

Telecel Zimbabwe in major expansion drive

By [Sam Hungwe](#)

1 Jun 2009

Telecel Zimbabwe has announced that it plans to significantly increase its subscriber base, urging customers to shun the black market for mobile lines as it will release more lines.

The surprise announcement by Telecel, the smallest of three mobile networks that was recently reported to be a take-over target by South Africa's MTN, was a sign that the battle for market share was beginning to intensify.

The telecommunications firm said it had dismantled some old base stations and replaced them with high capacity equipment, resulting in the availability of 100,000 new lines.

"We will be targeting selected new geographic sites to extend out geographic coverage to most highway corridors, service centres and rural areas in addition to all major cities, towns, commercial and mining centres. (This) will result in even more lines being released onto the market," the announcement said.

Egyptian billionaire and Orascom Telecom chairman Naguib Sawiris announced in 2007 an ambitious deal under which Telecel Zimbabwe could become part of a bigger pan African group.

Reports suggested Sawiris was in talks with unnamed partners about the development of a pan African telecommunications operator into which Orascom would contribute its Zimbabwean assets.

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