# Groaning Under Poor services

Contributed by Anthony Akaeze
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MTN subscribers complain that the telecommunications company is ruining their lives and businesses with its persistent poor quality service delivery

Disappointment, anger and frustration. These words best describe the feelings of many MTN subscribers over the poor quality of service they have, of late, been getting from the South African telecom company. All over the country, many customers have been lamenting what they generally term “MTN’s poor services.” The complaints range from difficulty in loading credits, drop calls, inability to instantly confirm credit balance and difficulty in getting connected. Ikechukwu Ezeunara, a Minna based trader, said that he had not been able to make optimum use of the network in the past three weeks due to a hitch in service delivery. Ezeunara told Newswatch that he recently bought an MTN card but was unable to recharge for two days. According to him, he could not also easily connect other MTN phone users and subscribers of other networks. Consequently, he said his business had suffered since he could not make or receive calls. “The service here in Minna has been very bad in the past two weeks. I can’t make telephone calls as I would have loved to and it’s affecting my business. Also, I cannot easily connect MTN lines and other people also find it difficult to reach me. It’s been very frustrating,” he said. He is not alone. John Kola William, a resident of Calabar, complained as much. “It’s been bad, very bad,” he said, in reply to the state of service delivery in the town. “The network was particularly bad in the past two days. You cannot easily make calls and people can’t also reach you. It’s embarrassing. I don’t know what those guys at MTN are doing,” he said. Ngozi Ike, a resident of Asaba, has a similar story. She told Newswatch last week, that in the past four days, he could not make calls on MTN network “It was the same for many people that I know. I do not understand what went wrong.” Obi Maco, who lives in Uyo, also complained that the network situation in the state had been epileptic in the past few days. “The service has been bad in recent days, as one could neither recharge his phone nor make calls easily. For two days, I could not make local calls. And I also had problems in making international calls. I kept experiencing drop calls. It was annoying.” For Prince Busari Tajudeen, a Lagos resident, MTN services in the past two weeks leave much to be desired. “I’ve had a hectic time trying to recharge my phone and check my balance. Most times, this lasts for eight hours. It’s tough and surprising that, even with your money, you could be left stranded. The worst is that it is not easy to connect the MTN customer care line. I’ve been trying to reach the customer care in the past three days without success.” According to Tajudeen, “there was a time I was supposed to call somebody around 8.00 am, I bought the card but was unable to connect until later that evening. I needed to make the call with my own telephone line but I found it worrisome because my wife and daughter also use MTN. But as it is now, I may be forced to opt for other networks.” It’s not just private phone users who are dissatisfied. Many business centre operators are complaining too. Dada Omoniyi, a resident of Akute in Ogun State, told Newswatch that he had witnessed a drop in sales since the problem began. “It’s very bad for a telecommunication company like MTN to hold its customers to ransom for more than a week as I have witnessed. For that reason, there has been a drop in demand for MTN cards, and this has made me to switch to selling recharge cards of other networks. When they rectify the problem, I can come back.” Wunmi Adegoke, another business operator in Ishaga, said she has not made much profit in recent days, given that she mainly deals on MTN cards. Hence, she was forced to switch to other networks in order to survive. “ MTN should please find a solution to the problem,” she appealed. The MTN management is not unaware of the problem. The company recently apologised to its customers over the difficulties being experienced on its network. It said the situation was caused by a routine work on the company’s equipment across the country. According to Amina Oyegbola, MTN corporate services executive “ while the equipment upgrade was ongoing, recharge requests from subscribers came in unanticipated volumes and queued in the system, awaiting their turns to be processed.” She has, however, promised that the problem has been fixed and that normal services would soon be restored. “Our engineers have long completed the exercise and the requests are now being processed as quickly as possible,” said Oyegbola. But even with those reassuring words, MTN still has more battles to face. The trouble this time has nothing to do with poor network or services. It is about the base station which the company reportedly installed in a densely populated area of the federal capital territory, thus breaching the rules of the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency, NESREA. In a suit filed at the Federal High Court in Abuja two weeks ago, NESREA is demanding N500 million as damages and another One million naira for cost of damages from MTN for the company’s decision to install two 15KVA generators in the high density area. The company was also accused of installing a mast on the rooftop of residential buildings without regards to the effects of the radio-active and electromagnetic discharges on the people living around the area. For that breach, NESREA seeks the court order barring MTN from further erecting such equipment and to also stop it from operating the facilities within the premises. In a statement, NESREA said it took the legal option because MTN had refused to honour the invitation for a meeting to resolve the problem, following numerous complaints from residents of the area. “NESREA is reacting to the genuine complaint from the residents and in the exercise of its power as enunciated in the relevant law and considered it legally expedient to take this course of action after the failure of MTN to honour the invitation for a meeting to resolve the problem.” Reported by Adekunle Adedosu and Muyiwa Oladunjoye