

Research Terms of Reference

Localisation – Capacity Strengthening Landscape Assessment

UKR2505

Ukraine

September 2025

V1

REACH Informing
more effective
humanitarian action

1. Executive Summary

Country of intervention	Ukraine				
Type of Emergency	<input type="checkbox"/>	Natural disaster	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Conflict	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>specify</i>)
Type of Crisis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sudden onset	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slow onset	<input type="checkbox"/> Protracted
Mandating Body/ Agency	ECHO				
IMPACT Project Code	64GGA				
Overall Research Timeframe (<i>from research design to final outputs / M&E</i>)	09/09/2025 – 29/12/2025				
Research Timeframe <i>Add planned deadlines (for first cycle if more than 1)</i>	1. Pilot/ training: 09/09/2025		6. Preliminary presentation: N/A		
	2. Start collect data: 10/09/2025		7. Outputs sent for validation: 15/12/2025		
	3. Data collected: 10/11/2025		8. Outputs published: 25/12/2025		
	4. Data analysed: 21/11/2025		9. Final presentation: (tentative)		
	5. Data sent for validation: 24/11/2025				
Number of assessments	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single assessment (one cycle)			
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Multi assessment (more than one cycle)			
Humanitarian milestones <i>Specify what will the assessment inform and when</i>	Milestone		Deadline (can be tentative)		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Donor plan/strategy	_ / _ / _ _ _ _		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inter-cluster plan/strategy	_ / _ / _ _ _ _		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cluster plan/strategy	_ / _ / _ _ _ _		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NGO platform			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify):	_ / _ / _ _ _ _			
Audience Type & Dissemination <i>Specify who will the assessment</i>	Audience type		Dissemination		

<i>inform and how you will disseminate to inform the audience</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Programmatic <input type="checkbox"/> Operational <input type="checkbox"/> [Other, Specify]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General Product Mailing (e.g. mail to NGO consortium; HCT participants; Donors) <input type="checkbox"/> Cluster Mailing (Education, Shelter and WASH) and presentation of findings at next cluster meeting <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Presentation of findings (e.g. at HCT meeting; Cluster meeting) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Website Dissemination (Relief Web & REACH Resource Centre)	
Stakeholder mapping <i>Has a detailed stakeholder mapping been conducted during research design to identify all actors that could contribute to and/or benefit from the research?</i>	x	Ongoing external engagement with partners and fora with Localisation components to understand relevant stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/> No
General Objective	To conduct an assessment that will inform the NGO Platform and other humanitarian actors on the underlying factors driving capacity-strengthening requests among local civil society organisations (CSOs) in Ukraine and to evaluate the effectiveness of current capacity-strengthening efforts. The ultimate aim is to enhance localisation by aligning humanitarian support with the actual organisational challenges and priorities of local CSOs.		
Specific Objective(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To identify the underlying factors influencing local CSOs' requests for capacity-strengthening support and localisation. 2. To map existing capacity-strengthening initiatives offered to local CSOs by IOs/donors and to assess if and where there are areas of overlap or duplication 3. To uncover how humanitarian response efforts can be better aligned with the real organisational needs, challenges, and priorities of local CSOs, ensuring that support provided is both relevant and effective in advancing localisation. 		
Research Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the primary factors driving local CSOs to request capacity-strengthening support? - To what extent do existing capacity-strengthening efforts meet the actual needs of local CSOs? - Where do gaps or duplications exist among current capacity-strengthening efforts for local CSOs? - How could capacity-strengthening initiatives be improved to better support localisation efforts? 		
Geographic Coverage	Focus on CSOs operating in the East and South of Ukraine, interviews may take place in other locations where relevant key informants are based		
Secondary data sources	See Section 3.3		

Population(s) <i>Select all that apply</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	IDPs in camp	<input type="checkbox"/>	IDPs in informal sites
	<input type="checkbox"/>	IDPs in host communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	IDPs [Other, Specify]
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refugees in camp	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refugees in informal sites
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refugees in host communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refugees [Other, Specify]
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Host communities	X	Local actors (CSOs, NGOs, volunteer groups)
			X	International organisations
Data collection tool(s)	x	Structured (Quantitative)	x	Semi-structured (Qualitative)
	Sampling method		Data collection method	
Structured data collection tool # 2	x Purposive x Snowballing <input type="checkbox"/> [Other, Specify]		X Quantitative survey (Target 140-160): - Local/Ukrainian: Representatives of CSOs with international partners: 140-160 Total (quantitative): 140-160	
Semi-structured data collection tool # 1	x Purposive x Snowballing <input type="checkbox"/> [Other, Specify]		x Key Informant Interview (Target 23-27): - Representatives of local CSOs: 12-15 - Representatives of INGOs: 8-9 - Representatives of UN agencies: 3 Total: 23-27 x Individual interview (Target #): 23-27 <input type="checkbox"/> Focus group discussion (Target #):_ _ _ _ _ <input type="checkbox"/> [Other, Specify] (Target #):_ _ _ _ _	
Disaggregation by gender and age <i>Are you planning to conduct sex/age disaggregated analysis?</i>	Gender		Age	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
	x	No	x	No
Data management platform(s)	x	IMPACT		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	[Other, Specify]		
Expected output type(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Situation overview #: 1	X	Report #: 0
	<input type="checkbox"/>			Profile #: 0

	<input type="checkbox"/>	Presentation (Preliminary findings) #: 0	X	Presentation (Final) #: 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	Factsheet #: 0
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interactive dashboard #:0	<input type="checkbox"/>	Webmap #: 0	<input type="checkbox"/>	Map #: 0
	<input type="checkbox"/>	[Other, Specify] #: 0				
Access	x	Public (available on REACH resource center and other humanitarian platforms)				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Restricted (bilateral dissemination only upon agreed dissemination list, no publication on REACH or other platforms)				
Visibility Specify which logos should be on outputs	REACH					
	Donor: ECHO					
	Coordination Framework: N/A					
	Partners: NGO Platform					

2. Rationale

2.1 Background

The geographic focus on East and South of Ukraine—particularly the areas along the Russian border known as the “crescent”¹—is based on the prioritisation outlined in the 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), which shifted its emphasis toward delivering life-saving assistance in these regions due to heightened humanitarian needs and ongoing conflict dynamics. In the context of ongoing efforts to strengthen the localisation of humanitarian action in Ukraine, capacity-strengthening for local civil society organisations (CSOs) has become a key priority. International organisations have launched multiple initiatives to strengthen local CSOs' capacities through training, mentorship, and equipment provision. Despite these efforts, local CSOs in Ukraine continue to express a high and sustained demand for capacity-strengthening support². Local CSOs in Ukraine have become frontline responders in the humanitarian crisis. Yet, international projects and regional capacity-building programs have also highlighted CSOs' need for structured training, mentorship, and resource mobilisation.

The NGO Platform, a coordination body for humanitarian NGOs in Ukraine, has identified a need to map and coordinate these initiatives to avoid duplication and ensure that support is effectively aligned with the local actors' needs. After consultations with the NGO Platform, it has come to light that many local CSOs receive repeated trainings on similar topics, while priority areas remain under-addressed currently. While local CSOs in Ukraine request capacity-strengthening support, the motivation for capacity-strengthening remains poorly understood. It is unclear whether these requests are driven primarily by internal organisational capacity gaps, external donor requirements, or structural challenges such as limited decision-making power, unequal access to funding, and fragmented coordination mechanisms within the humanitarian system. Understanding these drivers is essential to ensure that international support is responsive, targeted, and contributes meaningfully to localisation efforts.

2.2 Intended impact

¹ OCHA, [Ukraine Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025](#), January 2025.

² REACH, [Best Practices of Localization Assessment](#), January 2025

To address these challenges, IMPACT will conduct an assessment to investigate the factors driving demand for capacity-strengthening, evaluate the accessibility and effectiveness of current initiatives, and explore opportunities to improve coordination, alignment of resources and avoid duplication of efforts. The assessment will include both a quantitative survey with approximately 150 local CSOs and qualitative interviews with up to 15 local CSOs and 9 international organisations. The primary geographic focus will be on local CSOs operating in the East and South of Ukraine.

In addition to identifying needs and gaps, the assessment will contribute to ongoing efforts to support more strategic coordination of capacity-strengthening activities. By involving both international and local actors, the assessment aims to foster a shared understanding of capacity-strengthening needs and strengthen collaboration in advancing the localisation agenda in Ukraine.

3. Methodology

3.1 Methodology overview

This assessment will employ consultations and a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to comprehensively understand the capacity-strengthening needs of local CSOs operating in the East and South of Ukraine, the factors driving those needs, and the role of international organisations in delivering or coordinating support. The use of both data types will ensure a broad and nuanced understanding of the context, experiences, and perceptions of key stakeholders.

1. **Consultations** (August) will be held with representatives of international humanitarian organisations and donor agencies who have had experience in delivering capacity-strengthening activities to explore their approaches to capacity-strengthening initiatives targeting CSOs in Ukraine. These discussions will help contextualise the assessment by clarifying the strategic intentions, operational models, and expectations of international actors. Insights from these consultations will inform the research design, contributing to a more balanced understanding of current capacity-strengthening dynamics and localisation efforts.

2. **Quantitative primary data collection** (September-October)

A structured, close-ended survey will be designed to gather data on types of capacity-strengthening activities accessed, perceived effectiveness, priority areas for future support, and challenges faced in accessing training. Respondents will also be asked about their knowledge of experiences of duplication in training content and how well existing initiatives align with their self-identified needs. Informants will include representatives of the local CSOs, operating mostly in the East and South of Ukraine, who have had experience in accessing capacity-strengthening activities. The survey will consist of closed-ended questions based on the research questions to gather quantitative data on these aspects.

3. **Qualitative primary data collection** (October-November)

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) will include representatives of:

- **Local CSOs:** Informants will include representatives of the local CSOs, operating mostly in the East and South of Ukraine, who have had experience in accessing capacity-strengthening activities. These interviews will explore in greater depth motivation behind capacity-

strengthening requests, organisational capacity constraints, the perceived impact of existing support, and how these efforts are coordinated or fragmented across the humanitarian sector.

- **International Organisations:** The representatives from INGOs and UN agencies who have had experience in delivering capacity-strengthening activities to local CSOs, operating mostly in the East and South of Ukraine will be interviewed. Interviews will explore their experience regarding designing, managing, or evaluating capacity-strengthening initiatives with local CSOs.

Interviews will be carried out by REACH field teams with the support of the assessment staff. The data collection will take place in September-November 2025. The findings will be shared with local and international organisations, and will also be shared back to all local non-governmental actors who participated. The final report will also be posted publicly on REACH's website.

3.2 Population of interest

The population of interest for this assessment is local CSOs involved in capacity-strengthening with international organisations on the one hand, and international organisations involved in capacity-strengthening with Ukrainian non-governmental actors on the other. Because the purpose of the assessment is to provide findings in general and not to specifically evaluate individual capacity-building cases, the two sets of actors are not required to be *each other's* partners, though such cases may still occur. The geographic focus is on actors operating mostly in the East and South of Ukraine, to cover the oblasts located closer to the frontline. If time, internal capacity, and respondents' availability permit, perspectives from other areas, collected using the same methodology and leveraging REACH's existing contacts, may also be included to ensure a more comprehensive and diversified overview of CSOs' challenges and support needs

The following populations will be interviewed:

- Senior or partnership staff of local CSOs with activities mostly in the East and South of Ukraine who have had experience in accessing capacity-strengthening activities
- Representatives of INGOs, UN agencies that provided capacity-strengthening activities for CSOs with activities mostly in the East and South of Ukraine, will be interviewed for their perspective as well.

3.3 Secondary data review

A comprehensive review of grey literature and consultations related to localisation of capacity-building initiatives in Ukraine were conducted before the research design to identify challenges associated with the integration of local and international actors and to understand what has already been assessed, especially regarding documenting good practices.

The assessment will also draw on additional literature to provide a broader context and ensure that the findings are grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the existing challenges and opportunities in capacity-building initiatives localisation. This will include exploring successful examples of capacity-building, coordination mechanisms in supporting these efforts.

The findings from the secondary data review will inform the development of research questions and the overall approach to the assessment, ensuring that it addresses the most critical gaps and leverages existing knowledge to enhance localisation of capacity-building initiatives in Ukraine.

Sources

Secondary source	Purpose of source
<p>Refugees International, Efforts to Localize Aid in Ukraine One Year On: Stuck in Neutral, Losing Time, February 2023</p> <p>ACAPS, Perceptions of Localisation in the Humanitarian Response, June 2023</p> <p>NGO Resource Center, ICVA, A Humanitarian Localisation Baseline for Ukraine, September 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inform the appropriateness of research questions - Ensure avoidance of duplication - Key definitions where relevant
<p>Consultations with NGO Platform, INGO and donor representatives to understand current and upcoming capacity-building approaches</p> <p>Promoting Equitable Partnerships with Local Responders in Humanitarian Settings, DG ECHO guidance note, March 2023 - World ReliefWeb</p> <p>Ukraine – An opportunity for the Grand Bargain signatories to translate their commitments to local leadership of crisis response into practice [EN/UK] - Ukraine ReliefWeb</p> <p>Understanding Ongoing Localization Initiatives and Improving the Policy and Operational Environment for Local Actors - December 2023 [EN/UK] - Ukraine ReliefWeb</p> <p>REACH_Report_Information_Flows_in_Partnerships_April_2024.docx (sharepoint.com)</p> <p>“Duty of Care” package for local humanitarian responders in Ukraine - NGO platform - February 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contextual understanding of capacity-building initiatives in Ukraine

3.4 Key definitions

- Capacity-strengthening refers to the locally led process that empowers CSOs to define and pursue their own development priorities, improve effectiveness, sustainability, and engage equitably with donors and humanitarian partners, fostering long-term resilience and leadership during crisis response. This approach empowers CSOs to better address the needs of their communities. Capacity-strengthening can include (but is not limited to): trainings, workshops, technical assistance, mentorship, provision of resources and financial support, etc.

3.5 Primary Data Collection

Secondary Data Review and consultations will begin before the start of the primary data collection to deepen the assessment team’s understanding of the context and their approaches to capacity-building initiatives.

A quantitative tool will be developed for local CSOs. KII will be based on questionnaires adapted to international and local organisations, with considerable overlap but with some question route differences to understand the mechanisms that facilitate effective capacity-building from both sides of partnerships. Candidates for the assessed organisations will be selected according to the sampling

criteria in Section 3.1, and they will be recruited using REACH and Acted contacts in the scoped regions.

Quantitative component will be utilised first to capture a broad overview of capacity-building needs across various organisations. By using structured surveys facilitated through the ODK Collect phone app and Kobo forms, REACH can gather quantifiable data to be further analysed. A purposive selection of respondents will be used to ensure diversity in organisational profiles, geographic coverage, and thematic focus. Snowball sampling may be applied to identify additional relevant organisations based on referrals from initial participants. While the assessment does not aim to be statistically representative, this approach will allow for the collection of localised insights that reflect a range of experiences and perspectives across the humanitarian organisations in Ukraine.

Qualitative component will be implemented after the quantitative. After a quick quantitative data analysis, based on responses given, participants for KIIs will be chosen to provide the most diverse sample of local CSOs. This component is aimed at providing deeper insights into the experiences and perspectives of both INGOs and local CSOs. In-person interviews will be prioritised, although video call interviews may be considered for key informants whose availability is limited.

Data collection will take place in September-November 2025 by REACH teams. All local CSOs' key informant interviews (KIIs) will be conducted in Ukrainian or Russian, depending on the respondent's first language. IO partnership coordinator KIIs are likely to be conducted in Ukrainian, with some senior IO staff interviews potentially in English if that is their working language. Recording will be used if possible, but detailed notes rather than transcripts based on the recording review will be used for analysis.

Table 1. Data collection methods and samples

Type of Data	Partner Type	Actor Type	SAMPLE SIZE
Quantitative	Local/Ukrainian	Representatives of local CSOs who have had experience in accessing capacity-strengthening activities from IO (East/South)	140-160
Qualitative	International	Representatives of INGOs that provided capacity-strengthening activities for CSOs (East/South)	8-9
	International	Representatives of UN agencies that provided capacity-strengthening activities for organisations	3
	Local/Ukrainian	Representatives of local CSOs who have had experience in accessing capacity-strengthening activities from IO (East/South)	12-15
		TOTAL (qual.)	23-27

3.6 Data Processing & Analysis

During qualitative data collection, the Localisation Team Assessment Officer will regularly monitor the quality of incoming notes and debriefs to ensure that sufficient levels of details are being asked and

transcribed. The transcripts and debriefs will be translated into English automatically, with translation verified and edited by the Assessment Officers. Recordings can also be consulted to address insufficient details.

During quantitative data collection, data cleaning will be performed daily, including checking for duplicates, time checks, and reviewing all unstructured responses. Enumerator misunderstandings will be monitored and communicated to field teams by assessment staff. The assessment team will maintain a cleaning log in Excel, recording all changes made to the raw data. This log will be sent to the Field Coordinator every 1-2 days for clarification and corrections, which will then be updated by the Data Officer.

Quantitative data will be analysed using Microsoft Excel pivot tables, with the possibility of automation using R. The analysis will be limited to descriptive statistics due to the small number of surveys. Analysis will focus on absolute numbers and specific responses from CSOs. For organisations selected for qualitative follow-up, the analysis will integrate quantitative and qualitative findings.

MaxQDA will be used to code transcript notes on a rolling basis, due to the high volume of KIs. Qualitative interviews may be recorded with consent. If recording is not possible, note-takers will aim for verbatim note-taking in the source language. Digital transcription of notes will occur promptly after discussions. The MaxQDA coding/analysis will be “translated” into a REACH Data Saturation and Analysis Grid.

3.7 Limitations

The research is indicative and cannot be assumed to be representative of all IOs with local partners or local CSOs with international partners; so further conclusions should be made with caution. In addition, in previous REACH assessments it was noted that sometimes local CSOs can be hesitant to criticise IOs, so although the question route introduction will emphasise that results will be anonymous and aggregated to overview general rather than actors-specific trends, and questions asked in a way that emphasises mechanisms over people/organisations as actors, some bias may still be present in the findings. The issue of social desirability bias on both the international and local side will be carefully monitored during analysis, and if findings seem notably skewed, this limitation will be clearly noted in the final report.

4. Key ethical considerations and related risks

The proposed research design meets / does not meet the following criteria:

<i>The proposed research design...</i>	<i>Yes/ No</i>	<i>Details if no (including mitigation)</i>
... Has been coordinated with relevant stakeholders to avoid unnecessary duplication of data collection efforts?	Yes	
... Respects respondents, their rights and dignity (<i>specifically by: seeking informed consent, designing length of survey/ discussion while being considerate of participants' time, ensuring accurate reporting of information provided</i>)?	Yes	

... Does not expose data collectors to any risks as a direct result of participation in data collection?	Yes	
... Does not expose respondents / their communities to any risks as a direct result of participation in data collection?	Yes	
... Does not involve collecting information on specific topics which may be stressful and/ or re-traumatising for research participants (both respondents and data collectors)?	Yes	
... Does not involve data collection with minors i.e. anyone less than 18 years old?	Yes	
... Does not involve data collection with other vulnerable groups e.g. persons with disabilities, victims/ survivors of protection incidents, etc.?	Yes	
... Follows IMPACT SOPs for management of personally identifiable information?	No	To note, because contact information for specific focal points within the local response is crucial operational information for any international actors that hope to be able to coordinate with local response efforts and avoid duplication, this survey will collect and store personally identifiable information such as names, phone numbers, and e-mails. Consent, including consent to share information with other interested international actors, will be obtained in the survey before collecting any such information (respondents also have the clear ability to refuse to share such information with no impact on the remainder of the survey). PII will be stored in compliance with data protection policies and shared only with partners bilaterally.

5. Roles and responsibilities

<i>Task Description</i>	<i>Responsible</i>	<i>Accountable</i>	<i>Consulted</i>	<i>Informed</i>
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<i>Research design</i>	Assessment Officer	Assessment Team Lead	IMPACT HQ Research design & Data (RDD) unit	DCC; Communications/ Translation Team
<i>Supervising data collection</i>	Field officer	Field coordinator	IMPACT country representative	Operational partners (ACTED)
<i>Data processing (checking, cleaning)</i>	Data Officer	Assessment Team Lead	IMPACT HQ RDD Unit	DCC; Field team
<i>Data analysis</i>	Assessment Officer	Assessment Team Lead	IMPACT HQ RDD unit	Assessment Team Lead
<i>Output production</i>	Assessment Officer	Assessment Team Lead	IMPACT RRU	IMPACT RRU
<i>Dissemination</i>	Assessment Officer	IMPACT country coordinator	IMPACT HQ Research department and Communication department	NGO platform, working groups International: global clusters/ working groups
<i>Monitoring & Evaluation</i>	Assessment officer, Field officer	Assessment Team Lead	Assessment Team Lead	IMPACT country coordinator; IMPACT HQ RDD department
<i>Lessons learned</i>	Assessment officer, Field officer	Assessment Team Lead	IMPACT HQ RDD Unit; Assessment Team Lead	IMPACT country coordinator

6. Data Analysis Plan

Presented in a separate file.