



Make-IT Alliance

Promoting Tech Entrepreneurship Worldwide

GSMA – Action Statement

Do you already promote start-ups / tech-entrepreneurs in developing countries? If yes, why?

In March 2016, the mobile industry became the first sector to commit to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which represents a universal call to action to end poverty, protect our planet, and enable peace and prosperity for all people by 2030. At the forefront of the digital revolution, the GSMA works across sectors to drive change within the industry. In particular, the GSMA stimulates digital innovation to deliver both sustainable business and large-scale economic impact for the underserved through its Mobile for Development (M4D) portfolio.

For the past 7 years, GSMA M4D supports start-ups specifically to reach the scale needed for commercial viability while enabling mobile network operators (MNOs) to keep up with innovations required to solve critical local challenges and drive impact in emerging markets.

How did you promote start-ups / tech-entrepreneurs so far (worldwide and in developing countries)?

To date, the GSMA has supported over 100 organizations covering all 17 of the SDGs with over £16 million in dispersed funding in developing countries, resulting in over £470 million in additional capital raised from commercial investors.

For example, the GSMA Ecosystem Accelerator programme focuses on bridging the gap between mobile operators and start-ups, enabling strong partnerships that foster the growth of innovative mobile products and services. These partnerships bring impactful mobile solutions to the people and places that need those most, generating the greatest socio-economic impact. In particular, the programme operates an Innovation Fund, which supports start-ups from Africa and Asia-Pacific with direct grant funding, technical assistance, and connections with mobile operators. To date, our Ecosystem Accelerator Innovation Fund alone has reached over 6 million beneficiaries with 30 MNO partnerships; with a total £6.7m allocated in grant funding, these start-ups have already raised an additional £182 million in additional investments.

What are your experiences and best practices you might want to share with the Make-IT-Alliance?

Our Innovation Fund model provides start-ups with grant funding, technical support and opportunities to develop strong partnerships with local mobile operators.

Since the first round of the Ecosystem Accelerator Innovation Fund in 2017, the case for collaborating with start-ups has never been stronger for mobile operators. Increasingly, many are turning to external partners such as start-ups to help fuel their innovation engine. Operators are leaning toward start-up collaborations as they seek to stay relevant

in an industry where core revenue sources (voice and text) have been under significant pressure.

While focusing on the relationship between start-ups and mobile operators, we also recognize the critical role other stakeholders in the ecosystem (such as government, international donors, tech hubs and investors) play in support local start-ups in developing countries.

How do you want to promote start-ups / tech-entrepreneurs in the future? What is your vision?

Through our funding partnerships we are able to support and provide risk capital to early stage innovations and encourage replication, therefore ensuring that we stimulate digital innovation that addresses the challenges of local societies and of our planet in a commercially sustainable manner.

What are your expectations from the Make-IT Alliance together with the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development?

Public-Private collaboration is essential if we are to achieve the ambition of the SDG's. Digital technologies offer a potential to increase aid effectiveness, unlock new ways to deliver socioeconomic impact and catalyse private sector action to drive scale. By working together, sharing knowledge and accelerating digital inclusion for all, we have the ability to reduce inequalities further and drive global prosperity, to ensure no one is left behind.

About the GSMA

The GSMA represents the interests of mobile operators worldwide, uniting more than 750 operators with over 400 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 the industry-leading MWC events held annually in Barcelona, Los Angeles and Shanghai, as well as the Mobile 360 Series of regional conferences.

About Mobile for Development

GSMA Mobile for Development sits at the intersection of the mobile ecosystem and the development sector, driving innovation in digital technology to reduce inequalities in our world. In partnership with the mobile industry, tech innovators, governments and the development sector, GSMA Mobile for Development advances innovations that deliver sustainable business and empower underserved populations to build a better future.

For more information, visit the GSMA Mobile for Development website at www.gsma.com/m4d and follow @GSMAm4d on Twitter.