

Volume IX

SOS COALITION NEWSLETTER



Editorial

As we reach the end of the second quarter of 2026, we find ourselves at a defining moment for public interest broadcasting in South Africa. The media landscape continues to evolve rapidly, bringing both significant opportunities and complex challenges that demand multi-stakeholder action and a renewed commitment.

This quarter has reaffirmed the importance of the SOS Coalition's role in advocating for a public broadcasting system that is independent, adequately funded, and accessible to all. At a time when technological change, policy reform, and economic pressures continue to reshape broadcasting, it is essential that the public interest content remains at the centre of every decision affecting the future of television and media in South Africa.

A major milestone this quarter has been our inaugural Summit on the Future of Public Interest Television Broadcasting, which took place on 8 July 2026. The summit represented more than a single event, but an opportunity to bring together policymakers, broadcasters, civil society organisations, academics, industry experts, and communities to reflect on the future of television broadcasting and develop practical solutions that strengthen public interest media for generations to come.

The timing of the summit is particularly significant. Twenty years have passed since South Africa committed to the digital broadcasting migration process, yet many South Africans continue to face barriers to accessing quality public television broadcasting services, particularly in the province where the switching off of analogue transmitters has already taken place. As discussions around digital migration, funding models, technological innovation, and universal access continue, the voices of citizens must remain central to shaping the future of our broadcasting system.

Throughout the quarter, SOS has also continued its advocacy efforts through participating in local and regional events. In this quarter we continued our work of supporting the African Commission on Human and People's Rights' (ACHPR) to develop guidelines under Resolution 631 by hosting consultative sessions at the Digital Rights Inclusion Forum (DRIF) and the West African Youth Internet Governance Forum including an online validation workshop that was initially intended as a side session at the World Press Freedom Day. SOS also hosted two provincial workshops in and Mpumalanga.

As we move into the next quarter, we remain committed to advocating for communities, strengthening partnerships, and ensuring that public interest broadcasting continues to serve all South Africans. We extend our sincere gratitude to our members, partners, supporters, and stakeholders whose dedication makes this work possible.

Article

Summit Charts a Shared Vision for the Future of Public Interest Television Broadcasting

On 8 July 2026, the SOS Support Public Broadcasting Coalition, hosted a Summit on the Future of Public Interest Television Broadcasting under the theme "Reimagining Universal Access to Public Interest Content in the Digital Age."

The Summit brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to confront one of South Africa's most pressing media policy questions: How do we ensure that everyone continues to have access to trusted public interest content in a rapidly changing digital environment?

Participants agreed that the future of broadcasting extends beyond simply completing the Broadcasting Digital Migration (BDM) process. Instead, the transition must be guided by constitutional principles, protect universal access to information, and ensure that no one is left behind.

The Summit also underscored the need for stronger collaboration between government, regulators, broadcasters, civil society and industry experts. Participants recognised that the challenges facing the broadcasting sector cannot be addressed by any single institution and called for sustained multi-stakeholder engagement to shape the future of public interest media. Watch out for our upcoming media statement which outlines the envisioned multi-stakeholder approach.

Among the key proposals advanced during the Summit were calls for:

- an official moratorium on any further Analogue Switch-Off until at least 90% of analogue-dependent households have successfully migrated to digital television platforms;
- A review of the BDM policy.
- an urgent review of the R3 500 indigent household threshold for subsidised Set-Top Boxes (STBs) to reflect South Africa's current socio-economic realities;
- a sustainable funding framework for public interest broadcasting;
- a review of South Africa's broadcasting policy and regulatory framework to respond to technological convergence; and
- measures to ensure that public interest content remains accessible, discoverable and affordable across both traditional broadcasting and digital platforms
- most importantly, a novel multi-stakeholder approach which will be outlined in our subsequent publications.

The summit was strengthened by the participation of Members of Parliament from the Portfolio Committee on Communication and Digital Technologies, underscoring Parliament's important oversight role. Their engagement provided an opportunity for direct dialogue with the various stakeholders in attendance and allowed them to understand the concerns in their utmost depth and raw nature. It also reflected the Committee's commitment to meaningful stakeholder engagement as a critical component of informed and evidence-based decision-making, ensuring that the perspectives and lived experiences of those most affected are considered in future legislative processes.

While the Summit has concluded, the work has only just begun. The discussions have laid the foundation for continued multi-stakeholder advocacy, policy engagement and collaboration to ensure that public interest broadcasting remains sustainable, inclusive and responsive to the needs of all who live in South Africa and that universal access to public interest content in the digital age is a live reality.



Latest activities

SOS returned to DRIF to advance ACHPR Guidelines on Public Service Content

The SOS Coalition participated in the 2026 Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF), in Abidjan, where it convened a high-level panel discussion to review the ACHPR Draft Guidelines on access to public service content (PSC), being developed under Resolution 631. The session marked a significant milestone in the consultation process, commemorating one year since SOS launched its continental consultations, at DRIF 2025. These consultations were undertaken to gather insights from various stakeholders across the continent to inform the development of the guidelines. Since the launch, the Coalition has led a series of engagements across Africa to ensure the guidelines reflect the continent's diverse media, regulatory and digital realities.



The panel featured experts from the Paradigm Initiative (PIN) and the Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA). Discussions explored whether the definition of public service content should be expanded, how editorial independence can be better protected, and whether a PSC Trust Mark would be feasible, among others. The discussion generated valuable recommendations that informed the next draft of the guidelines.

Shaping Africa's Digital Rights Frameworks: Consultation on the Development of ACHPR Guidelines on Platform Accountability and Access to Public Service Content



WEDNESDAY, 20 MAY
09:00 – 12:00 (3 hours)
SAST

Shaping Africa's Digital Rights Frameworks:
Consultation on the Development of ACHPR Guidelines on Platform Accountability and Access to Public Service Content

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY SIDE SESSION (ONLINE)

The session is convened by SOS Support Public Broadcasting Coalition and Moxii Africa, with UNESCO's support. The session serves as an advanced, structured consultation in the development of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) guidelines for Resolutions 630 and 631. The session will present a draft outline reflecting the current thinking on the structure of the guidelines.

Supported by:   

In May, the SOS Coalition and Moxii Africa, with support from UNESCO, convened an online multi-stakeholder consultation, yet again, to advance the development of the ACHPR Guidelines for Resolutions 630 and 631. This session was originally planned as a side session during World Press Freedom Day in Lusaka but later moved online due to the cancellation of Rights Con by the Zambian government. The consultation brought together stakeholders to help shape a continental approach to platform accountability and access to public service content in the digital age.

Draft structural outlines for both of both guidelines were presented during the session and participants were invited to identify gaps, refine key concepts, and recommend priority areas to strengthen the guideline's relevance across diverse African contexts. The session also provided an important platform for dialogue on complex and emerging digital rights issues, ensuring that a broad range of perspectives informs the development of practical, rights-based guidelines for Africa's evolving digital landscape.

West Africa contributed to the Future of Public Service Content in the Digital Age

In May, at the West Africa Internet Governance Forum (WAIGF), in Sierra Leone, the SOS Coalition and Moxii Africa, convened a focused consultation to gather West African perspectives on the development of the ACHPR Guidelines under Resolutions 630 and 631. Our National Coordinator, Uyanda Siyotula, led a facilitated discussion on Resolution 631, focusing specifically on complex and controversial issues in the draft guidelines. The diverse group of stakeholders shared their perspectives to ensure that the guidelines reflect the region's unique experiences, priorities and regulatory contexts.

The recommendations and insights generated during the session were factored into the next iteration and contributed significantly to strengthening the guidelines.



SOS highlighted Africa's Public Interest Media Agenda at CAMRI's Seminar

In July, Uyanda Siyotula, the SOS National Coordinator, delivered the opening keynote address at the Communication and Media Research Institute (CAMRI) Quarterly Seminar Series on Public Interest Media and Media as a Public Good: New Pathways for Media Development, hosted by the University of Westminster in London. Joining virtually to address an international audience of academics, researchers, policymakers and media practitioners, she reflected on the unique challenges facing public interest media in Africa and South Africa, including political interference, unsustainable funding models, the digital divide, and the growing influence of global digital platforms on access to news and information.

Drawing on SOS's work with the ACHPR, Ms. Siyotula highlighted the development of the Guidelines under Resolution 631 as a critical opportunity to reimagine how public interest content is created, funded and distributed across digital platforms. She also shared South Africa's unique experiences in media regulation, digital platform governance and broadcasting digital migration, emphasizing the need for rights-based policy frameworks, sustainable funding, independent regulation and multi-stakeholder collaboration to ensure universal access to credible public interest content across Africa.

SOS Coalition returned to Bekkersdaal to Support STB Registrations

Following the successful community workshop held in Bekkersdaal on 10 March 2026, the SOS Coalition returned to the same community on 16 April 2026 to provide practical support to households requiring assistance with STB registrations.

The follow-up engagement formed part of the Coalition's commitment to ensuring that community awareness is translated into meaningful access to television services post analogue switch off (ASO). The Coalition's staff worked directly with residents to assist with the STB registration applications, respond to queries about the BDM programme, and help resolve challenges that had prevented eligible households from completing the registration process.

The visit also provided an opportunity to gather further feedback from community members on their experiences with digital migration. Residents highlighted ongoing concerns, including registration delays, uncertainty regarding eligibility, installation challenges (including non-functional STBs), and the continued need for accessible information and on-the-ground support.





The Bekkersdaal community follow-up registration process demonstrated the importance of sustained community engagement. Beyond raising awareness, the #SaveFreeTV Campaign continues to provide practical assistance to communities while generating evidence that informs the Coalition's advocacy for a more inclusive and equitable digital migration process.

As a result of these engagements, the Coalition continues to receive requests from communities to return and assist with STB registrations, reaffirming the value of community-based interventions in ensuring that no one is left behind during South Africa's digital transition.

SOS Coalition takes the BDM workshops to Mpumalanga and North West



These workshops formed part of the Coalition's ongoing initiative to raise public awareness about BDM programme and the ASO, highlighting their implications for access to information to free-to-air television. The workshops also educated communities about the government-sponsored STB subsidy, including eligibility criteria, registration and installation. Where possible, participants received direct, practical assistance with STB registration process.

In partnership with the Alliance for Rural Democracy(ARD), the SOS Coalition successfully hosted community workshops in Bushbuckridge and Nkomazi (Mpumalanga), as well as Ramotshere Moiloa and Moses Kotane (North West).



Latest press statements

Media statement: SOS Coalition Disappointed by the Use of AI in Draft AI Policy

Can freedom be truly realised in SA without a sustainable public broadcaster?

Press Release: SOS Coalition to host inaugural Summit on the Future of Public Interest Television Broadcasting

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