

COMMUNICATION AUTHORITY OF KENYA

LEVERAGING ICTs IN THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Government/Policy Interventions

The Government has instituted a raft of measures geared towards containing the spread of Covid-19. These include the establishment of the National Emergency Response Committee on Coronavirus to coordinate national efforts towards combating the pandemic.

The Ministry of Health, which chairs the Committee, runs a toll-free short code to provide public information on the Coronavirus. It also provides daily media updates on the pandemic, including Covid-19 preventive and suppression information and measures. The local media air Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on the Coronavirus at no cost.

The use of cashless transactions such as mobile money and credit cards is being encouraged to minimize the risk of transmission. To support the Government efforts, mobile operators have reduced the cost of mobile money transactions.

ICTs, including postal/courier, telecoms and media services, have been designated as essential services. Guidelines on virtual working have been enacted, and public servants (as well as private sector employees) allowed to work from home.

The Judiciary has suspended physical court proceedings, and courts judgments are delivered virtually. E-learning and educational broadcasts have become the norm in the wake of closure of schools and institutions of higher learning.

The afore-cited and other Covid-19 suppression measures have resulted in upsurge of e-commerce and uptake of ICT services.

ICT/Telecommunications Regulatory interventions

The Communications Authority of Kenya (CA) has unveiled a number of regulatory measures to complement Government efforts toward combating the Covid-19 pandemic.

Broadcasters are now required to air Ministry of Health Public Service Announcements (PSA) at no cost. As at May 10, more than 43,000 PSAs had been aired.

The Authority has also designated the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development's (KICD) EDU TV channel as a mandatory MUST CARRY channel alongside the national public broadcaster's (KBC) channel 1 on ALL licensed Broadcasting Signal Distributors (BSDs) and Pay TV platforms. This is meant to enable continued learning by students following the Government directive to close all educational institutions.

In addition, the Authority has secured the requisite authorization for licensed radio and TV stations to re-broadcast KICD's educational content during the watershed period. The Authority has also encouraged broadcasters to air educational content from other relevant sources.

Regulatory fees for toll-free numbers for public and private entities offering Covid-19 related advisories have been waived. At the same time, service providers are required to enhance the capacity of their networks to enable increased access to voice, data and Internet services.

To enable industry players meet increased demand for data and Internet services during this period, the Authority has offered additional spectrum resources to mobile operators and other service providers.

Courier operators have been requested to temporarily lower their tariffs in certain weight categories in order to reduce the transaction costs, and encourage home deliveries in the wake of enhanced uptake of e-commerce.

To contain the raging infodemic, the National Computer Incident Response Coordination Centre domiciled at the Authority identifies fake news on the pandemic and issues regular advisories to the public.

The Authority has also been issuing regular advisories to protect children from unsuitable online content during this period.

Kenya has also ensured that first responders in Government and health agencies have access to communication services at times of possible network congestion to ensure continued provision of emergency services.