



**GROUND TRUTH
SOLUTIONS**

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Call for applications

**Framework agreement: research and analysis for an accountable
humanitarian response in Ukraine**

AND

Data collection partner for GTS upcoming project (quantitative)

December 2024

Duration: 24 months framework agreement (January 2025- December 2026)

Place of work: across Ukraine, in particular: Kyivska, Sumska Kharkivska, Luhanska, Donetska, Dnipropetrovska, and Odeska Oblasts

GTS Focal Point: Programme Coordinator | tender@groundtruthsolutions.org

About Ground Truth Solutions

Ground Truth Solutions (GTS) is an international non-governmental organisation whose mission is to ensure that the priorities of people affected by crises are systematically reflected in humanitarian and climate action, from national humanitarian responses to system-wide humanitarian reform. Evidence and insights gathered through rigorous research and inclusive dialogue enable crisis-affected communities to actively shape the decisions that affect their lives. Based in Austria, GTS works globally as an independent advocate, working closely with local partners who share its vision.

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1 Context

GTS have been working in Ukraine and neighbouring countries hosting Ukrainian refugees since May 2022 to understand the views of affected communities, aid recipients, and local actors regarding the humanitarian response.

In May 2022, we launched a project to explore what the humanitarian response looks like from the community's perspective by asking people about their views, priorities, and expectations regarding how aid is provided. Part of this project was also a sub-project that focused on humanitarian journeys of refugees from Ukraine in Poland, Moldova and Romania, where we described the experience of different groups of people from the time they left their home, through their first experience with humanitarian support until when they settled in their host community, and how they are navigating their new environment.

In January 2023, we commenced a project aimed at understanding the specific experiences of people living in Ukraine who have applied for or received cash assistance from humanitarian organisations or through government social protection schemes. We also completed the report on the perceptions of cash and voucher applicants on the use of their personal data by aid providers in Ukraine.

In November 2023, we launched a project focusing specifically on community perceptions around sexual exploitation and abuse aiming to contribute to the establishment of an environment of trust - to encourage reporting cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, by including peoples' as well as humanitarian workers' views in the design and implementation of incident preventive strategies.

In October 2024, we launched a study to examine the current and potential future role of Ukrainian civil society in the provision and leadership of cash assistance programs. The findings will inform response leadership and key cash actors about opportunities for shifting toward a more locally-led model of humanitarian cash assistance that aligns with and improves Ukraine's shock-responsive social protection system.

Over the coming years, we will continue to seek and analyse people's views on access to assistance; rights and participation; timely and relevant support; resilience; feedback and complaints; respect; and the responsible use of humanitarian resources. We will use this analysis to facilitate dialogue across the country, with and between aid recipients, implementers, leaders, and funders, to support incremental improvements in the ongoing humanitarian response in Ukraine.

2 Rationale

For a 24-months **framework agreement**, GTS is looking for research partners capable of collecting data among displaced people, returnees, the general population, and specific vulnerable groups in areas prioritised by the humanitarian response, including but not limited to Kyivska, Sumska, Kharkivska, Luhanska, Donetsk, Dnipropetrovska, and Odeska Oblasts.

The selected independent contractors will form a pool of pre-qualified potential research partners for upcoming GTS projects in Ukraine. They will be considered for all future GTS projects in Ukraine during the duration of their agreement, provided their expertise and capabilities align with the project requirements. For each specific project, GTS will request contractors to submit a brief technical and financial proposal.

These proposals will be reviewed by the GTS procurement committee, and the most suitable and cost-effective contractor will be selected for the project.

We seek independent contractors with experience in conducting large-scale surveys, face-to face as well as via phone, among people in humanitarian need **and/or** employing qualitative methods, such as focus group discussions, community dialogue, and in-depth interviews, including the use of participatory approaches. For more information, see **3. Framework agreement**.

In addition to the framework agreement, interested organisations can submit applications for an **upcoming quantitative phone survey**, which is part of GTS' new project in Ukraine. The overarching goal of the project is to promote a more accountable and localised approach to humanitarian action that aligns with the expectations of people affected by crises. For this project, GTS will partner with one or two established framework contractors to conduct one round of quantitative data collection and one round of qualitative data collection. For more information, see **4. Upcoming quantitative phone survey**.

Interested organisations can submit applications for either the framework agreement alone or for both the framework agreement and GTS upcoming project. It is not possible to apply solely for the upcoming project, as eligibility for this work requires being under a framework agreement with GTS.

Fluency in both written and spoken English, Ukrainian, and Russian is required. Exceptional proficiency in written English is essential.

3 Framework agreement

Depending on their profile and expertise, interested **organisations** can submit their applications for either quantitative research (Lot 1) or qualitative research (Lot 2), or both.

3.1 Documents to submit for the framework agreement

- Profile of the organisation and an overview of the services offered.
This document should explicitly specify whether the application is for Lot 1, or for Lot 2, or for both. For applications for Lot 1 or Lot 2, the document should be a maximum of 4 pages. For applications for both, the document should be a maximum of 6 pages.
- Overview of previous relevant research activities.
Experience in collecting similar data (quantitative research, or qualitative research, including dates, client or source of funding, budget, sample size, target population, methodology, and reference contact).
- CVs of key staff members
with proven experience and strong background in qualitative and / or quantitative methodology.
- Experience in sensitive research (e.g. protection, GBV, trauma) - *desirable*, and have strong internal policies on ethics and safety.
- Other relevant internal policies and documentation on ways of working.
- Detailed description of the organisation's level of access in the proposed areas of work.

The documents should reflect the applicant's approach to:

- Testing and piloting data collection tools;

- Sampling approach, including how applicants for Lot 1 ensure randomness in sampling;
- Data quality (including how this was done in previous data collections) and how poor-quality data and fraudulent interviewers are identified;
- Ensuring that the data is collected in a responsible manner and that no harm is caused to any person directly or indirectly involved;
- Ensuring interviewers' safety.

4 Upcoming project: quantitative perception survey [conducted via phone]

The objective of the phone survey is to gain large-scale insights into how communities perceive the factors driving the fulfilment of the revised Core Humanitarian Standard commitments: rights and participation; timely and relevant support; resilience; feedback and complaints; respect; and the responsible use of humanitarian resources. Data collection is scheduled to take place in the first quarter of 2025.

4.1 Scope of work

The independent contractor selected for this specific project will be expected to:

- Support GTS in the preliminary research and advise during the survey design phase. This involves regular meetings with GTS team, as well as jointly conducting consultations with humanitarian actors to inform the design of the research questions and of the data collection tools.
- Support designing the sampling strategy.
- Organise the training of the enumerators/interviewers, jointly with GTS.
- Test and pilot the data collection tool.
- Conduct cognitive testing of the parts of questionnaire
- Conduct phone surveys, with a sample size of minimum 1,000 aid recipients across Ukraine.
- Conduct daily data quality checks and ensure data quality.
- Translate relevant materials from English to Ukrainian and from Ukrainian to English, including presentation of the research, data collection tools, training material for the enumerators.
- Provide support in analysis work to contextualise and summarise findings.
- Participate in a learning session with GTS team and highlight areas for potential improvement.

Demographic specifications of the sample

- All respondents must be aged 18 or over.
- The sample will aim for an equal distribution between the sexes (50% men and 50% women).
- If possible, 15% of respondents will identify themselves as living with a disability.

4.2 Documents to submit for the upcoming project

- Brief methodology (maximum 4 pages).
- Timetable of expected results.
- Detailed budget in euros (EUR).

4.3 How to submit your application

Interested organisations should submit their application by December 31, 2024 at the following address tender@groundtruthsolutions.org with the email title "**GTS framework agreement in Ukraine**".

Deadline for submission [updated]: December 31, 2024

Summary of application opportunities

Opportunities / conditions	Opportunities	Conditions
Framework agreement	Lot 1- Survey work	Submission of documents in 3.1
	Lot 2 – qualitative studies	Submission of documents in 3.1
Upcoming quantitative project	phone survey	Being accepted into the framework agreement pool + submission of documents outlined in 4.2

5 Joint work with GTS

GTS is used to being strongly involved in the data collection phase.

- GTS will co-facilitate the training of interviewers.
- At the start of collection, the independent service provider must be available for daily check ins with GTS team.
- Throughout the data collection process, the provider will submit brief daily progress reports in the form of a questionnaire pre-designed by GTS.
 - The total number and percentage of investigations completed.
 - Information on the sampling carried out on the same day.
 - Any complications arising during the day.
 - The contextual information necessary for GTS to correctly interpret the quality of the data obtained.
 - The activities scheduled for the following day.
 - Any other relevant comments or questions.

The independent contractor will submit a final report after data collection, covering the number of successful surveys / data collection activities, adherence to the agreed data collection protocol and sampling strategy, and any **relevant observations and questions**.

6 Contractual arrangements

- a. The framework agreement contract will be concluded between the selected organisations and GTS. It does not guarantee or obligate GTS to assign any specific task, project, or workload under this agreement. Assignments, if any, will be issued on a case-by-case basis at GTS's sole discretion and subject to separate agreements or task orders as required.
- b. GTS expects the independent contractor and its staff to comply with GTS requests and protocols during data collection.
- c. Before any data collection activity can begin, all the necessary authorisations and consents must be obtained.
- d. All data obtained as part of this assignment is the exclusive property of GTS. The independent contractor will not be permitted to use or disseminate the data obtained in any way without the prior consent of GTS.

7 Annexes - GTS Policies

7.1 Code of conduct

The independent contractor(s) will ensure that all investigators/researchers comply with the GTS code of conduct for investigators/researchers (Annex 1). If any aspect of the code of conduct is not adhered to, GTS reserves the right to suspend payment until the data has been collected in accordance with the aforementioned code of conduct.

If the behaviour of the investigators/researchers constitutes a fundamental breach of the code of conduct, compromising the safety or well-being of participants or damaging the reputation of the organisation, GTS reserves the right to immediately terminate the contract of the individual(s) and the independent contractor.

In cases where it is brought to the attention of GTS that the actions of investigators have constituted a clear breach of safeguarding practices (for example, sexual exploitation and abuse), GTS will also report this to the relevant authorities.

7.2 Do no harm and mitigate risk

The independent contractor must clearly state how the data will be collected in a responsible manner. It must ensure that any risks to respondents have been carefully identified and that mitigating measures have been taken to avoid any harm to those directly or indirectly concerned.

The independent contractor will contribute to the development of a protection incident referral protocol and will be required to adhere to it. Researchers/investigators will be trained to identify and report cases safely.

The independent contractor must demonstrate that any risks to the investigators have been carefully identified and that mitigating measures have been taken to minimise the risks as far as possible. The selected independent contractor and GTS will together develop a simple protocol to specify when and how GTS will be informed and involved where appropriate.

7.3 Code of conduct for investigators/researchers

Overview

Ground Truth Solutions (GTS) is a non-governmental organisation that helps people affected by crises to influence humanitarian and climate action. As a researcher, you play an important role in gathering the perceptions and reactions of people affected by crises. You must comply with certain research standards and respect Ground Truth Solutions' code of conduct throughout your employment/consultation.

Code of conduct

1. **Safety first:** your safety and well-being, and that of the survey participants, are most important and must always come before the interests of the research. Respect the safety protocols, avoid putting yourself or others at risk, and report any incident as soon as it occurs to your supervisor.
2. **Informed consent and voluntary participation:** ensure that consent (people's willingness to take part in research) is obtained freely and voluntarily for each participant, recognising that power differentials may influence their decision. Make sure they know that their participation will have no direct impact on whether or not they receive help. Provide participants with a contact person within your organisation/company in case they wish to withdraw their consent (decide they do not want to participate) at a later date.
3. **Do no harm:** be aware that participants may have experienced traumatic events and that certain questions or topics may provoke strong emotional reactions (they may appear withdrawn, anxious, agitated). Do your best to avoid causing additional trauma or distress by being sensitive to participants' reactions and body language throughout the study. Redirect conversations when traumatic topics come up for which you are not trained and never pressure participants to share such experiences. If sensitive issues or safeguarding concerns arise, follow the incident referral protocol to ensure appropriate support and action.

Definition of traumatic events: traumatic events are events in which a person experiences or witnesses something very frightening and terrifying. Traumatic events can involve threats to life or physical and emotional integrity, such as sexual violence, torture or the forced displacement of oneself or others. They are accompanied by a feeling of helplessness and loss of control.

Source: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Human Rights Monitoring Handbook, Chapter 12: Trauma and self-care, 2011.

4. **Managing expectations:** if interviewers do not explain the purpose of the survey properly, false expectations may arise (for example, people thinking that by taking part in the study they will get more or better help). Misunderstandings can break down trust and complicate subsequent research. Make sure that participants fully understand the aims and reasons for the research.
5. **Confidentiality:** reassure participants that we will not pass on their names or contact details. Their answers will remain confidential. Explain that Ground Truth Solutions works independently of aid agencies, governments and authorities. Participants may be concerned that their participation will have a negative impact on their safety and well-being. Participants should be reassured about the confidential and secure way in which data is collected, stored and shared.

6. **Safeguarding and ethical conduct:** interviewers are prohibited from discriminating against anyone or abusing the authority conferred by their position. Sexual exploitation and abuse are strictly prohibited.

Definition of sexual exploitation: any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, power or trust, for sexual purposes - including, but not limited to, profiting personally from the sexual exploitation of others, in the form of money, social status or political standing.

The term "sexual abuse" refers to physical intrusion of a sexual nature, actual or threatened, by force or under conditions of inequality or coercion.

Investigators are also prohibited from having sexual relations with a child - anyone under the age of 18. If you hear or see incidents of misconduct by other interviewers, you are required to report them to your supervisor, your organisation/company management or Ground Truth Solutions for review.

7. **Empowerment and transparency:** treat participants as contributors to the research process, not simply as subjects for evaluation. Inform them of the nature, purpose and potential results of their participation.

Breach of ethics

Failure to comply with this code of conduct may result in disciplinary action, including suspension of payments or termination of the contract. Serious breaches, such as those endangering the safety of participants or damaging reputation, may result in immediate termination and possible reporting to the relevant authorities.

Responsibilities

- Keep a low profile and don't draw too much attention to yourself or the participants.
- Remain aware of your environment and potential security risks. Adapt research to security risks and maintain strict confidentiality.
- Refrain from consuming alcoholic beverages or recreational drugs during working hours (including during lunch breaks, as consumption will affect your performance afterwards).
- Obtain genuine informed consent, ensuring that participants understand the purpose, process and implications of their participation. If the participant has only agreed to take part in the survey, you have not obtained their informed consent. Participants must understand who you are, how you will use their information and the possible consequences for them and their communities. Explain that participation or refusal to participate will have no effect on the person's chances of receiving help in the future.
- Ensure that participants understand the difference between receiving help and taking part in research.
- Remain aware of ethical issues and the inherent power imbalance between the researcher and the research subject. Do not coerce or intimidate people into responding for the sole purpose of achieving your data collection or research objectives.
- Treat informants as key players in the research and not simply as objects of evaluation. Participants must be respected throughout the research process. This includes ensuring their well-being and safety and protecting their privacy and confidentiality.
- Conduct the interviews/discussions in safe and appropriate locations, giving priority to the comfort and safety of the participants.
- Treat participants with respect and sensitivity throughout the research process.

- Promptly report any concerns or incidents to your line manager, and sensitive issues in accordance with the incident reporting protocol.

I have read and agree to abide by the Ground Truth Solutions Code of Conduct. I understand that any breach of any part of this agreement may result in disciplinary action by my organisation and/or Ground Truth Solutions.

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Name and signature of interviewer

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Place and date