

2.2.2 [10] Maximising Use of Local Resources

ARK's corporate values include the principle of empowering local staff. Since 2011, this has been achieved through the gradual transition of ARK's Syria programme team to one that is staffed principally by highly qualified Syrian and Turkish staff.

In accordance with that principle, ARK has assembled a well-regarded team of Syrian and international professionals to deliver AJACS, the majority of whom currently work together to implement the ICSP. The core of AJACS programme delivery rests with three Syrian team leaders responsible for the Policing and Rule of Law/Justice programme, as well as Stakeholder Engagement. Their experience as activists since the early days of the Syrian revolution provides them with credibility among, and access to, Syrian beneficiaries as well as the Syrian Opposition Coalition and Interim Government. The larger AJACS team will comprise twenty Syrian staff members (contingent on co-funding for AJACS by the US State Department's Bureau of Conflict Stabilization Operations). Under this comprehensive staffing plan, ARK will employ six Syrian Community Facilitation Advisors and three Community Facilitation Officers who will be based inside Syria to routinely engage with AJACS stakeholders and facilitate the work of the proposed Community Cohesion Committees (CCCs).

In addition to its many Syrian staff, ARK also has the demonstrated ability to mobilise large networks of associates within Syria in support of programme delivery. This includes a network of 61 media stringers located across all fourteen provinces, as well as hundreds of former beneficiaries of training and equipment, who are available to act in support of AJACS monitoring and evaluation efforts (as demonstrated several times in 2014 with ARK stringers documenting the use of ICSP-supplied equipment in Aleppo).

ARK has also established and trained ten Syrian field officers to conduct follow-up and impact interviews, as well as a network of 60 Turkey-based Syrian researchers to conduct broad-based population surveys in Syria. This team demonstrated their capabilities during Wave 1 of the ICSP survey study in May 2014, obtaining in-depth information from over 1,300 people in four provinces of Syria. ARK partners with the Syria Research and Evaluation Organisation, a field research capability based in Gaziantep, enabling access to third-party assessments of implementation. ARK also conducts in-country independent quality assurance and spot checks via its partner organisations.

ARK has an Arab-led in-house media production unit which can deliver tailored communications products in support of AJACS programming. Drawing on its extensive network of media stringers in Syria for raw footage and for dissemination of campaign products, ARK has a demonstrated ability to effectively support AJACS programme objectives by bolstering Syrian public support for programme beneficiaries, through targeted media campaigns.

ARK's Logistics and Procurement department is staffed principally by Turkish employees with established networks in the Turkish market, allowing more time- and cost-effective local procurement, as a complement to the standing procurement relationship ARK maintains with international procurement specialist, Crown Agents. ARK's ownership of a fully registered Turkish company (PPM) offers an additional, legally compliant vehicle to access the Turkish procurement market.

ARK has also undertaken market studies of the manufacturing sector in northern Aleppo with a view to identifying potential sources of supplies and equipment that could be procured locally on behalf of Syrian programme beneficiaries. This is a particularly salient risk mitigation option for the AJACS programme given the increased threat posed by extremist groups (including Designated Terrorist Organisations) to the border crossings at Bab al Salama and Bab al Hawa, which, if lost, would sever northern Syria's lifeline to Turkey. The search for local procurement options must be tempered, however, by the responsibility to ensure donor-compliant accounting of funds, given the opaque state of the cash economy in northern Syria, as well as the general scarcity of qualified suppliers of goods and services.

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ARK's presence in Turkey delivering assistance to the Syrian opposition since 2012 has allowed it to establish relationships of trust with the Government of Turkey and the Syrian political opposition and civil society communities. ARK's track record of establishing and directly supporting Syrian organisations, from the Syrian revolutionary media entity Basma (supported by the UK, US and Canada) and the Syrian CSO capacity building hub Baytna, in Gaziantep (supported by Denmark), to the Syrian Commission for Justice and Accountability (supported by the UK and Denmark), is a testament to ARK's commitment to empowering Syrian actors to deliver locally-derived and locally-driven solutions to citizen needs.