

DTT to provide opportunity to restructure SA's ICT

THOHOYANDOU: The implementation of Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) will provide great potential to restructure South Africa's Information Communication and Technology (ICT) infrastructure as set out by the National Development Plan (NDP), says Communications Minister Faith Muthambi.

Speaking at the Vhembe Communicators Conference at the University of Venda in Thohoyandou, Limpopo, on Monday, the Minister said the NDP infrastructure development agenda calls for efficient information infrastructure that promotes economic growth and greater inclusion that require a stronger broadband and telecommunications network that is affordable to all.

"South Africa does not have a choice but to create sustainable economies with broadcasting services as key contributors.

"During and after the implementation process of digital migration, South Africa should have good stories to tell about the commitment made in capacity building and skills development in the field of broadcasting content and other related economic agendas," Minister Muthambi said.



Image via [123RF](#)

She said when people view broadcast digital migration as a programme that impacts on television services, they see a lot of economic opportunities behind its implementation.

She said these include issues such as Electronic Manufacturing Industry Development and Broadcasting Content Development.

"Spectrum allocation has been the biggest bottleneck in the deployment of wireless technologies aimed at meeting the diverse needs of society and the economy.

"Frequency Spectrum is a scarce resource that needs to be optimally allocated to meet both economic and social objectives.

"For the country to grow faster and for more people to be employed, legislation requires business to consider employment equity, black economic empowerment, the environment, skills development, local content, small-business development, community social responsibility and several location-specific imperatives, such as Broadcasting Local Content strategies," she said.

DTT to create jobs

Minister Muthambi further said constructing and maintaining communication networks will generate both unskilled job opportunities in the short to medium term (such as digging trenches or spanning cables for expanding networks) and skilled work over the longer term (as networks need to be maintained, upgraded and refurbished).

She said the education system, supported by government investment into ICT skills development, will need to prepare for this.

The Minister said the use of digital communications has started changing society in ways that are not yet fully understood.

Minister Muthambi reiterated that the implementation of DTT will be achieved in South Africa within a reasonable period to reap the benefits of both Broadcasting, Electronic Manufacturing Industry Development and affordable broadband services.

The implementation of the digital programme will provide a significant high-capacity spectrum that will become available with the shift from analogue terrestrial television broadcasting to digital terrestrial broadcasting.

She said ICT will continue to reduce spatial exclusion, enabling seamless participation by the majority in the global ICT system, not simply as users but as content developers and application innovators.

"It is high time that telling South African stories through media as a result of the channels to be made available by the implementation of DTT becomes a reality.

"Successful implementation of the programme will create a number of free-to-air television channels that require local content.

"The fact calls for the emergence and growth of broadcasting local content in the country by South Africans. Telling stories about the cultures of South Africans is not only exciting, but provide education about the history of the country and its uniqueness in the continent and globally," she said.

Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT)

DTT is a reliable and much cost efficient means to distribute linear television content and has many advantages over the old, analogue broadcasting that is still in use today.

Digital migration refers to the switch from an analogue broadcasting system to a digital broadcasting system and this has been a world-wide move which is being driven by the ITU.

In order to view digital television signals on an ordinary analogue television set, consumers will need a so-called Set-Top-Box. The purpose of the Set-Top-Box is to convert the DTT signal for reception on an ordinary analogue television set.

If consumers haven't acquired a set top box by analogue switch-off, they will no longer be able to view the existing terrestrial television broadcasting services

The South African Communications Department anticipates the rollout of Set-Top-Boxes to be completed in the coming 18-24 months so that South Africans can switch off analogue signal and begin to realise the benefits of digital dividend to allow for the rollout of Wireless Broadband Services

Conference to strengthen good relations

Meanwhile, Vhembe Executive Mayor Cllr Tsheitereke Matibe said government communicators at the conference will help them to strengthen their good relations with the local print media, the community and commercial radio stations, as well as all the SABC radio stations in the province.

He said all four municipalities in Vhembe (Makhado, Musina, Mutale and Thulamela) have their own newsletters through which they disseminate information about their programme to residents.

However, Minister Muthambi said she's more concerned about the municipal newsletters since they are more focused on profiling the Mayors rather than giving residents more content on government's programme of action.

She encouraged residents to influence the content of the newsletters, adding that it should be written in the languages that are spoken in the area.

Minister Muthambi said one way of ending the so-called service delivery protests is constant communication and regular feedback on service delivery, adding that now is the time for municipalities in Vhembe to communicate with residents using social media such as Twitter and Facebook.

Univen FM ?Director, Communications and Marketing Manager Takalani Dzaga said for the past 17 years, they have been entertaining, informing and educating the Univen community and neighbouring villages with information about their area, province, country and the world.

The station, which was established in September 1997, will celebrate its 18th year anniversary on air.

Dzaga said they broadcast in different languages (Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Sepedi and English) that are understood by their listeners.

He said the only challenge they have is the issue of salary which has resulted with the majority of presenters leaving the station to join the SABC and other commercial radio stations in the province.

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