Financing Options for Cell Broadcast for Early Warnings in Africa

Cost areas, financing sources, and illustrative pathways for countries and partners planning national Cell Broadcast implementation.

USD 80m

Capital plus three years of operating expenditure for 27 African countries

~USD 3m

Average indicative need per country, capital plus three years of operating expenditure

WHY FINANCING MATTERS

Cell Broadcast (CB) delivers emergency warnings simultaneously through mobile networks to all compatible phones within a defined geographic area. It is increasingly recognised as a core component of last-mile warning dissemination under Early Warnings for All.

Scaling CB across Africa will require a combination of national, sectoral and international financing — there is no single financing model. The indicative need is approximately **USD 80 million for 27 African countries**, covering capital expenditure and three years of operating expenditure.

These estimates cover the initial three years of operation. Longer-term operation and maintenance, as well as periodic re-integration as mobile networks evolve, will need to be considered as part of each country's financing model.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE FINANCED

Technical assessment

Assessments, feasibility studies, technical specifications, regulatory support and procurement preparation.

Mobile network integration

CB network functions, software or licence upgrades, operator integration and testing.

Operation and maintenance

Hosting, technical support, maintenance, recurring testing and other ongoing operating costs.

Integration into the national alerting infrastructure

Alert management platforms, hosting, connectivity and integration with relevant authorities and systems.

Implementation and capacity building

Stakeholder coordination, training, exercises, public communication and system testing.

Lifecycle upgrades

Periodic re-integration or reconfiguration as mobile networks and technologies evolve.

FINANCING SOURCES

Domestic public funding. National budgets can support or finance implementation — through the ministry responsible for ICT and telecommunications, the disaster management authority, the ministry of the interior, the regulator's own budget or other designated public resources.

Universal Service and Access Funds. Where their legal mandate accommodates public safety or public-interest uses, existing funds may support infrastructure, integration and, in some cases, operating costs.

Bilateral partners. Grants, technical assistance or targeted programmes may be provided by various donors.

International climate and development finance. Grants, concessional finance and technical assistance through climate funds and multilateral development banks, subject to eligibility criteria and programming cycles. Two routes are available.

> ***New grants or projects.*** A dedicated proposal to a climate fund or development bank. Relevant sources include the Green Climate Fund (GCF); the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) initiative; the African Development Bank and the World Bank for larger national or regional investments; and relevant European Union climate resilience, digital development and regional cooperation programmes.
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> ***Existing projects with a warning dissemination component.*** Regional and national early warning projects already under implementation may include a component covering warning dissemination and communication. Where such a component has remaining funds, CB can be financed without a new approval cycle, subject to the project's scope and geography and to agreement with the implementing entity.

Mobile Network Operators. Operators may support the operation and maintenance of the system by covering ongoing costs associated with operating the CB functionality within their own networks. This could include recurring network-side costs for technical support, maintenance, testing and operation, as well as periodic re-integration or reconfiguration when mobile networks and technologies are upgraded.

ILLUSTRATIVE FINANCING PATHWAYS

Different country situations lend themselves to different combinations of financing sources.

COUNTRY SITUATION	INDICATIVE FINANCING MIX
Strong domestic fiscal space and political commitment	Domestic public funding anchors the national alerting system; mobile operators support network-side implementation and operation. External partners focus on technical preparation, capacity building or standards alignment.
An active, well-capitalised Universal Service Fund (USF)	The USF supports national infrastructure and selected network-side implementation costs, potentially alongside government and operator contributions.
Limited fiscal space and constrained operator capacity	A blended model combines international support for technical preparation and initial capital investment with domestic commitments for longer-term operation, alongside an agreed approach to operator-side costs.