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- SMS for Life 2.0 launches for the first time in Kaduna State, Nigeria's third most populous region, in collaboration with the Kaduna State Ministry of Health
- Program uses smartphones and tablet computers to improve access to medicines and increase disease surveillance, helping to provide better care for patients
- Initiative builds on the success of award-winning SMS for Life and will introduce eLearning for local healthcare workers

Novartis (www.Novartis.com) announced today the launch of an innovative technology-based healthcare program called SMS for Life 2.0 in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The program aims to increase the availability of essential medicines and improve care for patients across the region by using simple, available, and affordable technology. SMS for Life 2.0 is a joint public-private partnership led by Novartis and supported by its partners, the Kaduna State Ministry of Health and Vodacom.

"Novartis is proud to partner with the Kaduna State Ministry of Health to implement the first ever SMS for Life 2.0 program," said Joseph Jimenez, CEO of Novartis. "Companies must join forces with the public sector to co-create innovative solutions to improve access to healthcare around the world. This is the first step in what we hope will be an impactful public health initiative, unleashing the potential of mobile technology and big data to increase the quality of care for underserved patients."

SMS for Life 2.0 builds on the SMS for Life program launched by Novartis in 2009, which used cell phones to manage stock-outs of malaria medicines in more than 10,000 healthcare facilities in sub-Saharan countries. The new and enhanced SMS for Life 2.0 program will now use smartphones and tablet computers to address key operational challenges at peripheral healthcare facilities in Kaduna State. Local healthcare workers will be able to track stock levels of essential antimalarials, vaccines, and HIV, TB and leprosy treatments, and send notifications to district medical officers when stock levels are low. The program will also monitor surveillance parameters of malaria, maternal and infant deaths and seven other diseases, including measles, yellow fever and cholera. In addition, SMS for Life 2.0 will enable training of healthcare workers in local facilities using on-demand eLearning modules.

“We welcome the introduction of SMS for Life 2.0 in primary healthcare facilities, where we often face stockouts of medicines,” said Dr. Hadiza S. Balarabe, Executive Secretary of Kaduna State Primary Health Care Development Agency. “With more than six million people, Kaduna is Nigeria’s third most populous state. We hope the program will improve healthcare services by expanding access to essential medicines, thus reducing disease prevalence in communities.”

Medicines do not always reach the patients who need them, particularly those living in remote areas. Running out of stock is a major hurdle in ensuring access to essential treatments. By increasing stock visibility, health authorities will be able to monitor stock levels of these medicines in real time. Furthermore, disease surveillance data combined with the stock reporting function can improve supply chain management, by allowing authorities to better forecast demand for the treatments. This will help to ensure people get the medicines they need in a timely fashion.

“Vodacom believes that mobile technology is a powerful platform to address healthcare problems in Africa,” said Vuyani Jarana, Chief Officer of Vodacom Business. “Our vision in partnering with Kaduna State is to support the development of productive societies which are healthy, well-educated and economically active. The SMS for Life 2.0 initiative will contribute towards better quality and more accessible healthcare services which will in turn contribute to an increase in life expectancy in Nigeria.”

In addition to the launch in Nigeria, Novartis and its non-profit partner Right to Care, have signed a memorandum of understanding with the Zambian Ministry of Health to deploy SMS for Life 2.0 in up toÂÂ 2,000 health facilities across the country. The program, which will include stock reporting, disease surveillance and eLearning, will be supported by Vodacom and is expected to launch in Q2 2017.