

Brace for digital era, media told

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Media houses in Zimbabwe will need to have content ready when the country commissions its high definition television channels in April, with initial plans for 12 channels, six going to the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, while the remainder will be shared among private broadcasters.

Information, Media and Broadcasting Services Minister, Christopher Mushohwe, said yesterday during his tour of Zimpapers' business units in Harare that local producers had to come up with strategies to ensure that there is enough content to broadcast when the process was completed.

Addressing journalists, Mushohwe said despite the financial problems, the partners in China would deliver equipment before payment.



Image via [123RF](#)

"Before April we should have completed all the infrastructure construction and that is the major part of it, so that by the end of this year we should be full swing. We should see some new television stations shaping up.

"Of the 12 (stations) that we are going to come up with, we think that six can go to ZBC, that is four to Harare and two to Bulawayo and the other half would be for private broadcasters who may want to take them up," he said.

He said the convergence of the print and electronic media was very critical.

"We need to make sure that all our print media platforms must be prepared for a tough competition with the electronic media and if you can't beat them why not join them.

"I also see a lot of business opportunities in this sector because this is a sector where you can never quench the desire for news consumption from people regardless of the economic climate, people will always want information, will always want to know what's happening, they will always want to be acquainted with what's happening even beyond our country," Mushohwe said.

He said Government was committed to make sure that signals reached every corner of the country after the digitisation process.

He said some people were receiving signals from neighbouring countries such as Mozambique, South Africa and Botswana.

Mushohwe urged local producers to come up with strategies to ensure that there was enough content to broadcast when the process was completed.

"We have a lot of talent in this country and we urge local producers to ensure that we have enough to broadcast. Look at what is happening in Nigeria, India and look at what the Philippines are doing. Ghana has collaborated with Nigeria for their content and therefore we also need to collaborate with others," he said.

Mushohwe said as a result of technology, most people in the country were no longer reading hard copies of newspapers as they would read them through their mobile phones.

"We need to embrace the current future technology. Let's embrace it, it is for our own good," he said.

Mushohwe said *The Herald* was still the most popular newspaper in the country. He urged journalists at *The Herald* to continue working as a team.

He said President Mugabe set up the ministry in recognition of this sector and its contribution towards national development.

"The ministry was set up by President Mugabe for your sake. So I say we must work together and we must also work as a team. If Government didn't recognise this sector, the President would not have set up this ministry," Mushohwe said.

He urged journalists to disseminate information responsibly and truthfully for the benefit of the people. During the tour, Mushohwe was accompanied by his deputy, Cde Thokozile Mathuthu and the ministry's principal director, Regis Chikowore.

Deputy Minister Mathuthu recently said while Government was in the process of meeting the technical side of digitisation, it was the content side that mattered most.

She said Zimbabweans were anxiously waiting to feel the results of digitisation.

Digitisation, she said, was not about ZBC alone or Government, but all broadcasters who would come on board with digital migration.

Permanent secretary in the ministry George Charamba recently said the \$125m that Government committed to digitisation 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.

Government bought 28 HD cameras, 20 editing suites and other equipment that would be hired out to film producers.

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.

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