

# Qatari firm vows 'affordable' mobile access for Myanmar

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Ooredoo executive Ross Cormack speaks to the media during a press conference in Yangon, on August 16, 2013. The Qatari telecoms giant has pledged to introduce "affordable" phone services to Myanmar next year as it pumps \$15 billion into one of the world's few remaining frontier mobile markets.

Qatari telecoms giant Ooredoo on Friday pledged to introduce "affordable" phone services to Myanmar next year as it pumps \$15 billion into one of the world's few remaining frontier mobile markets.

The firm, which in June along with Norway's Telenor won bids to provide [mobile coverage](#) to a nation where less than 10 percent of the population has telephone access, should be formally awarded its 15-year 3G licence by the end of this year.

It will then start to roll out its [mobile services](#)—including [money transfers](#) and [weather data](#) for farmers—within six months, a company executive told reporters in Yangon.

"People can use Ooredoo's services next year... we need to build quickly, not only in cities but also in [rural areas](#)," Ross Cormack said.

Few in Myanmar can currently afford mobile phones and SIM card fees, which in the past cost about \$200, although the government is now trying to make prices more affordable.

Asked how calls will be priced—in a country where about a quarter of the population live below the national poverty line—Cormack said: "I can't say exactly but you will find it attractive and affordable."

In a statement in July Myanmar's government said Ooredoo had "committed" to selling SIM cards for about \$1.5 and to charging roughly four cents for off-peak calls.

"We will deliver SIM cards and all the services at every road-side store and to villages," Cormack said, adding up to 97 percent of Myanmar's 60 million people will have access to his company's services within five years.

Mobile coverage in the former junta-ruled nation is extremely limited, with less than 10 percent of the population enjoying access to a telephone.

The company, formerly known as QTel, will invest in selling its services at tens of thousands of outlets across the country, it said, with a focus on add-ons including [mobile money](#) transfers and providing market prices, weather updates and equipment rental costs to help farmers in remote areas.

Valid for 15 years, the licences are the first to be awarded by the formerly junta-ruled nation, and will see the two foreign firms enter a market once monopolised by a pair of state companies.

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