1.2.1 Capability and Capacity to Deliver

ARK Group DMCC is a development and stabilisation company working for governments, the EU and UN agencies implementing research-informed programming to reduce conflict in fragile and conflict-affected communities. We have been programming in Lebanon since 2009 and have a registered office in Beirut, with a core staff of 12 supplemented by field teams, data collectors and local community based organisation (CBO) partners.

Experience of programming involving Parliamentary, Municipal and Government Engagement: ARK has previously implemented governance programming in Lebanon and is currently implementing political engagement programming on behalf of the US government which complements this project. This experience will enable ARK to effectively involve governance actors and link project activities with national-level strategies.

- **Take Action:** From early 2017 to May 2018, ARK implemented a multi-media, on and offline get out the vote (GOTV) campaign for HMG called "Take Action". It raised awareness about Lebanon's new electoral law among first-time voters, promoted the importance of voting and encouraged increased political participation among young people. The project team coordinated closely with the Ministry of Interior, which oversaw implementation of the elections.
- **Take Action II (Pilot):** Following the success of the initial Take Action campaign, ARK received funding for a pilot project to use the Take Action brand to build young people's capacity to engage politically and act as governance watchdogs. Over four months, the team held political participation 'boot camps' to educate young people on key governance issues and their roles as active citizens, amplifying this through Take Action social media platforms. ARK then facilitated constructive dialogue sessions between youth groups and public officials (members of Parliament, Municipality members, and other governance actors) holding well-attended town hall meetings.
- **Enhancing Public Accountability and Trust in Lebanon:** ARK is in the initial stages of implementing a multi-year US-funded project to increase political party accountability and trust in Lebanon, working directly with a range of political parties, governance actors and CSOs, in partnership with the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE).
- **Palestinian Youth Project (PYP):** ARK has been implementing programming in the Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon since 2008, coordinating extensively with local municipalities, Lebanese security forces and national level governance actors, including the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee, to align project activities with local and national level strategies.

Understanding and experience of Lebanon's political system and context in Lebanon and a track record in thinking and working politically:

- **Take Action:** The design of the Take Action project was based on research by ARK and the Arab Barometer Project (one of the most comprehensive surveys in the Arab world to assess attitudes toward democracy) which showed that despite strongly favouring democracy, young people under 27 (first time voters) had significantly less confidence in democratic systems than their older counterparts and a lack of confidence in Lebanon's democratic institutions.[1] The Take Action campaign successfully raised awareness among Lebanese youth about the mechanics of voting, registering over a million engagements with campaign material, and motivating the target audience to engage with the democratic process (over 2,000 people participated in local campaign events). Engagement with the campaign had a demonstrable positive effect on knowledge of the new Lebanese electoral law and over 80% of those exposed to campaign material actually voted.
- **Take Action II:** The follow-on pilot to Take Action was designed around ARK's research findings revealing a striking lack of understanding among Lebanese youth about the roles and responsibilities of elected officials, and citizens' ability to hold them accountable. To address this, ARK's pilot project built on Take Action's success in engaging young people to educate them on how to carry out their roles as active citizens and constructively engage with governance actors as well as working with governance actors to engage with young people.
- **Target Audience Analysis (TAA):** In 2016 and 2019, ARK conducted nationwide Tier-1 Target Audience Analyses (TAA) in Lebanon on behalf of the UK government. This research explored a number of social, political, and economic issues to guide the British Embassy's programming in Lebanon. Surveys queried sensitive topics, including exposure to armed violence, support for armed violence, political ideology, media and communication habits and support for governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations. In the 2019 TAA, ARK used this research to define potential target audiences most likely to be effectively influenced by strategic communications efforts to engage in political behaviours leading to positive social change.
- **UNDP:** ARK has a five-year contract to implement UNDP's Regular Perception Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon, with each wave including approximately 5,000 respondents. Surveys assess public perceptions of UN interventions and assistance for Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities. The results of these surveys have been used to inform the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) and have been briefed to

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[1] The Arab Barometer, data available at www.arabbarometer.org.

1.2.1 Capability and Capacity to Deliver

the UN Social Stability Working Group, the Inter-Agency Working Group, the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs, and other concerned stakeholders.

Solid knowledge and relationships of local organisations working with political actors in Lebanon: Through ARK's work on Take Action and the previous experience and personal connections of project team members, ARK has strong relationships with local organisations working with political actors throughout the country. This includes LADE, the primary civil society group dedicated to free and fair elections in Lebanon (with whom ARK is partnering on its US-funded governance accountability project); Beirut24, a youth organisation working on advocacy and community mobilisation to improve youth political participation; *Hala Baqa*, a youth-run organisation in Tripoli whose members engage with local political actors in a variety of ways, including radio and video interviews; the Professional Centre of Mediation (CPM) at Saint Joseph University in Beirut; and the Lebanese Organization for Defending Equality and Rights (Louder) at Lebanese International University (LIU) in the Bekaa. The latter two organisations have strong track records of working with political parties in Lebanon to increase dialogue and engagement. During the Take Action pilot, these relationships were essential to helping ARK secure the buy-in and engagement of Lebanese political actors in town halls and facilitate interviews for Take Action social media pages.

Technical expertise and organisational capacity, including a strong track record of gender sensitive programming:
- **Governance and political engagement programming:** Through Take Action and the other programming it has for the UK and US governments and UNDP in Lebanon, ARK has demonstrated the organisational capacity to implement effective governance and political engagement programming. It has a technically experienced team who were able to develop and maintain engagement with the Ministry of Interior under Take Action I, as well as direct engagement with five MPs, three municipalities, and one governor under Take Action II, and target youth audiences for both projects. ARK's project teams all use PMD Pro project management tools to implement programming. We partner with local organisations, such as LADE, to increase relevant expertise, and work closely with academic advisors including the Mershon Center for International Security at Ohio State University and the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation at Deakin University to ensure all programming is based on academic research and best practices relating to social learning and behaviour change.
- **Gender sensitive programming:** ARK has a dedicated Gender Advisor who works across all projects, and all project staff have received extensive training in gender mainstreaming and gender sensitive programming. As with all ARK programming, this project will have an inception phase gender analysis to ensure an understanding of key gender issues and appropriate programmatic responses to address these. ARK ensures that all programming is tailored to the needs of both genders, does not do harm by reinforcing gender inequality, and enables men and women to benefit equally.
  - *Take Action II:* All political participation bootcamp trainings included at least 50% female participants, and moderators at town hall events ensured that both genders had equal opportunities to ask questions of MPs. When possible, given the short time-frame and geographic scoping, ARK also sought to engage female governance actors, such as Beirut MP Rola Tabish, whose presence on the panel at the town hall ensured a diversity of opinions when issues such as civil marriage were raised. Likewise, ARK used the Take Action platform to highlight male and female perspectives of gender in Lebanon, such as through vox-pops with USJ students on International Women's Day.
  - *Palestinian Youth Project:* Through ARK's work in the Palestinian Refugee Camps, the project team has built a network of female activists and women's groups which have significantly contributed to helping female beneficiaries overcome gender-related barriers. Under the same project, ARK was one of the first actors in the camps to design programming to also address male vulnerabilities and negative concepts of masculinity in an effort to counter behaviours contributing to violence.

- **Production and strategic communications capacity:** ARK has a production hub in Lebanon (supported by a further one in London), and generates content to support projects that is disseminated on a wide variety of platforms, from websites and social media channels to local television news and regional satellite channels. Using footage from its stringer networks, ARK's teams have placed thousands of pieces of content on national and regional pan-Arab broadcasters since 2012. We have supported the creation of eleven radio stations, developed hundreds of hours of content, set up 14 magazines, and created more than 30 targeted social media pages, working with and through local partners to place an average of five pieces of original content per day on each of

these. Our approach generates high levels of reach and engagement. In 2018, ARK worked with 20 local partners to deliver online and offline content. Online, in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon TSN's Facebook pages achieved:

- Average reach of over **10 million people a month** across all online platforms;
- An average of almost **1.5 million female users a month**;
- **Pages posted almost 5000 times**, gaining over **2 million reactions**;
- Video content on ARK's platforms was **viewed over 31 million times**;
- The **average engagement rate for ARK's platforms is 2.19%**, which is deemed 'excellent', according to industry standards.

For this project, ARK will also partner with Lebanese production company 4-Productions. In partnership with 4-Productions on Take Action, ARK successfully reached 30% of first-time voters nationwide and project platforms had a reach of 9.5 million and engagement of over 3.5 million users. Currently, the platform continues to reach 45% of the country.

Experience delivering flexible and adaptive programming: ARK has repeatedly demonstrated the ability to implement flexible and adaptive governance programming in Lebanon through both Take Action projects.

- **Take Action I:** During Take Action I, ARK originally partnered with four local partners to support project delivery. However, after the first year of the project, two of the partners aligned themselves with political parties, leading ARK's project team, in coordination with British Embassy Beirut (BEB), to end these partnerships. In Year Two, ARK adapted the project by increasing engagement with the other two local partners and increasing staff project responsibility to ensure that all project targets were met or exceeded.
- **Take Action II:** Under Take Action II, ARK initially planned to engage members of Beirut municipality however the municipality was slow to engage and was not able to commit within the short timeframe. The project team was instead able to engage the Beirut governor and three Beirut MPs to hold two town halls, one more than was originally planned.
- **Ana Hon and the Tripoli by-election:** Between From 2017-2018, ARK ran a Canadian-funded Youth Empowerment Project that created a Facebook platform called Ana Hon to use strategic communications to enhance social stability in the troubled areas of Tripoli, Saida, and Central Bekaa. The Ana Hon platform has continued to operate since the end of the project and the ARK team still works with the group of youth to use the platform to support political engagement and good governance objectives. For example, during the April by-election in Tripoli, the Ana Hon team conducted interviews with each election candidate while driving around in a local taxi. This initiative was later picked up by national Lebanese channel MTV.

Coordination with other donors and actors and other HMG programming: ARK will also be running a complementary US-funded political engagement project, leveraging the Take Action platform and therefore, with UK and US guidance and agreement, will be able to align online and offline engagement efforts on both projects, providing significant VFM as well as maximising impact (see also details in 1.2.2 and 1.2.9)

ARK has extensive experience implementing on behalf of HMG in Lebanon and ARK's Lebanon staff have strong working relationships with BEB, previous experience supporting linkages between BEB's programming in Lebanon, coordinating with other implementers to deconflict and maximise impact. ARK will work in close coordination with BEB to ensure that the platforms and outputs developed by this project are linked to its wider programming. Through, BEB, ARK will seek introductions to other HMG or partner programming so that the Take Action platform can provide coverage of relevant initiatives, CSO, individuals, etc.

> For the Take Action project, ARK partnered with MARCH, UTOPIA, the Lebanese Organization for Studies and Training (LOST) and Development for People and Nature Association (DPNA), four local organisations implementing similar work, to ensure that efforts were mutually supportive and maximised VfM. ARK also deconflicted with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) on pre- and post-elections surveying for HMG. Under the Take Action II pilot, ARK has helped Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) recruit local youth for leadership trainings conducted by WFD on behalf of HMG.

Depending on the level of coordination sought by HMG, the ARK project team can hold weekly coordination calls with other project teams to identify coverage opportunities and support other synergies (for example with offline events or activities). Cooperation could include providing coverage of other HMG initiatives or cross-posting content with and from other BEB strategic communications platforms when relevant to support social stability programming.