



GLOBAL
FORUM ON
CYBER
EXPERTISE

GFCE ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

1.1 GFCE 2020-2024



The Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE) was established in 2015, during which time it was anticipated that the GFCE would develop into a global, informal, and coordinating platform for cyber capacity building (CCB). With the launch of the GFCE, the Netherlands government installed the GFCE Secretariat under the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), with the aim of facilitating the GFCE with policy, logistics and administration, and to function as a broker between supply and demand for cyber knowledge and expertise.

Since 2015, the focus of the GFCE has been on building a strong in-person GFCE network. In 2017, the GFCE positioned itself as the coordinating platform for cyber capacity building by developing the Global Agenda for Cyber Capacity Building. After a year of conducting extensive consultations and research, the GFCE community endorsed the Delhi Communiqué on a GFCE Global Agenda for Cyber Capacity Building. The Delhi Communiqué prioritizes five themes and calls for action to jointly strengthen global cyber capacities. The Delhi Communiqué has laid the foundation for the GFCE to build the cyber capacity building ecosystem. Throughout 2018-2019, the GFCE has started to build its structures to support the ecosystem. Key elements of the GFCE ecosystem are the GFCE Working Groups, the Cybil the CCB knowledge portal, the GFCE Clearing House mechanism, regional GFCE meetings, the CCB Research Agenda and Strategic Partnerships and Cooperation.

To expand the GFCE's efforts, effectiveness and reach, a new institutional framework was required. Accordingly, in December 2019, the GFCE Foundation was established to guarantee its continuity, growth, and internationalization.

1.2. GFCE: Vision, mission, objectives and strategic activities

Everyone should be able to reap the benefits that an open, free, and secure internet has to offer. Under these conditions, cyberspace has thrived and continues to offer extraordinary opportunities for innovation, communication, sustainable development, and economic growth. Building cyber capacity provides the necessary foundation for countries to strengthen their cyber resilience by developing skills and capacity to address threats and vulnerabilities arising from cyberspace.

The GFCE is a multi-stakeholder community of more than 210 members and partners consisting of governments, IGOs, private entities, academia, and implementers from all regions of the world sharing the vision that everyone should be able to fully reap the benefits of ICT through a free, open, peaceful, and secure digital world. The GFCE was tasked with a clear mission to strengthen cyber capacity and expertise globally by being a pragmatic, action-oriented and flexible platform for international cooperation.

The long-term objectives of the GFCE are:

- Duplication and fragmentation of cyber capacity building efforts are globally avoided.
- Relevant CCB knowledge and expertise are made available on a global scale.
- Capacity gaps are filled, and the capacity needs of countries are supported.

To strengthen international collaboration on cyber capacity building and expertise globally, the GFCE focuses on the following three strategic activities:

1. Coordination

With the global community and a proven track record, the GFCE facilitates the coordination of CCB projects and programs around the world, improving efficiency and avoiding duplication of efforts. We are the 'go to' place to locate partners, pathways, and support to build and develop cyber capacity, expertise, and resilience. Like cyberspace itself, the GFCE's value comes from the depth and strength of the network's connections. The community meets in virtual and in-person settings, such as at GFCE global and regional meetings, in addition to the thematic Working Groups which are a space for members and partners to network, collaborate and share knowledge and opportunities.

2. Knowledge sharing

The GFCE makes relevant CCB knowledge, practices, and expertise available on a global scale. The CCB knowledge repository, the Cybil Knowledge Portal, is the only online repository for international CCB projects, tools and publications that help to improve the effectiveness, coordination, and transparency of capacity building. Cybil's array of supports includes practical tools for CCB activities, best practices, and research publications, all developed and created by and for the GFCE and the broader CCB community.

3. Match-making

The GFCE provides a support mechanism that fosters cooperation among partners, including identifying pathways for donors and beneficiaries to optimize CCB delivery and impact. We bridge the gap between CCB demand and supply by supporting stocktaking and research to ensure a better understanding of needs, and by deepening the GFCE's regional networks to match projects and programs to local demands. Specifically, the GFCE Clearing House is a matchmaking service to pair available resources with countries identified CCB needs.



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GFCE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND (SUB-)CORE ACTIVITIES

2.1 GFCE Secretariat: foreseen objectives, strategic objectives and core activities

The GFCE Secretariat provides operational and logistical support, acting as a liaison and point of contact for the GFCE Community. The Secretariat facilitates the GFCE structures, projects, and initiatives; enhances information-sharing within and outside the Community; and organizes all GFCE meetings. The GFCE Secretariat is located in The Hague, The Netherlands. The GFCE Secretariat's objectives can be broken down into two main strands of work:

1. Facilitation of the global GFCE network

Since the establishment of the GFCE in 2015, the main task of the Secretariat has been the facilitation of the global GFCE network. This is still the priority for the Secretariat, and with the growth of the GFCE network from 42 to over 200 stakeholders and the expansion of the cyber capacity eco-system of Working Groups, Cybil, Research Agenda, Clearing House, and projects - the demand on the Secretariat is higher than ever. Additionally, it is in line with the GFCE's mission to ensure that the GFCE is the leading coordination platform for cyber capacity building stakeholders and activities on a global and regional level. The GFCE is making strides to strengthen regional coordination and local collaboration to support global cooperation. Therefore in 2022, the Secretariat has started the process of establishing and expanding the GFCE regional hubs in Africa, Americas and the Caribbean, Pacific and South-East Asia. This entails that the Secretariat in The Hague is becoming a Head Quarters and is responsible for coordinating, steering the separate GFCE regional entities and ensuring alignment with the GFCE's work. The GFCE is tracking five core activities that correspond to this strategic objective:

- Engage an inclusive GFCE network - The GFCE is unique as it is a multi-stakeholder community-driven platform for cyber capacity building. Therefore, the network is the most important feature of the GFCE - the Members and Partners steer the direction of the platform. The GFCE aims to be inclusive and have all relevant actors involved in global and regional cyber capacity building activities. The Secretariat is tasked with maintaining, communicating with, and expanding the GFCE network and facilitating and addressing their needs.
- Support the GFCE community structures - The GFCE community is active in the GFCE in different ways, which are referred to as community structures. The most important task of the GFCE Secretariat here is the facilitation of these different structures, for example the Advisory Board, co-chairs and Foundation Board - but also the Women in CCB network, the Cybil steering committee, and the Research Agenda committee. Information sharing and feeding this back into other cross-cutting groups and the GFCE eco- system are ongoing responsibilities of the Secretariat.
- Enhance the GFCE ecosystem - The various community structures come together in the cyber capacity building ecosystem that is facilitated by the GFCE Secretariat. Since its establishment in 2015, the GFCE ecosystem has expanded tremendously, and so have the facilitating tasks of the Secretariat. Important elements in the GFCE ecosystem are the Working Groups and Task Forces, but also Cybil - the CCB knowledge repository, the Global CCB Research Agenda and the Clearing House.
- Facilitate GFCE meetings - The GFCE community is an informal network and GFCE meetings and events are the milestones for the community to come together. Besides organizing numerous virtual meetings throughout the year, the Secretariat also organizes two global meetings and one regional meeting in the identified regions: Africa, Europe, Americas and the Caribbean, the Pacific, and South-East Asia. Responsibilities of the Secretariat cover the entire range of event management from deciding on the program, to logistical support and providing sponsored participation for Global South participants.

- Strengthen the GFCE's regional efforts - The GFCE has been expanding and strengthening its regional focus over the past years. Over the coming years the aim is to establish and further develop the GFCE regional hubs in Africa, Americas and the Caribbean, Pacific and South-East Asia to support needs analysis, regional coordination, and delivery of CCB, as well as provide support to the GFCE community. Each GFCE regional hub will e.g. build a regional multi-stakeholder CCB community and identify and prioritize the needs of each region and country. The Secretariat is responsible for coordinating and facilitating the regional hubs.

2. Support the GFCE Foundation

The GFCE Foundation was established in December 2019 to provide an independent vehicle for the GFCE to continue to grow, internationalize and increase its impact through multiple donor funding. Under the wings of the Foundation, the GFCE Secretariat will continue to have an invaluable role in facilitating the GFCE network and its activities and do so even more effectively by expanding and internationalizing the team. With the establishment of the GFCE Foundation new activities were identified: establishment of the Foundation as a separate entity including operations, finance, and HR; fundraising, project coordination and management; and facilitation of the GFCE Foundation Board. The GFCE is tracking two core activities that correspond to this strategic objective:

- Secure financial continuity for the Secretariat - The establishment of the GFCE Foundation provided the Secretariat with a financial vehicle to secure financial continuity for the Secretariat. Therefore, additional tasks for the Secretariat are fundraising, project proposal writing and reporting, and project coordination and management.
- Develop of Foundation as Head Quarters and employer - The Foundation has existed for almost three years and the next ambition for the Secretariat is to establish the Secretariat's Head Quarters in The Hague and to coordinate and facilitate with the (virtual) regional hubs. Additionally, the Foundation will expand its responsibilities to being the direct employer of the Secretariat's employees instead of outsourcing this to a payroll organization.

These seven core activities are explained below and further narrowed down into sub- activities. These sub-activities will be used in the Secretariat Activities overview in section 4. The activities and sub-activities are further described and linked to measurable performance indicators in terms of expected output for the year 2023 in section 4.



The GFCE Secretariat's core activities and sub-activities

1. Engage an inclusive GFCE network

- Development and carrying out of the GFCE strategy.
- Awareness of Members' cyber landscape and their needs.
- Inform the community through communication channels such as the website, social media, and member mailing.
- Identify, assess, and connect missing relevant stakeholders and platforms.
- Broaden and strengthen the GFCE community with relevant countries and organizations as formal members or partners.
- Increase the visibility and awareness of the GFCE through communication channels and participation in events

3. Enhance the GFCE ecosystem

- Facilitate and restructure the Working Groups
- Scale up Cybil - CCB knowledge portal
- Develop the Global CCB Research Agenda
- Increase efforts regarding the Clearing House mechanism

5. Strengthen the GFCE's regional efforts

- Establish and further develop GFCE regional hubs
- Build regional multi-stakeholder CCB community
- Identify and prioritize CCB needs for each region

7. Develop Foundation as HQ and employer

- Establishment of the Secretariat in the Hague as HQ in relation to regional hubs
- Develop the Foundation as legal employer
- Consolidation of the Foundation's HR house

2. Support the GFCE community structures

- Coordinate GFCE efforts and facilitate knowledge sharing across all groups
- Facilitate and support cross-cutting groups and committees
- Facilitate GFCE Advisory Board
- Facilitate GFCE co-chairs and Foundation Board
- Facilitate the Women in CCB network (WiCCB)

4. Facilitate the GFCE meetings

- Event coordination and facilitation
- Event Registration
- Event Communication
- Travel and sponsoring

6. Secure financial continuity for the Secretariat

- Active outreach to potential funders within and outside the GFCE community
- Assessing requirements/preconditions set by potential funders in terms of requested accountability and identify and supporting/respecting the basic values of the GFCE donors.
- Support the process of funding requests: 1) Pitch; 2) Travelling; 3) Follow up.



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GRANT
ACHIEVEMENTS
2023

3.1. Engage an inclusive GFCE network

Finalizing the 5-year 2023 – 2027 strategy

In response to the increasingly complex and evolving digital and cyber security landscape, the need for the GFCE to evolve to better represent its growing community was expressed both by its main donors and the Foundation Board. Accordingly, the GFCE has undertaken the drafting and issuance of its 2023- 2027 5-year Strategy, which encompasses the following:

- Recognizes the challenges that the GFCE and its community are facing, including limited alignment of CCB activities, inability to effectively address countries' CCB needs, absence of much-needed resources and investments, lack of trust and co- operation, and the multi-polarization of the world further fragmenting efforts.
- Support the GFCE community structures - The GFCE community is active in the GFCE in different ways, which are referred to as community structures. The most important task of the GFCE Secretariat here is the facilitation of these different structures, for example the Advisory Board, co-chairs and Foundation Board – but also the Women in CCB network, the Cybil steering committee, and the Research Agenda committee. Information sharing and feeding this back into other cross-cutting groups and the GFCE eco- system are ongoing responsibilities of the Secretariat.
- Enumerating the priorities that should further shape the strategic approach to CCB, maturing the GFCE as a sustainable and demand-driven provider of its core services, and the provision of said services in a tailored manner, including through the GFCE's emerging and expanding regional hubs.
- Laying out how Coordination, Match-Making and Knowledge Sharing services are to be provided, and how they will mature up through 2027.
- How the GFCE's financial sustainability can be realized while ensuring growth in services, representation and geographical scope through the Hubs, and through exploring mid- and long- term fundraising and membership fee models.
- Evolving the GFCE governance structure, with the Strategic Steering Committee creating an opportunity for the GFCE community to be better represented in the decision-making processes of the Foundation, and to induce a feeling of greater ownership of its results and benefits.

The 5-year Strategy will serve as a framework document for guiding the GFCE's transformation in 2024 and will be revisited periodically to ensure that the direction of travel of the organization is maintained.

Enlisting new members and partners

The GFCE's account management efforts continue to foster community growth, hereby addressing its community needs and enhancing the organization's contribution. Such efforts are significant, as they uphold the GFCE's commitment to sustaining an ecosystem that puts the participation of its Partners and Members at its very heart.

In 2023, the GFCE account management efforts were demonstrated in:

- Global and regional GFCE meetings and conferences
- Regular calls and meetings with Members and Partners
- Multiple online webinars and meetings facilitated by the GFCE
- Participation of the GFCE Secretariat in external events
- Expansion and development of the GFCE regional hubs and liaison offices.

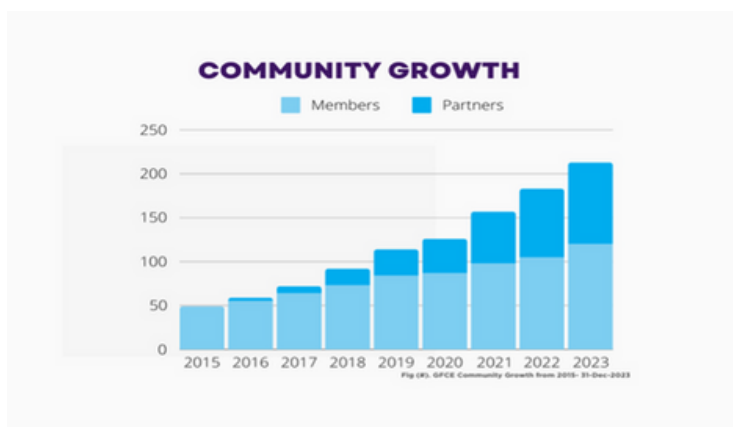
The GFCE's multi-stakeholder community is expanding and comprises a rich pool of governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private sector, think tanks, research organizations, technical associations and regional organizations. In 2023, the GFCE's continued growth was additionally stiffened by the launch of its Africa regional hub in November of that year.

Overall, the GFCE community registered a growth of 16.5% during the calendar year; in concrete numbers, the GFCE counted, by December 31, a total of 120 Partners and 93 Members, of which 15 new Members and 15 new Partners.

New Members	New Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curaçao • Absa Group • Indonesia • PM Consultancy • Pakistan • Uruguay • Samoa • Regional Coordination Council (RCC) • Moldova • Tonga • Colombia • Cybastion • Albania • Kosovo • Ecuador 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre of Multilateral Affairs (CFMA) • Florida International University • EclecticIQ • Internet & Jurisdiction Policy Network • Datasphere Initiative • Royal Holloway University of London • Linear Visions Consulting • CISAB • Developing Capacity LTD • Cyber Trust • CRDF Global • African Cyber Defense Forum (ACDF) • Independent Diplomat • Pacific Forum • Genesis Analytics

Overview of new GFCE Members and Partners, 2023

Community growth, January – December 2023.



ENHANCING GFCE COMMUNICATIONS

For the GFCE to evolve and better represent its community, it must not only be able to reach and engage with a wide array of stakeholders across the globe but also establish its position as a key coordinating platform within the international cyber capacity building ecosystem. Thus, the GFCE has made efforts to advance its communication strategy by improving the delivery and visibility of key messaging through its communication channels and by supporting the organization of events. This revitalized the promotion of GFCE activities as well as those of its community. Some key achievements of Communications in 2023 include the following:

- **Website and brand re-design:** The re-design of the GFCE website was a process that took several months with the official launch at the end of November 2023. The team discussed with the website developers how to best organize the variety of content and pages on the GFCE website and how to re-design the website by making it more visually appealing through a more modern look and feel. The icons of the working groups were re-designed, the GFCE's regional efforts were highlighted by designing a map of its regional hubs and by developing a new tone of light blue that has been added to the brand guidelines.
- **Development of communication channels:** The GFCE has continued to send news and updates to its community and promote opportunities at the request of community members through the member mailing. It has also transformed its social media strategy, aiming to make its key messaging more personal and human by changing its voice of tone and promoting the GFCE team on its channels. It has shifted focus towards increasing engagement on LinkedIn, as evidenced by the increase in followers and reach. In 2023, the GFCE LinkedIn channel had 2,660 new followers, accounting for 30% of followers' growth on the platform. Our post received 213807 total impressions, 2,107 page views, and 5,025 unique visitors, which is significantly greater than the previous year's result. This is a positive result since GFCE increased the number of posts on LinkedIn to 22 posts per month, which caught the attention and steadily grew the audience pool. GFCE X channel also had a strong improvement with 20% growth in new followers as the result of our on-time interaction with participants and updates after webinars and events, along with the halo effect from the GC3B.
- **Event support:** The Communications team provides event management support for its regional meetings, the global annual meeting and other events like Triple-I gatherings. It manages and maintains the event website, registrations, and mailings to attendees of regional meetings and other events through an event platform, as well as promotes the event for increased visibility through the GFCE social media channels.
- **GC3B:** The GFCE communications team supported the organization of the GC3B by managing and maintaining the GC3B website as well as the GC3B Twitter and LinkedIn accounts. The GC3B website underwent significant updates since the 'save the date' announcement in May and the months leading up to the conference, including the maintenance of the program page or the promotion of speakers. In 2023, the LinkedIn GC3B channel gained 2,092 new followers, over 8,238 page views and 2,862 reactions, which is a significant increase as the channel was dormant until May 2023. The GFCE managed the GC3B contact email inbox, supported the development of the GC3B brand guidelines, mailings to participants, and provided communications support for co-ordination with co-organizers, the GC3B Steering Committee and the Ghanaian government. It also provided support on the design and delivery to Ghana of branded items that participants and speakers received, such as the program book or a commemorative coin for speakers. It also developed its media outreach by identifying and inviting press, organizing a press conference in Ghana and sharing a press release with key media.

Overall, 2023 saw the development of the GFCE communications strategy, which revolved around modernizing the GFCE brand and enhancing its reach. The efforts that were undertaken in the previous year have served to guide its ongoing efforts, culminating in the GFCE Communications Plan 2024.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The GFCE Foundation Board and the GFCE Secretariat would like to thank the GFCE Community, including its Members and Partners, the committees and individuals on their personal capacity who contributed to the GFCE successes in 2022.

The GFCE Annual Report 2022 is distributed to GFCE Members and Partners and is available for download on the GFCE website.

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