

NORTHERN ICT4D FORUM

A REPORT OF THE AUGUST SESSION OF THE GINKS NORTHERN ICT4D FORUM HELD AT THE INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT STUDIES, TAMALE.

THEME: “Mobile Number Portability”

“Mobile Number Portability is currently operational in at least 34 countries. Its implementation takes different forms in different jurisdictions, depending on the peculiar regulation regime of individual countries” These were the words of Mr. Agbenyo John Stephen, Director of Savana Signatures, an NGO based in the Northern Region working primarily in mainstreaming ICTS into Education. He said this when he took his turn to speak at the August session of the Northern ICT4D Forum held at the Institute for Local Government Studies, Tamale.

Mr. Agbenyo mentioned that Mobile Number Portability is a facility given by operators where a subscriber can move from one service provider to another without changing the number allocated to the subscriber. He added that Mobile Number Portability is a system that allows a customer to keep his number, including the network prefix, when changing from one network operator to another

He explained that for best regulatory practice, the National Communications Authority of Ghana Act 2008, Act 769 mandates the Authority to among other things ‘Protect the interest of consumers or users of communications networks or communications services and in particular to the interest of consumers’ choice, quality of services and value for money.

He further explained that because of the legal framework backing the work of the National Communications Authority, there is a legal and regulatory framework for Mobile Number Portability in Ghana. “The electronic communications ACT 2008, act 775 section 6(1)(0), states that “Network operator or service provider shall provide number portability when required to do so by the Authority” Mr. Agbenyo said.

Speaking on countries that have Mobile Number Portability in operation, Mr. Agbenyo mentioned that the system is currently operational in at least 34 countries. He however mentioned that its implementation takes different forms in different jurisdictions, depending on the peculiar regulation regime of individual countries. He mentioned that several countries with mature telecom operations such as the United States, Ireland, Australia and Singapore have successfully implemented Mobile Number Portability.

Speaking on the relevance of Mobile Number Portability to Ghana, Mr. Agbenyo John Stephen mentioned that with its implementation, Mobile Number Portability will eliminate the inability of end users to switch networks while retaining the same telephone number, thereby increasing subscriber choice. He added that an increase in subscriber choice means greater competition which should lead to improved customer service and may lead to reduced cost. He further added that with the implementation of Mobile Number Portability, Mobile Number Portability will facilitate competition in saturated markets as ours, reduce subscriber cost of switching networks because there is no need to circulate new number, motivate service providers to provide high quality service, deploy advanced services and provide more choice to end users. He added that the claims and counter claims by network operators on which one has the best network quality will all be put to rest when Mobile Number Portability is implemented to give the subscriber the power to decide which network is best.

Concluding on why Mobile Number Portability would be good for Ghana, Mr. Agbenyo mentioned that Mobile Number Portability would give the subscriber the power of choice and luxury of flexibility. The subscriber would be empowered with a double edge sword to punish poor quality network service by migrating to another network and also keeping the number and network code that originally belongs to the previous service provider

On challenges in deploying Mobile Number Portability, Mr. Agbenyo identified Cost of upgrading of existing networks, software modifications and the assessment of effective call routing mechanism.

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