

THE RISE OF TELECOM AS A MAJOR ECONOMIC ENGINE

MTN revenues touched the \$1b mark last year, making it the first company in Ugandan history to do so.

The telecom giant reported sh3.6 trillion in total revenue for the year ended December 2025, setting it on the cusp of the billion-dollar club. A year earlier, revenues stood at about sh3.15 trillion, meaning the company expanded its top line by roughly 14% year-on-year. In a country where most companies still measure revenues in billions rather than trillions, that milestone is more than a corporate bragging right. It is a signal of how deeply telecom infrastructure has become woven into Uganda's economic life.

There is also a certain symmetry to the moment. MTN Uganda is not only the first company in Uganda to generate more than \$1b in annual revenues, it was also the first Ugandan company to cross the \$1b market capitalisation mark when it listed on the Uganda Securities Exchange in December 2021.

In other words, MTN first entered the billion-dollar club through investor belief. Today it has entered it again through economic performance.

But the real story behind those revenues lies in a transformation that has happened in less than three decades.

Thirty years ago Uganda barely had a telecom sector in the modern sense. Fixed telephone lines were scarce and expensive, confined largely to government offices and a handful of large companies. Getting a landline could take months.

Today telecom networks carry the lifeblood of the modern economy.

The numbers released alongside MTN's results illustrate that shift. The company now serves 24.2 million customers, up from roughly 21.6 million the previous year. Active data users have climbed to 14.7 million, continuing the steady growth seen in recent years as smartphones spread across the country. Meanwhile,



mobile money users have reached about 12 million, up from about 11.3 million in 2024.

Each of these indicators reflects the widening role of telecom infrastructure in everyday economic life.

But perhaps the most striking statistic lies in the fintech ecosystem built around MTN MoMo.

In comments accompanying the results, MTN Uganda chief executive Sylvia Mulinge revealed just how large that ecosystem has become.

"The volume of transactions on our platform increased by 16.8% to five billion while the value of transactions increased by 23.3% to sh195.5 trillion."

Those numbers deserve a moment of reflection.

Uganda's GDP is roughly sh200 trillion. In other words, the value of transactions flowing through mobile money platforms is now approaching the size of the entire economy.

And that number itself has been growing steadily. A few years ago mobile money transaction values were below sh160 trillion. Today they are brushing against sh200 trillion.

Telecom networks are, therefore, no longer just carrying voice calls and WhatsApp messages.

They are carrying the financial bloodstream of the economy.



An MTN Mobile Money agent kiosk serves customers. Small exchanges that multiplied across millions of Ugandans, now move sh195.5 trillion through the economy each year

BETWEEN THE LINES

Thirty years ago, Uganda barely had a telecom sector in the modern sense. Fixed telephone lines were scarce and expensive, confined largely to government offices.

Every boda fare paid digitally, every school fee sent to a boarding student, every electricity token purchased through a phone flows through this invisible infrastructure.

MTN's financial performance reflects that structural shift.

The company reported profit after tax of about sh678.8b, up from roughly sh641.5b the previous year. Earnings per share rose to sh30.3, compared

with about sh28.7 the year before.

Those gains may appear incremental at first glance, but they underline the steady compounding of a business that now sits at the centre of the digital economy.

Mulinge herself linked the company's revenue growth to rising connectivity and digital adoption.

Telecom growth is, therefore, not simply sector growth.

It is economic growth expressed through digital infrastructure.

When farmers receive produce payments through mobile money, telecom networks earn transaction fees. When families send remittances across the country, telecom infrastructure carries the payment. When small businesses pay suppliers digitally, telecom networks facilitate

the exchange.

Telecom infrastructure has quietly become the plumbing of the modern economy.

Mulinge framed the company's trajectory within MTN Group's broader strategic ambition.

"As we conclude the Ambition 2025 journey, I am pleased with the sustained progress we have made towards building the largest and most valuable platform business in Uganda."

The phrase 'platform business' captures the transformation under way.

The old telecom model revolved around voice calls and SMS. The new model revolves around data consumption, fintech services and digital platforms.

Behind the scenes the infrastructure supporting this transformation continues to expand. MTN now operates 549 network sites, whilst 4G population coverage has reached about 88.6%, up from roughly 86% last year.

These investments are capital-intensive but essential.

Without the network backbone, there is no digital economy.

For investors, MTN's results carry additional significance. Since its 2021 listing, the company has become the flagship stock of the Uganda Securities Exchange. More than 22,000 Ugandan investors participated in the IPO, many of them entering the stock market for the first time.

The company has also maintained a strong dividend policy, distributing over sh543b in dividends, reinforcing its reputation as one of the exchange's most dependable yield stocks.

And if the trajectory of fintech, data consumption and digital payments continues, telecom networks may prove to be the single most important piece of economic infrastructure built in Uganda since Independence.