

Ugandans get free access to Wikipedia



By [Walter Wafula](#)

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Ugandans who subscribe to Orange Uganda's network can now access Wikipedia for free, according to the company publicist, Patience Tindyebwa.

"Any customer with an Orange SIM and mobile internet enabled phone will be able to access Wikipedia, the largest online encyclopaedia in the world, through their mobile browser," Tindyebwa said in a statement on 2 April 2012.

Wikipedia is the free encyclopaedia containing more than 20 million articles in 280 languages and is used by over 500 million people worldwide. Beneficiaries of the initiative can access Wikipedia encyclopaedia services for as many times as they like, at no extra charge as long as they stay within Wikipedia's pages. For instance, they can now freely browse the millions of articles available on Wikipedia in languages including; English, Swahili and French.

The service has the potential to benefit at 4 million internet users in Uganda. Orange Uganda, is a subsidiary of the France Telecom Group, and has over 1 million mobile phone subscribers and internet users.

Spread free knowledge

Commenting on the initiative, Philippe Luxcey, the Orange Uganda chief executive officer commented, "Orange has enabled Ugandans to access affordable internet via their mobile phones and now we are proud to provide Ugandans with access to free knowledge which Wikipedia, the online encyclopaedia, offers."

The move is the result of a major [partnership signed](#) in January between the Orange Group and the Wikimedia Foundation. Over time, the partnership is expected to enable more than 70 million users in Africa and the Middle East where Orange operates. In Africa, Orange has a footprint in Kenya, Senegal, Tunisia, Egypt, Botswana, Central Africa Republic, Mali, Madagascar, Reunion, Ivory Coast, Niger, Mauritius and Equatorial Guinea.

By absorbing the cost of the data charges for its customers, the mobile operator is supporting the Wikimedia Foundation's initiative to spread free knowledge to the billions of people around the world whose primary opportunity to access the internet is via mobile devices.

Marc Rennard, group executive vice president of Orange, Africa, the Middle-East and Asia, said the company is making it simple and easy for our customers to use the world's most comprehensive online encyclopaedia, in countries where access to information is not always readily available.

"It is the first partnership of this kind in the world where we are enabling customers to access Wikipedia without incurring any data charges; and shows Orange's ability, once again, to innovate in Africa and the Middle East, and bring more value to our customers," Rennard remarked.

Wikipedia becomes the second free online platform, [the first was Facebook](#), that Orange has given internet users in Uganda at no extra cost. This is a clear indication that with time, there will be free access to the internet in Africa like it is in Estonia.

ABOUT WALTER WAFULA

Walter Wafula is a seasoned journalist who has reported for the *Daily Monitor* newspaper in Kampala-Uganda. He is also a contributor on Bizcommunity.com website. Email Walter at wafwalt@yahoo.com and connect on LinkedIn.

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