

Request for Proposals: Research on Human and Labor Rights Risks in Cocoa-Growing Areas of Colombia

October 2024

Project Background

Verité is an award-winning non-profit organization that illuminates and addresses serious human rights and labor rights violations in factories, farms, and other workplaces around the world. Aiming to promote human and labor rights, we serve private sector and public-sector clients by building their internal understanding of the labor rights problems they face in their supply chains and operations, and their skills to solve those problems.

For a research project on human rights risks in the Colombian Cocoa sector, Verité is seeking to hire a contractor with extensive research, research tool development, and worker interview experience within agricultural supply chains in Latin America, preferably in Colombia, the cocoa sector, and/or conflict-affected areas. The research project intends to assess the level and nature of human and labor rights risks on cocoa farms in the cocoa supply chain in Colombia, mainly those related to forced labor and child labor, as well as other issues such as occupational safety and health, discrimination based on gender and ethnicity, and land tenure issues.

The research study will include a security assessment, development of a research plan and tools, worker interviews, and a final research report. The research will be carried out from November 2024 to February 2025 in Colombia, and the final report will be due by March 7, 2025.

The selected contractor will be notified of their selection. A funding decision is expected by October 31st, 2024.

Scope of Work

The contractor will be responsible for the following tasks in close coordination with Verité:

1. Field research preparation and security assessment

The contractor will be responsible for preparing a detailed plan for field research, including a research methodology and tools, which should align with the desk research conducted by Verité. This plan will guide the fieldwork process, ensuring that all aspects are well-structured and grounded in prior findings. Additionally, the contractor must develop robust security protocols aimed at minimizing risks to both the researchers and the workers participating in the study.

2. In depth field research

The contractor will be responsible for conducting field research to gather information on human rights risks in the cocoa supply chain in Colombia in terms of child labor, forced labor, occupational safety and health, discrimination based on gender and ethnicity, and land tenure issues in Santander, Arauca, Tolima and Antioquia

2.1. Conduct 200 in-depth interviews with a cross section of workers outside of their places of work, 10-15 experts, 8 medium-sized or large farms, 5-7 cooperatives, and 15-20 smallholder farmers, to collect information on sensitive topics such as forced labor, child labor, discrimination based on gender and ethnicity, sexual harassment and abuse and land tenure issues.

2.2. This will be followed by the drafting of a comprehensive report that will detail research findings and recommendations to address labor risks detected through the research. The length and format of the report will be determined in accordance with the contractor but will not surpass a total of 75 pages. Researchers will work with local community leaders to recruit an initial group of workers to participate in the interviews and will then ask these workers to identify additional workers to participate in interviews.

The research contractor will be responsible for delivering several key outputs throughout this phase. These include a comprehensive research plan, tools, and a security assessment to ensure the safe and effective conduct of the study. Additionally, the contractor will provide a preliminary list of workers interviewed early in the process, followed by a finalized list of all workers interviewed upon completion of the research phase.

3. Report writing

Based on the information collected from field research, expert and worker interviews, draft an in-depth report detailing the findings on forced labor and other human rights related issues, and recommendations for how to address and prevent the recurrence of such issues.

The research contractor will deliver a five-page summary report detailing the field research conducted. This report will include the number of interviews with workers, producers, and experts, along with a summary of the key findings. Additionally, a comprehensive final research report will be submitted. The length and format of this report will be determined in consultation with the contractor but will not exceed 75 pages in total.

All deliverables must be approved by Verité.

Deliverables and Timeline

The Contractor is expected to produce a final report no later than March 7, 2025.

Please see the schedule of all four deliverables as follows:

#	Deliverable	Due Date
1	Research plan, tools, and security assessment	November 8 2024

2	Five-page summary report on the number of worker, producer, and expert interviews carried out and key findings	January 25, 2024
3	Draft research report containing findings from field research	February 10, 2025
6	Final research report, incorporating changes based on feedback from Verité	March 7, 2025

Evaluation Criteria

The research contractor must have the following technical and professional background:

- At least four (4) years of experience conducting research on labor and human rights issues within agricultural supply chains in Latin America, with a preference for experience in conflict-affected areas in Colombia and/or in cocoa supply chains.
- Experience conducting interviews with a variety of stakeholders in agricultural supply chains, including vulnerable workers. Experience in the cocoa sector will be an asset.
- Experience developing tools and materials for stakeholder engagement in agricultural supply chains.
- Professional or native-level fluency in Spanish is required.

The research contractor must also include in their proposal their availability to conduct fieldwork in Colombia while following safety protocols. The project is anticipating at least 200 workers, 10-15 experts, 8 medium-sized or large farms, 5-7 cooperatives, and 15-20 smallholder farmers interviews in Santander, Antioquia, Arauca and Tolima.

Contractors will be evaluated based on their cost proposal, relevant background on labor issues in agricultural supply chains and the cocoa sector, their professional experience, their language proficiency, and their educational qualifications.

Instructions for Proposal Submission

To submit a proposal for consideration, please send the following documents, along with any questions or clarifications you may need, to Esteban Gonzalez Jimenez, Latin America Program Manager, at egonzalez@verite.org by 11:59 p.m. Colombian Time on October 15th, 2024:

- Detailed proposal for the research approach, including methodology and timeline.
- Summary of organization’s required qualifications, experience, and expertise
- Cost proposal, including rate per day and/or any additional expenses, and estimated number of days needed for this work. Travel expenses should be detailed
- Sample research report illustrating similar work completed.