

Volume VIII

SOS COALITION NEWSLETTER



Editorial

As we conclude the first quarter of the year, we remain firmly committed to advancing and safeguarding public service media. The SOS Support Public Broadcasting Coalition (SOS) will continue to protect our public broadcaster and speak out against any form of political interference that threatens its independence, credibility, and ability to serve the public interest.

During this quarter, we led several impactful campaigns, including #SaveFreeTV, Did You Know, and What Would South Africa Be Without the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC)? These initiatives aimed to raise public awareness about the critical role of a strong, accessible, and independent public broadcaster in strengthening democracy and ensuring that all South Africans have access to reliable information.

We also marked key milestones by launching our Public Service Media (PSM) Symposium Report, which contributes to ongoing conversations about sustainability, governance, and the future of public broadcasting in South Africa. In addition, our participation in platforms such as the International Conference on Digital Platforms Governance and the Africa Editors' Congress enabled us to engage with regional and global stakeholders and gather insights on what should be included in the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) guidelines for Resolution 631.

Beyond these milestones, SOS continued to prioritise public engagement through community workshops ensuring that communities remain at the centre of the conversation on the broadcast digital migration (BDM) process.

Looking ahead, we will build on this momentum by deepening our advocacy, strengthening partnerships, and amplifying the voices of the public. We remain resolute in our goal to ensure free universal access to quality local public service content on digital and broadcast platforms to strengthen democracy.

SOS board

Meet the new SOS board, as appointed at our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 20 November 2025. This is a group of highly esteemed individuals, with diverse expertise and unwavering commitment to shaping the strategic direction of SOS and ensuring its success. The board's leadership is instrumental in guiding SOS to achieve its strategic objectives and ensuring that SOS continues to be impactful in its efforts to ensure free universal access to quality local public service content on digital and broadcast platforms to strengthen democracy.



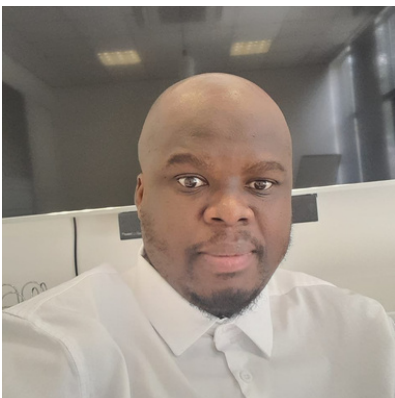
Xolile Vundla (ASA)
Chairperson



Samkelo Mokhine (FXI)
Deputy Chairperson



Pearl Munonde (SASFED)
Treasurer



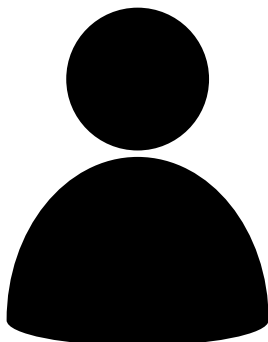
Ezekiel Kekana (CFE)



Amilcar Patel (DFA)



Sibusiso Molteno (S.Molteno Inc)



Jade Gezane (IPO)



Uyanda Siyotula
SOS National Coordinator



Bongani Ka Mthembu (R2K)

Article

SOS Coalition Continues Consultations on Resolution 631 in 2026

In 2026, the SOS Coalition is continuing its important work to advance the continent-wide consultative discussions and stakeholder engagements on the ACHPR Resolution 631 .

In the February/March 2025 session, the ACHPR adopted Resolution 631 and mandated the Special Rapporteur (SR) on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, to subsequently develop guidelines for access to public service content.

Resolution 631 marks a significant step in reimagining public service content in the digital era. It mandates the Special Rapporteur to develop guidelines that will assist African Member States in ensuring that all platforms operating on the continent uphold a strong public interest mandate. Central to this process is a comprehensive assessment of what constitutes public service content today, particularly in a rapidly evolving digital environment shaped by global platforms and shifting media consumption patterns.

To support the Special Rapporteur, SOS has been leading an inclusive and participatory consultation process, working alongside UNESCO under the Multi-Donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists (MDP). These engagements brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including broadcasters, digital rights advocates, policymakers, media practitioners, and civil society organisations, all contributing to shaping the concept of public service content in Africa and what should be included in the guidelines.

Following extensive continent-wide engagements, SOS is currently wrapping up its general consultations, which have focused on gathering input on what should be included in the guidelines. As of April 2026, SOS will engage stakeholders on the draft guidelines. This phase will focus on refining and strengthening the draft through targeted input, with the aim of ensuring that the final guidelines are practical, inclusive, and responsive to Africans and realities of the digital media landscape.

We encourage all interested stakeholders to keep a lookout on our social media platforms for upcoming opportunities to contribute to the draft guidelines and be part of shaping this important framework.

Resolution 631 represents a significant step toward building a framework for more equitable and accessible public service content which remains central to democratic life across Africa.

Current campaigns

#HandsOffTheSABC

The #HandsOffTheSABC campaign continues to advocate for a SABC Bill that ensures a strong, independent, and sustainable public broadcaster. Launched in response to the flawed Bill introduced in October 2023, the campaign highlighted critical concerns about governance, funding, and editorial independence. Following sustained pressure from civil society, including the SOS Support Public Broadcasting Coalition, Minister Solly Malatsi withdrew the Bill on 10 November 2024. However, more than a year of political infighting followed. The Speaker of the National Assembly has not yet formally gazetted the withdrawal, leaving the public broadcaster in uncertainty.

During this period, a tender for a new funding model was issued and completed. The Minister is now expected to brief Parliament on the revised Bill. We are yet to see what other revisions have been made on the Bill apart from the incorporation of the funding model. The #HandsOffSABC campaign remains committed to protecting the SABC as a cornerstone of democracy and a vital source of news, information, and cultural expression for millions of South Africans.

Did You Know?

The SOS Coalition's "Did You Know?" campaign highlighted the critical role of the SABC and PSM in ensuring access to information, education, and democratic participation. Phase 1 (February 2026) focused on the SABC's public mandate, emphasising its reach across all official languages, its cultural and educational programming, and its role in supporting civic participation and social cohesion. The campaign stressed that millions of South Africans, particularly in rural and low-income communities, rely exclusively on the SABC as their most trusted source of news and information, and that sustainable funding is essential to protect its independence and ensure it can continue serving the public.

Phase 2 (which is scheduled for May 2026) will shift the focus from PSM to the Broadcast Digital Migration (BDM) process, including the analogue switch-off (ASO). Posts will highlight the benefits of digital broadcasting and provide practical guidance for households to access digital television through set-top boxes, decoders, or satellite TV. Together, both phases emphasise that public service media is a vital democratic infrastructure, and that protecting and supporting the SABC is essential for equitable access to information and a strong, inclusive democracy.

#SaveFreeTV

The #SaveFreeTV campaign continues to protect South Africa's access to free-to-air (FTA) television amid the ongoing BDM processes. Millions of households, particularly in low-income and township areas, still rely on analogue television for news, information, and entertainment. Without adequate government support and access to set-top boxes (STBs), vulnerable communities risk being left behind, deepening information and digital inequalities.

In 2025, SOS conducted workshops in Alexandra and Sebokeng to assess community readiness, share information about STB registration, document barriers to digital access, and assist with applications for the STBs. These sessions revealed that high unemployment, low household incomes, and infrastructure challenges make independent digital migration unaffordable and unsustainable for many households. Communities emphasised that the SABC remains their most trusted source of news, particularly for those without smartphones, data, or subscription services.

Building on these earlier sessions, the SOS Coalition hosted a workshop in Bekkersdaal on 10 March 2026, with a notably high level of youth engagement (see more details further down).

What if South Africa Did Not Have the SABC?

The What if South Africa Did Not Have the SABC? is a campaign that highlights the essential role of South Africa's public broadcaster and what the country would lose if it weakened or completely collapsed. The SABC remains the only broadcaster with a national footprint, providing news, education, cultural programming, and coverage in all official languages. Millions of South Africans, especially in rural and low-income communities, rely on it as their most trusted source of information.

On 26 March 2026, the SOS Coalition hosted a workshop at the Human Rights Festival, inviting participants to imagine a South Africa without the SABC (see more details further down).

Latest activities

International Conference on Digital Platforms Governance: Strengthening Regulatory Collaboration

The Pretoria consultation, held as part of the International Conference on Digital Platforms Governance, brought together African regulators to contribute their perspectives on the development of Guidelines for Resolutions 630 and 631. This engagement marked an important milestone in the ongoing consultation process and underscored the value of collaborative, inclusive approaches to platform governance across the continent. Regulators reaffirmed their strong support for the Resolutions, while emphasizing that the Guidelines must be practical, implementable, and responsive to diverse national and regional regulatory realities.



A key concern raised was the limited capacity of individual countries to effectively hold global digital platforms accountable. In response, regulators highlighted the urgent need for stronger cooperation and coordination among African regulatory bodies to ensure consistent oversight and enforcement.



Importantly, participants stressed that the Resolutions presents a unique opportunity for Africa to develop its own context-specific digital governance frameworks. Rather than adopting models from the Global North, the Guidelines are seen as a vehicle to articulate shared African values, priorities, and policy approaches in addressing platform governance challenges and access to information.

African Editors Congress: Advancing Public Interest Journalism in the Digital Era



At the African Editors Congress, SOS co-hosted a workshop with Moxii Africa which created an important platform for editors from across the continent to directly contribute to the development of the Guidelines for Resolutions 630 and 631. The consultation enabled participants to share practical insights and propose solutions to ensure that the Guidelines effectively respond to the realities journalism in the digital era. Discussions focused on the need for strong safeguards and mechanisms to protect public interest journalism in an increasingly complex digital environment.

Editors emphasized the importance of ensuring that the Guidelines support credible information ecosystems, strengthen accountability of digital platforms, and enhance access to quality content and journalism.

In addition, members of the African Editors' Forum submitted a consolidated submission on both resolutions to ensure that sector-specific issues are taken into account in the drafting of the guidelines.

Bekkersdaal workshop

On the 10th of March 2026, the SOS Coalition hosted a workshop in Bekkersdal.

The workshop focused on raising awareness about the BDM process, clarifying STB registration procedures, and capturing community feedback for advocacy purposes. Facilitated by SOS Coalition and Be the Future Foundation the session combined presentations, interactive discussions, myth-busting exercises, and group activities to provide practical knowledge, capture community feedback, and encourage participants to engage actively. Attendees expressed strong interest in the SABC, its services, demonstrating a willingness to participate in shaping media policy and holding authorities accountable.

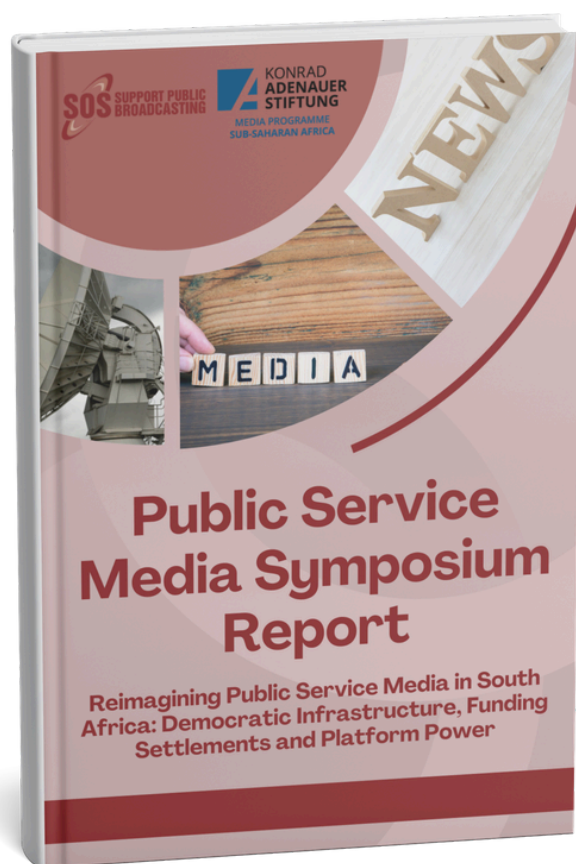


The workshop also surfaced key challenges affecting communities: delays in STB delivery, unclear eligibility communication, signal issues, and instances of participants reportedly being asked to pay for installation. These insights underscored the need for ongoing engagement, follow-up workshops, and advocacy with relevant authorities to ensure equitable access to digital services.

Building on these findings, the SOS Coalition has planned a follow-up session on 16 April 2026 to provide practical support for STB applications. Overall, the Bekkersdal workshop successfully reinforced public understanding of BDM and ASO, strengthened trust between communities and civil society actors, and highlighted the importance of youth participation in sustaining long-term engagement with public broadcasting and media governance.

Launch of PSM Symposium report

The SOS Coalition launched the PSM Symposium report. This report draws on a reflexive thematic analysis of the 2025 Annual Public Service Media (PSM) Symposium, convened by the SOS Coalition, and approaches public service media as democratic infrastructure rather than a failing commercial enterprise. It examines how participants – including broadcasters, regulators, activists and policy experts – wrestled with six interconnected themes, with particular attention to debates over the SABC’s democratic role, the politics of funding and austerity, and the changing influence of digital and pay-TV platforms.



What would South Africa be without the SABC workshop

On 26 March 2026, the SOS Coalition hosted a workshop at the Human Rights Festival titled “What Would South Africa Look Like Without the SABC?”. The session was important because it highlighted the vital role of the SABC in sustaining democracy, civic engagement, and access to information, particularly for rural and low-income communities.

The session included a panel with a civil society representative, community member, and a freedom of expression activist, followed by a facilitated dialogue. Participants reflected on the risks of collapse, who would lose access to information first, and the consequences for elections and civic engagement, generating insights on how to strengthen and sustain the broadcaster.



Participants engaged with the constitutional and societal significance of public broadcasting, exploring how the SABC reaches audiences in all official languages and provides content that commercial or subscription media cannot. The workshop created a space to critically reflect on the potential consequences of a weakened or collapsed SABC.



The workshop revealed that while some participants see the SABC as one of several media options, for many it remains the only accessible source of reliable news and educational content. The keynote and panelists underscored the SABC’s role in protecting democracy, emphasizing its capacity to provide election coverage, reach millions of South Africans regardless of location or socio-economic status, and deliver programming in indigenous languages, ensuring inclusivity and representation. Attendees reflected on the need to sustain a strong, independent, and well-funded public broadcaster, with youth engagement highlighted as key to fostering long-term public participation and advocacy for the SABC’s future.

Human Rights festival

The SOS Coalition participated in this year's Human Rights Festival, engaging with the public on the importance of a strong, independent, and sustainable public broadcaster. Through conversations we highlighted the critical role the SABC plays in informing, educating, and empowering South Africans. The festival provided an important platform to connect with diverse audiences, raise awareness about the challenges facing public broadcasting, and reinforce the need to safeguard it in the public interest.



Latest press statements

[Media statement: Government Starves SABC of Election Funding – Democracy at Risk](#)

[Launch of the Public Service Media Symposium Report](#)

[The SOS Coalition continues with consultations for ACHPR Resolution 631](#)

[Another win for accountability at the SABC. Thanks to the SIU](#)

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