

Digital television launch set for March

By [Lloyd Gumbo](#)

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Zimbabwe is expected to launch its first digital television by March this year, and Government has urged television content producers to ensure the country has enough to broadcast when the industry is fully digitalised. The digitalisation exercise will create room for 12 high definition (HD) television channels of which six will be owned by Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation while the remainder will go to private broadcasters.

Speaking at the launch of the content production phase of the Zimbabwe digitalisation programme in Harare yesterday, Information, Media and Broadcasting Services Deputy Minister Thokozile Mathuthu said Government was committed to digitalisation. She said this was evidenced by efforts that have been put into building transmission infrastructure across the country.

Deputy Minister Mathuthu said while Government was in the process of meeting the technical side of digitalisation, it was the content side that mattered most. "Broadcasting is not about technicians or engineers, but it is about content," she said. "If we have no content to show on our television channels, then we may just as well forget about broadcasting."



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"The solution is not to look for content beyond our borders. No! The solution is to produce our own local content which is beyond reproach and matches international standards, if not better. "We have to produce content for our country, for the region and beyond as we market ourselves as Zimbabweans in the global village in the long run."

She said Zimbabweans were anxiously waiting to feel the results of digitalisation. Digitalisation, she said, was not about ZBC alone or Government but all broadcasters who would come on board with digital migration. "In many countries that are ahead of us in this respect, the content industry employs thousands and thousands of people and generates billions of dollars in earnings.

"This is the vision which my ministry has, to grow the content industry to reach those heights. We pride ourselves as a learned people, multi-skilled people, a creative people," said Deputy Minister Mathuthu.

Speaking at the same occasion, permanent secretary in the ministry George Charamba said the \$125m that Government committed to digitalisation was clear testimony of its interest in the broadcasting industry. He said it was high time local film producers sought to end Nigeria's dominance of the film industry in the continent.

"We are not congregating to produce content for any one broadcaster. When we have done our digitalisation, we shall have 12 HD channels. "With those 12 HD channels, from the perspective of Government, I am not interested in any one of them, I am interested in all of them. Which means there is no first born, there is no second born, there is no last born. They are channels whose duty is to keep Zimbabweans entertained, informed and educated.

"That means our focus in terms of production is to produce content minimally for Zimbabweans and maximally for Africa. Let us be very, very, very clear. Nigeria has taught us that it is possible for one to launch a broadcast industry that caters beyond your national borders," said Charamba.

He said in its endeavour to capacitate the film industry, Government bought 28 HD cameras, 20 editing suites and other equipment that would be hired out to film producers for free. So far, 15 cameras and eight editing suites are already in the country while 13 cameras and 12 editing suites are expected on January 22, 2016.

Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe chief executive Obert Muganyura said digitalisation would create an opportunity for them to license more players in the industry. He said the exercise would create employment opportunities adding that the ball was now in the producers' court.

Zimpapers chief executive Pikirayi Deketeke said it was gratifying that Government was committed to supporting the broadcasting industry. The integrated media group owns newspapers and a radio station -- Star FM.

Deketeke said Zimpapers was interested in establishing a television station in the near future. "I believe this is an historic meeting, an historic moment where we see Government sitting together with the creative industry. "I think it's a rare moment in our history, in our journey and in our development as a people," said Deketeke.

He said Zimpapers was an integrated media group which demonstrated Government's commitment to empowering the media industry in Zimbabwe.