

**5. Explain your methodology for monitoring and evaluating the success of the project activity. How will you monitor the quality of the deliverables, horizon scan and adjust the project over its lifetime to benefit from learning, and exploit opportunities 2 pages**

ARK has extensive experience delivering behaviour change strategic communications projects in complex contexts, which has allowed it to iteratively refine its approach to measuring impact and behaviour change. ARK benefits from cooperation with its academic advisory board (Kings College London, Ohio State University [US] and Deakin University [Australia]) as well as its dedicated Beirut-based social stability research team, expert partners, and SMEs, whose expertise is critical when project evaluations require measurement of abstract concepts, such as social stability and social cohesion, or where the context is particularly complex and innovative M&E methods are required to rigorously assess the quality and success of projects.

ARK has partnered with two regional evaluation partners, IMPACT and Nudgeco, whose work, in conjunction with ARK's own internal M&E, will provide a comprehensive overview of the success of project activity. This will also generate regular lessons learned and best practices that feed into on-going delivery, as well as identifying lessons for future programming. IMPACT is an M&E and research organisation, based across the MENA region. It has extensive experience evaluating strategic communications programming, as well as projects that include social cohesion, social resilience and stability outcomes. IMPACT delivered third party monitoring (TPM) for the UK Government's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) in Syria between 2016 and 2019, and in 2017 conducted the baseline evaluation of the USAID implementing transparent, innovative and effective solutions (CITIES) programme. Both projects aimed to support more resilient and cohesive communities through municipal capacity building, with social cohesion outcomes. Its evaluation will focus on progress against the results framework; approach and performance on gender-sensitivity, conflict-sensitivity, and Value for Money; as well as identifying wider lessons learnt.

Nudgeco is the first social purpose company in the Middle East dedicated to the advancement and application of behavioural sciences to public policy and organisational challenges through use of experimentation tools such as randomised controlled trials (RCTs). Nudgeco is a leader in applied behavioral science in a variety of public policy settings, in particular, improving citizen-centered policies and steering people and organisations towards optimal decision-making.

**Approach to M&E:** This will be led by ARK, with external evaluations from IMPACT and Nudgeco, with expert input from Dr Neville Bolt, Director of the Strategic Communications Centre at King's College London. ARK's approach to M&E follows project cycle activity, and is participatory, inclusive, and gender and conflict sensitive. During the inception phase, the ARK M&E team will contribute to any design changes. The team will also carry out a rigorous baseline in conjunction with IMPACT, where Key Performance Indicators (at Impact, Outcome and Output level) will be benchmarked for on-going monitoring. The baseline will assess initial measures of social cohesion in target communities, as well as incidences of tension and perceptions of in- and out-groups. ARK also establishes KPIs drawn from across industries and sectors (e.g. humanitarian, development and peacebuilding), that allow ARK to benchmark its progress against wider standards to ensure quality of delivery. KPIs will be both qualitative and quantitative in nature (see below for further).

**Monitoring:** ARK's monitoring of quality and progress is done on a regular basis (usually weekly or monthly, depending on project requirements), and involves tracking KPI targets via monitoring offline events, ethnographic observation and pre- and post- testing. ARK also upskills its local partners to be able to do their own monitoring activities, which adds another layer of quality monitoring to project delivery. Additionally, ARK uses its digital intelligence and social listening capabilities to monitor the quality of online communications delivery, as well as progress towards outcomes. To do so, ARK uses Crowd Analyzer (CA), the first digital sentiment analysis tool that functions in Arabic. ARK also uses Datamir, a keyword mining platform, that tracks keywords in geo-targeted locations and identifies conversations of interest or virality, thus enabling ARK to understand the reach and resonance of campaign messaging and flexibly adapt messaging to local contexts. ARK will also use FanPage Karma to monitor *Ana Honi's* performance and to track progress against quantitative digital metrics. Where monitoring activity identifies issues in quality, the M&E team are able to flag this to be addressed by relevant staff immediately, and ARK's weekly project meetings and monthly

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programme boards provide additional opportunities to address quality control issues. Additionally, these meetings and programme boards provide the project team more broadly with structured opportunities to use the most recent data to review any changes in context, to adapt the project to fit contextual evolution, or to expand project activity (where possible and appropriate) in current or future iterations of the project.

**Iterative Learning:** ARK's approach to learning over the project cycle uses data from monitoring and evaluation activity, but also generates learning-specific data through discrete learning activities such as completing monthly project journals with project teams and holding quarterly reflection sessions and thematic reviews to ensure project information is disseminated amongst, and used by, relevant stakeholders. Quarterly reflection sessions are scheduled at key project decision gates (e.g. the start of each new quarter) to ensure that any necessary adaptations can be incorporated in a timely manner. At the end of the project, beyond contractual and regular reporting requirements, ARK will produce a final learning report, that is overseen by Dr Neville Bolt and incorporates ARK's M&E data, IMPACT's evaluations and Nudgeco's randomised control trials (RCTs). This report will aim to understand if, and to what extent, strategic communications can impact behaviour change to improve social cohesion.

**Evaluation:** IMPACT will deliver formative evaluations at key milestones over the course of the project that will feed into any course corrections and provide learning materials. IMPACT will also conduct a final impact evaluation using quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and control and treatment groups, to measure increased social cohesion. Nudgeco will deliver an initial RCT in the first six months of the project as a proof of concept, the results of which will feed into project learning and potential implementation adaptation in Q2. Nudgeco will use this learning to deliver a second, larger RCT that encapsulates the whole project and will ascertain to what degree certain behaviours have changed, and how they impact social cohesion. RCTs are a scientific approach used to test behaviour change by monitoring a control and treatment group over a period of time, using statistical methods to ascertain reasons behind changes in the group, and attributing these changes to project activity.

**Accountability & transparency:** ARK's M&E team supports an accountability and transparency function by running feedback systems (appropriately tailored to the project) that allow beneficiaries and project stakeholders to anonymously and safely contact ARK to ask for information, or to report issues with the project. ARK operates this mechanism using multiple modalities (e.g. offline meetings, WhatsApp hotlines, emails) to ensure broad coverage in the target communities. ARK has a severity scale for types of information received and escalates and responds to issues according to severity. Most recently, ARK used the feedback mechanism on a youth governance project in Lebanon. Youth beneficiaries were able to contact ARK M&E staff via a specific WhatsApp hotline, as well as text. M&E staff would then respond to the beneficiary, log complaints and escalate responses depending on the nature of the complaint and its immediacy. ARK's M&E officer also attended all project offline events, and informed beneficiaries that should they have issues they wish to raise in person, he was available to speak confidentially. Finally, ARK staff and partners have access to ARK's third-party whistleblowing hotline – SafeCall – which functions in 140 languages and allows individuals to anonymously raise issues to a neutral third-party.

**Inclusive M&E:** ARK's approach to M&E is rights-based and inclusive. This means ARK uses M&E data to ensure project activity adheres to principles of 'Do No Harm', and also upholds standards of transparency and accountability to project beneficiaries and stakeholders. At a minimum, all project data is sex and age disaggregated, but ARK typically includes additional, intersectional markers where relevant to analysis. ARK integrates gendered outcomes and outputs into Results Frameworks and monitors for backlash against any group involved in the project. Additionally, ARK monitors delivery to ensure all social and gender groups in target locations have equitable access to project benefits.