

2.4 Conflict Sensitivity

Approach to Conflict Sensitivity and Conflict Analysis: Conflict sensitivity is at the core of ARK's operating principles. To ensure that all programming is evidence- rather than assumptions-based, we conducted a top-level conflict sensitivity analysis in the design of this project, working with our Lebanese gender advisor and selected partners, to identify the most effective and appropriate ways to engage CSOs and other stakeholders in increasing women's participation in politics. This also provided the ARK project team with a detailed understanding of how implementation is likely to affect different groups in each area.

Previous experience has demonstrated that programming in support of women's empowerment can expose women to further risks if not carefully designed and this will be a key consideration in all activities, given that in some locations for this project, women's participation in politics and decision making is directly and openly opposed by political and armed groups. ARK has therefore adopted a gender mainstreaming approach to this project, ensuring that men and boys are included as key stakeholders and as training beneficiaries. Through its weekly project meetings, the ARK team will examine all activities, and the behaviour of partners, to understand if these send implicit messages that reinforce conflict dynamics or if activities risk a backlash from local communities or political actors given prevailing social and cultural attitudes. ARK uses the following tools to integrate conflict analysis in programming and operational procedures:

- **Contextual awareness** – ARK's ten years of programming in Lebanon and predominantly Lebanese implementation team provides a high level of nuanced understanding of the different stakeholder motivations, dynamics, and affiliations at play across the different political parties and geographical areas this project will work in. The ARK team will also work with and consult a diverse cross section of stakeholders so as not to inadvertently align with one group or another. We look to identify formal and informal leaders among different sections of the community and consider and adapt to the culture-related needs of community sub-groups when designing and implementing activities. Given the potential sensitivity of the subject matter, we also take into account safety and security fears and evaluate protection risks for all community members.
- **Identify spoilers and sources of tension** – For all areas we look at programming in, particularly for work with municipalities under Pillar 2, we will take into account historical relations and tensions within or between gender or other groups, and ensure that we are aware of any existing tensions such as existing power dynamics in specific municipalities between particular political parties, who is driving or being affected by these and how these may negatively affect the project.
- **Connectors and local capacities for increased women's participation** – We will examine ways and places that men, women, boys and girls naturally come together, and look at the key roles women are already playing, formally or informally, to understand if and how we can further develop these as part of the intervention.
- **Project design** – The project has been designed to include ongoing consultation processes and monitoring to ensure that the project does not – and is seen not to - align with specific groups/leaders over others, does not impose unwanted or unnecessary interventions on individuals or communities, and avoids personal prejudices affecting the project's work.
- **Intervention analysis** – We assess community needs to understand who will be served and who will be left out and review anticipated outcomes to understand how to reduce the possibility of doing harm. The project team will ensure that any intervention minimises existing divisions and that there are confidential complaints mechanisms integrated into the project.

Monitoring and Evaluation: ARK undertakes ongoing project monitoring which is briefed into the team's weekly project meeting, and evaluates activities for gender and conflict sensitivity. This enables ARK's project team to fully understand the effects of activities undertaken, allowing them to adapt or alter these as required.