



# TELECEL ZIMBABWE

## GAINING NATIONAL COVERAGE

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*Chief executive officer Francis Mawindi explains how Telecel Zimbabwe plans to deliver mobile phone coverage to 90 percent of the population by 2013*

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Telecel Zimbabwe is the country's second largest mobile telecommunications provider in terms of subscriber numbers



Across Africa, the winds of change are being felt throughout the telecommunications sector. These winds are being driven by the rapid movement consumers have been making away from basic telephony services to data services. In response to this, operators have had to capacitate their data service provision capabilities in order to cater to the changing needs of their customers.

Aided by the high literacy rate of its people, Zimbabwe is one such country experiencing high levels of demand for data services. In fact, with an estimated 58 percent of Zimbabweans accessing the internet today through their mobile phones, the country ranks within the top ten African nations as it relates to this trend.

One of the companies leading the way in responding to the changing requirements, and dynamic needs and demands of Zimbabweans is Telecel. With a sizable market share of around 29 percent, as recorded at the end of September 2012, Telecel Zimbabwe is the country's second largest mobile telecommunications provider in terms of subscriber numbers, boasting a subscriber base of over 2.3 million users.

"As a business on a growth trajectory," explains chief executive officer, Francis Mawindi, "we have been growing rapidly over the last 16 months. This has coincided with our ability to capacitate our network by

expanding 2G and 3G coverage, enhancing network capacity in those areas with increased demand, and by introducing new products and services to the marketplace."

Being an important player within the industry, Telecel Zimbabwe's contributions towards the development of the country's telecommunications sector have proven to be significant. "What we have been doing during the course of this year," Mawindi continues, "is expanding our coverage to ensure that the majority of Zimbabweans have access to our services. At present, our coverage stands at close to 80 percent of the

population and we intend to increase this to 90 percent by the end of 2013."

In addition to increasing coverage, Telecel Zimbabwe has made a concerted effort to price its products and services aggressively to ensure that they are affordable to almost everyone, including those

situated in rural areas. "The vast majority of our promotions," Mawindi says, "have succeeded in bringing and delivering value to our subscribers. We were the first operator to reduce the price of our SIM to just \$1, when others' prices still averaged close to \$20, and we continue to offer best-of-breed voice and data bundle rates, the latter going for as low as \$0.04 per megabit."

While boasting some of the most competitive prices available in the marketplace, the company also prides itself on its strong customer centric focus and its prudent cost management systems.

**2.3  
MILLION**

.....  
Current subscriber base

“Our customer focus,” Mawindi enthuses, “has seen us taking home various national awards in recent years, including the Customer Service Excellence award from the Zimbabwe Institute of Management in 2011, to this year’s Call Centre Association of Zimbabwe, Best Call Centre Award. Meanwhile, our embracing of cost management and cost leadership strategies has enabled us to optimise our subscription prices and thus offer great value for money.”

One of the significant and notable developments at the heart of Telecel Zimbabwe’s operations today is an extensive network expansion programme. The central theme of this programme is to enable the company to develop sufficient scale and this will be facilitated through the acquisition of more than 575 physical sites across the country by the end of 2012, with an additional 100 to follow in 2013. It is this phase of expansion that will allow the company to achieve its goal of delivering coverage to 90 percent of the population.

“Another thing we are doing,” Mawindi states, “is enhancing our 3G coverage to the extent where we hope to have around 275 sites located countrywide. To date, the roll-out programme is on track and proceeding well, with all the major cities, towns, rural service centres and highway corridors being covered, and efforts are under way to cover a sizable



Telecel Zimbabwe pursues the vision of total customer delight

number of mining and commercial farming areas, which were previously not serviced. Nonetheless, we still believe that, even within some of the major urban and metropolitan centres, there is a need to optimise coverage and target those black holes that still exist and in the process improve network availability and quality of service.”

Recently, the company has been re-certified as ISO 9001 compliant and remains the only certified mobile operator active within Zimbabwe. Naturally

this is a very important achievement, and indeed a significant milestone for the business, and is one that is tied to the system of best operating practices that it operates under.

“Our re-certification,” Mawindi says, “is a clear testimony that our company is unequivocally and irrevocably committed to achieving excellence in products, services and business processes by actively pursuing continuous improvement and sharing the vision of total customer delight. In addition the attainment of this status has meant that, as a corporate body, Telecel has the confidence and assurance that it has its

**90%**  
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**National coverage  
planned by the  
end of 2013**

customers at heart. It is also important to point out that the time is near when no significant differentiation will exist between mobile network operator offerings; the difference will primarily be on how we do business.”

This ISO 9001 status allows Telecel to eliminate waste and duplication, while at the same time controlling its operating costs. This added value is then passed on to its subscribers through lower pricing.

“We are currently in the process of putting the finishing touches to enable the technical deployment of a new AYAYA Call Centre system,” Mawindi adds. “Once

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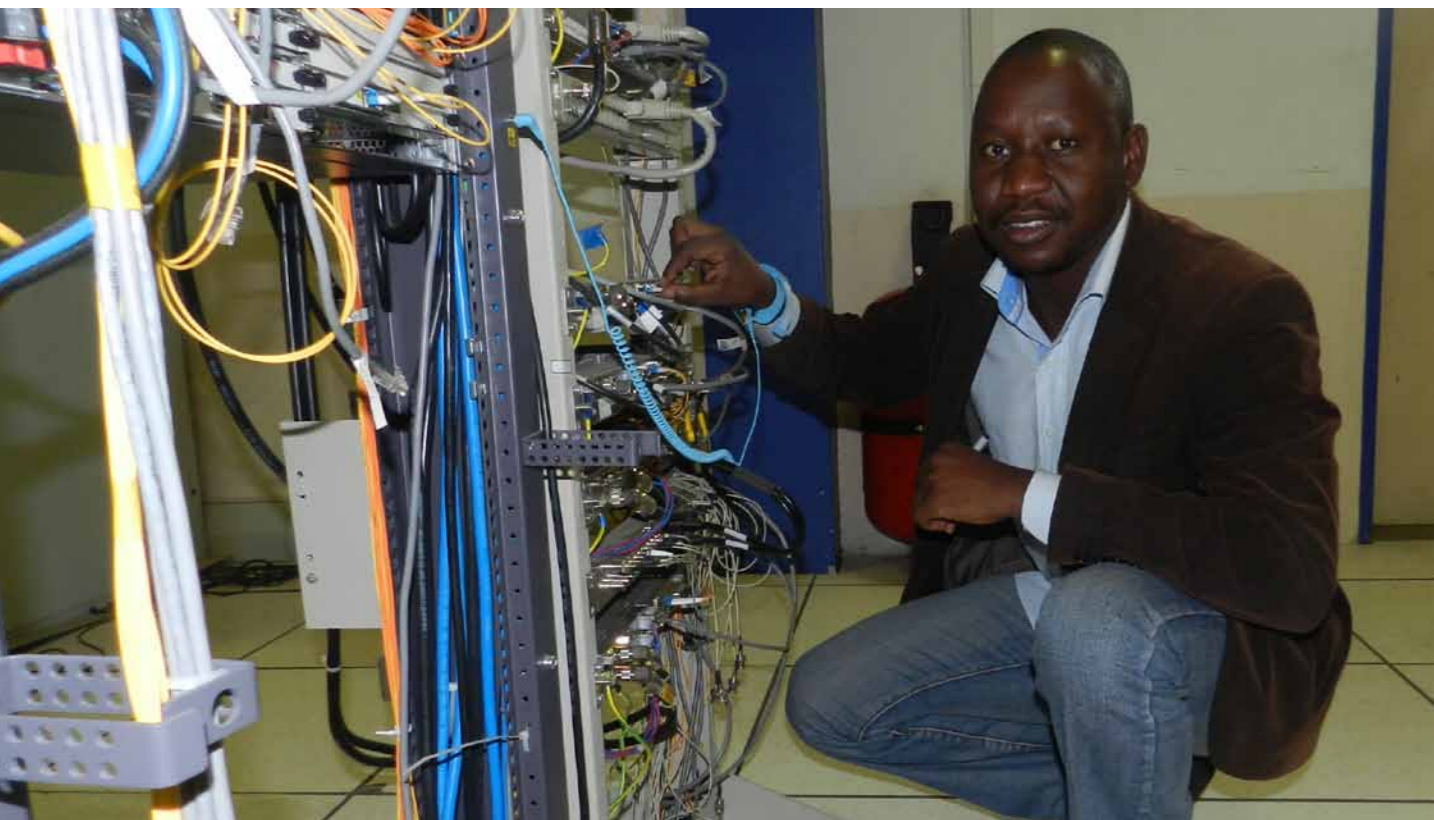
complete, this will drastically improve upon our ability to manage customer relations. This will inevitably result in better customer service delivery, while generating greater customer value.”

Challenges, however, do still remain for the company, the major one being that of capitalisation of the company’s mobile network. For some time the country risk for Zimbabwe has remained high, though

now the political landscape has changed with the new coalition government, in addition to the promising economic fundamentals, which have triggered international organisations and the global investing community to show greater interest in the country.

For Telecel Zimbabwe, the company has been boldly resilient for quite some time, even in difficult times characterised by economic

“THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY FOR US GOING FORWARD WILL BE IN THE PROVISIONING OF NATIONAL BACKBONE BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE”



Telecel is continuously expanding its network coverage and capacity



Telecel has won awards for customer service

contraction, hyperinflation, liquidity challenges and inadequate investments. These factors in the past put enormous pressure on the company’s capacity and capability to capitalise on market growth opportunities. However, once economic stability returned, Telecel was quick to rise to the challenge and take advantage of the new opportunities this presented. “We have managed to secure vendor financing for our network expansion programme,” Mawindi says, “with the bulk of the guarantees coming from our principals.”

Despite some of the challenges that it faces in its industry, Telecel’s future is certainly brighter. “We are continuously expanding our network coverage and capacity,” Mawindi concludes. “Our

subscriber growth and revenue performance are both healthy, and we believe that we are in a good space in the market. The biggest opportunity for us going forward will be in the provisioning of national backbone broadband infrastructure, utilising fibre technology to connect and gain access to submarine cables coming into and leaving the country. This will allow us to further reduce mobile broadband connectivity costs and improve penetration rates, thus ensuring an affordable universal service to all Zimbabweans.” **BE**

For more information about  
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