



Safeguarding Civic Space while Countering the Financing of Terrorism in Eastern and Western Africa

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Global Center on Cooperative Security (Global Center) is leading a three-year initiative to advance policies and practices that safeguard civic space, human rights, humanitarian action, and access to financial services while implementing countering the financing of terrorism (CFT) measures. The initiative is supported by the Kingdom of the Netherlands in collaboration with the Kingdom of Morocco, and intends to further the implementation of recommendations set out in the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum Good Practice Memorandum on “Ensuring the Implementation of Countering the Financing of Terrorism while Safeguarding Civic Space.

A central component of the initiative is providing seed funding and capacity development support to civil society actors in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Tanzania, Togo, and Uganda. Selected organizations will participate in a series of peer exchanges with national, regional, and international experts and receive guidance in the design, implementation, and evaluation of national programming to work with government and private sector actors to advance proportionate and risk-based measures that protect non-profit organizations (NPOs) from terrorism financing abuse.

The initiative builds on the Global Center’s expertise on the intersection of CFT and civic space and its history of providing seed funding to more than 60 organizations across Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia to implement context-specific programming on security issues affecting their communities.

BACKGROUND

Measures intended to detect and disrupt terrorism financing have, intentionally and unintentionally, had negative impacts on civic space, humanitarian actors, and NPOs.

Lingering misperceptions of the non-profit sector as higher risk for terrorism financing contribute to declines or delays in financial access (de-risking) that jeopardize civil society and humanitarian operations, and particularly impact women’s rights and gender and youth-focused organizations. The implementation of counterterrorism-related sanctions creates complexities for humanitarian actors operating in contexts where violent extremist operations overlap with other forms of conflict and crisis. In some places, CFT measures have been abused to target political opposition and human rights defenders. In others, NPOs struggle with arduous legal and administrative barriers imposed under CFT frameworks, causing a

chilling effect on civic space and freedom of association.

International bodies have increasingly recognized and sought to mitigate the negative consequences of CFT measures. United Nations Security Council [Resolution 2462](#) (2019) calls for states to uphold their obligations under international human rights, humanitarian, and refugee law while countering the financing of terrorism, and to take into account the consequences of CFT measures on principled humanitarian action.

The Financial Action Task Force has revised its international CFT [Standards](#) to call for a proportionate and risk-based approach to protecting NPOs from abuse and launched a [project](#) to consider the impact of its Standards on de-risking, financial exclusion, undue targeting of NPOs, and curtailment of human rights.

The Global Counterterrorism Forum recently adopted a [Good Practice Memorandum](#) on

Implementing CFT Measures while Safeguarding Civic Space, co-led by the Netherlands, Morocco, and United Nations, with support from the Global Center. The memorandum emphasizes lessons learned in advancing multistakeholder dialogue, inclusive risk assessment practices, and timely access to financial services.

Efforts to recalibrate measures to protect NPOs from terrorism financing abuse are critical, but implementation of international standards and good practices remains lagging at the national level. Critically, there is a need for robust collaboration between NPOs, CFT authorities, and the private sector to prevent and mitigate negative consequences of CFT measures while enabling the detection and disruption of illicit and terrorist finance. Such efforts must be locally-led to ensure sustainable, inclusive, and effective partnership in addressing the critical intersection of CFT, civic space, and humanitarian action.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL CENTER ON COOPERATIVE SECURITY

The Global Center on Cooperative Security (Global Center) is a non-profit organization that advances inclusive, human rights-based policies, partners, and practices to address the root causes of violent extremism. We provide independent analysis and partner with government, civil society, private sector, and multilateral actors to advance the design, implementation, and evaluation of programming that is globally informed and locally grounded. Our work focuses on four areas: preventing and countering violent extremism, advancing the rule of law, promoting financial integrity and inclusion, and strengthening multilateral security policy.

Under its financial integrity and inclusion programming, the Global Center works with public and private actors to build capacities on anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) while safeguarding human rights, civic space, and financial access. We have partnered with more than 50 jurisdictions and provided training to over 250 entities across the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Western Balkans, Southeast Asia, and Europe. In particular, we specialize in partnering with jurisdictions considered to be higher risk for terrorist and illicit finance to provide strategic guidance in understanding risk profiles, refining legal frameworks, and enhancing implementation of international standards and good practices in line with a proportionate and risk-based AML/CFT approach. In our programming, we draw on a global network of expert practitioners and promote peer-learning and practical expertise sharing among jurisdictions in the same region or with similar operating contexts.

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