

Airtel, NACA partner to fight HIV/AIDS in Nigeria

Telecommunication services provider, Airtel Nigeria, and the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) have announced a joint initiative aimed at decreasing the spread of the Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and HIV in the country.

NACA Call Centre project



Announcing the partnership at a press conference in Abuja this week, director general of the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA), Professor John Idoko, said the body is now better equipped to tackle the spread of AIDS with the support of Airtel, which provided a telecoms platform at the NACA Call Centre with 100 lines for the project.

On his own part, CEO and MD of Airtel Nigeria, Rajan Swaroop, stated the company's commitment to contributing to the well-being of all Nigerians, particularly its customers.



According to Swaroop, "this partnership provides us with a new opportunity to serve our customers in a fresh and different way, especially in the area of quality health care delivery. We have partnered with NACA with the objective of improving the delivery of healthcare services in Nigeria".

Continuing, Swaroop pledged that Airtel will work closely with NACA to send information via a short code on the deadly scourge to our customers nationwide in addition to providing access for people to speak to call agents at the NACA call centre" he said.

In line with terms of the partnership, Airtel has helped to equip the recently established national call centre with toll free lines which will enable Nigerians irrespective of their location access accurate information on HIV/AIDS.

Access to information

The centre, which will be officially commissioned by the First Lady, Dame Patience Jonathan, will provide information and counseling on the disease in the English, Pidgin English, Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo languages.

NACA's director general, Prof. John Idoko, explained that Nigerians can access information on the disease by dialing 6222, adding that the centre would both serve as information hub and public enlightenment platform that is carefully designed to grow the knowledge of HIV and AIDS among the people.

Idoko added that "Studies show that only 36% of young people in urban areas have correct knowledge on the condition while knowledge is extremely poor in rural areas. We have made a giant stride in the fight but we need to intensify campaign and reduce the prevalence rate which dropped to 4.1% from 6% in 2001. We still have about 3.1 million people living with HIV and there is a danger of potential increase.

The call centre project is a Public-Private-Partnership programme between NACA, Airtel and the Nigerian Communications Commissions (NCC).