

## Kenya: Airtel cries foul over mobile number portability service

Barely two weeks after the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK) launched the mobile number portability (MNP) service, one of the mobile players is crying foul. Airtel Kenya MD Ren Meza has raised a red flag saying several anti-competition tactics were being used to block customers seeking to move to its network.

By [Carole Kimutai](#) 13 Apr 2011



Before the MNP service was launched, Charles Njoroge, CCK director general said the implementation of number portability was expected to deepen the level of competition in the mobile telecommunications market and enhance consumer choice. "In the new dispensation, service providers who do not pay attention to quality and good customer service may find it hard to survive," Njoroge said.

### Some operators going against the spirit of MNP project

In a statement sent to journalists Tuesday, 12 April 2011, Meza said whereas initial technical hiccups in the implementation process had been deemed to be normal and expected, it is emerging that some operators are reluctant to address the bottlenecks expeditiously, going against the spirit of MNP project of giving the customer freedom to own their number and move to the network of their choice within the stipulated terms.

"How do you explain several complaints received from customers who have opted to move their number to Airtel from Safaricom being unable to receive calls from Safaricom numbers for several days, while they are able to communicate on all platforms on the Airtel network with the same number?" asked Meza.

According to CCK, the introduction of the MNP service followed extensive public consultations carried out between 2004 and 2008 which showed that the market was ready for the service.

### Acceptability in the market

"Given the insights collected during the public consultation exercise, MNP is expected to see significant acceptability in the market, given that the one-time fee per port is considered competitive, and is unlikely to hinder the uptake of the service," says a statement on the CCK website.

MNP was meant to kick off in December 2010 but the move was deferred to allow mobile service providers more time to acquire and test their equipment. All mobile service providers then signed an agreement with CCK and Porting Access Kenya committing to roll out the service.

"The operators have carried out the necessary tests and we expect the services to kick off without major hitches. There might be some few teething problems at the beginning but this should be sorted out within the shortest time possible," said the CCK director-general.

Meza says Airtel has referred the matter to CCK. Kenya is among 62 other countries around the world that

have implemented the MNP service.

## ABOUT CAROLE KIMUTAI

Carole Kimutai is a writer and editor based in Nairobi, Kenya. She is currently an MA student in New Media at the University of Leicester, UK. Follow her on Twitter at [@CaroleKimutai](#).  
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