

More resources demanded for digital migration

 By [Gregory Gondwe](#)

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The Ministry of Information and Civic Education which is implementing digital migration in Malawi has demanded extra resources from government to ensure that by 31 December 2013 Malawi has shifted from analogue to digital.

Principal secretary for the ministry, Anthony Livuza said since the cost of the equipment is high they have requested an additional amount of K1.2 billion to ensure that they lay a national network.

"The Malawi government is financing the project to the tune of K2.1 billion, of which K0.5 billion has been approved by parliament in this year's budget to be used for procuring equipment," he said.

In turn, Livuza says the country's economy would be boosted as revenue would be generated through the sale of frequencies.

The ministry is going around popularising the project and last week a high powered delegation of ministry officials met with members of parliamentary committee responsible with communication.

The team led by minister of Information and Civic Education, Moses Kunkuyu said the aim of meeting the parliamentarians is to enlighten them the stage at which the country is on in the adoption of the new concept as well as challenges it is facing.

The minister described the Media and Communication Committee of Parliament as a catalyst in the review of the country's laws to accommodate digital migration.

"My ministry had completed the review of the country's Communications Act and now it is incorporating aspects of digital broadcasting," he said before asking the members of parliament to take up their role of passing it to effectively pave the way for the adoption of digital migration.

He told them that as legislators, they have a duty to pass the revised Act into a binding law to protect the different players in the industry.

Kunkuyu, who is also a parliamentarian, told his colleagues that there is no better partner in this process than them.

Careful planning and resourcing required

"Your role cannot be overemphasized as it is without doubt the transition process will require careful planning and resourcing," he said.

Like laying out the parliamentary committee's work plan towards achieving the aspirations of the digital migration process, Kunkuyu the parliamentarians involved should also help in communication transfer to relevant authorities including the rural masses on digital migration.

"The nation stands to benefit a lot from the process," he said.

"I ask you to complement the efforts of the government in disseminating information and I request you to begin spreading messages of the migration to the populace in your constituencies," he lobbied.

Policy framework already developed

Kunkuyu said the country had already developed a policy framework that would enable the country to progress in the right direction on the migration process.

"The policy will need support of all stakeholders whose role will be of great value. As you can see honourable members, you have a distinguished role to play in the whole process," he said.

Kunkuyu said government is progressing well towards the migration as technical, policy, content and communication working committees are in place.

During the meeting with the parliamentarians, a member of the steering committee on digital migration, Dingani Mtande said the digital migration promises a brighter future for the media industry as it will create a wide range of service provision as opposed to the current analogue scenario.

A range of innovativeness

"Expect a wide range of innovativeness in the media and communication industry once Malawi migrates to digital broadcasting in 2013," this was an assurance that he gave the parliamentarians adding that digital broadcasting has many advantages ranging from social to economic ones as there will be high quality voice and picture on radios and televisions.

On the list of good things to come, Mtande included one where independent production houses will increase with digital migration in place as it will facilitate more local production than is the case now. He said as a result government hopes to create more jobs.

"At the moment with the analogue system, broadcasters have multiple responsibilities ranging from managing transmitters to transmitting their own produced materials which is more involving," he added, saying this is not viable.

By extension he said the 16 licensed broadcasters in the country has transmitters and a team of engineers to manage them.

"The digital broadcasting will only use a single transmitter for 16 or more broadcasters with a different entity manning the transmitters," said Mtande.

"Digital transmission will allow service provision on network, application and content provision as MACRA (Malawi Communication Regulatory Authority) will license all the service providers as is the case with broadcasters and telecommunication providers," he explained.

United Nation's International Telecommunication Union declared in 2006 that all nations should migrate from analogue to digital broadcasting by 17 June 2015 while SADC member states agreed to migrate before 31 December 2013.

Parliamentarians, some of whom had never heard about digital migration, pressed the ministry and MACRA officials to explain more on the project and its advantages to the telecommunication progress in the country.

Parliamentarians said they will not hesitate to ensure that the draft law that now accommodates this initiative is passed into law as soon as possible so that the project is implemented without any hurdles by the set date.

ABOUT GREGORY GONDWE

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