

# **Request For Proposals For External Mid-Term Evaluation of the CHARM Programme (2023–2025).**

Client: DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)  
Arie Towers,  
Plot 16, Mackinnon Road, Nakasero  
P.O.BOX 70356, Kampala Uganda.

**July 2025**

## Request for Proposals

The DefendDefenders, requests for proposals/bids for **consultancy for conducting an external Mid-Term Evaluation of the CHARM Programme (2023–2025)**.

The request for proposal document is attached to this call.

In response to this request, the bidder must submit a technical and financial proposal.

Both the technical and financial proposals should be addressed to and sent to:

### Head of Procurement

#### DefendDefenders

Arie Towers, Plot 16 Mackinnon Road, Nakasero

P.O.BOX 70356 Kampala Uganda

Email: [procurement@defenddefenders.org](mailto:procurement@defenddefenders.org), CC in [MariaK@defenddefenders.org](mailto:MariaK@defenddefenders.org),  
[patrickd@defenddefenders.org](mailto:patrickd@defenddefenders.org)

Proposals/bids should be submitted before **5:30pm** (Ugandan local time) on **Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2025**.

*Late submissions shall not be accepted.*

Thank you.

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Head Procurement

## 1.0 Instructions to Proposers

The bidder is to read carefully the instructions set out below. No claim will be entertained on the grounds of failure either to read or comply neither with the instructions nor for any alleged misunderstanding of their meaning.

### 1.1 Request for Clarifications

For any inquiries regarding this request write to the Procurement Team on email address is [MariaK@defenddefenders.org](mailto:MariaK@defenddefenders.org), cc, [Procurement@defenddefenders.org](mailto:Procurement@defenddefenders.org) & [patrickd@defenddefenders.org](mailto:patrickd@defenddefenders.org), provided your request does not concern the prices for these services. This request must be sent prior to 12.00hrs on Monday, **28<sup>th</sup> July 2025**.

Should there be any doubt or obscurity as to the meaning of any word or phrase or terms or conditions in the request for proposals document or anything to be done or not to be done by the eventual contractor, or to these instructions, or as to any other matter or anything pertaining to the eventual contract, the bidder must submit such doubt or obscurity in writing. Any clarification so issued will form part of the contract documents.

DefendDefenders is not obliged to provide explanations regarding requests made after the closing date. Results will not be made public. **Any lobbying will lead to automatic disqualification.**

### 1.2 Cost of Preparing the Proposals

The proposer shall bear all costs associated with the preparation and submission of his/her proposal and DefendDefenders will in no case be responsible or liable for these costs regardless of the conduct or outcome of the proposal's solicitation process.

### 1.3 Taxes and Duties

DefendDefenders will withhold 6% tax for Ugandan based consultants or 15% for foreign consultants except for those with WHT exemption from Uganda Revenue Authority. Your offer should, therefore, be inclusive of all taxes and any other levies.

### 1.4 Format and Signing of Proposals

The proposer shall prepare the **Technical Proposal** and the **Financial Proposal**. The proposals shall be typed and signed by the person or persons duly authorised to bind the bidder to the eventual contract. The **Proposal** shall be signed as per the prescribed **Proposal Submission Form** without alterations, except those in accordance with instructions issued by DefendDefenders.

### 1.5 Examination and Evaluation of Proposals

Information relating to the examination, clarification, evaluation and comparison of proposals and recommendations for award shall not be disclosed to bidders or any other persons not officially concerned with such processes until the award to the successful proposer has been announced. Any effort by the proposer to influence DefendDefenders' processing of the proposals or award decisions will result in automatic rejection of his proposal.

To assist in the examination, evaluation, and comparison of the proposals, DefendDefenders may, at its discretion, ask any proposer for clarification of their proposal including breakdown of the unit rates. The request for clarification and the response shall be in writing, but no change in the price or substance of the proposal shall be sought, offered or permitted except as required to confirm the correction of arithmetic errors discovered by DefendDefenders in the evaluation of the proposals.

### 1.6 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation methodology to be used for the evaluation of bids received shall be the Quality and Cost Based selection (QCBS) methodology. The Quality and Cost Based selection methodology recommends the highest scoring bid, which is substantially responsive to the technical and financial requirements of the Bidding Document where Technical Shall be 70% and financial 30%. The evaluation shall be conducted in two sequential stages-

- a) The technical quality of bids against set criteria on a merit point system, to determine the technical score of each technical bid.
- b) A financial comparison to determine the financial score of each financial bid, and to determine the total score of each bid.
- c) For any financial proposals that shall not be in United Dollars/ USD the Prevailing info Euro rate for the deadline day shall be used to convert the proposal for purposes of evaluation.
- d) The **minimum technical score** required to pass the technical evaluation is: 50 points. **Bids scoring less than this will be rejected.**

### 1.6.1 Determination of Best Evaluated Bidders

That bid achieving the highest combined technical and financial score shall be the Best Evaluated Bid.

### 1.6 Determination of responsiveness

Prior to the detailed evaluation of the proposals, DefendDefenders will determine whether each proposal is substantially responsive to the requirements of the request for proposals. A substantially responsive proposal is the one, which conforms to all the terms, conditions, and terms of reference of the request for proposals without material deviation or reservation. A material deviation or reservation is one:

- a) Which affects in any substantial way the scope, quality, or performance of the services.
- b) Which limits in any substantial way, inconsistent with the request for proposals, DefendDefenders rights or the proposer's obligation under the eventual contract?
- c) Whose rectification would affect unfairly the competitive position of other proposers presenting substantially responsive proposals.

If a proposal is not substantially responsive, DefendDefenders will reject it.

### 1.7 Correction of Errors

Proposals determined to be substantially responsive will be checked by DefendDefenders for any arithmetic errors in computation and summation. Errors will be corrected as follows: The corrected errors, with the concurrence of the proposer, shall be binding upon the proposer. If the proposer does not accept the corrections made of the proposal, his/her proposal will be rejected.

### 1.8 Technical and Financial Proposals

The technical proposals shall be submitted guided by the Terms of Reference and Application Format for the technical Proposal in the RFP. The financial proposal shall be submitted guided by the budget format.

DefendDefenders reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal and to annul the solicitation process without incurring any liability to the affected bidders or any obligation to inform them of the grounds for DefendDefenders' action.

### 1.9 Signing of the Contract

After DefendDefenders notifying a successful proposer that his/her proposal has been accepted, DefendDefenders will send a copy of the contract to the successful bidder and within **five days** of receipt of the contract, the bidder shall sign and date the contract and return it to DefendDefenders.

### 1.10 Proposal Validity

The proposals shall remain valid and open for acceptance for a period of **30 days** from the date of closing.

### 1.11 CURRENCY OF PROPOSAL

**Offers are to be made in United states Dollars/USD.**

Please note that the prospected contract will be in Uganda Shillings, any proposals or offers that shall be made is a currency other than the one specified shall be converted to USD using the info Euro exchange rate on the Date of Bid closing.

### 1.12 Summary of the Procurement Timelines

No	Description	Timeline
1	Issuing of a Request for Proposal	22/07/2025
2	Bid Closing Date	8/08/2025
4	Evaluation of Proposals	22/08/2025
5	Contract Negotiation and final selection/ award of a contract	29/08/2025
6	Start date of a contract	02/09/2025
7	Inception report	12/09/2025
8	Review of Inception report	19/09/2025
9	Revisions to inception report/Final inception report	24/09/ 2025
10	Implementation of the evaluation: secondary and primary data collection and analysis, and reporting	25 Sep to 31 October 2025
11	Presentation and validation of preliminary findings (online session)	5 November 2025
12	Draft report	10 November 2025
13	Feedback to draft report	14 November 2025
14	Final Report	20 November 2025

### Proposals Submission Form

We understand and agree to the request for proposal with all the terms and conditions as stipulated in the instructions to bidders, the terms and conditions of the contract and the Annexes.

We undertake that if our proposal is accepted, and the contract is awarded to us, we shall start offering the services immediately in accordance with the contract commencement date and shall render the whole services required in this contract.

We understand that DefendDefenders is not bound to accept the lowest financial proposal or any proposal you may receive and DefendDefenders shall not be liable for any expenses incurred by us in the preparation of these proposals.

We agree that the prices we have quoted are to be fixed and valid from the date of submission of the proposals and not subject to variation throughout the eventual contract period.

We further agree that we shall follow all the security and other DefendDefenders requirements as will be directed by DefendDefenders in the implementation of the contract.

Signed: .....

Name: .....

Title.....

For and on behalf of.....

(Name of Proposing Firm).

Dated this .....day of .....2025.

(Affix Company seal or official stamp)

## **Terms of Reference for the External Mid-Term Evaluation of the CHARM Programme (2023–2025)**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Consortium to Promote Human Rights, Civic Freedoms and Media Development in Sub-Saharan Africa (CHARM), funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), is approaching the completion of its implementation phase for the period July 2023 - December 2025. Building on prior evaluations and learning from the 2020-2023 phase,



CHARM seeks to commission an independent consultant/team to conduct Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE). This evaluation will assess performance, ensure accountability to stakeholders, and generate actionable learning to inform future programming.

## 2. CHARM OVERVIEW

CHARM aims to promote and protect human rights and media freedoms in Sub-Saharan Africa. The partnership of CIVICUS, Civil Rights Defenders, DefendDefenders, Fojo Media Institute, The Wits Centre for Journalism, Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement, and Magamba Network acknowledges the role that a free and active media and civil society have in the protection of robust and inclusive democracies and the promotion of sustainable national development. Together as a consortium, these organisations offer a strong and unique contribution in the following areas:

- I. **Civil society building and civic space advocacy** by emboldening of local, national, regional, and global alliance of civil society organisations (CSO) and activists to bolster citizen action and civil society throughout sub-Saharan Africa and protect and safeguard civic space, in particular through enhance access of civil society and journalists working at grassroots and local levels to national, regional, and international decision-making process. We strengthen civil society by reaching out to the most marginalised groups, including those who are part of small informal groups, unregistered collectives/networks, and individual human rights defenders.
- II. **Safety and protection of women/human rights defenders (W/HRD) and activists** through protecting the work of W/HRDs and other activists by reducing their vulnerability to the risk of persecution and by enhancing their capacity to effectively defend human rights through advocacy, litigation, public campaigns, and protection support.
- III. **Integration of gender and social inclusion** by utilizing an intersectional approach to designing and implementing our interventions. We ensure that the partners and sub-grantees who we work with practise a gender-transformative and inclusive approach and reach out to the most marginalised and discriminated in their own communities. **CHARM is a gender-inclusive entity.**
- IV. **Media development and protecting/expanding media freedoms** by strengthening free, independent, and inclusive journalism especially by under-represented groups such as female journalists through fostering alliances, exchanging of expertise, building media literacy, and bringing together community media, larger media houses, alternative media, content creators, and advocacy and international reporting networks.
- V. **Tech, innovation, and digital activism** advancements through working on the cutting edge of technology, arts, digital media, activism, and innovation through supporting and incubating a myriad of young content creators, artists, and activists who speak truth to power, open up space for free expression online, and amplify counter-narratives.
- VI. **Inter-state and regional collaboration** through consortium synergy effects. Together, consortium members can reach all countries in SSA and a diverse spectrum of stakeholders, from grassroots activists and journalists to international policymakers. We leverage and



amplify local and national insights, opportunities, and advocacy efforts to make regional contributions. Together, we tackle large-scale challenges that can be too much for one organisation alone.

CHARM engages with civil society and media who support W/HRDs and their organisations and journalists, particularly those that represent constituencies with the most limited access to resources and opportunities in their unique contexts (such as women, young people, sexual minorities, people living with disabilities, racial and ethnic minority groups, Indigenous people, amongst others). Together, the consortium contributes to change across four strategic outcome areas through six pathways of change related to civic space, public support (to marginalised and traditionally excluded groups), coalition building, and access to better resources to sustain the work of civil society and media in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

### **3. DEFENDEFENDERS: LEAD ORGANIZATION PROFILE**

DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project), established in 2005 and registered as a foreign NGO in Uganda, serves as the Secretariat of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) and AfricanDefenders. Its mission is to enhance the safety and capacities of human rights defenders (HRDs) through protection, capacity building, advocacy, research, technology development, and communications across 13 countries.

### **4. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION**

To comprehensively assess the CHARM project's performance from July 2023 to June 2025 in promoting human rights, civic freedoms, and media development in Sub-Saharan Africa, with a particular focus on who the intended users are the intended use of the evaluation, document key lessons learned, inform future programming, and provide accountability to stakeholders. The primary intended users of the evaluation are the CHARM consortium members and SIDA, who will use the findings for accountability, learning, and to inform future programming.

#### **4.1: Specific Objectives:**

- Assess the extent to which CHARM achieved its intended short-term outcomes and contributed to long-term outcomes, including:
  - Progressive and inclusive policy changes that open civic space.
  - Enhanced public trust in civil society and media.
  - Expanded coalitions demonstrating solidarity and countering disinformation.
  - Increased access to resources for marginalized groups.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Consortium's partnership and coordination mechanisms in delivering the project and achieving its objectives.



- Assess the coherence of CHARM’s design and implementation with relevant national, regional, and international frameworks, such as SIDA’s Strategy for 2022–2026, human rights conventions, and media freedom standards.
- Analyze the sustainability of CHARM’s interventions, including the likelihood of sustained impacts on civic space, human rights, and media freedoms, and the mechanisms in place for continued support and advocacy.
- Identify lessons learned, best practices, and recommendations for future multi-country, multi-partner consortia, particularly in addressing challenges like shrinking civic space and digital security threats.

#### 4.2: Scope of the Evaluation

- **Timeframe:** July 2023–June 2025 (building from 2020–2023 end-term evaluation)
- **Geographic Scope:** Sub-Saharan Africa where CHARM Consortium members have been active.
- **Focus Areas:** All strategic outcome areas and pathways of change, including civic space advocacy, HRD protection, media development, gender equality, coalition building, digital activism, and inter-regional collaboration

#### 4.3: Key Evaluation Questions

##### Relevance and Coherence:

- To what extent was CHARM responsive to the needs of HRDs, media actors, and civil society in the Sub-Saharan context?
- How well did CHARM align with national, regional, and international frameworks on human rights and media freedoms, including SIDA’s Strategy for 2022–2026?
- How coherent were the consortium structures and partnerships?

##### Effectiveness:

- To what extent did CHARM achieve its intended short-term outcomes, such as progressive policy changes, enhanced public trust, expanded coalitions, and increased access to resources?
- How did CHARM contribute to long-term outcomes, like safe civic spaces, decreased public tolerance for abuses, resilient coalitions, and sustainable organizations?
- How effective were CHARM’s partnership and coordination mechanisms in supporting program delivery?

##### Sustainability:

- What mechanisms have been established to sustain the project's outcomes, such as continued advocacy, coalition building, or resource mobilization?
- What are the prospects for replication and scaling up successful interventions in other regions or contexts?

### **Learning and Adaptation:**

- How did the consortium use its learning cycles and prototype reviews to adapt the project to changing contexts, such as shrinking civic space or new digital threats?
- What lessons can be drawn from CHARM's experience for other consortia working in similar fields?

## **5. METHODOLOGY**

The evaluation will build upon the project's existing Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) system, which employs a Developmental Evaluation approach with Outcome Harvesting as the primary qualitative method and quantitative indicator tracking. It will utilize data from the end-term evaluation (June 2023) and ongoing MEL activities, including outcome harvesting reports and indicator data. The 2020 and 2023 CHARM evaluations will serve as baseline data to assess progress and changes over time. The evaluation will employ a mixed-methods approach, incorporating:

- **Outcome Harvesting:** Conduct a comprehensive analysis of harvested outcomes to understand both intended and unintended impacts of the project.
- **Qualitative Methods:** Use Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs-virtual), and Most Significant Change (MSC) to capture diverse perspectives and stories of change, particularly from HRDs, journalists, civil society partners, and marginalized groups.
- **Quantitative Analysis:** Analyze quantitative data from project indicators to measure progress against targets, including disaggregated data by gender, age, and other relevant identities to assess GESI impacts.
- **Desk Review:** Review project documents, Annual and bi-annual reports, partner reports, and relevant external literature to provide context and triangulation.
- **Virtual Data Collection:** Utilize online tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Forms, and online surveys to ensure accessibility and inclusivity, especially for stakeholders in remote or hard-to-reach areas.

The evaluation will apply gender-responsive, participatory, and conflict-sensitive principles, ensuring ethical standards such as informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and “do-no-harm” are upheld. It will assess how well the project integrated GESI principles.

***Evaluation shall conform to OECD/DAC's quality standards for Development Evaluation. The evaluators shall use the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation.***

## **6. TENTATIVE TIMELINE AND DELIVERABLES**

The main output of this External Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) will be a final CHARM MTE report. This report will need to be delivered in English. CHARM recommends a final MTE report of approx. 25-30 pages. During the inception phase, the CHARM coordination team and the MTE team will determine the appropriate length of the MTE report.

An indicative timeline is presented below. CHARM expects the inception report to be delivered by **12 September 2025**. The deadline for submitting the final MTE report is **20 November 2025**.

*Further details and deadlines are to be agreed upon by the DefendDefenders and the consultant(s).*

## **7. SET-UP OF THE EXTERNAL END EVALUATION**

The External Evaluation team will be commissioned by DefendDefenders as the CHARM consortium lead. After receiving the consultancy proposals, the proposals will be reviewed and scored according to the selection criteria presented below. The proposals and the review and scoring matrix will be presented to the CHARM Steering Committee, which will meet virtually to make the final selection of the winning proposal.

DefendDefenders/ Coordination team will be the first point of contact of the External Evaluation team and will provide them with the programme documentation and the contact information of

the various partners they need to communicate with for the evaluation process. However, the External Evaluation team will directly communicate and coordinate with the various partners involved in the evaluation and will independently design the methodology and tools for the evaluation, select the evaluation participants and data sources, conduct the collection, review and analysis of data, and prepare the report. The External Evaluation team will receive feedback from the Coordination team at key stages of the evaluation process. The role of the Coordination team is to guide the evaluation process in terms of content and quality, review the inception report and the draft report, and advise on the signing off on the inception report and final report.

## **8. QUALIFICATIONS**

CHARM seeks to contract a team of specialists, individuals or a consultancy firm, organization or institute to conduct this External End Evaluation.

**The evaluation team should be independent and impartial and therefore should not have been involved in any way in the design or implementation of the CHARM programme.**

*Qualifications of the Team Lead:*

- ✓ Master's degree in social sciences, international development, M&E or other relevant field.

- ✓ At least 10 years of experience in (complex) development programme evaluations, including experience in evaluations of programmes on Journalists W/HRD's rights, participation, leadership and lobby & advocacy.
- ✓ Demonstrated experience of leading multi-country and multi-stakeholder evaluations.
- ✓ Demonstrated experience with mixed-methods evaluations, contribution analysis or other relevant evaluation approaches, as well as in feminist, gender transformative and participatory MEL approaches (Outcome Harvesting, Outcome Mapping and Most Significant Change Stories).
- ✓ Excellent interpersonal communication skills demonstrated ability to work cooperatively with clients, and ability to liaise tactfully as coordinator of and member of a multicultural team.
- ✓ Previous experience in the implementation regions (SSA), and excellent understanding of cultural differences, gender dynamics, intersectionality and inclusiveness.
- ✓ Excellent command of English and French, both oral and written.

#### **Proposals should include:**

- ✓ Cover letter (1,000 words max.) highlighting the relevant experience and why the team is a good fit for the assignment.
- ✓ Technical proposal (3,000 words max.)
- ✓ Financial proposal with clear breakdown of budget lines (fees and working days)
- ✓ CVs of team members (2-3 pages max. per CV).
- ✓ 2 Sample report of previously completed evaluation.
- ✓ Contact details of two references (only checked for short-listed candidates).

## **9. BUDGET**

The proposed budget should not exceed \$20,000 including VAT. **The evaluation will be entirely virtual.**

## **10. EVALUATION RESPONSIBILITIES AND MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

The overall leadership for the evaluation will be on the Director of Program and Administration-DefendDefenders. However, the consultant will directly work with the Coordination Team led by the Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Lead.

## **11. SCORING TABLE**

Criterion	Weight (%)	Description
1. Understanding of the TOR and	15	Evaluate how well the consultant demonstrates understanding of the CHARM project's goals, objectives, and evaluation requirements, including alignment

<b>Evaluation Approach</b>		with the project's Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework and stakeholder roles.
<b>2. Methodology and Workplan</b>	30	Assess the appropriateness and feasibility of the proposed methodology (e.g., Outcome Harvesting, qualitative and quantitative methods) and workplan, ensuring alignment with the project's timeline, deliverables, and GESI principles.
<b>3. Team Composition and Expertise</b>	25	Evaluate the qualifications and experience of the team members or consultant, particularly in conducting multi-country, multi-partner evaluations in human rights, civic space, or media development. Consider expertise in Outcome Harvesting, virtual evaluations, and fluency in English (with knowledge of French, as an advantage).
<b>4. Past Experience</b>	20	Score based on the relevance and quality of past similar assignments, especially in evaluating complex programs in Sub-Saharan Africa or related fields. Consider the number of similar evaluations (e.g., at least 2–3) and their outcomes.
<b>5. Financial Proposal</b>	10	Assess the reasonableness and justification of the budget, ensuring it is within the USD 20,000 limit (including VAT) and provides good value for money.

## 12: HOW TO APPLY

Please submit your proposal to [procurement@defenddefenders.org](mailto:procurement@defenddefenders.org) with CC to Maria Kaddu at [mariaK@defenddefenders.org](mailto:mariaK@defenddefenders.org) and Patrick Dowan at [patrickd@defenddefenders.org](mailto:patrickd@defenddefenders.org) and by **8<sup>th</sup> August, 2025**

**Application deadline: 8<sup>th</sup> August 2025, 5:30 PM EAT**