



GROUND TRUTH SOLUTIONS

PEOPLE POWERING ACTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE POLYCRISIS

Ground Truth Solutions strategy:
2025 - 2028

May 2025

Why a new strategy? Why now?

At Ground Truth Solutions, we learn as we go. It's one of our greatest assets. Our last strategy felt out-of-date soon after its publication, but that didn't mean we operated without a plan. We were listening, reacting, and letting people in crisis be our guide. That is, after all, what we are always nagging others to do.

The world is in a dangerous state. Fascism on the rise, increased militarisation, racism, sexism and prejudice rearing their ugly heads in policy, discourse and action. Citizen and activist voices are being silenced while human-created climate change wreaks havoc on our planet and its inhabitants. Aid and support systems are having their funding ripped away while unchecked wealth grossly increases inequalities. Things have to change.

Our work feels more important than ever. Accountability has never been more needed and more lacking. The capacities and creativity of communities in crisis must be elevated and harnessed, and with whatever resources we have, and a network of allies around the world, we'll help them fight for that.

So, we're not changing things that much. But we've spoken to people - thousands of them - about what would need to change for more people driven support systems, and we've given ourselves some guidelines to help break out of the humanitarian status quo, work truer to our mission, shrink in size and grow in impact, and respect people's desire for lasting change.

We hope you'll join us, and share your feedback along the way.



Ground Truth Solutions works with crisis-affected communities across the globe to ensure community views and preferences drive the design, allocation and understanding of global support. With a network of exceptional local partners, we do perceptions research to understand what people in crisis are experiencing, what their priorities are for their lives and futures and the support they need to make that happen. Together we identify solutions, advocate with power holders to change the way aid is allocated, designed and delivered and shape the global narratives and policies that affect people in crisis. More than 15 years of research with communities around the globe makes the irrefutable case that aid that doesn't listen, fails.

We are proud of the impact we have had on making community perceptions the touchstone of humanitarian aid effectiveness. But what we hear from people about their changing realities makes clear we now need to push harder and expand our focus. In the age of polycrisis the people we work with are impacted by worsening and intersecting disasters, while the resources to support them and the norms intended to protect them are rapidly eroded. We hear people say the assistance they are getting is not what they need, that they feel trapped in cycles of humanitarian aid when they need long-term support, and that they are systematically excluded from the decisions that affect them. Community realities, capacities and priorities are often ignored in support systems that are irrelevant, ineffective, duplicative and – at their worst – harmful. At the same time, dis-and-misinformation is rife, leaving people in crisis further marginalised and unheard.

**May the help not make us slaves but assist us in rebuilding our lives
and the future of our children.**

– Idrissa, 37, Burkina Faso

We believe that the only way for global support systems to remain effective and relevant through the polycrisis, and through a major contraction in funding, is for all assistance to be driven by and to start from the priorities and preferences of communities in crisis. In this strategy period we will sharpen our focus on identifying the changes that communities want to see and driving progress towards them. We will continue to carry out our robust and independent perceptions research, making clear what is and isn't working from the perspective of people and communities in crisis. And we will work to accelerate our impact on systems change, within and outside the humanitarian system, prioritise community leadership and empowerment, support a global movement of changemakers and use the data and stories people share to shape and challenge global narratives.



Our theory of change

We envision support systems for people in crisis that fully recognise their agency, and are responsive to their views, preferences, and needs.

IF local communities are better understood, heard and have more power to hold systems accountable

THEN the systems that intend to support them through crises will be more relevant, efficient and equitable

RESULTING IN better support, more resilient communities and a shift in global narratives



How will we achieve this?

Working with our diverse and growing network of partners we will focus on five main areas to identify and drive the changes communities want to see:

Supporting and emboldening communities	<p>We will listen to what communities say and prioritise and work together to discuss solutions, even when they go beyond the humanitarian system.</p> <p>We will support dialogue and planning that starts from community perceptions and brings together diverse systems of support. Together, we will continue to make and evidence the irrefutable case that effective aid is impossible without listening.</p> <p>We will leave the communities and grassroots organisations we work with better equipped to hold aid providers and institutions to account.</p>
Providing data	<p>Decision-makers operating with less access, more pressure and fewer resources need clear information about what communities prioritise. Applying a suite of research and analysis methods, we will provide clear, transparent information about issues impacting people in crisis, potential solutions, barriers to impact and changes needed. This will remain a public good, and will be amplified by a strong communications and advocacy strategy.</p>
Transforming systems	<p>We will challenge global support systems – humanitarian, development, climate and beyond – to better listen and respond to community views. We will diagnose problems: sense-checking policies and approaches against community priorities and calling organisations out when they fall short. We will also work with power-holders to reimagine ways of working that take community priorities as their starting point.</p> <p>We will set clear systems change goals based on communities’ priorities and invest in the advocacy and communications approaches necessary to turn our evidence into behaviour change and policy impact.</p>
Building a movement	<p>We work with a diverse network of thought leaders and systems thinkers in countries around the world with unique perspectives and ideas that are not being heard. We will join these actors in advocacy, and bring them together around opportunities for advocacy and learning, increasing our collective reach and influence.</p> <p>We will continue to play a leadership role within existing policy processes, and will connect a diverse network of people and organisations with common goals and fresh ideas to decision making fora, facilitating knowledge exchange and amplifying voices.</p>
Changing narratives	<p>We will use the data and stories people share more creatively and intentionally to shape and challenge global narratives, especially those that undermine the agency and priorities of people enduring crises. We will amplify and unlock spaces for the voices of the people we work with, acting as a conduit between people on the frontlines of crisis and national and global opinion-formers.</p>



How is our approach changing?

We will continue to carry out robust perceptions research that helps make community priorities the touchstone of effective support, and our central focus will continue to be on communities in crisis and the efforts intended to support them. But we believe we have focused too much on status quo systems in the past. The main changes we will make to our existing work are:

Past focus	Future focus
Humanitarian action	All support to communities in crisis
Humanitarian system performance management	Community-driven advocacy for multi-system change
Diagnosing problems and co-creating solutions	Ramping up targeted engagement to address those problems and push for implementation of solutions
Heavy focus on participation in humanitarian aid based on acceptance of international standards	Broader focus and co-designed research allowing communities to set the agenda

What will we need to do this?

To effectively deliver on this strategy we will need:

- **Money:** developing relationships with more diverse funding partners who share our vision and champion the need for independence in accountability
- **People:** we will boost our partnerships, communications and advocacy capacity, and grow our understanding of the key power-holders and levers of change. In a resource-stretched environment, we will operate a leaner core team with a greater focus on partnering for impact.
- **Movement:** Working with our vast and growing network we will develop clear goals for ensuring community voices grow louder and louder, and jointly identify the best strategies to achieve these.
- **Self-reflection:** We have always prided ourselves on listening, learning and adapting. We must retain that spirit and act as accountably as possible, championing diverse viewpoints and challenging ourselves to do better, every step of the way.



Explainer: Working with partners to amplify the voices of crisis-affected communities

The NGOs have come to support the population in distress. But through the ways they're working they're helping to fan the flames of division and conflict between members of the community.

– Thierry, 60, CAR

As the humanitarian system buckles under the pressure of the polycrisis, and political shifts see aid reduced as vulnerability increases, slowly won gains in people-centred aid risk being lost. Our work has always used community-driven research and dialogue to drive change, and has served as one of the only community-focused, independent checks and balances on systems of global humanitarian support. We remain staunchly committed to providing this service, and will build upon it with an enhanced focus on getting clear, reliable data as quickly as possible, informing decisions more directly, and building a movement for change. We will operate with independence, producing analysis that can be used across systems to drive improvements and hold power-holders accountable.

Explainer: Expanding our focus across global support systems, with a greater focus on climate, rights and justice

People don't want any more rice and lentils. There is no more land to live on. We need better support.

– Nasrin, 45, Bangladesh

The support communities tell us they need and the changes they want to see are often outside the scope of humanitarian aid. People say they feel trapped in cycles of emergency assistance when they need support that helps them plan for the longer term. They feel ignored when they flag concerns about their safety or rights. We hear from people across countries how climate change and environmental degradation are affecting their lives and livelihoods, and how badly-needed adaptation support is lacking. Our targeted work with climate-affected communities in Bangladesh and Chad confirms the importance of increasing community influence in climate assistance and we will focus on increasing the impact of our work on climate policy and programming.

Explainer: Emboldening communities

It's short-term assistance we're getting from NGOs. Give us food, yes, but give us much more something that can serve us in the days to come.

– Angelique, 25, DR Congo

We will do more to support the communities and leaders we work with to hold aid providers to account and drive solutions, using the data and findings we develop together. Diverse systems of support, be they led by government, civil society, diaspora, multilateral assistance or other, will all be strengthened by communities' long term influence on the decisions that affect them.





We will pilot this strategy throughout 2025, learning as we go and iterating based on what we learn. We will then implement the strategy in full from 2026 until it needs another refresh.