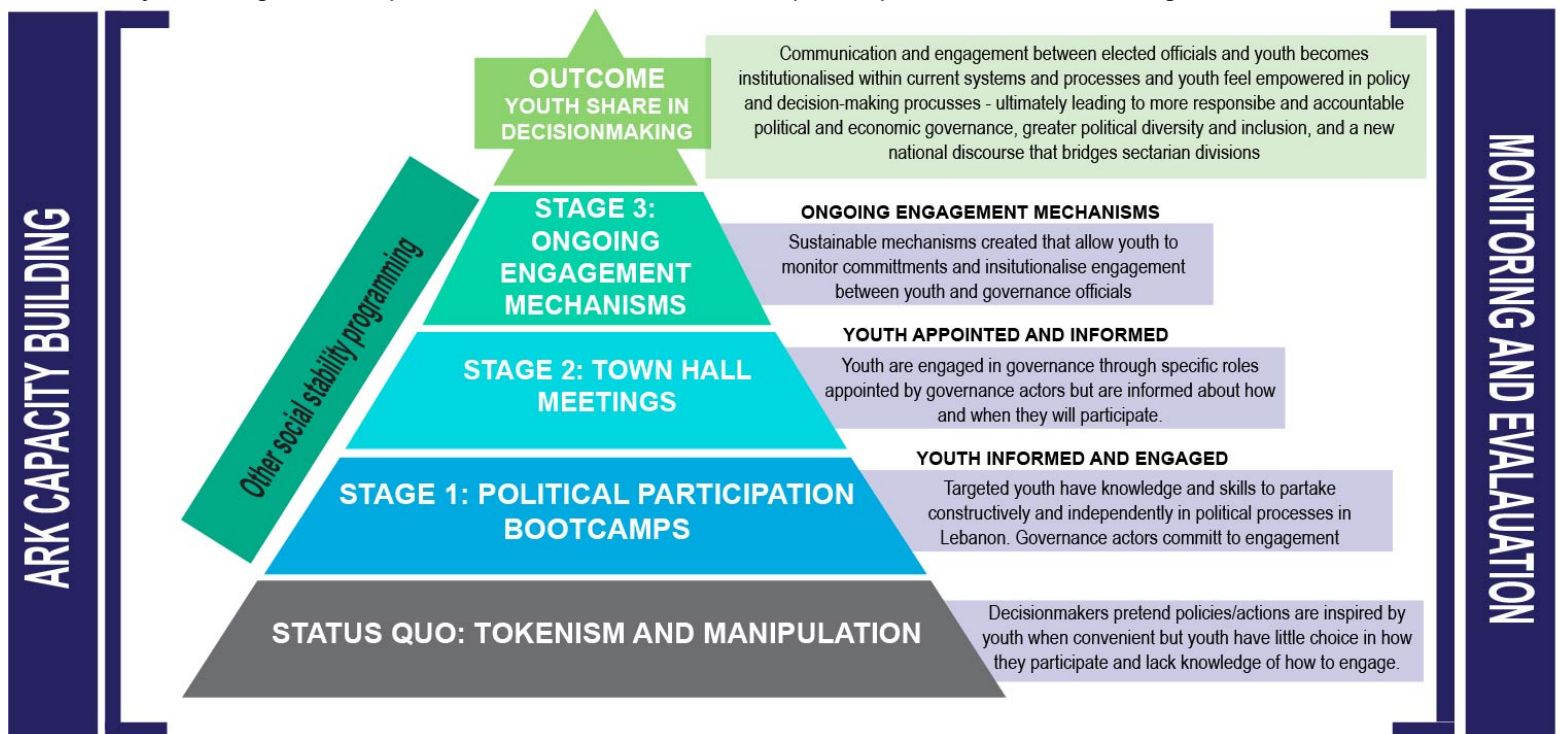


Overview: ARK's proposed approach and activities for this project are based on its ongoing research and experience implementing similar programming in Lebanon, as well as on wider academic research and best practice in youth political engagement. To structure this project, ARK has adapted a youth political engagement pyramid from a model developed by Roger Hart for UNICEF¹ and normed to the Lebanese context by local NGO Nahnu.² At the bottom of this pyramid is the status quo, in which governance actors involve youth when convenient and youth have little agency in how they engage with governance actors or knowledge of how to engage. In this project, ARK will partner with local groups to build on the previous success of the Take Action brand and engagement pilot to move both youth and governance actors up this pyramid, with each stage representing a step to realising a situation in which young people are active participants in, and a source of ideas and insights for, community governance. This will be achieved by educating youth and governance actors in positive engagement and increasing their ability to fulfil their roles as active citizens committed to holding elected officials accountable, linking them with governance actors to build sustainable mechanisms for meaningful engagement. The Take Action brand will develop into an umbrella network that fosters political diversity and inclusion and stimulates a new national discourse by demonstrating positive political engagement between young people and municipal leaders and MPs, building an understanding among political elites of the benefits of youth participation to develop constructive, participatory responses to the challenges facing Lebanon, thereby fostering more responsible, accountable, and transparent political and economic governance.



Beneficiary groups:

Lebanese youth: ARK's surveying post 2018 elections showed that while young people (18-30) had real expectations for change, they now doubt the potential for democratic reform. At the same time, our surveying found young people do not understand the roles and responsibilities of elected officials or citizens' ability to hold them accountable. ARK will work with existing youth groups identified as agents of positive change within their communities, on the basis that members of these groups already evidence a commitment to positive civic participation and hence are better prepared - and more likely to sustain - engagement in project activities. They can also be seen as role models by other youth for whom the barriers to engagement are higher.

Municipal Leaders and Members of Parliament: At the local and national level there is a deficit of engagement between Lebanese youth and governance actors. Any efforts to address youth issues at the local and national scale are ad-hoc and uncoordinated, with the most recent National Youth Strategy completed in 2012.³ ARK will work with MPs and municipal leaders identified as driving (and with the potential to drive) change within the political system who are

¹ Roger Hart, "Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care," Unicef, 1997.

² Nahnu, "Youth Engagement in Beirut," January 2018, <http://nahnu.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Youth-Engagement-in-Beirut.pdf>

³ Youth Forum for Youth Policy, "Lebanon's Youth Policy," 3 April 2012, http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Lebanon_2012_National_Youth_Policy.pdf

willing to engage proactively and constructively with young people in regular town halls, supporting them to develop mechanisms for sustained engagement tailored to the local context. ARK will meet with governance actors prior to all events to coach them on positive engagement.

Local communities in target areas will be secondary beneficiaries of the project. Empowering young people as agents of positive change and supporting more responsive and accountable governance will benefit community members writ-large, reducing clientelism and promoting more responsible, accountable, and transparent governance.

I. Planned Approach and Proposed Activities:

Political Participation “Boot Camps”: Following on the model of the successful Take Action pilot, ARK will engage Good Governance Expert Nizar Rammal to provide existing youth groups with a range of capacity building to enable them to reach the first level of the political engagement pyramid. Trainings will achieve this by:

1. Educating young people on the roles and responsibilities of both citizens and governance actors;
2. Working with them to identify critical local level issues that should be addressed by governance actors; and
3. Exploring different strategies for constructive engagement with officials to raise these issues, based on lessons learnt and international best practice.

Capacity building will be tailored to each group's needs (groups engaged in the Take Action pilot project will receive more in-depth, follow-on training). All trainings will follow a “train the trainer” approach so that youth groups are able to host boot camps for their peer groups. Pre- and post-testing will be carried out for each session to monitor beneficiaries' existing knowledge and the ability of groups to effectively impart knowledge and share skills. All course materials will be made available on the Take Action online platforms (see below) to allow other interested youth around the country to engage with the project. During Year 2, ARK will connect trained youth into a national network and will support regular experience-sharing meetings that bridge confessional lines and build consensus views.

Developing community-based mechanisms for engagement: Using ARK's “learning-by-doing” approach, bootcamps will include a range of tasks and activities that will connect beneficiaries with political figures to develop effective engagement mechanisms, building a culture of youth participation to achieve the second and third levels of the political engagement pyramid. Across all target geographies, this will include monthly town hall meetings and/or other engagement forums between young people, political activists, political party leaders and government officials (inclusive of MPs and municipality members). Initially town hall meetings will be facilitated by the Good Governance Expert to ensure sessions are positive and productive, however by the end of year one, responsibility for organising and facilitating town hall meetings or other engagement forums will gradually be transferred to youth groups. In advance of events, the project teams will arrange informal meetings with the municipalities and MPs to look at best practices for engaging with young people and to prepare them for the meetings. Events will be the main mode of highlighting British Embassy Beirut (BEB) participation should this be desired, by inviting BEB representatives to town halls and/or by informing participants of BEB sponsorship of the event.

ARK is currently commencing a US-funded project that aims to increase political party transparency and community engagement. Youth groups and political actors participating in this project will also be invited to attend US-funded events and will have access to materials produced to increase engagement opportunities and overall impact of both projects, while also providing value for money.

The project team will support youth groups to develop additional engagement mechanisms, such as carrying out small-scale surveying of local communities to identify or confirm key issues of concern, developing prioritisation mechanisms for local issues, and identifying creative and constructive engagement channels and platforms. Youth will be supported in this in part through building their skills by participating in U.S.-funded workshops led by LADE for local CSOs that aim to identify community issues and raise them with relevant party members. In Year Two of the project, ARK will work with local youth groups engaged in year one to identify which of the community-based engagement mechanisms could be successfully scaled into sustainable activities - such as forming municipal youth committees - and will support the youth groups to lead this effort. All engagement mechanisms will be flexible, adapted to the local context and responsive to existing and emergent local needs. This approach ensures local ownership and institutionalises communication and engagement between youth and governance actors within existing systems.

Social media campaign: During the Take Action pilot, the project's communications team shifted the previously elections-focused Take Action brand towards political engagement/participation. This project will build on progress made during the pilot phase to provide additional educational material and engage target audiences on a range of issues, supporting them through each stage of the political engagement pyramid. In addition to the political participation road map, the role of municipalities, and material already produced to hold elected officials accountable, all new training materials will be posted on the page as a free resource. The platforms will also continue to host

governance actor interviews and question and answer sessions, allowing them to explain issues in their own words and directly engage with young people. Coverage of project boot camps, events, calls to action and individual engagement with governance actors will be shared on the Take Action platform to provide examples of positive actions that can be easily replicated by peer groups. This 'social learning' approach encourages other to participate in similar actions and extends the project's reach beyond initial beneficiaries. ARK will work with local Lebanese production group, 4-Production, which oversaw production of the successful Take Action Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaign, to support humorous messaging campaigns that build on the work done for the GOTV project and the Take Action pilot. During year one, 4-Production will consult on content design and communications strategy and then will take on a greater role in year two to produce campaigns to encourage the audience to use political engagement skills ahead of the 2022 elections, ensuring that these efforts work in tandem with any national-level strategies to increase youth political participation in advance of elections. ARK's communications team will provide ongoing support to beneficiaries to use communications to cover and promote their work within their peer groups and beyond, posting content to their personal social media sites, as well as to the Take Action site. Micro, youth-focused sites may be developed if required as the project develops under Take Action branding.

Gender and Inclusivity: Despite the perceived progressive position of Lebanese women compared to other nations in the Arab region, Lebanon has one of the lowest indicators of female participation in national political life by both global and regional standards.⁴ While there are no formal restrictions on women's participation in politics, a highly patriarchal system based around male leaders and family ties, combined with a discriminatory legal landscape, lead to women's relative absence from the political sphere, particularly at the upper echelons.⁵ Lebanese men without strong family connections also face barriers to political engagement and are rarely represented on party lists or in high-level positions. Likewise, persons with disabilities (PWD) are excluded entirely from national political life and face significant barriers to participation.

Cognisant of these challenges, this project will mainstream gender and inclusion of PWD across all activities, including equal participation for females and males in trainings and community engagement, and ensuring trainings are accessible for PWD. Including youth groups in the design of trainings and activities, while allowing them to select the issues they wish to engage with political representatives on, will ensure that the project is relevant to the needs and priorities of both male and female youth and PWD. In particular, acknowledging the deficit of women in Lebanese politics, the project will use the Take Action platform to champion existing female leaders in Lebanon, both within the political sphere and in the public and private sectors. In doing so, the project will seek to foster a dialogue on the importance of female participation to a functioning democracy in Lebanon and also provide positive role models for female beneficiaries. In year two, the project will join trained female youth across target areas to form a network of young women engaged in politics in Lebanon and to connect these women with a mentor, thereby supporting them in the formation of a national group capable of pushing for greater change.

Conflict Sensitivity: The design of this proposal is supported by a top-level conflict analysis informed by the nationwide TAA conducted by ARK in 2019 and lessons learned from implementation of Take Action and US-funded programming. This will be expanded during the inception period into a full conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity plan. Our analysis and approach to conflict sensitivity includes the following:

- **Contextual awareness and mapping** – To understand motivations, dynamics, affiliations, and project successes and challenges to date, ARK consults a diverse cross section of stakeholders so as not to display inadvertent bias. The team will review partners, identify formal and informal leaders among different sections of the target audience and ensure that the cultural identity(ies) of communities are considered in content and activity design. The project team considers historical relations and tensions within or between target communities; existing tensions and how these factors dynamically interact with the conflict ecosystem; who is driving or being affected by these; what drivers are already being addressed; and how to identify opportunities.
- **Connectors and local capacities for social cohesion** – We examine which individuals or groups are in a position to influence the operating context – either negatively or positively – and how this project can reinforce or mitigate them; and how dynamics are typically managed, formally and informally.
- **Conflict sensitive implementation:** Throughout implementation, the project team will review anticipated outcomes through scenario mapping and carry out ongoing reviews at monthly programme boards to ensure that the overall project design and activities remain conflict sensitive. The conflict analysis will be refreshed at least quarterly, feeding into the wider quarterly review process. ARK has a dedicated conflict sensitivity advisor, Dr Teri Murphy from the Mershon Centre at Ohio State University, who supports all reviews. Conflict sensitivity risks are integrated into the project risk register and reviewed at the weekly project meeting to enable timely adjustments.

⁴ <https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/publications/092011LebanonGenderFINAL.pdf>

⁵ Ibid.

The project team will review online communications on an ongoing basis to ensure that content remains conflict sensitive and take corrective action if required.

II. Geographic Targeting Criteria and Local Partnerships

ARK has selected the Bekaa, Beirut, Chouf, and Tripoli as four priority regions for intervention based on the target audience segmentation it carried out for the 2019 TAA. This indicated that youth in these areas are most likely to be effectively influenced to engage in political behaviours leading to positive social change.⁶ ARK previously worked in all of these areas during the Take Action pilot and has a reputation as a credible actor among existing local youth groups and governance actors. Supporting local groups capable of providing training and organising events at the municipal level ensures flexibility and adaptability and allows activities to easily shift to new local target areas depending on opportunities and constraints. Should the Lebanese government begin work on a new national youth strategy, the project team will ensure that local level activities are tailored to align with strategy, and if possible, feed into strategy development.

Bekaa: Under the Take Action pilot, ARK provided political participation boot camp training to 30 students at Lebanese International University (LIU) in the Bekaa, an area that has a mixed confessional status, and held a town hall meeting between them and MP Abdul Rahim Murad. ARK will partner with the Lebanese Organization for Defending Equality and Rights (Louder), a youth-run group based out of LIU that provides trainings on human rights and activism. Louder will support the provision of additional training to follow on from the previous boot camp, help recruit other youth in the Bekaa, and identify mechanisms for ongoing engagement with governance actors.

Beirut: In Beirut, ARK will continue to partner with Saint Joseph University to organise town hall events to connect students with political actors. Likewise, ARK will engage the Professional Centre of Mediation (CPM) at USJ to provide political participation boot camp training to youth groups at USJ (follow-on training to Take Action) and at other universities, including the Lebanese International University and the Arts, Sciences and Technology University in Lebanon (AUL). As demonstrated during Take Action, engagement with CPM gives the initiative credibility with the various political parties and helps engage universities. One of the trained groups will include Beirut24, which works on advocacy and community mobilisation to improve youth political participation, and will support further training.

Chouf: Following the 2016 municipal elections, the Chouf region saw the rise of alternative movements and increasing youth activism and engagement. However, this ended with disappointment in 2018, when the opposition list fell short of the threshold for a parliamentary seat. Intervention in the Chouf could therefore help counter youth disaffection and leverage high electoral participation towards sustained positive engagement. ARK previously worked in the Chouf during the Take Action pilot, however youth participation was comparatively low due to the small size of districts. During this project, ARK will therefore focus on building youth networks across districts and engaging governance actors at municipal union rather than municipality level.

Tripoli: While conventionally known for violence and under-development, Tripoli, Lebanon's second largest city, is also home to a growing number of youth groups and civil society movements. Through ARK's previous violence prevention work in the city with the youth-led Ana Hon platform, the project team has strong ties with local youth groups and governance stakeholders. During the Take Action pilot, part of the local group Hala Baqa reached out to the project team to seek support in holding a town hall in Tripoli. ARK will work with this group to provide them with boot camp training and support them to train other youth and organise events.

Leveraging the Take Action Brand

ARK is currently commencing a US-funded project that aims to increase political party transparency and broad community engagement and we will work with the UK and US to develop appropriate coordination mechanisms to link proposed activities for this project with complementary US-funded activities taking place under the Take Action brand to maximise value for money and project impact. US-funded content produced for the Take Action platforms will grow overall reach, while this project will produce youth-focused campaigns for the platforms that relate directly to this project's objectives. Youth trained by this project will also have the opportunity to participate in offline political engagement training and activities conducted by ARK and its partner the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE), linking youth groups both to CSOs and a wide range of governance actors, including those who have previously not participated in these types of engagement.

⁶ This segment of the population was defined by a specific combination of: socio-economic status (neither extremely high or extremely low income), positive political self-efficacy (more confident that they could personally perform a number of actions related to influencing decisions, maintaining relationships with decision makers, or monitoring the performance of officials); and perceptions of the influence of foreign actors and influences (more likely to perceive lower levels of foreign influence).