

As part of ARK's programming model, the team systematically conducts scoping activities and assessments to either inform the initial design of a programme or revise the design of an existing programme or activity. This includes capacity self-assessment for organisations or institutions participating in capacity development programmes, for which ARK has developed its own methodology for beneficiary-led, participatory capacity assessment.

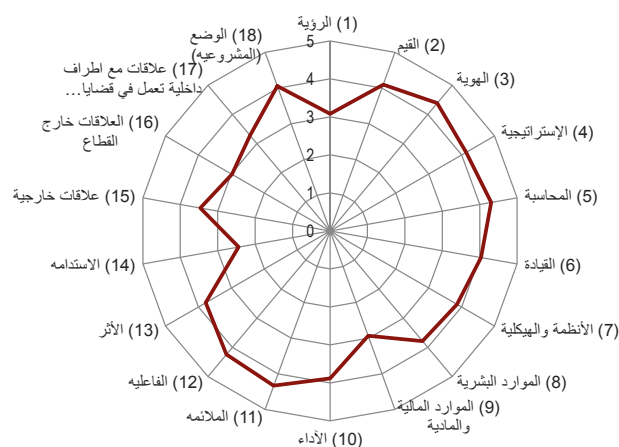
### ARK's Participatory Capacity Self-Assessment Process

Over multiple capacity development programmes for a wide range of organisations – from informal youth groups, to civil society organisations (CSOs), Civil Defence teams and nascent police and justice institutions – ARK developed and refined a composite, four-step process for a beneficiary-led capacity self-assessment. This methodology utilises flexible Capacity Assessment Tools (CATs) that have been successfully adjusted based on the type of institution and the degree of access to its leadership, staff, members or clients. As one example, ARK used this process with *Baytna*, a Danish-funded, civil society capacity building programme that ARK initiated and led between 2012 and 2014.

#### **Baytna's CSO Capacity Self-Assessment.**

**Step 1.** A comprehensive mapping exercise was undertaken over the course of three months to identify relevant and strategic CSO partners for participation in the programme. A set of seven criteria were agreed within the team based on the project's goal, and Syrian team members reached out via Skype to a snowball sample of over 50 organisations. This allowed for a depiction of the landscape of Syrian CSOs in four governorates by detailing the type and level of activity, structure, membership, scope, mission and vision of these organisations. **Step 2** Once 16 CSOs were selected, the native Arabic-speaking capacity building team remotely facilitated an initial internal discussion based on five, key open-ended questions around the organisations' goals and activities.

**Step 3.** All members and staff of the CSOs were asked to complete a CAT that looked at 98 capacity indicators under three key headings: the capacity to *be*, the capacity to *do*, and the capacity to *relate*. In a facilitated workshop, decision makers in the organisation aggregated and analysed the results of all self-assessments by plotting them onto a spidergram to visualise points of strength and weakness within the CSO. This exercise illustrated very clearly which capacities were more of a priority and also gave participants an important insight into the relations between the strengths and weaknesses of the diverse capacities. **Step 4** Once priority capacity indicators were determined, and agreed within each CSO, the team worked with each CSO to develop customised, as well as joint, CB plans.



**Baseline capacity assessment.** As another example, ARK carried out a baseline capacity assessment for Civil Defence centres across northern Syria to understand conditions on the ground and the varying needs of centres; to improve delivery of on-going training and equipment provision; and to inform subsequent programming. The baseline capacity assessment was conducted during joint Idlib/Aleppo 'Training of Trainers' and Incident Commander courses, which brought together 40 Civil Defence volunteers, including the heads of most centres. **The assessment, a series of questions and statements organised by area of organisational capacity,** was designed by the ARK project team, combining its implementing partner AKUT's experience, UN INSARAG best practice guidelines and local knowledge of the Syrian context.