

Terms of Reference

Assessing GSMA's Strategic Partnerships for Mobile-Enabled Early Warning Systems

June 2025

Overview

The GSMA's Mobile for Humanitarian Innovation (M4H) programme is seeking a research consultant to design and deliver an assessment of its strategic partnerships work to support early warning systems (EWS). This study will review GSMA's contribution to strengthening mobile-enabled EWS in different humanitarian contexts, with the aim of identifying enabling conditions, lessons learned and providing robust evidence on GSMA's contributions. The findings will support decision-making across the M4H team and its partners, shaping future programme activities.

GSMA overview

The GSMA Mobile for Development Foundation, Inc. ("GSMA M4D") is a U.S. 501(c)(3) charitable organisation that seeks to relieve poverty and improve living conditions throughout the world through identifying opportunities for social, economic and environmental impact and to stimulate the development of scalable, life-enhancing mobile services. GSMA M4D is a wholly owned subsidiary of the GSM Association ("GSMA").

GSMA represents the interests of mobile operators worldwide, uniting nearly 800 operators with more than 300 companies in the broader mobile ecosystem, including handset and device makers, software companies, equipment providers and internet companies, as well as organisations in adjacent industry sectors. The GSMA also produces industry-leading events such as Mobile World Congress, Mobile World Congress Shanghai and the Mobile 360 Series conferences. For more information, please visit the GSMA corporate website at www.gsma.com.

For this project, the successful Respondent will contract with The GSMA Mobile for Development Foundation.

GSMA's Mobile for Humanitarian Innovation Programme

The programme focuses on catalysing partnerships, investing in innovation, unlocking policy barriers and delivering original research to strengthen the role and sustainability of mobile-enabled services in humanitarian contexts. The programme's Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) work collects, analyses and reflects on evidence related to the full breadth of the work, and drives programme improvements across the portfolio.

Early Warnings for All Initiative

In response to the growing frequency and severity of climate-related disasters, the United Nations' Early Warnings for All (EW4All) Initiative was launched in 2022. It aims to ensure that everyone in the world is protected by an early warning system. These systems are among the most cost-effective climate adaptation tools, offering a tenfold return on investment and significantly reducing human and economic losses during crises.

Today, 96% of the global population reside in areas covered by a mobile network and there are 5.8 unique mobile subscribers.¹ Mobile technology is therefore an essential tool to improve the reach and function

¹ GSMA. (2024). [The Mobile Economy 2024](#)

of EWS.² While the EW4All Initiative has brought new attention to the importance of EWS, mobile network operators (MNOs) have been enabling their development and implementation for decades.³

The M4H programme is playing a leading role in the EW4All Initiative as part of 'Pillar 3: Warning Dissemination and Communication', led by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). It contributes by:

- Convening the mobile industry and enabling multi-sectoral partnerships to develop and implement EWS
- Investing in innovative digital solutions for EWS through the GSMA Innovation Fund
- Publishing research on mobile-enabled EWS, including on cell broadcast and enhancing inclusion in risk communications
- Providing technical assistance to MNOs and partners developing EWS with a user-based approach
- Highlighting best practices, including through the GSMA's MWC and global M360 event series

Strategic partnerships for EWS

A core focus of M4H's work is fostering collaboration between mobile operators, technical partners and humanitarian organisations to strengthen digital humanitarian assistance and providing the relevant technical support for systems to be developed. This approach has enabled GSMA to support the development or improvement of EWS in 10+ countries, helping MNOs and partners build more inclusive, multi-hazard, multi-channel systems.

Through this process, M4H has found there is no single 'one-size-fits-all' model for EWS development. Each approach must reflect national priorities, ecosystem maturity and stakeholder capacity. With continued demand for GSMA engagement, there is an opportunity to better understand what makes partnerships effective and apply these insights to future M4H efforts.

Scope of work

Assessing M4H's role in advancing mobile-enabled early warning systems

As outlined above, early warning systems are complex, national-level initiatives that rely on a range of interdependent components – from mobile infrastructure and technologies to connected disaster risk reduction ecosystems, enabling regulatory environments and strong institutional champions. Within this broader ecosystem, the GSMA's role is one part of a multifaceted landscape.

This research study aims to generate actionable insights into the value and impact of M4H's partnerships and market-facing activities to support mobile-enabled early warning systems. While other areas of GSMA's EWS and EW4All portfolio – such as research, Innovation Fund grants and global policy work – are not the primary focus, relevant crossovers will be included where they have directly contributed to or been impacted by the country-level EWS work.

² GSMA. (2024). [The State of Mobile Internet Connectivity Report 2024](#)

³ GSMA. (2024). [Mobile-Enabled Early Warning Systems: The GSMA and the Early Warnings for All Initiative](#)

Key objectives of this evaluation are to:

1. Explore how GSMA's strategic partnerships have strengthened EWS outcomes in different market contexts
2. Understand the enabling and inhibiting conditions for successful GSMA engagement in EWS
3. Develop compelling case studies illustrating GSMA's partnership approach, activities and impact on national EWS
4. Inform GSMA's future strategy and planning for ongoing activities designed to strengthen EWS

Research questions

The evaluation is expected to adopt a mixed-method approach, including a desk review of relevant documentation, stakeholder interviews with both GSMA team members and partners, and comparative case studies. Guiding questions include:

1. EWS enabling conditions

- What was the specific context and need for EWS support in each market?
- What foundational elements – such as MNO readiness, humanitarian ecosystem strength, infrastructure and government engagement – were already in place? What gaps were identified?
- What factors contributed to deeper or more sustained national or regional engagement?

2. Assessing GSMA's value-add

- What role did GSMA play in enabling or enhancing EWS in different contexts?
- What specific needs or gaps did GSMA help address?
- How do stakeholders view GSMA's role, and what aspects of the support were seen as most valuable?
- What lessons or good practices emerge?

3. Impact*

- What outcomes – direct or indirect – have emerged from GSMA-supported country-level EWS activities?
- What evidence suggests GSMA's influence on these outcomes?

4. Case study insights

- What were the specific context, role and outcomes of GSMA's engagement in selected countries (e.g. Tanzania, Pakistan, the Pacific Islands)?
- What models or approaches were used and how effective were they?
- What transferable lessons can be drawn?

5. Considerations for future engagements

- Based on the evidence gathered, what types of GSMA support or EWS engagement models appear to be the most effective?
- How should GSMA prioritise future countries, partners or activities?
- What guidance can be offered for scaling, adapting or replicating partnerships models in new contexts?

**Note: This research study will not include community or end-user research. Insights on user outcomes should be drawn from existing data, secondary sources or stakeholder perspectives where available.*

Methodology

The consultant is expected to propose a suitable methodology as part of their proposal submission, but the evaluation is likely draw on a combination of primary and secondary data. Core elements may include:

- Desk review of GSMA programme materials and relevant partner documentation
- Key informant interviews with GSMA staff and external stakeholders, including mobile network operators, donors, humanitarian organisations and government representatives
- Stakeholder mapping and analysis of engagement models across different country contexts
- Analysis of selected markets, reflecting varied levels of GSMA support and engagement
- A virtual workshop held with selected stakeholders to validate emerging findings, surface additional insights and test the relevance of the recommendations for future activities

The case study component will provide comparative insights across markets with different types of GSMA involvement such as:

Level of GSMA support	Example activities	Example markets
Higher	Expert-level technical assistance provided both in person and remotely, up to 20 days of support per month, including at least two in-country visits and two or more stakeholder convenings.	Tanzania
Medium	Technical assistance, up to 10 days of support per month. Some in-person engagements, including stakeholder convenings.	Nepal Pakistan Madagascar
Lower	Light-touch technical assistance delivered remotely, with no in-person convenings to date.	The Caribbean Mozambique

A landscape review of key markets will support the development of engagement approaches and conditions for successful delivery. While several markets may be reviewed, up to 3 will be prioritised for in-depth case study analysis, allowing for richer exploration of GSMA's contribution.

Where relevant, the evaluation should also consider the [EW4All Logic Model](#) and its implications for GSMA's role and strategic contribution.

Please note, the majority of the research will be conducted remotely. GSMA will facilitate introductions to key stakeholders for interviews and engagement.

Expected outputs

For external publication:

- A comprehensive report answering the key research questions. This is expected to include standalone narrative case studies presenting the market context, timeline, nature of the EWS developed, GSMA's role, key outcomes and lessons learned.

For internal GSMA use:

- A synthesis PowerPoint presentation comparing GSMA's approach across case studies, highlighting good practices and areas for improvement, offering actionable recommendations for ongoing engagement.
- A practical checklist of enabling conditions to support future market selection and prioritisation of GSMA engagement and resources.

Deliverables

Key deliverables from the evaluation are expected to include

- Short inception report, including refined methodology and timeline
- Agreed key informant interview list and interview tools – co-developed with the GSMA team
- Draft and final versions of:
 - o Full evaluation report including key findings and recommendations
 - o 3 detailed country case studies
 - o Internal synthesis deck for GSMA use

Timelines

Request for quotes

Activity	Deadline (2025)
Terms of Reference shared	27 June
Request for quote deadline	18 July
Quote review	25 July
Supplier selection	27 July
Supplier contracted	21 August

Indicative activities and deliverables timeline

Activity	Deadline (2025)
Kick off call to brief consultant on project background, ongoing partnership work and key documents	22 August
Inception report delivered with refined methodology, timeline and approach agreed	27 August
Desk research	12 September
Case study selection agreed	15 September
Key informant interview list compiled and questions agreed	19 September
Stakeholder interviews	22 September- 31 October
Analysis and write up	3 – 21 November
Validation workshop	28 November
Final report/s	12 December

Proposal requirements

Interested consultants are requested to submit:

1. Technical Proposal

- 1-page statement of suitability
- 1-2 page methodological approach
- Comments on Terms of Reference
- Relevant CV(s)

2. Financial Proposal

- Total estimated cost in GBP* (excluding VAT)
- The cost should be inclusive of all expenses, including fees, insurance, liabilities, obligations, risks, and any other financial requirements associated with the performance of services and delivery of outputs.

*The GSMA default currency requirement for all proposals is UK Pounds Sterling, this will be the contract currency for the successful consultant.

Due to GSMA compliance requirements, exact project budgets cannot be provided at this stage. You are, however, able to provide a few implementation/budget options that can help us assess value for money and we can align our project scope to the relevant budget after a consultant has been selected.

Consultant requirements

Essential

- Track record of leading evaluations in humanitarian or digital development contexts
- Familiarity with early warning systems and risk communications
- Demonstrated ability to produce concise, high-quality evaluation outputs
- Excellent stakeholder engagement and qualitative research skills

Desirable

- Experience working with mobile operators or digital platforms
- Experience working with or alongside GSMA, ITU or EW4All actors
- Regional experience in Africa, Asia-Pacific or the Caribbean

The deadline to submit expressions of interest is 23:59 (UK time) on 18 July 2025. Proposals should be submitted to Anna Colquhoun acolquhoun@gsma.com and Angela Nkonu ankonu@gsma.com. GSMA anticipates that interviews will be conducted on 23 July 2025, or earlier on a rolling basis.

Useful reference documents

- [Mobile-Enabled Early Warning Systems: The GSMA and the Early Warnings for All Initiative](#)
- [Tanzania's journey towards mobile-enabled early warning systems](#)
- [The GSMA at PITA 29: Supporting digital transformation in the Pacific](#)