

Context and General Approach: Surveying by ARK on behalf of UNDP finds that both Syrians and Lebanese feel relations between the two communities have worsened since 2014. Drivers of poor relations between communities and associated tensions vary greatly at the local level but are rooted in structural issues resulting from increased demographic pressure on already-stretched resources, specifically competition for jobs and services, and negative perceptions regarding the political situation in Lebanon and regionally. Yet, despite the persistence of these structural drivers of tensions, levels of inter-communal violence remain low as the Syrian refugee crisis enters its eighth year. Research by ARK finds two main factors mitigate against tensions escalating to violence: greater inter-community interaction and higher perceptions of the fairness of assistance. Given the inability of strategic communications to address structural drivers, ARK has integrated these research findings with academic research on social cohesion and stability to develop an approach that reinforces drivers of reduced tension amongst and between Lebanese host communities and refugees in Lebanon and increases their resilience, thereby reducing the risk of conflict, violent conflict, and violent extremism.

In addition to ARK's target audience analysis (TAA) research for HMG (2016 and 2019) and ongoing research for UNDP on social cohesion (2017 – 2021), ARK's approach in this project is rooted in inputs from ARK's M&E, and insight from consortium partners Nudgeco and Impact Initiatives, with expert insight from Dr Neville Bolt, Director of the Strategic Communications Centre at King's College London War Studies¹ department. Through this, ARK has developed three core programmatic building blocks for the project that are designed to reduce the risk of violence by enhancing social stability and resilience. These building blocks are grounded in academic theory and adapted to the Lebanese context:

1. **Inclusive relationships:** Social interactions, both on- and offline that build relationships between communities increase empathy between individuals and communities, reduce negative stereotypes, and reinforce mutual perceptions of common grounds for cooperation.² Research by ARK on behalf of UNDP validates this finding in the Lebanese context, demonstrating that where Lebanese and Syrians within a community share social bonds and common views of community problems, positive collective action will both be more likely to take place and the propensity to violence will be reduced.³ The potential impact of inclusive relationships on social cohesion can be amplified through empowering local community representatives in nonviolent communication techniques and conflict resolution principles.⁴
2. **Positive self-efficacy:** Individuals or groups who believe in their innate ability to achieve goals and manage prospective situations are more likely to exhibit positive coping behaviour in the face of obstacles.⁵ Conversely, individuals or groups with negative self-efficacy may be less willing to take action, or, may be more likely to take negative actions, including violence, drug use, or engagement in violent extremist groups (VEOs). Evidence from the Lebanese context indicates one way that both Syrians and Lebanese can build positive self-efficacy is through pro-social community engagement.
3. **Access to social justice** – In the context of Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities, ARK approaches social justice by addressing the reasons that people feel insecure. These are generally rooted in factors of discrimination both within one's own community (e.g. intra-Lebanese or intra-Syrian) and between communities. For example, one of the main drivers of tensions and therefore insecurity between Lebanese and Syrians is the perception within host communities of unfairness in the distribution of aid and services. ARK's research demonstrates that such views impede social justice and therefore negatively impact social stability by making individuals less likely to work with others within and outside their community for positive social change.⁶

Beneficiary Groups: The primary beneficiary groups of this project will be Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities, including local governance institutions and NGOs, in the 251 most vulnerable localities in Lebanon mapped by UNDP in 2015 and which ARK's research on social tensions affirms remain valid. Selection of these groups as primary beneficiaries is based on the finding of higher perceptions of refugee population pressure in these areas and also of higher propensity to violence.⁷ Secondary beneficiary groups will include Palestinian refugees and Lebanese communities not hosting Syrian refugees in significant numbers, both of whom are prone to see Syrians as taking their jobs and opportunities.

Targeting strategy: The consortium will employ a regional targeting strategy focusing on vulnerable localities in northern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, southern Lebanon, and Beirut that builds on the 2019 TAA research completed by ARK on behalf of HMG. Specifically, using data from the TAA, ARK will conduct focused research during the inception period to delineate local level potential target audiences (PTAs) from both the Lebanese and Syrian communities in each region, with PTAs defined by: a) higher propensity to take violent action and/or b) higher likelihood to take positive collective action. A

¹ King's College London, "Dr. Neville Bolt," <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/people/dr-neville-bolt>

² Bruneau, E. G., and Saxe, R. (2012). The power of being heard: The benefits of 'perspective-giving' in the context of intergroup conflict. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48(4), 855-866

³ ARK, "Regular Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon, Wave I," July 2017, pg. 14.; ARK, "Regular Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon, Wave III," April 2018, pg. 14.

⁴ Burleson, M., Martin, M., and Lewis, R. Assessing the Impact of Nonviolent Communication – An Outcome Evaluation. The Center for Nonviolent Communication, https://www.cnvc.org/sites/cnvc.org/files/NVC_Research_Files/EVAL-2011-Final.pdf

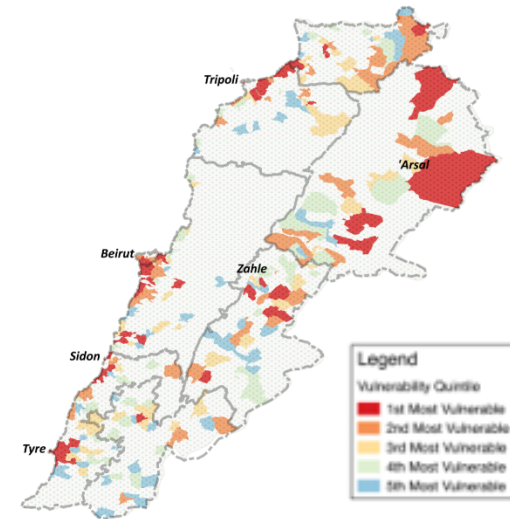
⁵ Bandura, Albert (1982). "Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency". *American Psychologist*. 37 (2): 122–147.

⁶ ARK, "Regular Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon, Wave II," January 2018.; In the second wave, nearly all (90.3%) respondents in the most vulnerable cadastres agreed with the statement, 'Vulnerable Lebanese have been neglected in international aid/assistance programmes'.

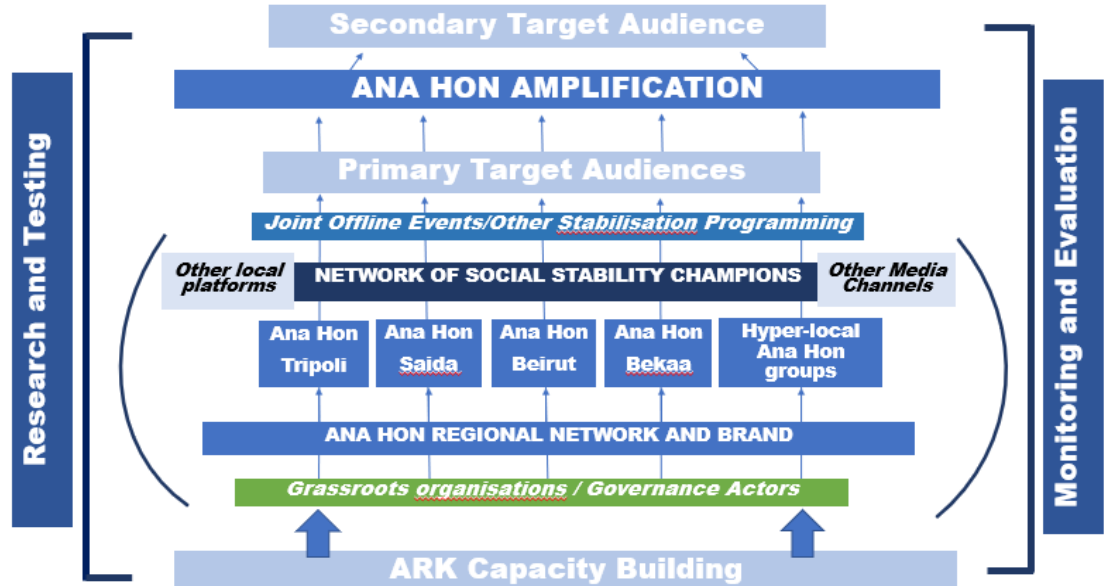
⁷ ARK, "Regular Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon, Wave III," pg. iii

supporting gender analysis and conflict sensitivity assessment⁸ will be carried out during inception by ARK's gender and conflict sensitivity focal points. These will provide further insight into PTAs by informing how cross-cutting issues of gender, class, and social status inform perceptions, affect opportunities and constrain programming. For each of the project pillars, and in line with HMG's communications guidelines⁹, ARK will promote two types of associated change among these PTAs: 1) an increase in awareness and 2) a change in behaviour, both of which are mutually reinforcing and will support the overall project objective of increasing social cohesion.

Planned Approach: ARK will adopt a three-pillar approach to this project that engages and builds the capacity of local communities, existing media actors, sub-national and local governance actors and NGOs/CBOs to use strategic communications in defusing tensions between/among host communities through mainstreaming social stability narratives supporting drivers of social stability. The three main activities outlined below are designed to be mutually reinforcing in mainstreaming social stability narratives around community cohesion at all levels, from the hyper-local to the sub-national. Gender and conflict sensitivity will be mainstreamed throughout¹⁰ all communications activities, with activities tailored to overcome barriers to inclusivity and ensure that the project does not drive or reinforce existing conflict drivers. Ongoing research and M&E in collaboration with consortium partners Impact Initiatives and Nudge and in partnership with Dr. Neville Bolt, will provide strategic guidance throughout implementation to inform project decision-making and identify areas where the below project activities and messaging could be adapted to maximise impact.



1) Leveraging the Ana Hon brand: ARK will leverage and expand the already-established, highly successful *Ana Hon* (I Am Here) Facebook platform as a regional platform and brand for hyper-local sub-groups designed to deliver targeted messaging within PTAs that counters intra- and inter-communal discrimination and promotes social stability narratives.



- **Expanding the existing platform:** The existing cross-regional *Ana Hon* platform (covering Saida, Bekka, and Tripoli) will be expanded to Beirut and broader regional locales and will serve as a sub-national aggregator for stories about local initiatives that provide replicable examples of pro-social behaviour and counter negative perceptions surrounding refugees and Lebanese host communities (including negative perceptions of other Lebanese within host communities).
- **Expanding the Ana Hon brand:** To ensure access to all PTAs, ARK will also establish hyper-local media platforms and groups under the *Ana Hon* 'brand', such as closed Facebook groups or offline community groups. Stories from hyper-local platforms/groups will be posted on the regional platform to support a networked approach.
- **Growing the Ana Hon network:** Expansion of the *Ana Hon* brand will be enabled by recruiting and training new *Ana Hon* reporters to join the existing cohort of 24. New reporters will be recruited to ensure reach into all PTAs (e.g. inclusive of Syrian refugees, women and older male demographics) and will specifically seek to include at least 50% women as they are more likely to be able to conduct effective outreach to female audiences.
- **Delivering targeted messaging:** Potential awareness-raising methods will be tailored based on research and M&E to ensure conflict sensitivity and adaptation to the local context while addressing the three core pillars of the project's

⁸ The gender analysis delivered during inception will meet CSSF gender mainstreaming guidelines, DFID guidelines for integrating gender in strategic communications (2018) and incorporate ARK's own learning and multiple consultations with HMG gender advisors.

⁹ Government Communications Service, "Strategic communication: behavioural approach," <https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/guidance/campaigns/behaviour-change-is-one-of-the-primary-functions-of-government-communications/>

approach to social stability. These messages will seek to reinforce factors for peace, counter drivers of tensions, and build audience members perceptions of their own self-efficacy and ability to contribute to positive change. Offline events, including offline calls to action and events, will reinforce messaging and support sustainable behavioural change through relationship building.

- *Providing value for money:* In Year Two, the *Ana Hon* network, under supervision from ARK, will take on increasing oversight over recruitment of new network members, providing related training. Likewise, *Ana Hon* will gradually assume responsibility for production-related training for local governance actors, NGOs, and other media outlets included in the project (see below), thereby increasing VfM while supporting the pillars of social stability through project design.

Using the *Ana Hon* brand rather than relying on solely empowering existing independent media ensures control of messaging and narratives, which is essential to a targeted approach to maintaining or changing perceptions and to accurately assessing the impact of strategic communications on the reduction of tensions.

The *Ana Hon* Facebook platform was established in 2016 under a Canadian-funded social cohesion project, that spanned Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian nationalities in vulnerable locations in Lebanon. *Ana Hon* achieved documented, positive behaviour and attitudinal change amongst beneficiaries, such as Ahmad Aysan, who now runs a popular show in which he interviews local figures and politicians. The platform still posts daily content, maintains 68,000 followers, and reaches 12% of the Lebanese population.

2) Establishing a network of social stability champions of established local media actors and influencers: Using ARK's media connections, the team will develop and provide training support for a network of existing independent local media actors and influencers committed to promoting peace and counteracting narratives that could contribute to violence.

- *Engaging local stakeholders:* ARK's production team will establish a network of popular local and sub-national media actors to become "social stability champions" and provide them with additional, tailored training in production, pro-social messaging, and countering disinformation to inculcate efforts to defuse tensions among host communities and refugees among existing local media.
- *Linking project components:* Through quarterly experience-sharing meetings with the network of social stability champions and the *Ana Hon* team, ARK will encourage relationship building and support identification of synergies. When relevant, the *Ana Hon* platform will re-post pro-social content from social stability champions. The latter will also be encouraged to re-post *Ana Hon* content and provide coverage of offline events, increasing reach and VfM.
- *Securing national coverage:* ARK will also seek to place coverage about initiatives by the network of social stability champions and *Ana Hon* in national media outlets, boosting name recognition and credibility for network members and extending reach into secondary target audiences.

Supporting champions of social stability will inculcate efforts to defuse tensions among host communities and refugees among existing local media, thereby equipping them to contribute to sustainable mitigation of tensions and the promotion of stability beyond the project. Likewise, linking this network with the *Ana Hon* network will help foster collaboration and opportunities for the *Ana Hon* team, who may otherwise be excluded from the traditional media space, after project closure.

3) Building the capacity of 'agents of change' in local governance and NGOs: Using connections with local municipalities in target areas established through its other governance and communications programming, ARK will support local governance actors and NGOs in developing strategic communications that leverage their existing activities to support social stability and reduce tensions.

- *Engaging and empowering local stakeholders:* ARK's in-house capacity building team and external consultants will provide communications capacity building training and support for offline community engagement to local governance actors, including municipalities, and NGOs identified as "agents of change" for the reduction of inter-communal tensions between Syrian refugees and host communities. In recruiting agents of change, ARK will ensure at least 30% are women, on the basis that mainstreaming gender across project activity is fundamental to ensuring "empowered communities" that can sustain impact.
- *Support for offline events:* ARK will also support agents of change in holding monthly offline events that connect with and inform community members. Such events aim to counter perceptions of social injustice resulting from misinformation and improve perceptions among both Syrians and Lebanese of those working to support their communities.
- *Linking project components:* ARK will link local governance actors and NGOs with the *Ana Hon* team and network of social stability champions, who will provide coverage of government/NGO initiatives. This will amplify offline events as replicable examples of community cooperation, inclusive relationship and pro-social engagement.

Communications support to governance actors and NGOs, who are at the forefront of addressing structural drivers of tensions, will maximise their impact by teaching them how to publicly frame their efforts in a way that supports social stability (such as emphasising how assistance for refugees also benefits Lebanese). Linking them with the other two project components will also amplify local efforts and build trust in local governance, a key element of social stability in the Lebanese context.