The demand for mobile phones in Africa in the last few years has been more than most people expected and continues to expand. Operators have traditionally targeted urban areas, but it is the demand from rural and low income areas that have exceeded all expectations. This paper, prepared by Gamos for the Commision for Africa, proposes three key areas where support from high level institutions could help African countries exploit the potential that mobile technology offers to the vulnerable.

Ensure the poor benefit from expanding access to networks - develop new business models for network investment which reflect the behaviour of African consumers. This includes low cost, low tariff models, and making sure universal access strategies are effective in extending networks to remote areas. Ensure the poor have equity of access.

Ensure the poor benefit from the phone network through appropriate services. Services relevant to the poor need to be stimulated. Many of the existing commercial services horoscopes, football results have little relevance to the poor. Stimulate the development of locally designed, mobile based solutions to African opportunities by supporting local technology entrepreneurs (both for profit and not for profit).

Ensure the poor benefit from access to financial services, enabled through mobile phone networks. Integrating mobile phone operators into the reform of financial services will accelerate the introduction of electronic services to the rural poor. Mobile technology lends itself to this application, and phones offer a means of access through voice or text.

The full report is available to read here- The Impact Of Mobile Phones In Africa