

2.2.22 Please explain how you would encourage Syrian involvement and participation in the project activity.

1. **General.** All segments of the Syrian mosaic – young, old, pro-opposition, pro-regime, neutral, inside and outside – will be encouraged to participate in project activity through a variety of mechanisms: building trust, competitions, comment forums, discussion platforms, campaign workshops. **We have tried, tested and are currently using these methods.** The incentive to ‘get involved’ will not only stem from the spirit and continuation of the revolution, as not every Syrian has such an outlook, but from the impetus to express one’s opinion and contribute to ‘the discussion’. The bottom-up grass roots approach, i.e. Syrians encouraging other Syrians and owning the projects, is very effective as current experience and success would suggest. Such an approach facilitates dialogue between Syrians, and therefore leads to greater understanding and tolerance.
2. **How we do it**
 - a. **Inclusivity with Syrian partners.** Projects with a neutral focus targeting the broad spectrum of Syrians, such as the RevFor **#WhereAreThey** campaign, have proved extremely successful on many fronts:
 - 1) **Syrians make the campaign their own.** The campaign highlighted the enforced disappearances of Syrians at the hands of the regime and ISIS. The hashtag **#WhereAreThey trended on Twitter with over 4 million reaches** in the campaign’s first few days. This traction translated from the cyber sphere to on-the-ground participation: Syrians on the inside sprayed graffiti on walls imitating the project logo and using the hashtag. Many others found innovative ways of re-creating the logo or expressing the theme through other drawings, and would post their creations on our social media sites.
 - 2) **Pro-regimists participate too.** This campaign is probably one of, if not **the only event, in the last three years, which has united Syrians on opposing sides.** The neutrality of the campaign and its focus on the frustrations of all Syrians who have lost loved ones encouraged those who were ‘traditionally’ pro-regime to participate in the activity. Many criticized the regime for not protecting its soldiers from ISIS attacks by using the **#WhereAreThey** slogan on social media and creating their own posters endorsing the campaign.
 - 3) **Opposition voices unite and involve one another.** The synergy of the above developments encouraged Syrian activists inside and outside the country to hold virtual and actual workshops in order to further shape and energize the campaign. Such an activity demonstrates the organic development and fusion, which neutral campaigns lead to: **Syrian generated involvement leading to greater Syrian participation.**
 - b. **Outreach.** Building relationships in the Arabic speaking world is key, we understand this and use our majority Arabic speaking staff to develop relationships over extended periods. A number of our international staff have been working with prominent Syrians (**President, Interim Prime Minister, Head of the Supreme Military Council, Head of the National Coalition media office, Chairman of the Syrian Tribal Council, COS to the President, numerous senior military commanders and heads of regional news in major satellite TV networks, press bureaus and print media**) for over 2½ years. This has built trust and confidence in each other. These relationships are all current building from their support and networks we are able to maximise other Syrians’ involvement in the programmes.
 - c. **Syrian Leadership.** We have encouraged Syrians to take leadership roles in our media production and distribution offices. A female Syrian activist leads the Istanbul office, and the southern production office is headed by a defected general from the Syrian police force who holds a doctorate in media and journalism from a UK university. **Using Syrian leaders encourages other Syrians to cooperate and join the programmes.** Our international staff take a mentoring and coaching role rather than front of house.
 - d. **Competitions.** Competitions can be hosted on various media, and can draw from different genres: film; photography; cartoon drawing; picture drawing; article/essay writing. Such variety will draw in a broad range of



competitors. The motivation for such activity is self-expression and the opportunity to contribute to a wider discussion in the public domain. Competitions also lead to better quality of product as there is a greater range from which to choose .

- 1) **The young bring in the old.** Drawing or story-writing competitions for children not only actively engage the young in an educative process, but encourage their parents to take an interest and become involved in the project. Furthermore, such projects to involve the young directly undermine the “hearts and minds” campaigns, which groups such as ISIS have undertaken in the last two years.
 - 2) **Train, equip, prove yourself.** We have conducted a large number of capacity building courses for Syrian stringers. The partnership has given them new equipment, and set them tasks or competitions in order to a) put the theory into practice in a conflict-affected environment, b) establish and maintain the relationship with the stringer. Such tasks are then followed on with additional projects. This process ensures that these trainings are capacity building processes, not mere equipment transfers. Moreover, the trainees are often perspicacious to the extent that they want to return for more training and encourage others to participate with them. Our ‘lessons learned’ process ensures we are able to continuously improve and evolve our capacity building work to better meet the needs of the participants, which in turn encourages greater requirement for training.
- e. **Participation through dialogue.** As the #WhereAreThey campaign proves, dialogue between people can manifest through various media: posters, pictures, graffiti. Nevertheless, traditional modes of discussion, i.e. through interactive radio programmes and comment forums, generate a great deal of participation.
- 1) **FM Radio.** The directors in the partnership have had success in running FM radio stations with interactive programmes whereby Syrians contribute to the discussion and give their opinion. Such a programme would be an equivalent to BBC World Service’s World Have Your Say or BBC Arabic’s *Nuqtat Hiwār*. A different topic on a daily basis will ask ordinary Syrians for their opinion. Producers of the programme will look for opposing voices in order to generate a balanced and interesting discussion. The focus on ordinary citizens will encourage more Syrians to participate as they will not be expected to counter experts or journalists. From a sociological perspective, such a programme will maximize involvement, as it will most likely take place in local dialects. The contributors, therefore, will not feel the pressure of having to converse in the language of the academic elite.
 - 2) **Social media comment forums.** Such platforms have been run by the partnership for the last 2½ years, and are considered to be of the utmost importance to Syrians, who have used social media to facilitate many aspects of the revolution. Micro-blogging such as on Twitter, sharing pictures, posters and videos on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have all stimulated discussion or further creativity among Syrians originally beyond our scope.
- f. **Opening doors.** Whether nepotistic or financial, such facilitation has demonstrated to Syrians the necessity of becoming involved in our projects. We are careful to ensure that financial motivation is not the only reason Syrians participate in our programmes

One month ago an InCoStrat member in Jordan with good connections to the Syrian Tribal Council facilitated a meet between the Chairman and members of the FCO who are running a civilian project inside Syria, as their interests coincide.

This facilitation not only demonstrates our ability to help others beyond our scope, but establishes us as people to continue working with.

- 1) **Small controlled financial grants.** A recent example of the success of providing a small grant of £15k is the establishment of a media production and distribution office in Reyhanli, right on the Turkish/Syrian border. The office now regularly generates reports on international media and a constant daily stream on Syrian media outlets. Examples from the last six months include: interviews on the BBC, articles in The Times and Washington post, interviews on BBC Radio 4, World Service and US NPR.
- 2) **Introductions.** Project mentors in the partnership have often facilitated introductions between Syrian civil and political groups, up to Presidential level in the last three months, and those who may be in the position to help them. Such introductions not only highlight the usefulness of our broader networks, but are also a leverage tool to encourage people to participate in our projects.