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Centre for Common Ground

Annual Program Report 2024

Executive Summary

In 2024, the Centre for Common Ground (CCG) continued implementing the GCERF-funded project "Building Resilient and Inclusive Communities," engaging 350 direct participants across 15 events in municipalities across North Macedonia. Programming combined community outreach, reflection meetings, workshops with civil society organizations, journalism training, collaborative dialogues, social cohesion training, trust-building forums for women and mothers, and a media campaign.

In addition to GCERF-funded community outreach and social cohesion activities, CCG implemented the WIN project in 2024, funded by the U.S. Department of State, to strengthen women's leadership on peace, security, gender-based violence, and prevention of violent extremism in five multiethnic municipalities.

Overall participation remained strongly inclusive, with 56.5% female (198 women) and 43.1% male (151 men). Ethnically, CCG reached approximately 47.1% Macedonian (165 participants), 40.3% Albanian (141), and around 12.6% participants from other minority communities (44 combined Roma, Turkish, Bosnian, and other groups), reflecting continued balanced interethnic engagement.

2024 Key Achievements

- 350 direct participants across 8 program types and 15 events.
- 56.5% female participation (198 women) and 43.1% male (151 men).
- Balanced ethnic representation: 165 Macedonian (47.1%), 141 Albanian (40.3%), and approximately 44 participants (12.6%) from other minority communities.
- 40 community members reached through a community outreach event in Gostivar.
- 31 stakeholders engaged in two reflection meetings in Skopje and late 2024.
- 24 CSO representatives trained through two workshops with CSOs in Skopje and Ohrid.
- 17 journalists trained in conflict-sensitive reporting through a journalism workshop.
- 32 participants engaged in collaborative dialogues in Gostivar and Dukat.
- 42 participants trained through social cohesion and critical-thinking training in Ohrid.
- 103 participants reached through four trust-building forums for women and mothers.
- 61 participants engaged through a media campaign event on 12 March 2024.

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 2024, the GCERF portfolio focused on eight program types: community outreach events; reflection meetings; workshops with CSOs; journalism training; collaborative dialogues; social cohesion and training; trust-building forums for women and mothers; and a media campaign.

2024 Impact at a Glance

Metric	2024 Result
Direct beneficiaries	350 participants
Events implemented	15 events
Female participation	198 (56.5%)
Male participation	151 (43.1%)
Macedonian participants	165 (47.1%)
Albanian participants	141 (40.3%)
Other minority participants (est.)	44 (12.6%)

Community outreach participants	40
Reflection meeting participants	31
Workshop with CSOs participants	24
Journalism workshop participants	17
Collaborative dialogue participants	32
Social cohesion training participants	42
Trust-building forum participants	103
Media campaign participants	61

1. Community Outreach Events

In 2024, CCG organized one community outreach event in Gostivar, bringing together community members to strengthen social cohesion and interethnic trust.

The event engaged 40 participants with an equal gender balance (20 women and 20 men). Ethnically, participants included 20 Macedonian, 16 Albanian, and 4 individuals from other minority communities.

Table 1: GCERF Community Outreach Event 2024 – Gender and Ethnic Composition

Location / Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
Gostivar 2024	40	20	20	20	16	4

2. Social Cohesion and Critical Thinking Training

A social cohesion and critical-thinking training held 15–17 May 2024 in Ohrid (Hotel Pela) equipped participants with skills in conflict transformation, interethnic communication, and non-violent problem-solving.

The training engaged 42 participants (28 women, 14 men), including 18 Macedonian, 19 Albanian, and 5 participants from other minority communities.

Table 2: Social Cohesion and Critical Thinking Training 2024 – Participation Overview

Location / Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
May 2024, Ohrid	42	28	14	18	19	5

3. Training with Journalists and media workers

In 2024, CCG organized a journalism workshop focused on conflict-sensitive reporting, ethical journalism, and combating hate speech.

The workshop trained 17 participants (9 women, 8 men), with 9 Macedonian and 8 Albanian journalists and media workers.

Table 3: Journalism Workshop 2024 – Participation Overview

Location / Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
Sep. 2024 Skopje	17	9	8	9	8	

4. Collaborative Dialogues

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

The two sessions engaged 32 participants (12 women, 20 men), including 13 Macedonian, 13 Albanian, and 6 participants from other minority communities.

Table 4: Collaborative Dialogue Sessions 2024 – Participation Overview

Location / Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
Oct.2024 Gostivar	14	6	8	6	6	2
Feb.2024 Skopje	18	6	12	7	7	4

5. Reflection Meetings

Reflection meetings in 2024 brought together civil society partners and community actors to review programming progress, extract lessons learned and adapt activities.

Two reflection meetings (one in Skopje and one held on 30 September 2024) engaged 31 participants (18 women, 12 men), including 15 Macedonian and 16 Albanian participants.

Table 5: GCERF Reflection Meetings 2024 – Participation Overview

Location / Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
March 2024 Skopje	14	9	5	7	7	
Sept. 2024 Skopje	17	9	7	8	9	

6. Trust-Building Forums for Women and Mothers

Trust-building forums for women and mothers in Prilep and Mavrovo created dedicated spaces for women to share experiences, discuss community concerns, and build interethnic solidarity.

The four forums engaged a total of 103 participants (68 women, 35 men). Across all sessions, 57 participants were Macedonian, 44 Albanian, and 2 from other minority communities.

Table 6: Trust-Building Forums for Women and Mothers 2024 – Participation Overview

Location / Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
21/02/2024 Prilep	26	19	7	24	2	0
13/02/2024 Mavrovo	28	12	16	15	11	2
11/2/2024 Mavrovo	25	18	7	11	14	0
10/02/2024 Mavrovo	24	19	5	7	17	0

7. Workshop with CSOs

Workshops with CSOs in Skopje and Ohrid focused on capacity-building for civil society organizations, covering organizational development, project management, and collaborative approaches to community peacebuilding.

Across two workshops, CCG engaged 24 participants (8 women, 16 men). The cohort included 13 Macedonian and 10 Albanian participants, reflecting a diverse group of civil society actors.

Table 7: Workshops with CSOs 2024 – Participation Overview

Location / Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
27/06/2024 Skopje	11	2	9	1	9	0
15/05/2024, Ohrid	13	6	7	12	1	0

8. Media Campaign –Documentary Screening and Dialogue and production of PSAs

In 2024, CCG launch the media campaign for P/CVE by the screening of the award-winning documentary film called “Shattered Chains: Returning from ISIS” as the central media campaign activity. The event brought together representatives of the Embassies of USA, UK, Sweden, France, Kingdom of Netherland, and other development agencies, National Coordinator for PCV&CT at the Government of North Macedonia, and representatives from relevant government agencies and Ministries, media and local CSOs to watch the film and engage directly with its themes.

The screening gathered 61 participants (35 women, 26 men), including 20 Macedonian and 15 Albanian participants alongside attendees from other nationalities. Following the film, CCG facilitated an open discussion on how to reduce violent extremism and how to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of former ISIS-affiliated individuals and their families back into North Macedonian society.

Table 8: Media Campaign Event 2024 – Participation Overview

Location / Date	Participants	Female	Male	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
March 2024	61	35	26	20	15	

Overall Inclusion and 2024 Summary

Across all 2024 GCERF activities, CCG engaged 198 women (56.5%) and 151 men (43.1%), further strengthening its track record of strong female participation while continuing to include significant numbers of men in peacebuilding efforts.

In terms of ethnicity, 165 Macedonian (47.1%), 141 Albanian (40.3%), and approximately 44 participants from other minority groups (about 12.6%) joined CCG activities in 2024. This mix demonstrates continued balanced engagement between the two largest communities and outreach to smaller minorities.

Overall, the 2024 GCERF programming confirms that CCG maintains a robust, multi-layered model for fostering resilience and social cohesion across North Macedonia, combining large-scale outreach, targeted training, structured dialogues, and media-based engagement.

WIN – Enhancing Women to Promote Peace and Security

Project overview

In 2024, the Centre for Common Ground (CCG) continued implementing the multi-year project "Enhancing women to promote peace and security by increasing awareness about gender-based violence and violent extremism in North Macedonia" (WIN), funded by the U.S. Department of State. The project empowers local women to promote peace and security by increasing awareness of gender-based violence (GBV) and violent extremism (VE), and by strengthening their role in prevention and response at both local and national levels.

WIN is implemented in five multiethnic municipalities—Skopje-Chair, Gostivar, Kichevo, Struga, and Prilep, where CCG has established Community Action Teams (CATs) as local task forces for the prevention of violent extremism. These CATs bring together representatives of local government, state educational and social institutions, religious communities, youth, and civil society organizations, and serve as key partners for WIN activities.

Specific objectives

• To strengthen the capacity of local women leaders to collaborate across divides and advance the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, including addressing GBV and VE at local and national levels.
• To support women leaders and local CSOs in implementing initiatives that operationalize priority components of the Collaborative Action Plans on WPS through technical and financial assistance.

Key activities in 2024

Component	Indicator	Value
Rapid Needs Assessment	Status in 2024	Final report edited, translated (MK/ALB) and published

Rapid Needs Assessment	Municipal coverage	5 local communities: Chair, Gostivar, Kichevo, Struga, and Prilep
Follow-up trainings	Number of trainings	5 two-day trainings
Follow-up trainings	Participants (total / female / male)	99 total; 67 women; 32 men
Follow-up trainings	Ethnic breakdown	49 Macedonian; 49 Albanian; 1 Turkish
Sub-granting mechanism	Women-focused CSOs supported	5 CSOs (Komunikim, Psychea, ADAY, SOCIO, FreshNews22)
Sub-granting mechanism	Target municipalities	Chair, Gostivar, Kichevo, Struga, and Prilep

Finalization and dissemination of the Rapid Needs Assessment

In the first half of 2024, CCG finalized the Rapid Participatory Needs Assessment on GBV and VE, based on field work conducted in 2023. The final report was edited, translated into Macedonian and Albanian, and published on CCG's website, providing evidence to tailor follow-up trainings and local initiatives in the five municipalities.

Follow-up trainings for local women and CSOs

Between February and April 2024, CCG organized five two-day follow-up trainings for youth (15–29) and women CSO leaders from Struga, Kichevo, Gostivar, Prilep, and Chair. A total of 99 participants (67 women and 32 men) took part, with a nearly equal representation of Macedonian and Albanian participants, plus one participant of Turkish ethnicity. The trainings strengthened participants' understanding of GBV and VE, national policy frameworks, and community-based prevention approaches, and supported them to develop local action plans.

Sub-granting mechanism for women's CSOs

In May–June 2024, CCG launched a small-grants scheme to support local women-focused CSOs in implementing WPS-related initiatives in the five target municipalities. After a public call and evaluation process, five organizations—Komunikim (Chair), Psychea (Kichevo), ADAY (Prilep), SOCIO (Gostivar), and FreshNews22 (Struga)—were awarded sub-grants to implement local projects on GBV prevention, women's empowerment, and community resilience to VE.

Following the signing of agreements in September 2024, CCG provided technical support and organized online information sessions with all sub-grantees to clarify finance, procurement and reporting procedures. Sub-grantees began implementation in November 2024, and CCG conducted monitoring visits in November and December to accompany their work and ensure quality and compliance.

Multi-stakeholder working groups

Throughout 2024, WIN brought together trained women leaders, CSO representatives and potential sub-grant applicants in multi-stakeholder working group meetings. These meetings

focused on sharing experiences from the follow-up trainings, refining community project ideas, and coordinating around the public call for small grants and CCG procedures.

Results and contribution to CCG's 2024 portfolio

In 2024, WIN significantly strengthened the gender and WPS dimensions of CCG's broader work on social cohesion and prevention of violent extremism. By training 99 youth and women leaders, supporting five women's CSOs through sub-grants, and building evidence on GBV and VE through the Rapid Needs Assessment, the project created a cadre of local actors who can promote gender-sensitive prevention and response and sustain community initiatives beyond the project period.

WIN also deepened cooperation with Community Action Teams and municipal stakeholders in Chair, Gostivar, Kichevo, Struga and Prilep, and increased the visibility of GBV and WPS issues through participation in the National 16 Days Campaign and local media activities. These efforts complement CCG's GCERF-funded programming by bringing a stronger focus on women's leadership and the intersection between GBV and VE.

Conclusion: Combined Impact of GCERF and WIN

The overall impact of CCG's implementation of the GCERF partnership and the WIN project in 2024 demonstrates a coherent and mutually reinforcing approach to strengthening social cohesion, preventing violent extremism, and advancing inclusive peacebuilding in North Macedonia. By combining broad-based community engagement with targeted, gender-responsive interventions, CCG was able to address both systemic and localized drivers of division and vulnerability.

Through these project interventions, the organization not only expanded opportunities for interethnic dialogue and cooperation across multiple municipalities, but also deepened the capacity of key actors—including youth, women leaders, civil society organizations, and local institutions—to actively contribute to prevention efforts. The integration of community outreach, capacity building, and evidence-based programming, particularly in addressing the intersection of gender-based violence and violent extremism, further enhanced the relevance and sustainability of the interventions.

Importantly, CCG's work reinforced trust between communities and institutions, strengthened the functionality of Community Action Teams, and equipped stakeholders with practical tools to identify and respond to emerging risks. This dual focus on inclusivity and resilience has laid a solid foundation for continued progress.

In conclusion, the successful implementation of these projects highlights CCG's ability to deliver impactful, locally grounded, and gender-sensitive programming, contributing meaningfully to long-term stability, social cohesion, and prevention efforts in North Macedonia.