

Is MTN a fraud or just incompetent?



FIDERI KIRUNGI

Like many Ugandans, I have had terrible experiences with MTN. Not once or twice but many times over. I enumerated some dubious incidents in the article "Does MTN promote crime?" (*The Observer*, 1-7 April 2026). I particularly found the continued use of a strange phone number on the MTN network illegally registered under my NIN (National Identification Number) appalling. Many people subsequently reached out to me to share their painful experiences.

In one particular incident, someone said that MTN's Change Makers outfit, without his permission, used his wrongly stored data to enter him in its 2025 "competition". When he complained to MTN and to their so-called foundation, they both simply ignored him. This is serious and possibly illegal data abuse. He is now taking up the issue with national industry regulator UCC (Uganda Communications Commission).

After *The Observer* run that article, MTN sent me an email saying that they were keen to address the matter.

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I told them they could contact me by email or my lawyer by phone (I gave them his personal phone number) at any time. I never heard from them again. It's now more than a month. It seems that contrary to their email, they were not keen to address the matter at all.

In the latest incident (boy, have I not suffered with MTN), they repeatedly and irregularly cut off my 30 days' internet subscription days before it was due to expire. Initially, I put this down to a simple but serious billing error but after it continued unabated months after complaining to their so-called Customer Care, I am not so sure.

When I contacted them to complain about it yet again, they asked me for my account number, which, I pointed out politely, was all over the paperwork I had given them. To my utter surprise, they told me that the said account doesn't exist and, therefore, they couldn't "help" me (as if they were doing me a favour). After I insisted that it didn't make any sense that their own notifications and emails would quote that very number, the account miraculously

surfaced! I was given case number INC16311644. Ten days later, as of May 15, I am yet to hear from them. I am bracing for another unexplained internet cut off before my 30-days package expires on May 22.

My point is not that corporations cannot make mistakes. It is that when mistakes are pointed out, they should be addressed and, importantly, not repeated. I have had problems with DFCU, Stanbic Bank, NSSF (National Social Security Fund) and UEDCL (Uganda Electricity Distribution Company Limited), among others, but the issues were immediately addressed. Not MTN.

Normally, I wouldn't complain, fraud apart. I would simply move to the next company. Unfortunately, companies in the telecommunications sector are not much better. I have tried three companies before but they were not much better. Perhaps not this bad.

So, the question is: Does MTN willfully commit fraud or it is merely hopelessly incompetent?

The writer is a concerned Ugandan.