



HelloMama Brief for Engagement with Mobile Network Operators in Nigeria

May 2017

www.mcsprogram.org

Engagement with Mobile Network Operators in Nigeria

HelloMama is an initiative that aims to improve maternal, newborn, and child health behaviors and outcomes in Nigeria through a demand generation mobile health program that delivers age- and stage-based messages to pregnant women, mothers, and household decision-makers.

Currently, the technology platforms used to enroll pregnant women are unstructured supplementary service data (USSD) and interactive voice response (IVR) across two mobile networks (MTN and Etisalat), while the other two networks are in the process of completing integration. This, among other things, has posed a challenge in the implementation of our program.

Areas of possible discussion with the mobile network operators include:

- 1. Inventory costs:** We are currently charged NGN 3 (USD 1 cent) per SMS for transport cost and NGN 10 (USD 3 cents) per SMS for usage cost. IVR inbound for registration costs NGN 28 (USD 9 cents), IVR for outbound costs NGN 14 (USD 4 cents) for Airtel and Etisalat, NGN 12 (USD 4 cents) for MTN, and costs NGN 16 (USD 5 cents) for Glo, for an average of NGN 13.83 (USD 4 cents). USSD costs an average of NGN 33.25 (USD 11 cents)—MTN costs NGN 22 (USD 7 cents), Glo costs NGN 47 (USD 15 cents), Airtel costs NGN 37 (USD 12 cents), and Etisalat costs NGN 27 (USD 9 cents). Though this is acceptable at the moment, at scale, these rates are not sustainable. (We may need to negotiate this using the confirmed, not estimated, number of pregnant women, since payment is usually required upfront or as a negotiated bill for services.)
- 2. Quality of service:** Because of how uncommon it is to have such a program for pregnant women and new mothers in mostly rural communities, erratic networks or the lack of a network altogether have hindered registration and consistent receipt of messages.
- 3. Monthly service rental costs:** This would apply if we were to integrate directly with the mobile network providers rather than go through an aggregator, which is what we do now. Though the Prackelt Foundation argued against this approach, we feel strongly that this will foster ease of platform transfer and significantly improve network failures and accountability of the calls and messages.

Challenges

- Poor and tedious accountability of calls and messages through the Vas2Nets and mobile network operators' platforms
- Unusually higher network failure rate for outbound calls
- Difficulty of accessing national standards of network failures for similar projects in Nigeria

Recommendations

- Possibly reduce inventory and integration costs by 50% across mobile network operators
- Hosting our servers with the mobile network operators directly with rental cost waivers, rather than paying for an aggregator

This brief is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the terms of the Cooperative Agreement AID-OAA-A-14-00028. The contents are the responsibility of the Maternal and Child Survival Program and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.