



ARK Group has extensive experience delivering peacebuilding, in-conflict programming and support to civil society (including training) globally. This would be a new geographical delivery area, and as such ARK will partner with peacebuilding specialists the Conflict to Peace Lab (C2P) at the Merson Center for International Security at Ohio State University, which in addition to providing conflict sensitivity expertise to ARK, works globally to support international peacemaking, peacebuilding, and social cohesion in fragile states affected by war and political violence.

ARK specialises in conflict transformation, stabilisation and peacebuilding to support vulnerable and hard-to-reach communities in fragile and conflict-afflicted areas. By partnering closely with local stakeholders, ARK provides insight and develops and implements conflict- and gender-sensitive programmes that are of immediate, tangible assistance to local communities. The company's research-informed and evidence-based approach is validated by a track record of projects for international/multinational organisations and government donors. Among the present and past donors and clients are the US State Department's Conflict and Stabilization Operations, Near East Affairs and Global Engagement Center; the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund; Global Affairs Canada (Peace and Stabilization Operations); the United States Agency for International Development, the EU and the United Nations Development Programme.

C2P brings together 75 university faculty affiliates specialising in conflict-affected areas, placing priority on conflict sensitivity and cultural appropriateness. With years of field experience working in conflict zones (including in the countries of this intervention), world class analytical skills, and a commitment to making knowledge useful to those living and working in societies affected by war and political violence, C2P seeks to produce knowledge that is useful to local communities impacted by violence, accessible to policy makers and practitioners, and compelling to the scholarly community. Key partners in C2P include Dr Christopher Gelpi the Director of the Mershon Center for International Security Studies, Chair of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution, Professor of Political Science, and Co-Director of the Conflict to Peace Lab at The Ohio State University who focuses on the impact of peacebuilding interventions on the development of social cohesion. Dr Teri Murphy is Co-Director for the Conflict to Peace Lab at the Mershon Center and has been actively engaged in conflict interventions and peacebuilding in international contexts for the past 25 years. Her primary research interests focus on the intersection between peace, human security, and development and developing culturally adaptive and complexity sensitive policies and practices for stabilization. We will also partner with Russian-speaking former BBC journalist and media development specialist Ian McWilliam. Through him we have already identified communications delivery partners in the target area of delivery to support and amplify project effect, including:

1. Ziarul de Garda, a female-led key Moldovan news website/newspaper (in Moldovan and Russian), <https://www.zdg.md/>
2. JAM News, based in Tbilisi, a website that publishes news and news features in Georgian, Armenian, Azeri, Russian and English. Run by an active female Georgian editor and journalism teacher. <https://jam-news.net/>
3. Meydan TV, a prominent Azerbaijani online TV/ news site (in Azeri, Russian and English). <https://www.meydan.tv/az/>



ARK intends to use the period between now and the issue of the tender in 2020 to conduct research and partner identification in all four target countries to assess the most appropriate responsive programme design. We will follow our model of a research-led design process that is supervised by our Head of Research Dr Manuel Almeida and combines Conflict and Gender Analyses with stakeholder mapping and organisational capacity assessments for potential partners. ARK has extensive capacity building expertise as well as small grants management experience and will seek to fuse the elements of analysis, needs assessment and partner identification to deliver a clear programme logic and theory of change that promotes credible local partners' contributions to peace, stability & security in Georgia, the wider South Caucasus and Moldova, utilising the Mershon Centre partnership to ensure academic rigour to both the design and evaluation of proposed programme activities.