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Centre for Common Ground

Annual Program Report 2023

Executive Summary

In 2023, the Centre for Common Ground (CCG) continued implementing the GCERF-funded project "Building Resilient and Inclusive Communities," engaging 720 direct participants across 30 events in municipalities across North Macedonia. Programming combined community outreach, social cohesion training, youth debates, psychosocial support, local self-government training, trust-building dialogues, women's forums, reflection meetings, and a new media campaign centered on the award-winning Shattered Chains documentary.

Overall participation remained strongly inclusive, with 52% female (377 women) and 48% male (343 men). Ethnically, CCG reached approximately 43% Albanian (310 participants), 41% Macedonian (295), and 16% other minorities (115 combined Roma, Turkish, Bosnian, and other communities), reflecting balanced interethnic engagement in line with CCG's mandate.

2023 Key Achievements

- 720 direct participants across 10 program types and 30 events.
- 52% female participation (377 women) and 48% male (343 men).
- Balanced ethnic representation: 310 Albanian (43%), 295 Macedonian (41%), 115 other minorities (16%).
- 296 community members reached in six municipalities through large-scale outreach events.
- 64 young people engaged in structured youth debates on social issues.
- 82 professionals trained in psychosocial support and 50 stakeholders in local self-government.
- 36 participants engaged through trust-building and collaborative dialogues (22 and 14 respectively).
- 17 women and community members engaged through targeted forums for women and mothers.
- Media innovation through a Shattered Chains documentary review session involving 9 participants (5 CSO-affiliated).

About Centre for Common Ground

The Centre for Common Ground (CCG) is a local non-profit peacebuilding organization affiliated with Search for Common Ground, working since 2008 to strengthen reconciliation, interethnic relations, and stability in North Macedonia.

CCG's mission is to transform the way people and communities deal with conflict—from adversarial approaches toward cooperative, problem-solving solutions. The organization works with local partners to develop culturally appropriate approaches that enhance societies' capacity to handle conflicts constructively, helping people understand differences while acting on shared interests.

CCG focuses on:

- Interethnic dialogue and social cohesion.
- Youth empowerment and leadership development.
- Media and journalism support conflict-sensitive narratives.
- Civil society capacity building.
- Community resilience against violent extremism.
- Women's leadership in peacebuilding.

GCERF Partnership

Since 2021, CCG has implemented the GCERF-funded program "Building Resilient and Inclusive Communities" with local partners to strengthen community resilience against violent extremism and radicalization. The program supports vulnerable groups through community-based outreach, training, dialogue, and targeted support for youth, civil society organizations, women, and local institutions.

In 2023, the GCERF portfolio focused on ten program types: community outreach events; social cohesion and training; youth debates; psychosocial support trainings; local self-government trainings; trust-building dialogues; collaborative dialogue; trust-building forums for women and mothers; reflection meetings; and a media campaign built around the Shattered Chains documentary.

2023 Impact at a Glance

Metric	2023 Result
Direct beneficiaries	720 participants
Events implemented	30 events
Female participation	377 (52%)
Male participation	343 (48%)
Albanian participants	310 (43%)
Macedonian participants	295 (41%)
Other minority participants	115 (16%)

Community outreach participants	296
Youth engaged in debates	64
Psychosocial trainees	82
Local self-government trainees	50
Media campaign participants	9

Program Results by Component

Community Outreach Events

Community outreach events under "Building Resilient and Inclusive Communities" brought together youth from Gazi Baba, Kumanovo, Saraj, Gostivar, Struga, and Chair to strengthen social cohesion and interethnic trust.

In 2023, CCG organized six community outreach events reaching 296 participants (126 women, 170 men). The events included 89 Macedonian, 144 Albanian, and 55 participants from other minority groups, ensuring diverse representation in each municipality.

Table: 2023 Community Outreach Events by Location and Demographics

Location / Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
Gazi Baba	54	20	34	24	30	0
Kumanovo	62	21	41	24	22	8
Saraj	51	23	28	2	32	17
Gostivar	40	19	21	20	10	10
Struga	41	21	20	13	24	4
Chair	48	22	26	6	26	16

Social Cohesion and Training

Social cohesion and critical thinking trainings equipped participants with skills in conflict transformation, interethnic communication, and non-violent problem-solving.

Across four social cohesion training cycles in 2023, CCG engaged 117 participants (75 women, 42 men). The ethnic composition included 63 Macedonian, 46 Albanian, and 8 participants from other minority backgrounds, confirming that the trainings successfully gathered mixed groups from different communities.

Table: 2023 Social Cohesion and Training Events

Location / Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other

02-03 March 2023 Tetovo	30	19	11	15	15	0
11-12 May 2023, Prilep	24	12	12	24	0	0
13-14 June 2023, Gostivar	27	24	3	12	12	3
October 18-19,2023, Skopje	36	20	16	12	19	5
total	117	75	42	63	46	8

Youth Debates

Youth debates provided structured forums for young people to discuss social cohesion, community challenges, and interethnic relations while developing public speaking and critical-thinking skills.

In 2023, CCG held three youth debates in Kumanovo, Prilep, and Gostivar, engaging 64 young people (36 female, 28 male). Of these participants, 31 were Macedonian, 18 Albanian, and 5 from other ethnic backgrounds, creating mixed debate groups and supporting positive interethnic interaction among young people.

Table: 2023 Youth Debate Events

Location / Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
22/06/2023 Kumanovo	15	8	7	12	2	1
16/03/2023 Prilep	25	11	14	15	0	0
13/02/2023 Gostivar	24	17	7	4	16	4

Psychosocial Support Trainings

Psychosocial support trainings targeted school psychologists, social workers, and other frontline professionals to strengthen trauma-informed and psychosocial support capacities.

CCG delivered five psychosocial support training sessions in 2023, reaching 82 participants (72 women, 10 men). The cohort included 38 Macedonian, 30 Albanian, and 14 other minority participants, ensuring that psychosocial support skills reach diverse communities.

Table: 2023 Psychosocial Support Training Sessions

Location / Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
4-Jul-23 Tetovo	17	15	2	8	6	3
3-Jul-23 Tetovo	13	11	2	6	4	3

8-Jun-23 Struga	15	12	3	9	4	2
7-Jun-23 Struga	16	16	0	6	10	0
18-19-May-2023 Veles	21	18	3	9	6	6

Local Self-Government Trainings

Local self-government training engaged municipal officials, councilors, and community leaders on inclusive governance, interethnic collaboration, and responsive local decision-making.

During this year CCG conducted three trainings in Kichevo, Prilep, and Gostivar, and through them CCG trained 50 participants (23 women, 27 men). The groups included 21 Macedonian, 20 Albanian, and 10 participants from other ethnic communities, bringing together representatives from different municipalities and backgrounds to work on shared governance challenges.

Table: 2023 Local Self-Government Trainings

Location/Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
30/11/2023, Kichevo	15	6	9	3	8	4
5/12/2023 Prilep	20	9	11	15	2	3
29/03/2023 Gostivar	15	8	7	3	10	3

Trust-Building Dialogues

Trust-building dialogues were small, facilitated sessions bringing together key community stakeholders to openly discuss tensions, share perspectives, and build mutual confidence.

In 2023, CCG facilitated two trust-building dialogues involving 22 participants (8 female, 14 male). Participants included 5 Macedonian and 17 Albanian stakeholders, reflecting the program's focus on bridging divides between communities most affected by interethnic tensions.

Table: 2023 Trust-Building Dialogues

Location/Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
19/12/2023 Skopje	9	3	6	1	8	0
24/02/2023 Gostivar	13	5	8	4	9	0

Collaborative Dialogue

Collaborative dialogue sessions convened civil society representatives and local actors to jointly identify problems and design cooperative responses across community divides.

One collaborative dialogue in Gostivar engaged 14 participants (4 female, 10 male), including 7 Macedonian, 6 Albanian, and 1 participant from another minority group. The session fostered joint planning and relationship-building among civil society and community leaders.

Table: 2023 Collaborative Dialogue Session

Location /Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
21/03/2023 Gostivar	14	4	10	7	6	1

Trust-Building Forums for Women and Mothers

Trust-building forums for women and mothers created dedicated spaces for women to share experiences, discuss community concerns, and build interethnic solidarity around their roles as caregivers and community anchors.

In 2023, CCG held one forum with 17 participants, of whom 12 were women. All 17 recorded participants were Macedonian women and community members, indicating strong engagement from Macedonian women and providing a basis to further expand outreach to Albanian and other minority women in subsequent years.

Table: 2023 Trust-Building Forum for Women and Mothers

Location / Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
28/03/2023 Prilep	17	12	5	17	0	0

Reflection Meetings

Reflection meetings brought together civil society partners and community actors to review programming progress, extract lessons learned, and adjust activities as needed.

Three reflection meetings in Skopje, Šapka, and Gostivar involved 49 participants (17 female, 32 male), with 19 Macedonian, 25 Albanian, and 5 other minority participants. These sessions strengthened civil society networks and informed adaptive programming for 2024.

Table: 2023 Reflection Meetings

Location /Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
20/12/2023 Skopje	18	7	11	7	8	3
12/9/2023 Tetovo	12	5	7	5	5	2
31/1/2023, Gostivar	19	5	14	7	12	0

Media Campaign – Shattered Chains Documentary Review

In 2023, CCG introduced a dedicated media component to the GCERF portfolio through a review session of the award-winning Shattered Chains documentary, focusing on critical reflection, discussion, and lesson-sharing around the film's themes.

The media campaign session on 17 November 2023 gathered 9 participants, including 5 CSO-affiliated stakeholders, with 4 women and 5 men, and an ethnic mix of 5 Macedonian and 4 Albanian participants. This activity piloted a media-based dialogue format, demonstrating the potential of documentary film as a tool for constructive discussion on sensitive topics.

Table: 2023 Shattered Chains Media Review Session

Location / Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
17 November 2023	9	4	5	5	4	

Conclusion for overall impact in 2023

Across all 2023 activities, CCG engaged 377 women (52%) and 343 men (48%), consolidating its track record of strong female participation while continuing to include significant numbers of men in peacebuilding efforts. Women's high representation is particularly visible in psychosocial support trainings, social cohesion training, and youth debates, where women often outnumber men.

In terms of ethnicity, 310 Albanian (43%), 295 Macedonian (41%), and an estimated 115 participants from other minority groups (about 16%) joined CCG activities in 2023. The "other" category includes Roma, Turkish, Bosnian, Serbian, and other minority communities, demonstrating meaningful outreach beyond the two largest groups.

CCG's 2023 programming demonstrates a strong and inclusive foundation for advancing social cohesion and resilience across North Macedonia. Through the engagement of 720 direct participants across diverse programmatic formats, the organization successfully balanced large-scale outreach with more targeted, in-depth interventions, ensuring both breadth and quality of impact.

The gender distribution reflects a sustained commitment to inclusivity, with women representing a slight majority of participants and playing a particularly active role in psychosocial support, social cohesion trainings, and youth debates. At the same time, the consistent involvement of men highlights a balanced approach to peacebuilding that engages all segments of society. Ethnically, the participation of Albanian, Macedonian, and a meaningful proportion of other minority communities underscores CCG's ability to foster dialogue and cooperation across diverse groups, extending its reach beyond the primary ethnic constituencies.

Importantly, the combination of community outreach, capacity building, facilitated dialogue, and innovative approaches such as the *Shattered Chains* media campaign contributed to a multi-layered model that addresses both the drivers and manifestations of division. This approach has strengthened community-level resilience, encouraged constructive interaction, and supported the development of more cohesive and inclusive local environments.
In conclusion, CCG's 2023 achievements reflect a well-established, inclusive, and adaptive programming model that effectively promotes social cohesion and resilience, laying important groundwork for the expanded and more integrated impact achieved in subsequent years.