



Egypt's National Efforts to Combat the COVID-19 Pandemic

To stay ahead of the COVID 19 pandemic, Egypt has adopted a multi-pronged approach that includes joint efforts and measures taken by the country's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) and the National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA).

This has since led to the following stages of sectoral cooperation and outputs:

- 1. Cooperation with the Ministry of Health:** The Ministry of Health has benefited from an increase in the number of free toll hotlines that support government interventions and provide necessary information for citizens making inquiries about coronavirus. In addition there are hotlines available for relief operations and post recovery consultations. The country has also been able to increase the number of call center agents for the same purpose. Equally, NTRA has agreed with the four mobile phone service providers in Egypt to provide all doctors, nurses and staff working in the medical field free airtime of up to 3,000 minutes and 10 gigabytes per month which supports all their communication needs in the fight to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2. Promotion of distance learning:** In collaboration with both the country's Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education, MCIT provided students free access to all educational websites during the period of the suspension of schools and universities. This is even as the government is seeking to seize this opportunity to entrench the use of e-education and distance learning culture among students. All education related websites and electronic platforms are currently freely accessible without deduction from landline internet bundle. MCIT in coordination with the ISPs further increased the download quota of home internet packages by 20% to attend to students' needs in browsing the different educational e-platforms and websites. This came at a total cost of EGP 200 million borne by the State.
- 3. Initiatives to encourage citizens to stay at home for longer periods of time:** The Egyptian government has also stood in the frontline through providing all home internet subscribers with additional 20% of their internet quota (minimum of 30 gigabytes) to encourage them to stay at home for longer periods. Crucially also, NTRA agreed with the mobile operators in Egypt to promote the use of e-transactions by offering several incentives for customers setting off their bills and topping up their balances via e-payment methods. Citizens are bound to receive 30 times the charged balance as free airtime.
- 4. Community service efforts:** NTRA has coordinated with the four mobile operators in Egypt to participate equally in providing staple food to 250,000 families (an average of 1 million citizens) who are adversely affected by the preventive measures of COVID-19. This comes within the framework of the social responsibility initiative launched by the Egyptian Food Bank to support irregular earners suffering the economic repercussions of such preventive measures.
- 5. In office measures:** NTRA called on the telecommunication operators in Egypt to take the necessary preventive measures for facing COVID-19 and providing a safe work environment for employees, while ensuring continuity of work. Measures include raising employees' awareness of the important precautions that should be followed to avoid infection and making the necessary equipment for measuring the body temperature of employees available. This is in addition to a regular sterilization and disinfection of all offices, surfaces and tools used by employees throughout the day. Moreover, operators are observing a work from home policy for more than 90% of their employees. MCIT and NTRA also suspended the fingerprint staff attendance system and halted all physical meetings. Alternatively, electronic-based meetings, such as video conferencing, are being widely used between staff. A work from home policy was then observed and encouraged for staff that their work nature allows them to finalize their tasks at home. MCIT, NTRA and all other affiliated entities made infrared thermometers available in all their premises to measure the body temperature of all staff and visitors daily.
- 6. Measures to facilitate service delivery for citizens and senior citizens:** The Egyptian government has enabled the increase of the number of post offices operating on evening shifts from 350 to 2000 offices across Egypt to prevent overcrowding, especially on the dates of monthly pensions collection. A further extension of the payment period of landline phone bills without interruption of service has been ratified. Throughout the country, citizens are being encouraged to embrace electronic and online payment of utilities. Bills could also be settled through post offices for those who are uncomfortable to use digital services.