

## **HMG independent monitoring programme**

# **Report for Syria Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) – Improving Human Security and Building Peace Capital**

Syria

Reporting period – First Monitoring Round - PCI / CCSD

## Introduction and Background

Upon request from Her Majesty's Government (HMG) of the United Kingdom of Great Britain, IMPACT Initiatives has monitored the HMG funded Aman Network (AN) project. AN is a group of 50 volunteer community leaders who work to prevent and manage local conflict, and improve human security by fostering social cohesion and collaboration. It currently works in 32 target communities (28 across Syria; 3 in Turkey; 1 in Jordan). The size of the operations changed over the past year.

The purpose of IMPACT monitoring was to independently collect and analyse data to improve understanding around the project, and give beneficiaries an opportunity to provide feedback on the intervention. Based on this, the information gathered can be used to identify potential areas of change within the project.

Monitoring exercises in Syria are extremely challenging due to the high volatile context and the security environment. A general lack of reliable information in a rapidly changing context, notably concerning population figures, does not allow for representative sampling to be implemented on a regular basis. Access constraints mean that contact between monitors, partner field teams and beneficiary communities has to be organised and coordinated by the Implementing Partner (IP) in order to guarantee a safe environment where participants feel secure and comfortable to share information that supports the monitoring evidence.

## Presentation of the project monitored

The AN project is currently supported through the HMG-funded *Improving Human Security and Building Peace Capital in Syria* Programme and is jointly implemented by the Peaceful Change Initiative (PCI) and CCSD. Its main objectives are to:

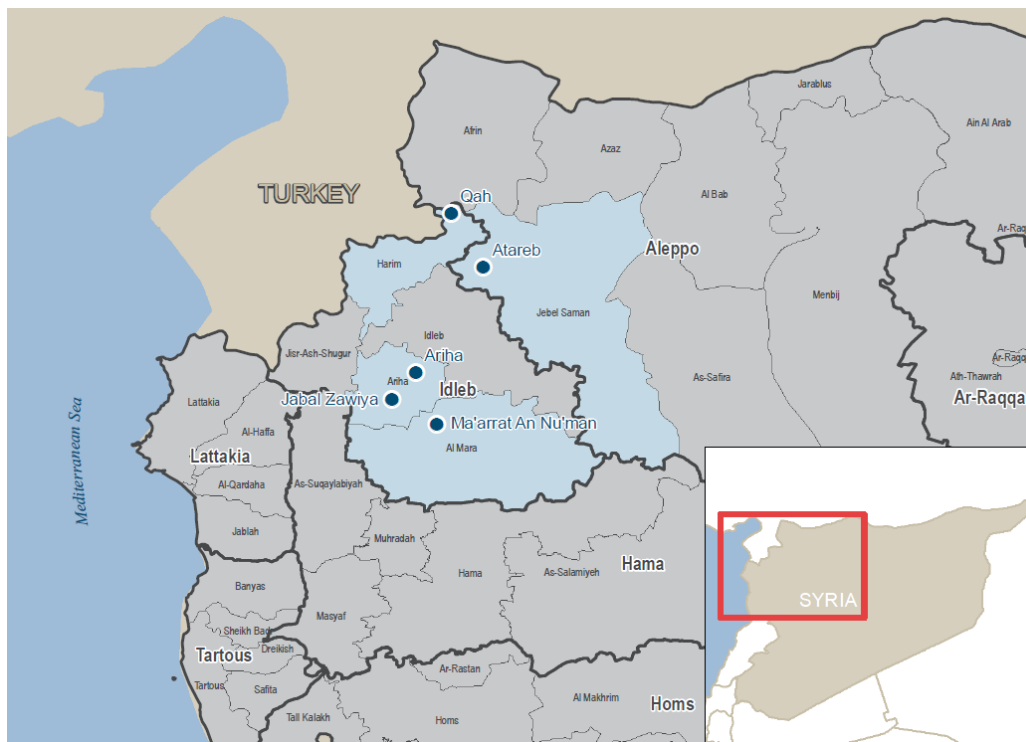
- **promote human security in conflict contexts**, negotiating humanitarian access, local peace agreements, the release of detainees, the protection of civilians and mediating local disputes;
- **build up peace capital by reducing triggers for renewed violence**, addressing community safety/human security needs in ways that rebuild relationships and foster collaboration between different religious and ethnic groups;
- **contribute to national conversations on the future of Syria**, using existing relationships with a broad range of civilian and military track II and I actors to feed community perspectives into ongoing peace processes;
- **promote civilian space, by promoting** dialogues with vetted armed actors on community safety and the need for civilian involvement; and
- **contribute to stabilisation**: Improving community resilience through non-violent mechanisms to pre-empt or resolve conflicts and facilitating the development/implementation of stabilisation and service delivery plans in collaboration with local and provincial councils.

## Monitoring Methodology

IMPACT Initiatives monitoring exercise with focus on the AN was designed in cooperation with HMG teams and the PCI and CCSD project team. Research questions, indicators, and tools were designed and discussed among all key stakeholders prior to their implementation.

The monitoring exercise has been conducted by IMPACT staff from 17 October 2016 to 4 November 2016. In order to capture various types of AN activities in the Governates of Idleb and Aleppo in Northern Syria, the following five

locations were chosen: Ma'arat Al Nouman, Ariha, Zawayah Mountain, Qah camps (Idleb Governorate) and Atareb Suburb (Aleppo Governorate).



Map 1. PCI locations where monitoring exercise was implemented.

The following table summarises the Research Questions, the Outputs and Outcomes monitored and the Indicators used. This table aligns with the Theory of Change developed by the partner for this project.

Research Questions	Outputs and Outcomes monitored		Indicators	
Has greater reliance on an inclusive dialogue-based approach been built? Has cooperation among key local stakeholders and 'across divides' increased? Do Syrians living in the target areas feel more resilient (safer), as they are better able to function in the conflict context?	<i>Outcomes monitored</i>	A greater reliance on inclusive dialogue-based approaches to managing conflict dynamics	<i>Qualitative Indicators</i>	Perception of key stakeholders on the impact of AN on strengthening local capacities in addressing conflicts through civilian dialogue-based approaches
				Awareness of key informant stakeholders in the community
		An increase in cooperation among key stakeholders and 'across divides' in managing human security and conflict issues	<i>Qualitative Indicators</i>	Perception of key stakeholders regarding the impact of the AN on human security in the targeted communities
				Perception of key stakeholders regarding the impact of AN on public trust in CSOs and civil administration structures in the target communities

		Syrians in target areas feel more resilient ('safer'), and are better able to function with the conflict context	<i>Qualitative Indicators</i>	Perception of key stakeholders on the impact of AN on strengthening local capacities in addressing conflicts through civilian dialogue-based approaches Perception of key stakeholders on the impact of AN on strengthening social cohesion and peaceful co-existence among different groups in the community
Has AN's capacity to deliver high-impact human security, social awareness, and civil peace interventions increased?	<i>Output monitored</i>	Increase in Aman Network's capacity to deliver high-impact interventions	<i>Quantitative Indicators</i>	Increase/decrease in the number of community requests for support addressed to AN over the past 12 months Number of operational AN volunteers over the past 12 months Perception of key stakeholders concerning the relevance of key skills and knowledge of AN volunteers
Have relationships been strengthened between AN and a diverse range of partners to enhance project impact?	<i>Output monitored</i>	Relationships strengthened with a diverse range of partners to enhance project impact	<i>Quantitative Indicators</i>	Number and quality of partnership meetings between AN and key stakeholders over the past 12 months (and number of people attending) Number of different organizations AN has engaged during Dialogue Forums in the past 12 months
Has the acceptance of civilian-led initiatives that promote peace and/or dialogue with other sides increased in the target areas?	<i>Output monitored</i>	Increase acceptance of civilian-led initiatives that promote peace and/or dialogue with other sides	<i>Qualitative Indicators</i>	Perception of key stakeholders regarding the impact of AN on the level of public acceptance of dialogue as a way to resolve conflicts
			<i>Quantitative Indicators</i>	Number of interventions that rely on dialogue to promote peace with other sides supported by AN over the past 12 month

The monitoring took place for a period of two days per community. IMPACT implemented both Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) in each location. A total of 19 AN local partners who work directly with CCSD teams in the field participated in the monitoring, and 5 FGDs and 37 KIIs were developed.

The next table provides some information on the monitoring exercise per communities.

Location	Day 1	Monitoring Activity	Day 2	Activity	Comments
<b>Idleb Governorate</b>					
<b>Maarat Al Nouman</b>	17.10.2016	2 KII with AN volunteers 4 KII with AN local partners 1 KII with CCSD staff	18.10.2016	1 FGD with local community stakeholders	4 duplications <sup>1</sup>
<b>Ariha</b>	18.10.2016	2 KII with AN volunteers 4 KII with AN local partners 2 KII with CCSD staff	26.10.2016	1 FGD with local community stakeholders	
<b>Zawiyah Mountain</b>	19.10.2016	2 KII with AN volunteers 3 KII with AN local partners	20.10.2016	1 FGD with local community stakeholders	5 duplications
<b>Qah camps</b>	24.10.2016	2 KII with AN volunteers 4 KII with AN local partners	25.10.2016	1 FGD with local community stakeholders	
<b>Aleppo Governorate</b>					
<b>Atareb Suburb</b>	25.10.2016	2 KII with AN volunteers 4 KII with AN local partners	26.10.2016	1 FGD with local community stakeholders	
<b>Turkey</b>					
<b>Gaziantep</b>	04.11.2016	5 KII with CCSD staff			

## Challenges and Limitations:

During the implementation of the monitoring, teams experience some challenges related with remote management and the conflict in Syria:

- In two locations assessed, some individuals participated in both FGDs and KIIs, or in different locations. Participants should ideally attend only one monitoring session, and not different types of monitoring, to ensure the availability of diverse information and points of view.
- The CCSD staff questionnaire had to be implemented in CCSD's Gaziantep office, rather than in the field as originally intended. This questionnaire was tested in the piloting phase and implemented in one location after having been approved by all parties involved. However, since the Project's records are generally archived in the Gaziantep office for security reasons, as field office could be subject to raids, the field offices could not meet IMPACT's records verification needs. The CCSD and PCI teams informed IMPACT of this challenge. After consultation with PCI management in Gaziantep, the questionnaire was implemented in CCSD's Gaziantep office on November 4<sup>th</sup>, as suggested by the PCI/CCSD team. CCSD staff members in Gaziantep participated in KI interviews. IMPACT does not know what records or if all the records are archived. For example, our Field Coordinator did not find a record for the activities in Zawiyah Mountain nor for Ma'arat Al Nouman, neither meeting minutes, whereas it was checked and confirmed in the other locations. The list of AN members in this location was checked.

<sup>1</sup> Duplication means that participants participated both in KII and FGD.

- There were challenges in the monitoring related with the limitations of the quantitative indicators such as the size of the network interviewed during the monitoring process to account for the quality of the services delivered.

## Findings

### Key Findings

All stakeholders who participated in the monitoring, when asked about AN activities, were able to name a number of activities and initiatives in their community. Their perception of the AN was overall positive: AN volunteers' skills were noted as being relevant and useful, and AN activities were seen as having a positive impact on the community. This positive impact notably concerns community's trust in public institutions, as well as its acceptance of civilian-led initiatives promoting peace or dialogue. However, there was lack of clarity among the population in the monitored areas regarding which activities and initiatives are AN activities, and which ones are not.

Overall, AN's reconciliation committee and its effort have made conflict resolution between individuals in the target communities more organised and systematic. It appears that communities' ability to interact and function in the conflict context has increased. However, other factors regarding human security and an increased resilience were outside the scope of AN interventions and significantly impact the communities' ability to function in the context.

The collected data indicates that AN has not been able to increase its capacity to deliver high-impact human security, social awareness and civil peace interventions. However, delivering high-impact human security may be outside the scope of the AN. This should be taken into consideration in future interventions.

#### Relevance:

- All interviewed key stakeholders (19 AN local partners) considered AN activities to respond to a key need in their communities, with AN volunteers' skills seen for the most part as relevant and useful. AN's Dialogue Forums were reported as useful in all monitored locations.
- Six out of eight Civil Society Organization (CSO) representatives in Ariha (Idleb) mentioned that they do not know the name Aman Network nor do they know about activities under this name. The other two CSO representatives who participated in the FGDs in this location were former members of the AN. This may be due to the fact that AN is not publicly using its name during activities, but it remains a point that requires further clarification. In the other four locations monitored, CSO representatives were aware of AN activities and the network itself.
- In all the locations monitored, AN activities were not mentioned by any AN local partners or CSO representatives when monitors asked questions about human security, trust in local institutions, conflict resolution, social cohesion or any other similar topic. Only when monitors asked specifically about AN activities, respondents mentioned AN activities as having an impact on their communities, but none of the participants mentioned activities spontaneously as having an impact.

#### Engagement:

- AN has engaged with a variety of stakeholders<sup>2</sup> to enhance cooperation and dialogue's inclusivity.

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<sup>2</sup> IMPACT monitoring was not directed to collect numbers of stakeholders.

**Effectiveness:**

- Overall, interviewed stakeholders reported AN activities as effective and to have yielded some tangible results, namely:
  - AN committees, which play an essential role in the resolution of conflicts between individuals in the community by providing a forum for dialogue and mediation. This has reportedly led to a decrease of individual conflicts in the community which at the same time has improved social cohesion. The acceptance of dialogue as a way to resolve conflicts between individuals in the community has increased in the past six months.
  - Trust in local institutions, most importantly local council and police, has increased, according to two thirds of participants, in the past six months which allows the communities to function better in the conflict context. However, according to one third of participants, there is either no trust in local institutions or it is dependent on the person representing the institution.
  - AN activities have played a significant role in raising awareness on a number of issues, such as education, random shootings, nepotism and the danger of migration with poster campaigns

**Findings by Research Question**

**Research question 1:** Has greater reliance on an inclusive dialogue-based approach been built? Has cooperation among key local stakeholders and 'across divides' increased? Do Syrians living in the target areas feel more resilient (safer), as they are better able to function in the conflict context?

Greater reliance on an inclusive dialogue-based approach has been built to an extent in the assessed communities. The IMPACT monitoring addressed the main question **on the way the community is addressing conflict**, by avoiding to mention AN itself, in order to evaluate if there was recognition of the existence of direct relation between AN directly and the way a community is addressing conflict. Only one participant in Maarat Al Nouman (Idleb) out of 19 participants in all five locations mentioned AN activities themselves had an impact, and another respondent in Ariha (Idleb) out of the same group mentioned the reconciliation committees to have also an impact in their communities.

However, two thirds of respondents (14 of them) affirmed during the monitoring that in the past six months the way their community deals with conflict has changed. The acceptance of the idea of dialogue in the communities could be one element responsible for this change – as one participant mentioned in Atareb Suburb (Aleppo). The monitoring results were unable to connect AN activities with the acceptance of dialogue or the changes with conflict management in the communities monitored. However, future monitoring rounds could explore factors that affect the way communities manage conflict, including the influence of AN activities.

When respondents were asked directly about AN activities having an impact on **the way** conflicts are addressed in the community, in all communities they mentioned that the establishment of reconciliation committees had a positive impact. According to these community members, conflict resolution has become **more organised** since people have become more aware of dialogue as a way to solve conflict and the AN has been mediating conflicts. Some examples of conflicts, where the AN has successfully intervened as mediator included (but are not limited to): marriage, divorce, murder, disputes over land, agreement over the payment of blood money to solve a conflict, beatings<sup>3</sup>, and financial dispute. However, future monitoring rounds could explore factors that affect the way communities manage conflict, including the influence of AN activities.

<sup>3</sup> There is no specification on what type of physical violence this entails in the responses.

Also, **cooperation among key local stakeholders has increased** due to the emphasis on dialogue. In all locations monitored, levels of social cohesion are high, as there are no sectarian or religious differences. According to KIs, there is no indication that cooperation ‘across divides’ has increased. In relation to particular aspects that can bring tension to communities, such as between IDPs and host communities, in some locations such as Atareb Suburb, it was mentioned that no differences are made between them, although there was no reference at all in other communities monitored.

Syrians living in the monitored areas affirm they can deal better in the context of conflict to an extent, as increased trust in local council, local police and other local institutions provides them with a mechanism to address these. This is mostly due to having a sense of their concerns being heard and addressed by the local council and other local institutions. For example, seminars and trainings provided to the local council by AN were mentioned as being a key element in this positive development. 13 Key Informants reported that the trust in local institution has increased. However, the monitoring results suggest that in some communities monitored, there is room for improvement in increasing trust in local institutions. For example, two respondents mentioned that trust had not increased in Zawiyah Mountain (Idleb), one in Maarat Al Nouman and Ariha (Idleb). This is an important element, relevant to the core of the project which has been monitored, as trust in public institutions is a core element of human security.

**Research question 2:** Has the AN's capacity to deliver high-impact human security, social awareness, and civil peace interventions increased?

This research question related to AN's capacity to deliver high-impact human security, social awareness, and civil peace interventions, was measured through a count of the number of AN's community requests received, the number of operational volunteers, and the existence or not of skills necessary among the group of AN volunteers. This count correspond to the past 12 months of the project.

Atareb Suburb, followed by Qah camps are the areas monitored which have the highest number of community requests, with 40 and 36 respectively followed by Ariha (3-10) and Zawiyah Mountain (12-25). The monitoring was not designed to obtain in depth information about the nature of the differences of the requests in each location.

Location	Range of community requests for support – lowest/ highest
Ariha	3-10
Atareb Suburb	40
Maarat Al Nouman	12-25
Qah (camps)	36
Zawiyah Mountain	7

Across all five target communities, the AN volunteers are highly respected and their skills are acknowledged by stakeholders and community members who think they are very well versed in conflict resolution and qualified moderators who help finding good solutions for the community when conflicts arise.

Local stakeholders were asked to rate the AN volunteers in their community on key skills (listening, facilitating, chairing, counselling, negotiating). All volunteers were rated between good and very good/excellent, across all five target communities by the stakeholders. The volunteer selection appears thus to be successful in choosing individuals with the right skill sets, which is an important factor for the AN's capacity in the communities they are

working in. The table below provides information on the changes of the total number of r of AN volunteers in the communities that have been monitored by IMPACT.

Location	Range of operational AN volunteers 12 months ago; lowest / highest	Range on operational AN volunteers currently lowest / highest	
Ariha	2-7	2-5	
Atareb Suburb	2	3	
Maarat Al Nouman	4-5	2-5	
Qah (camps)	4	6	
Zawiyah Mountain	3	3	

An increase of the number of activities AN network implements in these locations would go hand in hand with an increase of the number of volunteers which operate in these areas. Currently, the human power available in the monitored areas is providing the above outlined results, with limited capacity to increase its capacity to deliver high-impact human security, social awareness and civil peace interventions.

**Research question 3:** Have relationships been strengthened between AN and a diverse range of partners to enhance project impact?

This research question was measured through the count of number of partnership meetings held over the past twelve months, as well as the number of organisations AN has engaged during the Dialogue Forums. The information gathered indicates that AN has engaged with various different partner organisations<sup>4</sup> – between 3 and 18 in all locations monitored - and strengthened its relationships.

Location	Range of partnership meetings lowest to highest	Topics covered <sup>5</sup>
Ariha	9-20 <sup>6</sup>	N/A <sup>7</sup>
Atareb Suburb	8	Education, sports clubs, engagement of neighbouring villages
Maarat Al Nouman	24	Awareness campaigns
Qah camps	16	Education, youth, reconciliation committees
Zawiyah Mountain	12	Education, Awareness for disabled, dangers of migration

Furthermore, IMPACT has collected information on the number of different organisations that the AN engaged during Dialogue Forums:

Location	Number of different organisations AN has engaged during Dialogue Forums
Ariha	9
Atareb Suburb	18
Maarat Al Nouman	6-8

<sup>4</sup> IMPACT monitoring was not designed to obtain details on the names of the organizations but only on the numbers.

<sup>5</sup> This is a list of topics that were mentioned in key information interviews and is not exhaustive.

<sup>6</sup> Information provided by CCSD staff – 2 Key Informants – in Gaziantep.

<sup>7</sup> For Ariha the questionnaire did not include the topics, as it did in other locations.

Qah camps	14
Zawiyah Mountain	0 <sup>8</sup> 9

**Research question 4:** Has the acceptance of civilian-led initiatives that promote peace and/or dialogue with other sides increased in the target areas?

This research question was measured through the number of interventions by AN during the past twelve months that relied on dialogue initiatives to promote peace with other stakeholders, and further data collection was implemented in regards of the awareness campaigns. The information collected indicates that the acceptance of civilian-lead initiatives promoting peace and/or dialogue with other stakeholders has increased in the target areas. The 19 AN local partners regard the work of the AN network as valuable in promoting conflict resolution and dialogue between opposing factions to be beneficial for the community. Two thirds of the total number of partners (12 out of those 19) mentioned that the way the community deals with conflict has changed over the past six months and that the conflict resolution process has become more organised.

Participants reported that awareness campaigns had a positive influence on conflict resolution in the community and *“help people solving the conflicts with peaceful means”*, (Qah camps) and that that since the AN started working there, *“people stopped fighting in the queues for the bakery and queue up orderly for their bread”* (Maarat Al Nouman).

Location	Range of interventions that rely on dialogue to promote peace with other sides supported by AN over the past 12 months; lowest to highest
Ariha	7-10
Atareb Suburb	30
Maarat Al Nouman	20-24
Qah camps	36
Zawiyah Mountain	4

<sup>8</sup> According to CCSD staff in Gaziantep interviewed, there is no organisations engaged in Dialogue Forums in Zawiyah Mountain.