

VOLUME V

SOS COALIITON NEWSLETTER



Editorial

As we wrap up the second quarter of 2025, the SOS Support Public Broadcasting Coalition (SOS) remains firmly grounded in our goal: to ensure free universal access to quality local public service content on digital and broadcast platforms to strengthen democracy.

Over the past few months, SOS has continued to raise awareness about the importance of freely accessible, independent public service media particularly as the country anticipates the determination of a new analogue switch-off (ASO) date. Through public workshops, media engagements and community dialogues, SOS has worked tirelessly raise awareness about the Broadcast Digital Migration (BDM) process with the aim of enlightening communities, keeping them informed and getting them to a state of readiness ahead of the ASO. This work contributes to ensuring that no one is left behind in the digital migration, especially low-income and rural households.

SOS has also been leading continental work that promotes universal access to information, particularly, public service content (PSC). We are working with the African Commission on Human and People's Right's (ACHPR) through Special Rapporteur Commissioner Ourveena Geereesha Topsy-Sonoo to develop guidelines for universal access to PSC in Africa. We believe that the production and distribution of PSC can no longer be the sole responsibility of PSMs but more players are needed, particularly those with large digital footprint, as a practical measure to curb mis and disinformation.

In this edition, we highlight:

- Our ongoing campaign to support eligible individuals in registering for government-sponsored set-top boxes (STBs).
- Community education efforts aimed at ensuring digital inclusion and access to information for all.
- Continental work with the ACHPR to advance universal access to PSC

Now more than ever, PSM must be protected from commercial and political capture. We believe that every person has the right to reliable, accurate, and diverse information and we are proud to stand with our members and partners in advancing this cause.

Thank you for your continued support, solidarity, and engagement. Let us continue working together to ensure that public broadcasting remains truly public.

Latest activities

The ACHPR, in Collaboration with AAAD, MMA and SOS Gets Continental Consultations on Resolution 620, 630 and 631 Underway

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)'s Special Rapporteur (SR) on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information, Commissioner Ourveena Geereesha Topsy-Sonoo has begun the implementation of Resolution 620, 630 and 631. These Resolutions aim to develop African digital rights instruments for freedom of expression, access to information and information integrity solutions.

The SR is working with the African Alliance for Access to Data (AAAD), Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) and the SOS Coalition who are the implementing organisations for each of the Resolutions. The AAAD is leading Resolution 620, which focuses on promoting and harnessing data access as a tool for advancing human rights and sustainable development in the digital age. For this Resolution, the SR Mandate includes consulting broadly around the continent to examine and develop appropriate normative standards to guide data collection, deployment and access issues concerning data and to support efforts that promote and protect access to data across Africa.

MMA, with the support of UNESCO, is leading Resolution 630, which is concerned with developing Guidelines to assist States to monitor technology companies in respect of their duty to maintain information integrity through independent fact checking. Here, the SR Mandate entails developing Guidelines with all interested parties, such as civil society, regulatory bodies and technology companies, to enable States Parties to effectively monitor the platforms' performance in order to inform of the efforts to advance information integrity online, including the role of independent fact-checking in the African context.

SOS is leading Resolution 631, which is aimed at working towards the assessment of PSC in this digital era and developing guidelines to ensure a public interest element for all platforms operating in Africa. As such, the SR Mandate is to consult with African role players with an interest in broadcasting, freedom of expression, media freedom, digital rights, access to information policy and lawmaking to assess their concept of PSC in current times. This extends to developing Guidelines for Member States to assist them in developing a future focused policy framework for universal access to PSC in Africa.

These Resolutions all launched at the 2025 Digital Rights Inclusion Forum (DRIF) in Lusaka Zambia, which is hosted by the Paradigm Initiative (PIN). They have similar processes which include broad consultation at key African conferences. These sessions feature expert panelists who offer in-depth insights, while also allowing for broader participation by creating an opportunity for conference delegates to contribute during and after the sessions. Each Resolution has a [google form](#) where individuals can contribute their unique perspectives and to help shape the development of these Guidelines.

Organisations working in digital rights, broadcasting, media freedom, civic technology, journalism, access to information policy and lawmaking, internet governance and related fields are encouraged to participate in these consultations.

The ACHPR along with the implementing organisations further urges funders to support this critical work, financially or otherwise, keeping in mind that the digital space has become central to civic engagement, democratic participation and access to services. These instruments will ensure a rights-based approach to internet governance in Africa and further benefit African States while potentially advancing freedom of expression and access to information in the digital age.

For more information contact:

Res 620, African Alliance for Access to Data (AAAD): Guy Berger at gjegberger@gmail.com

Res 630, Media Monitoring Africa (MMA): William Bird at williamb@mma.org.za

Res 631, SOS Support Public Broadcasting Coalition (SOS): Uyanda Siyotula at natcoord@soscoalition.org.za



SOS Kicked Off Continental Consultations on ACHPR Resolution 631



SOS Coalition team with panelists and African experts at DRIF

SOS launched the first in a series of continental consultations as part of the implementation of the African Commission's Resolution 631, in April, at DRIF. These consultations are set to take place across the African continent to assess the concept of universal access to PSC with the goal of developing guidelines for Member States to assist them in developing a future-focused policy framework for universal access to PSC in Africa.

All consultations are conducted under the auspice of ACHPR's Special Rapporteur Commissioner Ourveena Geereesha Topsy-Sonoo; and are crucial to ensure that the policy framework and guidelines are informed by African perspectives, standards and needs.

SOS invites individuals or organisations who wish to contribute but are unable to attend consultations to air their views via this [Google form](#).

SOS participated at UNESCO's WPFDD Celebrations in Belgium

In May, our national coordinator, Uyanda Siyotula, attended UNESCO's World Press Freedom Day celebrations in Brussels, Belgium. She participated in the MMA led ACHPR consultation on Resolution 630, which is concerned with developing guidelines to assist States to monitor technology companies in respect of their duty to maintain information integrity through independent fact checking. Ms Siyotula focused on drawing connections between Resolution 630 and 631. The Special Rapporteur was part of this session and provided a keynote address on her mandate as it relates to the Resolutions.



SOS National Coordinator, Uyanda Siyotula with Paradigm initiative's Chief Operating Officer, Nnenna Paul-Ugochukwu & Programmes Officer, Miriam Beatrice Wanjiru

Southern Africa World Press Freedom Day (WPFD) 2025 Celebrations



SOS Communications and Admin Officer, Carol Seatlanyane and Campaigns & Project Coordinator, Gudani Tshikota

The SOS Coalition had the honour of attending the 2-day Southern Africa World Press Freedom Day (WPFD) celebrations. The event was hosted in Johannesburg by MMA in collaboration with key partners which include UNESCO Regional office for Southern Africa. This year's event centred on the global theme: "Freedom of Expression in the Face of the AI Revolution."

As a civil society coalition advocating for independent and sustainable PSM that serves the needs of all South Africans, freedom of expression is one of the rights that are at the centre of our work

Carol Seatlanyane and Gudani Tshikota, our Communications and Admin Officer and Campaigns and Project Coordinator, who were present found the inputs thought-provoking on key topics such as information integrity, social media regulation and protection, and the role of Big Tech in advancing Social Media for Peace (SM4P).

This comes at a time when public discourse is increasingly shaped by algorithm-driven platforms, the discussions reinforced the urgent need to strengthen regulation, uphold editorial independence, and ensure access to credible, democratic media across the region.

Quote from the panellist:

“

Without a free press, access to information remains out of reach.

-Abigail Noko, OHCHR Regional Representative

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SOS Coalition at “Debate da Beats” – Celebrating Freedom of Expression Through Music and Debates

SOS Coalition was proud to participate in the Debate da Beats event hosted by the Campaign for Free Expression (CFE). We set up a stall and engaged with attendees on the importance of PSM in South Africa, sharing information about our work, particularly our campaigns.

This unique event blended the power of music with the energy of open debate, creating an inclusive and vibrant space for young people and creatives to express themselves and reflect on a critical question: How free should free expression be? From performances to debates, the event encouraged meaningful dialogue and showcased the value of artistic and civic freedom in a democratic society.

Events like Debate da Beats are a powerful reminder of the role culture and creativity can play in driving public awareness and advocacy. We were honoured to be part of this important initiative.



SOS Team



Patron at our stall

SOS Coalition hosts two workshops and public canvassing in Alexandra (Alex)

On the 19th of May, the SOS convened its first workshop in the Alexandra township (Alex). The aim was to raise public awareness about the broadcasting digital migration (BDM) process in particular the peoples' constitutional right to access information in the context of the looming analogue switch-off (ASO). Beyond this, the workshop sought to understand the community challenges and concerns regarding this process, particularly the structural and logistical barriers contributing to low STB registration rates. The workshop provided critical public education on the ASO process, the government-subsidised set-top box (STB) registration system, and ASO's broader implications on access to information.



Alex workshop



Public Canvassing in Alex

On 20th May 2025, SOS undertook community canvassing in the Alex, just outside Pan African Mall. Through distributing of flyers and a garnering signature for the #SaveFreeTV petition, we educated the public on their rights and to ensure their voices are heard in shaping a more inclusive digital migration process

SOS hosted a follow-up workshop on 18 June 2025, again in Alexandra. This session focused exclusively on helping residents complete their registrations for government-sponsored STBs. Recognising that many people lack access to Post Offices, mobile data, or smartphones, SOS provided on-the-ground support to ensure no one is left behind as the country transitions to digital broadcasting.



STB Registration workshop in Alex

These engagements underscore the critical role of community participation in shaping a fair and transparent digital migration process, one that leaves no voice unheard and no household in the dark.

SOS Coalition in partnership with R2k hosts a workshop in Sebokeng



Sebokeng Workshop

On 26 June 2025, the SOS Coalition hosted a community workshop in Sebokeng to similarly raise awareness about the implications of the flawed BDM process and ASO implications on the rights and daily lives of poor communities. Despite strong winds on the day, the workshop was a great success, drawing over 50 participants, mostly elderly, unemployed residents who rely on SASSA pension grants for income. Many attendees shared their concerns and challenges, in particular, frustrations as a result of not receiving STBs, even though they have registered.

This highlighted the urgent need for a follow-up workshop, which will focus specifically on assisting the community with STB registrations and addressing other challenges raised.

Reflections from Bongani ka Mthembu (R2k activist)

R2K was extremely excited to see elderly people and youth in the morning of chili season, to participate and receive information on the digital migration.

R2K remain committed to supporting SOS in its advocacy for effective public broadcasting. This initiative empowers all people to participate in our democracy, actively and effectively, thereby aiding in advancing their political, social, economic and environmental rights.

R2K's supports advancement of the right to access to information, it is an important pillar and subject in R2K. R2K continues to empower communities and will continue to support the imparting of knowledge on the ASO and digital migration. R2K remains grateful for the solidarity and support of our partner, SOS Coalition.



SOS team with R2K's Bongani ka Mthembu

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[SABC Bill withdrawal crisis and South Africa's public broadcasting future](#)

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