

By Billy Rwothungeyo

The UN last year resolved that access to the Internet is to be considered a human right. Uganda is on the right track in this regard, thanks to investments by private players such as MTN Uganda.

When it comes to the best Internet coverage, MTN Uganda is heads and shoulders above the competition in Uganda.

Last year, the telecom giant embarked in a massive investment in its Internet infrastructure to consolidate market leadership in the fast growing data front.

"We are going to embark on a massive roll out of 3G, and then improve the fibre network which stands at more than 5,000km. We have 100 sites of 4G LTE, and are going to double that number before the end of the year," Rami Farah, MTN Uganda's chief technical officer, said in an interview with *New Vision*.

Internet speed

MTN already has the longest fibre optic cables in comparison to any other network. With MTN Uganda, the further the fibre optic cables go, the better Internet speeds become.

Speedtest.net last year conducted independent tests

which confirmed the telecom giant's superiority on this front. The tests, carried out at various locations around Kampala, put MTN's average 3G speed at 11.793Mbps. The next best telecom's speeds were half the speed at 5.467Mbps and the third was at 4.826Mbps.

MTN's 4G/LTE network exhibited speeds in excess of 60Mbps, with the highest speed of 68.84Mbps being recorded at Garden City in Kampala.

Speedtest.net is a web service that provides free analysis of Internet access parameters, such as

connection data rate.

Ericsson estimates that doubling the speed of broadband can directly impact the GDP growth of economies by 0.3%, while every 10% increase in data penetration, developing countries could add as much

MTN taps into Internet market



MTN has made it possible for most of its clients to get fast Internet connection

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as 1.3% growth to their GDP. Such is the significance of Internet in the modern era.

"From 2010, when I came to Uganda, our yearly budget is between \$80 to \$100m, the number and 3G sites for MTN is 655," Farah said, who also revealed that 70% of MTN Uganda's 3G sites are connected to the fibre network.

Internet access in Uganda has grown from time to time. The expansion of 3G and 4G, coupled with availability of affordable Internet, boosted the growth the Internet market.

Today, MTN offers Internet connectivity across Mobile 2G (GPRS, EDGE), 3G+ HSDPA (7.2MBPS, 14.4MBPS, 21.6MBPS and 42MBPS) and 4G (LTE) platforms. There is

free 15MB data every month after you have used your first 30MB data for the month.

Over the years, the cost of internet has gradually come down, thanks to developments such as the arrival of two undersea fibre optic cables; the East African Marine System and the Eastern Africa Submarine Cable System, covering a 17,000km distance on the East African coast in the recent past.

Before the fiber optic cables reached the East African coast in 2009, Internet connectivity was realised through the overly expensive satellite links. What else comes with the widest Internet coverage? You have guaranteed Internet connectivity wherever you are.