

Recognising the complex and evolving challenges associated with both monitoring remote projects and proving the impact of strategic communications programming, and learning from the consortium partners' years of experience in this field, the consortium bases its M&E approach on best practices from strategic communications, media for development, and conflict transformation evaluation disciplines. To meet the unique needs and requirements of this project, ARK and TGSN have chosen to partner with Conflict Management Consulting who will provide Audience Insight and Evaluation (AI&E). The AI&E and M&E strands will serve as coordinated yet autonomous functions to assess the impact of MOR programme activities on Syrian and international target audiences and will drive continuous learning and improvement.

The project M&E strand

M&E will be fully mainstreamed by the stratcomms implementers (ARK and TGSN) across project delivery, both supporting in-depth thinking about the feasibility and measurability of results and providing ongoing rapid assessments of outputs, outtakes and outcomes based on empirical evidence.

Designing Metrics and Indicators: The M&E team will work with HMG to finalise the project's theory of change to clearly state the inputs, activities, outputs, outtakes and outcomes that will lead to the communications objectives and contribute to the impacts outlined in the SoR. Next, ARK, TGSN and CMC will identify measures and indicators of activity, performance and effect both for the project and for each campaign. The consortium partners will then compile a logical framework and design conflict, context and gender-sensitive data collection tools to track delivery, campaign progress, and outcome indicators. Indicative Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for this project are based on the consortium's experience of communications programming in Syria to date, and include:

- Number of target audience members exposed to credible messaging that demonstrates the effectiveness and unity of opposition structures, highlighting that these values are aligned with those of most Syrians; targets are disaggregated by messaging platform.
- Percentage of online posts earning greater than 4% engagement rate (the Syrian average is 2%) and proportion of in-person events attracting greater than 80% of anticipated audiences.
- 30% increase in the number of opposition governance, security, service provision and civil society organisations participating in thematically-linked campaigns.
- 25% increase in the number of governance, security, justice and service provision entities reporting that participating in project activities has resulted in increased citizen engagement.
- A monthly average of five regional and international media outlets broadcasting project partners' material that exposes and highlights the abuses and military excesses of the Assad Regime and its backers.

Using technology for innovative M&E in hard to reach areas

The consortium is using both innovative digital technology, and existing digital technology employed in innovative ways, to track product reach and resonance. Given the complex and dynamic nature of the proposed project, the consortium will also use the following tools to help monitor and evaluate the performance and effect of project activities.

Mobile data collection applications: ARK uses encrypted mobile technology to allow for easy and efficient collection of quantitative survey data, including questionnaires and any associated imagery or videos. ARK M&E staff can also use mobile data to monitor field officers' data collection activities, which adds another layer of quality validation to the data management process.

Where content is shared using word of mouth modalities and messaging applications, ARK works with partners to gather WhatsApp metrics to collect information on shared content, images, GIFs, locations etc.

Tracking Outputs and Outtakes: Acknowledging the challenges associated with conducting primary research in Syria, the consortium will draw on existing HMG research outputs, including the ARK-delivered 2017 Target Audience Analysis (TAA) to set baselines and targets. In-house M&E processes will then test content to identify which approach is likely to be most relevant and compelling to the target audience. This will include focus grouping products in-house and amongst target audiences to understand bonding and recall, and qualitatively assessing the products. By testing products before dissemination, the consortium will ensure that disseminated materials are conflict and gender sensitive, and effective. Following dissemination of online products, the M&E team will track social media analytics, assessing reach and engagement rates and monitoring online comments for sentiment that determines the extent and tone of target audience interaction. For television broadcast of unattributed content, the consortium will rely on viewership rates provided by the stations, triangulated with media usage figures from nationwide surveys such as the TAA. Tangible results catalysed by such broadcasts will be assessed based on interviews with those featured in the TV news reports, as they are best placed to speak to immediate effects. The quality and effectiveness of capacity development activities will be assessed at three junctures. Pre- and post-tests will measure knowledge and skills acquisition, and follow-up interviews with trainees will ascertain the applicability and relevance of the acquired capabilities by identifying concrete improvements in institutional outreach behaviours. All data will be disaggregated by gender to ensure that content is appropriate for and effective with all members of the target audience.

Assessing Outcomes: The internal M&E system will examine the extent to which immediate outcomes have been realised amongst direct beneficiaries (moderate opposition civilian and armed entities) with CMC focusing on identifying direct and indirect, intended and unintended results amongst the target audience. In line with best practices, outcome identification will draw on a mix of qualitative and quantitative data sources, including:

- Structured observation during meetings, film screenings and informal broadcasts, where relevant.
- Qualitative analysis of comments posted to social media, which demonstrates awareness and attitudinal changes catalysed by products and campaigns.
- Quantitative surveys conducted in communities in Dara'a and Idlib, conditions permitting.
- Key informant interviews (KIIs) providing insights into product effects, triangulated with social and traditional media monitoring.
- Social and traditional media monitoring to identify ripple effects of products, including echoes of content or phrasing, to understand the impact of campaigns on the social media landscape.

The AI&E strand

The AI&E strand, as indicated, will be maintained by CMC. CMC provides M&E, technical assistance and research services in fragile conflict and post-conflict areas. It works for international organizations, governments and civil society, deploying multi-national and highly specialised teams of experts in peacebuilding, stabilisation and countering violent extremism, including through different forms of media. Using quantitative and qualitative research tools, they have conducted numerous evaluations and perception surveys in the Middle East, including in Syria. For International Alert, CMC conducted a study to provide International Alert and donors evidence-based conclusions and recommendations for their future engagement. For Save the Children, they did the Final Evaluation of the project "Long-term Education, Protection and Life-saving Support to Conflict Affected Children, their Families and Civil Society Organisations inside Syria". In the field of media and strategic communications, CMC and the proposed Team Leader have organised large-scale surveys, for example, for USAID OTI, in Karachi, Pakistan (2017), Cote d'Ivoire (2015) and Kyrgyzstan (2014) as well as for DFID's Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP, 2015), aiming to capture the change of perceptions and opinions about government performance, peace, security and conflict drivers through strategic communication and

other interventions. All AI&E activities will be conflict sensitive, and data will be gender disaggregated to ensure that all relevant stakeholders' perspectives are heard. The AI&E strand will employ a multi-round mixed methodology of KIIs, FGDs, quantitative surveys and social media analyses, aiming to provide a balanced representation to inform reporting as requested in the SOW, and to provide a strong knowledge and evidence base for future programming. The AI&E strand will be cumulative and thus build on the TAA conducted by ARK in April 2017. The TAA data will function as a baseline for the AI&E, allowing for benchmarking. The table below displays the frequency, population, sample size and sampling technique, and details the audience examined (Syrian/international) for each methodological tool employed.

	KIIs for non-spot reports	KIIs for spot reports	FGDs (only Syrian audience)	Surveys (only Syrian audience)	Social Media Analysis
Frequency	Monthly	As needed (estimated total: 5)	Monthly (total: 7)	Once. Data to be ready for final monthly report	Monthly
Population	Population in target areas	Pending topic/incident	Pending topic/incident	Population in target areas (comparison areas will be included)	Population in target areas
Sample size	40 domestic, 15 international	5 per topic/round - internationals as needed	2 per round with 7 participants	n=2500, allowing statistical comparison between target areas and comparison areas.	All programme output to be analysed
Sampling technique	A panel of KIIs representative on relevant variables will be selected and interviewed for each report.	Out of the panel of KIIs, relevant KIIs for specific topics will be selected, aiming to maximise information.	Stakeholders relevant to particular topic/incident will be chosen, reflecting relevant parameters (gender, age, SES).	Randomised sampling among populations in target areas, reflecting location population size. Provisionally: 5 locations in the Euphrates Shield area; 5 in Idlib; 5 in Hama countryside; 5 in Dara'a	

AI&E and project M&E reporting

ARK and TGSN will carry out targeted monitoring and evaluation activities throughout the project, and results data will be fed into the project team at weekly meetings (that will include the CMC project manager) to enable rapid adaptation. ARK's M&E department will be responsible for ensuring data is regularly sent to donors, through structured quarterly reports, logframe updates and spot reports based on ad hoc successes and/or major changes in context. For the AI&E function, there will be monthly reports. The data inputs for these reports will be from qualitative tools, including 1) a panel of KIIs, 2) needs-specific FGDs and 3) social media analyses. The social media analyses will use native tools such as Facebook Insights and additional data mining software as required. In addition, in the final monthly report, there will be data from a quantitative survey which will follow-up on the TAA to establish comparable figures. Finally, there will be spot reports, which will be based largely on KIIs.