

Government, private sector 'ignore' CTV?



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The 'temporary' closure of Cape Town TV (CTV) early this month has reopened a set of old wounds inflicted to community media by what many experts call 'negligence' and 'lack of ongoing support' by government entities and private corporate sector to boost a growing but cash-strapped industry.



CTV, which got an initial amount of R833 652 from the MDDA, had anticipated at least a further R1-million from the Western Cape Provincial government and other sources, and that income would have complemented the MDDA support. It did not materialise, however, forcing the station to go off air.

CTV now needs about R150 000 to get back on air and a further sum of about R600 000 to cover the costs of signal transmission over a one-year period.

Station needs to raise own funds

MDDA CEO Lumko Mtimde told Bizcommunity.com yesterday, & October 2009: "Regarding the current cash flow challenge CTV faces, it may well be due to not planning properly and failure to report in time to access further funding from the MDDA, as our funds are transferred on a tranches basis subject to part reporting for the previous tranche.

"As of now, the agency awaits reports for the previous tranche from CTV prior to releasing the next tranche. Having said so, the transmission costs they refer to are more than the cost centre budgeted for transmission costs in the budget they submitted to the MDDA.

"Hence, our expectation that more fundraising from the station would have assisted and complemented our contribution. It also appears they have not been able to generate enough income to cover the costs at this stage."

Mtimde also said that CTV's costs for transmission were very limited and a lot of funding provided went to infrastructure and not to service the monthly payments for transmission services offered by Sentech.

Tremendous growth

“The project has also engaged the Department of Communications regarding the payment of Sentech services in the context of the support provided to community radio. At this stage, the Dept of Communications has not decided to extend the support for signal distribution costs to community television.”

There has been a tremendous growth of community media in South Africa (print and broadcasting) in the last 10 years or so, but most of them have found it difficult to ‘make it to the next round’, due to lack of support by state and public advertisers.

Furthermore, Mtimde said the MDDA's funding alone may not be adequate enough to cover community media outlets' expenses. He urged them to scan and map their market, develop strategic partnerships, diversify their funding base and develop sustainability plans, so they are able to survive even beyond MDDA support.

Government, private sector support is vital

Kgaugelo Maphai, former SABC radio sales manager and MD of Omni Consulting, told Bizcommunity.com yesterday: “Where are the government and the private sector when these outlets are struggling?

“Most of these organisations depend on advertising to survive, but most advertisers only use them as an afterthought channel to access their consumers, which is unfair.

“Government needs to support these channels - like giving them some grants every month to support their operations, instead of letting them struggle to fight for an advertising pie. These outlets are growing almost every day and are working hard to tell their communities' stories, but their financial means are limited, hence they fall apart quickly.”

Visit www.mdda.org.za.

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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