REQUEST FOR QUOTATION

Bridging the Gender Digital Divide: Promoting Mobile Connectivity Among Refugee Women

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Antitrust Notice

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Requested Services and Deliverables

1. GSMA overview

The GSMA is a global organisation unifying the mobile ecosystem to discover, develop and deliver innovation foundational to positive business environments and societal change. Our vision is to unlock the full power of connectivity so that people, industry and society thrive. Representing mobile operators and organisations across the mobile ecosystem and adjacent industries, the GSMA delivers for its members across three broad pillars: Connectivity for Good, Industry Solutions and Events. For this project, the successful Respondent will contract with the GSMA Mobile for Development Foundation.

The GSMA Mobile for Development Foundation, Inc. ("GSMA") is a U.S. 501(c)(3) charitable organisation. The Mobile for Development team (M4D) operates at the intersection of the mobile ecosystem and the development sector. Our aim is to stimulate digital innovation and deliver both sustainable business and large-scale socio-economic impact. Our research and insights platform, in-market expertise and community of partners push forward digital innovations and implementations that empower underserved populations. To date, we have impacted the lives of over 220 million people.

2. Project Overview

Background

At the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, UNHCR, ITU, GSMA, and the Government of Luxembourg co-convened a multistakeholder pledge to mobilise the expertise, resources, and investment required to advance the availability and affordability of connectivity for 20 million forcibly displaced people and their host communities by 2030. This pledge is being implemented through the Connectivity for Refugees initiative.

Access to mobile connectivity plays an increasingly central role in the lives of displaced populations. For refugees, mobile phones are often the primary means of accessing information, humanitarian assistance, financial services, education, and livelihood opportunities, as well as maintaining connections with family and community networks. For women in particular, access to a personal mobile device can strengthen safety, privacy, economic participation, and decision-making power. Without equitable access, existing social and economic inequalities risk being reinforced or deepened in humanitarian settings.

Evidence from various Connectivity, Needs and Usage Assessments (CoNUA) has consistently indicated a gender divide: refugee women are significantly less likely than men to own a mobile phone, and even less likely to own a smartphone or use mobile internet services. In some contexts, women are twice as likely to have their SIM registered in the name of a friend or family member, limiting their control over connectivity and access to digital services.

To address these critical knowledge gaps, GSMA is undertaking a broader research effort to build a more comprehensive understanding of the gendered connectivity gap in humanitarian contexts, with a particular focus on refugee women's access to and use of mobile technology. The research aims both to assess the scale and variation of this gap across different settings and to better understand the underlying drivers, including social norms, affordability constraints, documentation barriers, digital skills, and regulatory factors.

This project represents Phase 2 of a broader research effort. Phase 1 of the project, which is currently ongoing, is being conducted by GSMA and consists of a global desk review analysing existing literature and available evidence to provide a high-level overview of the gender connectivity gap

among refugee populations. The findings from this global desk review will be shared with the technical partner.

Building on the findings from Phase 1, Phase 2 will conduct primary research in one or two selected country contexts through in-depth field research and engagement with refugee communities and key stakeholders. **The objective of this study is to generate location specific insights into the barriers and enabling factors shaping refugee women's mobile connectivity.** These findings will help inform targeted interventions, programme design, and policy recommendations to support more inclusive digital access in humanitarian settings.

Scope of work

The research will aim to trace the end-to-end mobile connectivity journey of refugee women, mapping their pathways from device access and SIM registration through to mobile use and interactions with mobile agents.

With a particular focus on refugee women, the research will examine:

- **Device access:** Examine how refugee women access and acquire mobile devices, and the social, economic, and contextual factors shaping this access.
- **SIM registration:** Assess the barriers and enabling factors influencing refugee women's ability to register and retain SIM cards.
- **Usage patterns:** Understand how refugee women use mobile phones once connected, including patterns of use, constraints on usage, and perceived value of mobile services.
- **Mobile agent interaction:** Analyse how interactions with mobile agents affect refugee women's access to mobile services.

Research questions:

The research questions guiding this work are:

1. What is the level of mobile ownership and mobile internet use among refugee women compared to men in the same communities?
2. What social, economic, and infrastructural barriers limit refugee women's mobile connectivity?
3. How do safety, privacy, and social norms influence women's access and use of mobile devices and services?
4. How do mobile agents affect refugee women's access to SIM registration, mobile money, and other digital services, and what factors shape these interactions?
5. What strategies or interventions have successfully increased connectivity and digital engagement among refugee women?
6. How do differences in age, education, or disability intersect with gender to affect mobile access and use?

Methodology:

This study will involve field research and direct engagement with refugee communities and key stakeholders across one or two country case studies, with data collection conducted in selected camps/settlements and, where possible, surrounding urban refugee settings. Respondents are requested to submit separate budgets for conducting the research in one country and for conducting the research in two countries.

Case study countries under consideration include but are not limited to:

- Thailand
- Mauritania
- Cameroon
- Colombia

Respondents may also propose additional countries not listed above, particularly where they have prior research experience and established access. As relevant data already exists for East Africa, we encourage respondents to prioritise other regions to avoid duplication of existing (and ongoing) studies.

The final methodology will be collaboratively developed with the selected technical partner during the inception phase, but is expected to include:

- Gender-Disaggregated surveys (an estimated 1000 per country) – collect data on:
    - Device ownership and mobile internet usage
    - Digital literacy and SIM registration, including interactions with mobile agents
    - Barriers to access, including affordability, safety, social norms, and agent accessibility
- Key Informant Interviews (an estimated 20-30 per country) – Engage refugee women to explore lived experiences, safety concerns, cultural norms, preferences related to mobile device use, and experiences with mobile agents.
- Focus Group Discussions (an estimated 4-6 per country) – Facilitate FGDs with humanitarian actors, mobile network operators, local NGOs (especially WLOs), to identify systemic barriers, support mechanisms, and opportunities to enhance women's engagement with mobile services and agents.
- Participatory Mapping – Engage refugee women and men in mapping key connectivity resources, including charging stations, Wi-Fi hubs, SIM registration points, mobile money agents, and agent accessibility:
    - Assess how accessible and safe these spaces are for women
    - Examine how distance, cost, social norms, and agent networks influence usage
    - Identify areas of limited connectivity and priority locations for targeted interventions

This mixed-methods approach aims to generate comprehensive insights whilst also ensuring meaningful participation from refugee communities and key stakeholders throughout the process.

The technical partner should ensure that all research activities are conducted in line with appropriate ethical standards for research with vulnerable populations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and safeguarding considerations.

Technical partner deliverables

The following deliverables will be expected from this engagement:

- **Methodology Paper/workshop slides**: This will outline the agreed research methodology, sampling framework, assessment plans and data collection tools.
- **Enumerator Training Materials**: A set of materials for enumerator training to ensure high-quality data collection.
- **Data Collection and Field Reports**: Regular updates on data collection progress and challenges
- **Raw Data Set**: A clean data set containing both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data should be provided in clean and easy to use file formats in English. This means clean and formatted data (including naming, labelling and coding of missing values) in Excel format for quantitative data.

- **Data Analysis**: Analysis of the data, segmented by different populations and including summary findings from focus group discussion [data analysis workshop, in person if possible].
- **Written Report**: A draft report that provides insights into refugee women's digital access and usage patterns.

Table 1: Timelines and Deliverables

The assessment will follow the timeline below:

Due Date	Deliverable	Owner
May 2026	Contract fully executed	GSMA
May 2026	Project kick-off	All
June 2026	Inception Report (including agreed methodology and internal workshop)	All
October 2026	Data collection (including enumerator training)	Technical partner
November 2026	Data analysis	Technical partner
November 2026	Internal presentation	All
December 2026	External report production	GSMA

Additional Requirements

The following elements are mandatory service requirements and processes through the research process.

1. Communication

All communication, both written and verbal to the GSMA, to be conducted in English (including the translation of any documents that are required by local law in the markets that are created in local language). Additionally, this includes any documentation submitted as final deliverables to the GSMA, including transcripts and research materials. Technical partners should also demonstrate their ability (either through direct employment or via partners) to bring on highly skilled bilingual researchers in various contexts to deliver detailed qualitative testing and refinement of tools.

2. Transparency

The GSMA requires the appointed technical partner to be fully transparent about local partner/fieldwork agencies they intend to use and the GSMA has the power to veto selection.

3. Safeguarding

As part of our commitment to ensuring all those involved in research and evaluation are safeguarded, the technical partner is requested to provide information on their safeguarding approach/mitigating activities to ensure the safety and dignity of any vulnerable persons. A full

safeguarding plan will be formulated together once a technical partner is selected and integrated into the research tools and fieldwork plan.

4. Service availability

GSMA M4H requires a named project manager and ideally requires response to emails within two working days. Any delays must be communicated in a timely manner. Any changes to the required services/deliverables must have prior written approval from the GSMA contract manager.

5. Project management requirements

Regular weekly updates with the M4H project manager either at the GSMA London office or via video conference throughout the project. During the KII phase, M4H expects weekly calls.

6. Ongoing support of deliverables

It is expected that the successful technical partner will respond in a timely manner to the GSMA and/or SIDA requests for clarification of the project activities and/or deliverables for up to four weeks after the final debrief.

7. Licenses/ Permits

The technical partner will be responsible for ensuring all data collection is in line with local requirements and that they have all relevant permissions.

Evaluations of proposals will consider the following elements. It is unlikely the GSMA will consider proposals that do not include all elements listed.

- **Understanding of the brief:** Technical partners should outline their understanding of the requirements and the value they believe the results will have.

- **Approach:** Technical partners should outline how they intend to deliver the project as specified above. This should include:

    - How you intend to meet the requirements of this document

    - A detailed sampling plan, developed in alignment with the initial guidance provided, should be included in the proposal.

    - The proposal should clearly outline the locations where the technical partner intends to conduct data collection. Please note that the technical partner is expected to have the relevant language skills for the selected locations.

    - Suggestions for alternative/supplementary approaches to address the central objectives

    - An indicative timeline for delivery and demonstration of capacity to meet this

    - Any dependencies on GSMA staff.

- **Team and responsibilities:** The proposed individual or team (if applicable) should be included with a short bio alongside proposed roles.

- **Relevant experience:** Include examples of previous work which demonstrates experience where possible with:

    - Design and undertaking assessments in humanitarian sector, particularly focused on producing research regarding vulnerable populations including refugee women.

    - Experience working with and collaborating with UNHCR including country offices and other protection agencies.

    - The ability to successfully deliver to agreed timelines.

- **Risks and mitigation strategies:** All RFQ responses should include how any potential risks may be mitigated, e.g., security risks, ethical considerations etc.

- **Itemized quote**: Technical partners should provide a fully itemized quote per country. The GSMA default currency requirement for this procurement is ‘GBP’. It should include at a minimum a price for commissioning the project as described.

    - An estimated travel budget should be incorporated into the overall financial proposal, with assumptions clearly stated.

    - All costs should clearly demonstrate breakdowns in terms of staff time, travel, direct costs and other expenses.

- Suppliers are also asked to provide costs for any alternative or supplementary approaches suggested in your proposal.

RFQ timeline

The RFQ timeline below is subject to change at GSMA's sole discretion.

Time and Date	Action
April 14	RFQ Issued
April 17	Submit questions to GSMA by this date
April 22	Questions and answers circulated back to all respondents
April 30	Cut off time and date for proposal to be received by GSMA
May 10	Estimated invitation to contract

Note: Timeline is subject to change

GSMA Contact details

All correspondence and queries in relation to this RFQ must be emailed to:

Zainab Moallin (zmoallin@gsma.com) ("GSMA contact")

Sheila Moa (smoa@gsma.com) ("GSMA contact")

Queries are accepted in written form by email, and GSMA's responses will be copied to all respondents, including an anonymous version of the query. No queries will be answered outside of the timeframe specific, except in extraordinary circumstances within GSMA's sole discretion.

RFQ submission details

Respondents should submit a full documentation package via email no later than 1700hrs (BST) 30 April 2026. Electronic submission should not exceed more than 5 MB in size per email and should be sent to: zmoallin@gsma.com; rpouakouyou@gsma.com; smoa@gsma.com. Acknowledgement of receipt of electronic submission will be sent by the next day of receipt before Close of Business. In case the Respondent encounters a problem in its electronic submission, please contact Sheila Moa by telephone at +44 (0)7583 050 849. If, following submission of the tender, the information contained therein changes, please advise the GSMA Contacts immediately. Where proposals are incomplete or not supplied, they may not be considered for evaluation. By submitting a response, the respondent agrees to respond to any other questions issued by GSMA in connection with this RFQ within the stated deadlines.

Milestone payment details

For the avoidance of doubt, GSMA's payment terms are contained in the GSMA Standard Terms & Conditions ("T&Cs"), and are thirty days from receipt of an undisputed invoice, which should be raised following acceptance of Services and/or Deliverables.

Please note, GSMA does not make advance payments prior to completion of the Services and Deliverables unless the payment requested is specifically traceable to purchase of items required to perform the Services or provide the Deliverables, which would otherwise be a loss for the Respondent. Any specific payment requirements must be notified as part of the RFQ response.

The Respondent's Total Price is inclusive of all costs, insurances, fees, costs, expenses, liabilities, obligations, risks, and all financial requirements for the performance of Services and provision of Deliverables. Any charge not stated in this Proposal, which extends above to the Total Price, is not permitted. Total Price is exclusive of VAT but inclusive of all other taxes.

Summary of proposed timeline and payment milestones

Please find below the summary of proposed payment milestones to be made to the supplier upon delivery of outputs. The following will be amended based on the supplier's proposal.

Proposed Payment Milestone	Corresponding Deliverable	Date
Milestone 1	Project kick-off	May 2026
Milestone 2	Inception Report (including agreed methodology paper, sampling framework, assessment plans, data collection tools and internal workshop slides)	June 2026
Milestone 3	Data collection (including enumerator training materials and interview transcripts and report structure)	October 2026
Milestone 4	Draft Report (including emerging findings, clean data set including quantitative and qualitative)	November 2026
Milestone 5	Final Report (including data analysis segmented by different populations and internal presentation of findings, lessons learnt and recommendations)	December 2026