

Incorporate role of women in the moderate opposition, Syria's political process and CSOs:

As the current implementers of the UK's strategic communications projects in Syria, ARK and TGSN are already following UK guidance on gender sensitivity; team members have participated in UK-led gender sessions and the consortium has designed this new project in consultation with female staff members, past and present beneficiaries, female Syrian journalists and CSOs, as well as using key findings from ARK's Target Audience Analysis and its UK, Canadian and Dutch-funded gender programming in Syria. This research highlighted that while Syrian women face an almost overwhelming variety of problems, there is also a critical need for information and awareness around those services and initiatives that do exist to support them. Equally, although the space for women to participate in public life has contracted significantly as the conflict has progressed, there remains a significant opportunity to support women's roles in the moderate opposition and political process by reframing coverage of women as positive and effective participants in public life, rather than as the victims they are too often portrayed as in Syrian media at present¹. As detailed in the strategy section, the consortium will include women in training and capacity building sessions with local governance actors to the extent possible, but perhaps more importantly in the current context, it will include a gender component to all training to ensure that local governance actors consider women a key target audience.

Given the significant number of Syrian households (up to 70%) that are headed by women, they are a critical audience for local governance, service and security providers. As such, the consortium has identified a gender lead within the project management team to ensure gender is considered in all capacity building and campaign development, to take into account the needs and preferences of different members of the target audience. While the TAA did not highlight any significant differences in the way men and women consume media—in terms of preferred medium or in the messages that they respond to—given the strong levels of trust target audiences placed in regional satellite broadcasters, the consortium will ensure that women are included in broadcast products, as well as on social media.

Through its Moubader platform, ARK already features positive coverage of women in each issue and on its social media pages. The Moubader team includes 11 female writers providing access to women's voices and opinions. While the focus of TGSN's MAO project has perhaps naturally been more male-centric, women remain a key audience for the Revolutionary Forces Syria (RFS) platform. It should be noted that the consortium is extremely aware of the risks of promoting women's participation beyond currently accepted social norms in Syria, given the potential to hinder message resonance or result in a backlash against female participation. The proposed project will therefore continue to subtly reframe the narrative of women, by highlighting their work and its value, and increasing the amount of coverage of their initiatives and opinions as the context allows.

AI&E / M&E strands: CMC will survey for perceptions of women's participation as an indicator of project impact. It has access to trained female enumerators to ensure that data collection includes a representative section of female views and opinions. All data will be disaggregated by age and gender where possible. Moreover, the consortium is committed to gender equality within its own teams. ARK's staff are slightly over 50% female. TGSN's board of directors is 50% female, while 33% of the project's core production personnel are women. CMC staff are 50% female, including senior staff.

¹ See: *Women in Emerging Syrian Media, a Critical Discourse Analysis (2011-2016)*, The Stitching Female Journalists Network. <https://goo.gl/JtnCuF>