

Terms of Reference

Political Economy Analysis (PEA) Consultancy

1. Background and Rationale

ActionAid is a global federation working for a world free from poverty and injustice.

Nearly two years since the onset of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the resulting refugee influx to Romania, the role of local civil society, particularly young leaders, has become critical in navigating the next phase of the refugee response. Approximately 85,000 Ukrainian refugees in Romania, primarily women, children, and youth, heavily depend on essential assistance from humanitarian organizations. However, diminishing funding and capacity among local groups are leaving vulnerable populations at greater risk as international focus shifts to other crises.

Romanian civil society has been central to the refugee response, despite facing significant organizational and political challenges, such as bureaucratic hurdles, limited operational capacity, and heavy reliance on international donors. These issues are further compounded by political changes, including elections, fiscal adjustments, and budget cuts, which exacerbate the funding challenges for grassroots and small-scale organizations. Additionally, populist narratives criticizing the perceived preferential treatment of refugees over local communities have intensified societal tensions and hostility toward Ukrainians.

Youth groups and movements have been at the forefront of efforts to foster social cohesion and improve emergency services, striving for a better future and democratic participation. Yet, the pressure on International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) to withdraw due to resource constraints is creating a service gap, which local civil society must fill. A proposed strategy aims to transfer knowledge and capacity from INGOs to local organizations to prepare them for a post-humanitarian response context, ensuring the continued provision of essential services to refugees.

In summary, the Romanian civil society, led by its youth, faces the dual challenge of sustaining essential services for refugees amidst dwindling international support and addressing the mental health needs of aid workers, while striving for greater empowerment and participation of young people in a rapidly evolving post-humanitarian landscape.

ActionAid, together with a number of local partners, has been working across Romania since 2022 to strengthen civil society actors in leading the refugee response but also in strengthening their organisational capacity in order to improve social cohesion, the engagement of youth and young people, and support vulnerable people from all backgrounds and layers of society.

2. Purpose and Objective of the Consultancy

ActionAid is starting a new Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC)-funded project focusing on Increased resilience and sustainability of local organisations to respond to humanitarian needs more autonomously and sustainably to ensure continuity in the delivery of effective, inclusive, qualitative, and timely emergency services.

As part of this project, ActionAid seeks to recruit an experienced consultant to develop the Political Economy Analysis of the civil society landscape in Romania.

The objective of the PEA assignment is to explore and analyse the possibilities, risks and feasibility of supporting civil society in Ukraine. It will explore the scope (or obstacles) for actions aimed at organisational capacity building, awareness raising, information disclosure, advocacy, making the information on various political and economic issues related to youth activism and women-led movements, and generally, the civil society landscape in Romania.

In particular, the assignment consists of three interlinked activities:

- **Activity 1: Developing a strong contextual understanding of changing civil society dynamics through a Political Economy Analysis-focused lens.**

As the Russian invasion of Ukraine continues and international attention wanes, Romanian civil society remains at the forefront of the humanitarian response. ActionAid will conduct a Political Economy Analysis (PEA) of Romanian civil society in the post-emergency phase. This analysis aims to understand the impact of the Ukraine Emergency Response in Romania, specifically exploring how the ongoing refugee crisis has influenced the capacities, perspectives, and enabling environment for local civil society actors. The PEA will address challenges such as limited capacity, funding constraints, and bureaucratic obstacles, while also identifying opportunities to strengthen resilience and effectiveness. The methodology adopts a political economy lens, analysing the political and economic dynamics that shape civil society. It employs a comprehensive approach, including document reviews, stakeholder interviews, key informant interviews, network analysis, institutional analysis, and participatory exploration through workshops and consultations. By examining foundational and structural factors, key actors and agents, and the 'rules of the game,' the analysis will inform programmatic decisions related to funding allocation, capacity-building initiatives, advocacy efforts, and collaboration strategies with Romanian civil society. The participatory exploration aspect ensures a contextual understanding, emphasizing the dynamic nature of the civil society landscape within the broader political and economic context. The PEA methodology also assesses the adaptive capacity of civil society actors, exploring their responses to external shocks like the emergency response. The goal is to empower civil society actors by amplifying their voices and informing actionable strategies that enhance their capacities, resilience, and effectiveness in navigating the challenges posed by the ongoing crisis. Through this, the PEA will serve as a starting point for shaping Romanian CSOs' future interventions to be more inclusive, targeted, effective, and sustainable.

- **Activity 2: Civil Society Consultations**

In line with desk research for the Political Economy Analysis (PEA), the "Civil Society Consultations" should be conducted by the consultant in six regions (Bucharest, Timisoara, Iasi, Suceava, Tulcea, and Baia Mare) and will include KIIs and FGDs. The objective is to actively engage local stakeholders, including CSOs organisations and community members, through interactive workshops, online platforms, and a continual feedback loop. This process translates PEA findings into actionable strategies and addresses regulatory constraints, fostering collaboration and adaptability. The analytical approach of the consultations positions

them as a tool to navigate challenges, ensuring that humanitarian assistance aligns closely with the evolving needs of the affected population.

- **Activity 3: Present findings at the Launch Event with DEC Community**

Introducing the "Launch Event: PEA/Research Findings" to share insights from the Political Economy Analysis (PEA) with the DEC community in Bucharest. The aim is to present key findings and recommendations, engaging stakeholders like government officials and civil society. The event will include presentations, discussions, and interactive sessions, fostering collaboration and generating strategies for addressing identified challenges. This knowledge-sharing forum sets the stage for enhanced cooperation and targeted interventions based on the contextual nuances highlighted in the PEA.

Throughout all activities, the Consultant will be required to:

1. Thoroughly examine the situation of public awareness, monitoring, political economy streams related to work of civil society and CSOs, in particular youth activism and women-led movements, and other actors related to humanitarian & development sector.
2. Analyse shifts in dynamics of civil society to operate pre and post 2022 full-scale invasion, and highlight dynamics, trends, changes, and expectations.
3. Identify key government stakeholders as well as key donors related to provision of assistance by the actors of humanitarian & development sector, analyse the interests, power and influences of key stakeholders.
4. Formulate precise and politically feasible recommendation on:
 - how to best support civil society organisations, in particular youth activism and women-led movements beyond "providing funding" and "strengthening capacity". This may include (but is not limited to) recommendations on in-depth capacity building, strategy development, tailoring programming to context and needs, advocacy, engagement of government and international actors at different levels, utilising evidence and data, working on/with transparency and accountability initiatives, building or enforcing coalitions, and applying issue-based approaches, among others.
 - how to strengthen and engage civil society to monitor implementation process of business development projects funded by humanitarian & development sector actors.

3. Deliverables and Timeline

The consultancy is a **22-day assignment**, part of which should be conducted in person on the ground in Romania

Summary of the expected deliverables and timeline. Full details can be found in the table below:

- 01/07/2024: Start of the assignment. The consultant will have a debriefing meeting with ActionAid team at the start of the assignment (1 day)
- Desk research and first draft (5 working days)
- Field research and civil society consultations in 6 locations (8 working days)
- Compilation of the draft PEA report and an internal session with ActionAid team (3 days)
- Final report (4 days)

- Launch event in Romania (1 day)

Deliverables	Details	Due date	Estimated working days
Deliverable 1: Research plan/ inception report		Week commencing 8 July or 5 days after the start date of the assignment)	5
Deliverable 2: Draft of PEA report	<p>The Consultant is expected to conduct their own desk review, informal interviews with key staff and representatives of relevant NGOs/CSOs, international agencies, government institutions involved in the activities and feedback provision</p> <p>Consultant is expected to conduct civil society consultations in 6 locations then submit the draft report.</p> <p>The consultant also needs to submit 6 short written recaps for the consultations conducted in 6 designated cities</p>	Week commencing 29 July	13
Deliverable 3: One internal session with ActionAid to present (Virtually)	Consultant to present the preliminary findings of the research and receive feedback before finalizing the final draft of the report.	Week commencing 29 July	1
Deliverable 4: Final PEA report	Consultant submits the final PEA report which should incorporate the comments and feedback from AA team received during the internal session.	Week commencing 5 August	4
Deliverable 5: Launch event in Romania	Consultant to present the findings of the PEA to the wider community (organisation and logistics will be handled by ActionAid, and expenses related to hosting the event will be covered by ActionAid).	Week commencing 12 August	1

Structure of the Final Report

The Consultant will be expected to conduct their own desk review, informal interviews with key staff and representatives of relevant NGOs/CSOs, international agencies, government institutions involved in the activities and feedback provision and at least one fact finding training session/workshop with the Programme Team. The **PEA report** should be clear, concise and relevant, and no more than 20 pages long. It should be composed of the following sections:

1. Executive Summary (max. 1 page)
2. Context (max. 2-3 pages)
3. Key actors and incentives (max. 3-4 pages)
4. The state of collaborative and adaptive capacity of civil society actors (2-4 pages)
5. Pathways of change (max. 4-6 pages)
6. Implications/recommendations for ActionAid (max 4-6 pages).

4. Safeguarding and Ethical Considerations

The ActionAid Feminist Research Guidelines emphasize the importance of conducting research that is rooted in feminist principles and aims to promote gender equality and social justice. Key principles include:

- Participatory Approach: Engage participants, especially women and marginalized groups, as active contributors throughout the research process to ensure their perspectives and voices are integral.
- Ethical Standards: Maintain high ethical standards, including informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' rights and dignity.
- Power Dynamics: Acknowledge and address power imbalances between researchers and participants to foster equitable relationships and empower communities.
- Contextual Sensitivity: Recognize and respect the cultural, social, and political contexts of the research environment to ensure relevant and meaningful outcomes.
- Reflexivity: Encourage researchers to reflect on their own biases, positions, and impact on the research process and findings.
- Intersectionality: Consider the intersections of gender with other identities and social categories such as race, class, sexuality, and ability to capture a holistic understanding of experiences and issues.
- Transformative Goals: Aim for research outcomes that contribute to positive change and the empowerment of women and marginalized groups.
- Knowledge Sharing: Commit to disseminating research findings in accessible formats to participants and stakeholders, ensuring the research benefits those directly involved.

These principles guide researchers to produce ethical, inclusive, and impactful research that aligns with feminist values and supports ActionAid's mission. Candidates can refer to [ActionAid Feminist Research Guideline](#) by clicking this embedded link.

5. Payments

The payment will be in two tranches:

- Tranche 1 (50%): Deliverable 2: upon completion of the civil society consultations and submission of the draft report.
- Tranche 2 (30%): Deliverable 4: upon acceptance of the final report.

- Tranche 3 (20%): Deliverable 5: upon the completion of the launch event in Romania

6. Requirements for Consultants

ActionAid is looking for a Senior Consultant with substantial experience in conducting analyses in the Political Economy Analysis framework/methodology, and significant experience in working with civil society-focused development programmes. Regional experience is highly desirable.

1. Education Qualification

- A master's degree in social sciences, Political Science, Political Economy, Economics, Development Economics or related fields with at least 5 progressive years working in a similar field; or
- A relevant first-level university degree in combination with 7 additional years of qualifying experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced university degree.

2. Work Experiences and Skills

- At least 5 years of professional experience in the development sector working on civil society programming, partnerships, economic development, youth engagement, governance, public policy, or other relevant programmatic sectors.
- At least 5 years of experience in conducting rigorous political economy analysis following established methodologies and approaches.
- Excellent understanding of the political economy and demonstrated experience conducting sociological research in Romania (or East Europe region);
- 3 years of experiences engaging with the civil society landscape in Romania and the ability to engage stakeholders (also remotely) is desirable
- Proven analytical capacities, including for analysing complex interconnectedness between economic, political, social and governance issues, including access to information and public oversight of government policies.
- Proven ability to integrate new tools and methodologies into their work.
- Excellent interpersonal communication and diplomacy skills.
- Confidentiality in treating any project or assignment related activities/reports.
- Fluency in English. Romanian language skills are highly desirable.

7. Application

Please submit your application by email to Jasper Kiepe, Regional Partnership & Fundraising Advisor, jasper.kiepe@actonaid.org and Kudzai Tavarera, Country Lead Romania, kudzai.tavarera@actonaid.org by **June 17, 2024 COB**.

The application should include:

- A short cover letter outlining relevant experience and a proposed methodology/approach.
- A working plan.
- A CV and references.
- 2 examples of similar past work.
- A simplified budget breakdown for 20 days of consultancy that should also include all local and regional travel expenses.

ActionAid will hold a selection panel with potential candidates in the week commencing June 17, 2024.

This document is non-contractual and may be modified to reflect the changing needs of the service. Due to high volumes of applications received, we can only correspond with short-listed applicants. Should you not have received feedback on your application within two weeks of the closing date, please consider your application as unsuccessful. ActionAid International will not consider unsolicited candidates from recruitment agencies. ActionAid reserves the right to modify, re-announce, or withdraw any of our vacancies at any time.