strengthening will be carried out through the provision of more user-friendly guidance and tools on GCERF’s requirements, monitoring visits, COP meetings, and the assistance of a local resource person. The financial examination will validate the reliability of the financial reports and other procedures to verify compliance with specific conditions.
The examination will also check on the implementation of the oversight and management plan of sub-recipient financial operations, document how the PRs analyse the risk of loss and misuse; document mitigation processes; and discuss the implementation of the anti-terrorism clause of the grant agreement.
Annex 1: Contextual Analysis

Current Dynamics of Violent Extremism in Nigeria

Since independence, Nigeria has been forced to confront violence in multiple regions of the country. Since 2009, North East Nigeria has been at the centre of international attention due to the insurgency and armed conflict that has affected the region, resulting in mass displacement and a significant humanitarian crisis. Recently, states in the North Central region have witnessed a new eruption of violence between herders and farmers, a crisis aggravated by population growth, climate change, and the conflict in the northeast of the country – and in turn exploited by violent extremist groups like Boko Haram and ISWA. As the participants in the national workshop on Preventing Violent Extremism in Nigeria reported in May 2017, however, “[T]he insurgency and eruption of extremism in the nation cannot only be reduced to Boko Haram, and the overemphasis on the country’s Christian-South and Muslim-North division underestimates the role of deep-rooted ethnic, linguistic and class conflicts that constitute some of the underlying drivers of violence.”

Research conducted in late 2016 by a GCERF grantee in Benue State showed that it was widely perceived by respondents that the increase in the spate of violence in the state is partly connected to massive migration of people from the North East fleeing from Boko Haram. Similarly, the same study found that desertification in the North has destroyed and rendered grazing areas in some Northern states unsuitable for cattle. As such, herders from the North are forced to travel into Benue State where lands are more fertile. Tensions between the two communities have grown over the past decade and an influx of new pastoralists has contributed to these tensions and has led to violent confrontations. At the same time, a proliferation of small arms has exacerbated the situation.

According to an independent country needs assessment conducted in early 2016 – and further research conducted by GCERF PRs in Benue, Kogi, Nasarawa, and Plateau States – unemployment, poverty, and lack of education are the primary drivers of violent extremism in all communities. The additional research also reveals that in Benue and Kogi States, approximately one-third of the respondents reported that some people express extremist ideas in their communities, and see violence in the name of religion as justified (with the choice of response as “rarely, somewhat, or often”). According to one study in Benue and Kogi States, voluntarily enlistment is more prevalent than forced recruitment, with internet and friends being facilitators of this process. Violent extremist groups recruit youth by providing for their financial and material needs and solutions to other challenges they face. Dynamics contributing to the cycle of violent extremism also include the exploitation of community watch groups for political ends, as well as the easy availability of small arms and light weapons.

The Federal Government of Nigeria has conducted a research study on the drivers of violent extremism at a national level. Through their research, the government has identified push and

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pull factors that can lead to participation in or support for violent extremism, including structural conditions such as unemployment, poverty, inequality, health, socio-economic factors, and the role of governance as push factors. Pull factors include existing grievances, status, charismatic leaders, and a tendency for simplified answers to complex issues, including the promise of financial or material benefits or marriage. Forced participation is also an issue in some regions of Nigeria, in particular in the North East, where both young women and men are forced to join violent extremist groups.

**Contextual Risks**

There are many contextual risks to programming in Nigeria. The humanitarian situation in the North East continues to affect the rest of the country, as regional markets are affected and large population groups remain displaced because of insecurity. Similarly, farmer-herder conflict is an ever-present risk factor in many states in Nigeria, with 22 out of 36 states reporting farmer-herder incidents. In some cases, the conflict has taken on more complicated dimensions, as the conflicting groups have been instrumentalised to the political and economic advantage of others. Criminal actors have taken advantage of the situation to conduct cattle rustling, banditry, and kidnapping. Terrorist groups like Boko Haram and ISWA exploit the farmer-herder conflict to mobilise greater support for their agenda, escape detection, move into new areas, and conduct attacks that intensify hatred and instability, as mentioned previously. In order to reduce the operating space for terrorist groups, it is essential to contribute to a society that is peaceful and inclusive. Meanwhile, the media have added to the tensions by characterising the crisis as an ethno-religious conflict. The farmer-herder conflict is more complex than its outward appearance of being a simple conflict over religion or ethnicity.

The financial crisis in Nigeria, brought on by a series of events, including the significant decline in oil revenues and the weakening of the Naira, remain key contextual risks. Lowered oil revenues have also hindered the ability of the Nigerian government to provide services, while also impacting income levels in some parts of the country. According to Focus Economics, Nigeria’s inflation rate in August 2017 was at 16.0%, far from the 6% to 9% target rate fixed by the Central Bank.

Although Nigeria is a federal republic with three tiers of administration, much political and economic power remain within the central government. Resource allocation to the regional and local government levels is often uneven and inadequate, which feeds into feelings of marginalisation for many regions of the country. The most serious problems are inadequate regional and district capacity, non-functioning support organisations, and lack of adequate resources to fund government services to meet constituents’ needs.

**Vulnerable Populations**

Many studies and needs assessments have been conducted in Nigeria – including by the United Nations Development Programme, CLEEN Foundation, Search for Common Ground, and RUSI.
(commissioned by GCERF) – and have identified the populations most vulnerable to violent extremism. Although there are regional variances based on the local contexts, overall, the groups most vulnerable to violent extremism include youth and women. GCERF-funded programming will work to counter these specific nodes. Given the current context in Nigeria, the research suggests that youth are most vulnerable to the push factors of unemployment, underemployment, and the lack of opportunities. They are also vulnerable to the pull factors of finding a sense of purpose, responsibility, and economic gain. Many youth in Nigeria are also linked to social media, which has been used for recruitment purposes. As articulated in the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change commentary, “The need for early response systems, including swift countering of rumours and false stories on social media, cannot be overemphasised. This is important because Nigerian youths in particular often rely on information they find on social media pages.” Half of the Nigerian population of 182 million people are under 30 years of age, and they make up 80% of Nigeria’s 3.6 million Instagram users.¹⁷

Women and girls are also a group vulnerable to violent extremism. As with men and boys, their roles in terms of violent extremism are multifaceted and nuanced. Women and girls may be victims of violent extremism, and, as the Global Center on Cooperative Security has noted, “[V]iolent extremist groups have deliberately attacked developmental, educational, and socio-economic opportunities for women and girls.”¹⁸ This often takes the form of restrictions on female dress and activities, attacks on girls’ schools, kidnappings, or physical attacks.¹⁹

Women and girls are also perpetrators of violence, either voluntarily or by force. As with youth in general, women are also vulnerable to the same push, pull, and enabling factors as are their male counterparts – including structural conditions such as poverty, and pull factors such as charismatic leaders or financial, social, and material incentives.²⁰ Often in Nigeria, women and girls are forcibly conscripted into violent groups like Boko Haram. As Bloom and Matfess, argue, “Women and girls have become ‘swords’ mobilized and weaponized to carry out attacks.”²¹ Women and girls also play an important role by influencing others. It is important to understand the wider influence of women and girls in their various roles in society, and to realise that these roles can have consequences outside the sphere of private life.²² Women and girls, therefore play a vital role in building resilience to violent extremism in their families and communities.

Cross-Cutting Issues

While youth are often targeted by development and humanitarian programming, the programmes often focus on equal access to opportunities and improving income. Broader challenges for youth – like building their sense of purpose and mobilising them to represent their own interests

through improved community agency – need to be included in a holistic approach to reduce their vulnerability to the drivers of violent extremism. As recommended by YouthCAN, “[I]t is necessary to create mechanisms to ensure meaningful youth engagement that can impact local and national developments while also ensuring that these decision making bodies and positions are accessible to youth from underrepresented or marginalised groups in society.”

Similarly, the different habits and behaviours of women, girls, boys, and men need to be appropriately considered in the development of programmes in Nigeria. While Nigeria already has a tradition of women’s associations and women-led businesses, and women hold political office, gender inequality remains, especially in the division of labour and the management of household income. Engaging men and women to take action together, and addressing the broader gender issues such as male/female imbalance in community agency will need to be prioritised over the simple targeting of women within project activities. As Sahana Dharmapuri, an independent gender advisor, has concluded, “Gender matters to countering violent extremism because violent extremism – its ideology and the people who perpetuate it – is highly gendered.”

**Current Context for PVE Practice**

Until recently, the Government of Nigeria did not have an officially articulated strategy on P/CVE. A series of laws and regulations provided counterterrorism policies and responses, but the so-called “softer power” of P/CVE were often peripheral. In this context, civil society has previously taken the lead in many areas. At the local level, many communities organised to ensure their own security, or to create dialogue and support groups. Community policing groups sprang up across the country in communities suffering from recurrent violence; and civil society groups promoted inter-religious dialogue in their own communities, to ensure that outside forces did not use religious differences as a basis for perpetuating conflicts. At a higher level, civil society groups organised and created various networks and platforms. PAVE is an example of a network of civil society organisations working on P/CVE and partnering with other stakeholders, including state actors. In particular, PAVE is the main organisation working with the Office of the National Security Advisor (ONSA) and was very involved in the development of the national Policy Framework and Action Plan. Government actors at the state level, including some governors, have also been very active, with the governor of Plateau State putting in place a peacebuilding agency to coordinate peacebuilding and P/CVE efforts.

**Nigeria’s National Policy Framework and Action Plan**

The Federal Government of Nigeria launched its “Policy Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Partnering for Safer and Resilient Communities” in September 2017 as the official national plan to provide a coherent vision for preventing and countering violent extremism in Nigeria. The main objectives of the Plan are to: (i) institutionalise and mainstream P/CVE practices across federal, state, and local governments; (ii) build institutional capacity, including that of civil society in P/CVE; (iii) strengthen research and

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23 Youth Civil Activism Network (YouthCAN) is an international youth counter-terrorism network that unites thousands of youth activists and provides them with tools, resources, and expertise.


knowledge development; (iv) strengthen coordination mechanisms, and ensure effective communication in delivering P/CVE programmes; (v) measure progress, share experiences, and enhance P/CVE programming; and (vi) align this framework with existing peace, security, and development initiatives to ensure a sustainable, complementary approach in dealing with conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism.26

The Government of Nigeria is employing a “Whole of Government” and a “Whole of Society” approach to implement their national Policy Framework. Although the framework is national in scope, Boko Haram terrorism is identified “as the most potent threat deserving of a comprehensive approach.” The framework also highlights that the government is “determined to deny violent extremist groups any foothold in Nigeria.” The framework outlines the core constituencies for implementation including: youth and students; women and girls; families; schools and teachers; community leaders; faith-based organisations and leaders; health and social workers; civil society organisations; media and social media influencers; artists and social mobilisers; political leaders; and the private sector (and markets).

As part of the Policy Framework, the Government of Nigeria has outlined an initial implementation plan. This includes defining the role of the federal and local governments in mirroring the national framework and action plan at the local level, though no timeframe is given for the completion of the local-level plans. In the meantime, the federal government is moving forward with the development of a national Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will be a multi-stakeholder forum comprised of the implicated government ministries, international agencies, and civil society actors and will be tasked with implementing the national action plan.

Stakeholders

A number of donors are supporting development or humanitarian programmes that may include either P/CVE-related or -relevant activities in country. Many of the current humanitarian and recovery programmes are based in the Lake Chad Basin or North East Nigeria, which is receiving a disproportionate amount of international assistance considering needs in other parts of the country. Other development initiatives and less specific P/CVE programming is implemented nationwide, although the Lake Chad Basin region has benefited most at the detriment of other regions in Nigeria. According to the Federal Government of Nigeria’s Development Assistance Database, in 2014, international development partners invested approximately USD 34 million in the North and North Eastern regions of Nigeria, while they invested just 6.4 million USD in total for the rest of the country.27

Based on an informal analysis of current funding in Nigeria as reported by donors, the largest donors to P/CVE programming in Nigeria are the European Union, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The United Kingdom has supported stability, reconciliation, and peace programming in the North Central region of Nigeria in the past, but this type of funding for this region will come to an end by the end of 2017, with no renewals planned. GCERF funding, therefore, is a significant boost for P/CVE programming in the North Central Region.

Coordination

Currently, there are coordination groups for humanitarian programming, particularly focused on the North East and Lake Chad Basin regions, but limited opportunities for P/CVE programming.

Donors meet regularly in various working groups and fora, but coordination specifically on P/CVE programming has been limited in scope. For example, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) participate in the PAVE network that is recognised by the Government as the mechanism for coordination for Nigerian CSOs.28 This network, however, does not include international actors or donors. Additionally, the Nigeria CSM was established as a P/CVE-specific coordinating body. The role of the CSM, however, housed in the MFA, is limited to only the GCERF-funded portfolio. Until recently, the Nigerian Ministry of Defence has played a lead role in coordinating counterterrorism initiatives in the country and has ventured into implementing P/CVE activities as well. As the national Policy Framework has now been launched, ONSA will bring all P/CVE actors together to improve coordination through the National Action Plan Steering Committee.

Annex 2: Current Programmes

In July 2015, the GCERF Governing Board approved the allocation of up to USD $4.8 million to support programmes in Nigeria that focus on young men between the ages of 15 and 35, and women in the North Central states of Kogi, Benue, Plateau, and Nasarawa. The Board's decision was based on an analysis of the CSM’s Needs Assessment and the Independent Review Panel’s (IRP) assessment of violent extremism in Nigeria.

While the needs assessment of the CSM and the IRP differed in terms of the prioritisation of geographical areas, given GCERF’s focus on the prevention of violent extremism, the North Central states were approved by the Board. This decision was based on a number of factors including the geographic location of the states to the south of and containing the conflict in the North East and their location as being on fault lines between herders and farmers, Muslims and Christians, and as a convergence point for various ethnic groups. As per the needs assessment, the drivers of violent extremism in Nigeria include economic and social inequality, high levels of illiteracy and unemployment, real or perceived marginalisation, lack of access to justice and rule of law, and a divided society given inter-ethnic, inter-religious, and inter-regional differences. The North Central region encapsulates all of these factors, and is a region with a history and high degree of vulnerability to violent extremism.

While many of the factors highlighted above also exist in the North East region, the ability to operate prevention programmes in the epicentre of ongoing violence is questionable. While more efforts are being made to include Do No Harm and social cohesion elements in programming in the North East, the primary focus has been on lifesaving humanitarian efforts. In September 2017, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that 8.5 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance in the North East region; and while the crisis is in its eighth year, it shows no signs of slowing down. Reintegration and reconciliation efforts will eventually have a place in the North East, but there is a risk of spillover of violence from the North East to the North Central region. Given the drivers of violent extremism and the difficulty of basing a prevention programme in a geographic area that is in the midst of violent acts on a daily basis, the Board originally opted to focus the pilot projects in the North Central region. While there were concerns raised about the original decision and subsequently since project inception, recent events indicate that focusing geographically on the North Central was necessary and timely. Although there had been stabilisation and peacebuilding programmes in the North Central, the geographical focus at the Local Government Area (LGA) level of GCERF’s funding was de-conflicted from other donor funding that is currently winding down.

Currently, GCERF’s total investment in Nigeria is USD 4.1 million over three years and focuses on the North Central states of Kogi, Benue, Plateau, and Nasarawa, as identified by the Board. Working with key populations: community, religious, and traditional leaders; farmers and herders; local authorities; youth, including youth vulnerable to violent extremism; and women, the current programming key objectives are to: (1) raise awareness of violent extremism and
effective responses; (2) promote community engagement, and the development of locally led strategies meant to promote peace and conflict transformation; and (3) lift barriers to meaningful livelihoods, to build resilience to both structural motivators and individual incentives (e.g. material enticements) offered by violent extremist groups. When GCERF funding was launched, the national Policy Framework was not in place. However, as the National Policy Framework prioritises safeguarding communities and building resilient communities, GCERF’s current programming falls squarely under the third component of “engaging communities and building resilience.”

As of June 2017, GCERF consortia in Nigeria had engaged directly with 1,610 community and religious leaders, 33,553 youth, and 10,840 women. The activities engaging each group are tailored to their specific needs and vulnerabilities.

**Promote community engagement:** GCERF grantees work with community and religious leaders through interreligious activities (such as novelty football matches and musical events) aimed at promoting tolerance and mutual recognition; and trainings on conflict transformation, alternative dispute resolution, and principles of reconciliation. In addition, these leaders participate in the development of talk shows on key issues (related to peace, conflict resolution, and religious tolerance), which are regularly broadcast on the radio. Representatives of government agencies are also trained on community policing and peaceful coexistence. GCERF grantees give young people the opportunity to mobilise for peacebuilding. Project activities equip them with advocacy and conflict management skills, to engage their local authorities and mediate between warring parties. Through their involvement in youth peace camps, safe school initiatives, or sports activities, young people promote mutual respect and tolerance for each other’s beliefs and are able to break barriers such as ethnicity or religion.

**Raise awareness of violent extremism and effective responses:** GCERF grantees engage with youth, including vulnerable in-school and out-of-school youth, unemployed or unskilled youth, and former members of armed militias. Grantees seek to increase awareness of recruitment into violent extremist groups, and sensitize youth via rallies and alternative messaging (e.g. radio programming). Youth also participate in community theatre and art, as a means of building their confidence and communication skills around preventing violent extremism. GCERF grantees engage with women of different ethnic and religious affiliations, including low-income and unemployed women. Women’s groups are supported to develop and disseminate counter-narratives to “extremist” messaging, and have the tools to promote engagement against violent extremism among students.

**Alternate Pathways:** GCERF grantees offer real, positive alternatives to youth by helping them increase their livelihood prospects. Youth receive vocational skills training, entrepreneurship development, business management training, and small grants. GCERF grantees also provide low-income and unemployed women (ages 15 to 35) with livelihood development, financial literacy training, vocational skills acquisition, and linkages to financial institutions, coupled with life skills training to boost their confidence to be able to advocate for their rights.

**Preliminary Results and Feedback**
Current programming has yielded encouraging preliminary results on an activity level, though measuring actual impact or increased social cohesion or sense of purpose is not yet possible. Participating individuals and community groups have reported an increase in the use of dialogue.
to resolve conflicts in the community. For example, youth peace ambassadors have created social media accounts to mutually support each other in their work. Similarly, field visits with local authorities have indicated that the programme’s community activities and coordination with the local authorities is appreciated and encouraged.

In general, donors have positive feedback on the programmes. Given the limited geographic coverage of the current programming, however, some would like to see the number of LGAs increased to reach a critical mass, especially in light of the withdrawal of other relevant donor programmes in the North Central states. In addition, the civil society CSM member recommended expanding the scope of the GCERF COP in Nigeria to include other P/CVE actors and stakeholders, to increase reach and impact to a national level.