



DIGITAL MIGRATION FOOTPRINTS

MISA-Zimbabwe monitoring of Zimbabwe's digital television migration process

This is the first edition of monitoring of Zimbabwe's digital migration process.

MISA-Zimbabwe's monitoring of the process is a part of its Access to Information campaign. The Migration footprints series is an analysis of major highlights of a process set to the face of television broadcasting in the country in the public interest.

Digitisation will make broadcasting more equitable, just and people centered while connecting formerly marginal communities. Zimbabwe, like other counties in Africa, is preparing to meet the obligatory International Telecommunications Union (ITU) deadline of June 17, 2015 of migration from analogue to digital broadcasting. After this date frequencies set aside for analogue television transmission will no longer be protected against cross border interference.

DATE	UPDATE
June 2006	On 16 June 2006, the (ITU) Regional Radiocommunication Conference (RRC-06) in Geneva signed a treaty resolving that all countries of Europe, Africa and Middle-East should migrate from analogue to digital broadcasting by June 17 2015
June 2009	SADC ICT Ministers meet in Swakopmund Namibia to set up a regional digital migration roadmap and set December 31, 2013 as their deadline. By 2014, the region had held 7 Forums to take stock of how individual member countries were fairing in digital migration, and whether the region is on course to meet the set deadline. The last forum was held in Kasane, Botswana on 10-14 June 2014. <i>Zimbabwe has attended all regional meetings but none of the information relating to the country's processes since 2009 was made public to the Zimbabwean citizenry. Zimbabwe has no publicly known Digital Migration policy. As of September 2014, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda and Tanzania had finalised the migration processes.</i>
July 2011	On 25 July, Zimbabwean news agency, New Ziana reported that Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) Chief Executive Officer Obert Muganyura said that Zimbabwe was lagging far behind other countries in the region because of lack of government funding for the project. Muganyura said in the SADC region, Zimbabwe was the only country that

	was yet to start the digitisation process.
February 2012	Television services introduced in Beitbridge, Victoria Falls and Plumtree which had relied on South Africa, Botswana or Zambia broadcasts since Independence. The transmitters set up in the areas are digital ready equipment, although they currently operate on the analogue platform. Transmitters were also set up in Mudzi and St Alberts.
September 2012	The Standard on 2 September reported that the director of Urban Communications in the Ministry of Media, Information and Publicity, Retired Major Anywhere Mutambudzi, said although funding had been a major constraint, government was working to comply with the International Telecommunications Union deadline.
November 2013	On 18 November, while touring Transmedia, Media Information and Broadcasting Services, Minister Professor Jonathan Moyo said meeting meeting the June 2015 digitisation deadline was a major priority for Zimbabwe.
February 2014	Ministry of Communication Technology, Postal and Courier Services, permanent secretary Engineer Sam Kundishora, while giving oral evidence to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communication Technology, Postal and Courier Services on 10 February, 2014 said the likelihood of the country missing the deadline were high because of the slow pace of the migration process. He noted the undercapitalization of the sector in 2013 and 2014 despite the impending digitisation deadline. The sector received less than it bid for the two years.
October 2014	<p>On 31 October 2014, MISA –Zimbabwe presented its research on the Digital migration process in Zimbabwe at broadcasting conference held in Harare. The report made recommendations relating to each of the critical stages of the process which include policies and regulation, spectrum planning and management and public awareness among others.</p> <p>Among the resolutions made at the conference, stakeholders made the following regarding the digital migration process in Zimbabwe:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitate the accessibility of information to the public and broadcasting stakeholders by all relevant authorities through regular updates on Zimbabwe’s digital migration plans and developments. 2. Recognise the importance of local content production in view of digitisation by coming up with a clear and sustainable policy for the sector. <p><i>Following the conference Copies of Zimbabwe Digital migration report were submitted to the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting services and Transmedia and an attempt was made to be a part of the public</i></p>

	<p><i>awareness campaign around the process. No public or official announcements were made relating progress was made relating to the process.</i></p>
March 2015	<p>The Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) on 11 March, 2015 held its first media briefing on the process at The Jameson Hotel, Harare. Chief Executive Officer, Obert Muganyura presented the following main points;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The signing of a contract with Chinese telecommunications company, Huawei Technology International on 25 February 2015 for the implementation of the digitisation programme which is set to cost \$125million. This signing followed a feasibility study for a digital solution for Zimbabwe with Huawei and the three major players in the migration process the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), Transmedia and BAZ. 2. \$200million had been raised for digitisation through licence fees paid for a data-casting licence which was awarded to mobile service operator NetOne. 3. Zimbabwe would comply with the International Telecommunications Union's (ITU) 17 June 2015 deadline to migrate from analogue to digital television broadcasting by installing and switching on digital transmission equipment on the country's 24 transmission sites, with priority on the border sites, and be in a position to switch these on by 17 June 2015. Another 6 new transmission sites would be added to the country, bringing the total to 30. 4. Zimbabwe would deal with the remaining elements in the digitisation implementation schedule the televisions studios, content production centres, radio studios, renewal of FM radio transmission network, a web TV system and an operational and regulatory monitoring system between July – December 2015. <p><i>The press briefing did not allow for any questions for clarity or follow up as the CEO was said to be busy running around with logistics related to the process. However copies of the presentation were made available to the media. No other press updates were held. However but an organisation known as Zim Digital Migration- exhibited at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF). The organisation which is a consortium of players within the sector is expected to lead the public awareness campaign on the process. No official announcement has been made of stakeholders or mandate of the organisation.</i></p>
May 2015	<p>On 14 May 2015, The Newsday reported that the Media, Information and Broadcasting Services deputy Minister, Monica Mutsvangwa said the government was going to meet the deadline.</p>

<p>May 2015</p>	<p>Minister of Information Media and Broadcasting Services, Professor Jonathan Moyo on 18 May 2015 appeared before a joint portfolio committee meeting of the Media Information and broadcasting services and Information Communication Technology, Postal and Courier Services to give an update on the country's digitisation process.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Informed of a 4 week delay in beginning of the project owing to challenges with American authorities during the processing of approximately US\$12million to Huawei. 2. Noted that the country would meet 'contextually' meet the 17 June deadline, as BAZ, ZBC and Transmedia had come up with an operational definition that would be the yardstick for measuring the compliance. The definition was as follows a) Switching off analogue transmitters that cause interference to the digital television services of other countries b) Switching on the digital transmitters at those sites to enable continuity of service provision. 3. Three (3) border transmitters, likely to interfere with neighbouring countries as determined by a preliminary assessment, namely Kamativi, likely to interfere with Zambia, and the Mutare and Nyanga, likely to interfere with Mozambique, would be the first to receive the first of the new 24 digital transmitters in the country. 4. During the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting, the country would broadcast using dual illumination. This is because of the likely challenges that may occur, which include the importation of the required set- top boxes. Huawei is expected to supply an initial 400 000 set-top boxes which government intends subsidise to cost US\$20.00. 5. 4 UHF television multiplexes will be available to the country, but only two (2) will be used - one dedicated to ZBC for its channels and the other to the private players. Each multiplex will host approximately six High Definition channels 6. The country would require 2 years (2017) to complete the process, a shift from the initial timeline of 30 September, 2016. <p><i>The presentation by Professor Moyo presented inconsistencies in earlier information as had been pronounced by his deputy, Hon. Monica Mutsvangwa who according to The News Day of 14 May 2015 Day had said that there would be an open tender for the supply of Set –top boxes for the country. Of note also was the shift from the total 30 transmission sites, as presented by BAZ CEO, Engineer Muganyura to the 48. The location of the new sites still remains unknown.</i></p>
<p>May 2015</p>	<p>As reported by The Chronicle on 28 May, 2015, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Media and Broadcasting Services, George Charamba on</p>

	<p>viewing a transmission site in Hwange revealed that the country was facing challenges in acquiring digital broadcasting monitoring equipment as an unnamed country in the European Union had refused to sell the equipment to Zimbabwe. He said the country had since sought an alternative.</p> <p>He also announced the importation of equipment worth US\$3million for the process through Huawei International, who he said have targeted mid-2016 for the completion of the digital migration process for the country.</p> <p><i>Charamba's statement on the set date for completion presented inconsistencies in the actual date that Zimbabwe is expected to have fully migrated to digital television broadcasting. Furthermore, the lack of transparency on which country exactly was unwilling to supply the monitoring equipment was of concern.</i></p>
May 2015	<p>On 24 May 2015, Broadcasting signal carrier, Transmedia, receives digital equipment which includes antenna systems and transmitters to be installed at six new transmission sites. Transmedia Chief Executive officer, Florence Sigudu notes that the digitisation process began in 2011, and the country would meet the ITU requirement of non-interference with other country's transmission signals by June 17.</p> <p><i>There is still no clear detail on where the new sites will be situated</i></p>
June 2015	<p>The Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation on 9 June 2015 reported that engineers were working 'flat out' to ensure that the country's digitisation becomes a reality. This followed the beginning of the installation of the satellite which will carry signal to transmitters across the country. BAZ technical Manager Mathias Chakanyuka said 48 transmitters have been erected across the country.</p>
<p>URGENT CHALLENGES' to digital migration;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of public awareness on the process itself and no public digital migration plan document • Lack of consistency in the policy statements relating to the digitisation process • Lack of clarity on the timelines related to the process and outline on implications of the process on Zimbabweans beyond 17 June, 2015 • Lack of public engagement of stakeholders who include content producers, broadcasters telecommunications players and civil society 	

SUMMARY

With only a few days left before the International Telecommunications Union deadline of June 17, 2015, it is apparent that Zimbabwe, and a significant number of other African countries, will not have fully migrated from analogue to digital television broadcasting.

What is even clearer is that information related to the digitisation process remains woefully inadequate in the country. Of significance is, firstly the setting of an operational understanding of what compliance implies. Secondly is the lack of public information on the process, and thirdly inconsistencies of government position and timelines on digitisation. To date the country has no clear timeline on the process, beyond the ITU set deadline – how long it will take, and what will happen at which stage with what impact.

However, some critical information of public interest has been shared through parliament such as the digitisation of the studios of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) which according to Minister Moyo is still at preparatory stage, and the call for applications for new and private television players, which had been set for 29 May, 2015.

The transition to digital television should be a more wholesome consultative process. Its complexities require the involvement of not only the regulators of the sector and the relevant ministry, but also broadcasting stakeholders that include network operators, retailers of receivers and other related broadcasting equipment, content producers and the viewers themselves.

Stakeholder engagement is particularly important for taking into consideration key technological and economic issues relating to the process. These include among other issues the relevant equipment for the viewers and the facilitation of a smooth distribution of the satellite signal for the country with the telecommunications operators who already have the requisite infrastructure that deploys fiber optic connectivity in the country. Currently, the telecommunications sector is embroiled in infrastructure sharing debates and it would be interesting to see how this development unfolds. MISA-Zimbabwe has noted in the past that key to the digital migration process is the need for a converged regulatory framework for the country's broadcasting and telecommunications sector.

MISA-Zimbabwe reiterates its call to the relevant authorities for accessibility, openness and transparency of information on the digital migration process through regular updates on Zimbabwe's digital migration plans and developments.

Issued : 11 June 2015