

SOS COALITION NEWSLETTER



VOLUME X

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Editorial

Keeping Public Interest Media at the Heart of the Conversation

The third quarter has been a busy and important one for the SOS Coalition, with public interest media continuing to take centre stage in our advocacy and engagement.

Over the past few months, we brought together stakeholders, partners and communities to explore the future of public service media in South Africa. From the Inaugural Summit on the Future of Public Interest Television Broadcasting to the Annual Public Service Media Symposium, these platforms created space for meaningful conversations about where our broadcasting sector is heading and what is needed to ensure it continues to serve the public. This quarter also marked an important milestone as this was the SOS Coalition's first international, regional Symposium, focused on advancing public service media advocacy in Southern Africa.

Another key priority for us this quarter was ensuring that digital transformation does not leave marginalised communities behind but instead includes their voices in the high-level conversations shaping the future of public service media. As technology continues to change how people access news and information, public broadcasters must adapt to a rapidly evolving media environment. However, this transformation must not come at the expense of the principles that make public interest media valuable such as access, diversity, accountability, independence and a commitment to serving communities.

Our community engagements have reinforced important conversations about public broadcasting that are not simply about institutions and policy, but about the centrality of people. They are about ensuring that communities can access reliable information, hear diverse voices and participate meaningfully in our democracy.

As we look ahead to the final quarter of the year and the local government elections, the SOS Coalition will continue to advocate for public broadcaster that informs and serves the public.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to these conversations and supported our work throughout the quarter.

Article

2026 Annual Public Service Media Symposium: Taking PSM Advocacy to the Region

The SOS Coalition in partnership with Konard-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) hosted its Annual Public Service Media (PSM) Symposium on 8 - 9 September 2026 under the theme: Strengthening public service media's digital future and advocacy. This was SOS's first international, regional Symposium and it brought together media practitioners, civil society organisations, academics and industry experts to reflect on the future of public service media in South Africa and across the Southern Africa region



Day one of the symposium focused on the changing media environment and the role of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. Discussions explored how the public broadcaster can adapt to changing audience habits while continuing to uphold its public service mandate.

A key issue was the importance of ensuring that digital transformation does not leave marginalised communities behind. While technology is changing how audiences access news and information, unequal access to connectivity and digital platforms remains a significant challenge. Participants highlighted the need for transformation to be grounded in ensuring universal access.



Day two broadened the conversation to the Southern Africa region, hearing perspectives from Namibia, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Botswana, and Zambia highlighted shared challenges facing public broadcasters, including sustainable funding and digital transformation and maintaining audience trust.

The symposium also created space to move from discussion to action, with the symposium statement that highlighted a five-point action plan to advance PSM in Southern Africa.

The two-day gathering reaffirmed the importance of public service media in supporting informed communities, diverse voices and democratic participation. As the media landscape continues to change, the challenge is not only to adapt to digital transformation, but to ensure that public broadcasting remains accessible, independent, accountable and responsive to the public it serves.

The SOS Coalition will continue to build on these conversations through its advocacy and stakeholder engagement towards a stronger and more inclusive public service media environment.

Read the Symposium statement [here](#)



Article

Public Interest Television Broadcasting Summit: Building a Common Agenda for South Africa's Digital Future

On 8 July 2026, the SOS Support Public Broadcasting Coalition convened the Summit on the Future of Public Interest Television Broadcasting in Johannesburg, bringing together stakeholders from government, Parliament, regulators, broadcasters, community media, civil society, industry experts and academia to confront the growing challenges facing South Africa's broadcasting digital migration (BDM) process.



The Summit came at a critical moment for South Africa's broadcasting sector. While digital migration has been underway for years, significant questions remain around household readiness, affordability, access to reception equipment, the position of the "missing middle", community television sustainability and the continued availability of free-to-air television content. Participants also recognised that universal access in the digital age extends beyond signal coverage and set-top boxes (STBs) to include affordable connectivity, devices, data, digital literacy, disability inclusion, language diversity and the discoverability of public-interest content across digital platforms.

The Summit provided an important space for these issues to be considered collectively and for affected stakeholders to articulate a shared vision for the future of public-interest television. At its core was the principle that digital migration must serve the public interest and leave no one behind. The resulting Declaration calls for a rights-based, inclusive and evidence-based migration process, meaningful multi-stakeholder consultation, and universal access to trusted public-interest content.

A particularly significant feature of the Summit was the participation of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communications and Digital Technologies (PPCCDT). The Committee's engagement demonstrated the importance of connecting the experiences and concerns of civil society, broadcasters and affected communities with Parliament's constitutional oversight role. The Summit Declaration specifically calls on the Committee to strengthen oversight of the BDM programme, monitor readiness for any further analogue switch-off, and ensure that future policy and implementation decisions are evidence-based, transparent and informed by meaningful stakeholder participation.

The Summit also proposed a Crisis Action Committee, bringing together broadcasters, government, ICASA, Sentech, industry, civil society and other stakeholders to support ongoing coordination, monitoring and engagement on BDM and other urgent broadcasting challenges. The proposed mechanism is intended to ensure that the Summit's commitments translate into sustained engagement and measurable action rather than remaining a once-off intervention.

The significance of the Summit has extended beyond the event itself. Following the Summit, the PPCCDT has engaged with the Summit outcomes and adopted the SOS Summit Report, creating an important parliamentary pathway for the issues and recommendations raised by civil society and other stakeholders to inform ongoing oversight. This is particularly significant because the Declaration expressly called for the Summit Report to be tabled before the Committee for consideration and adoption, with the adopted report intended to strengthen parliamentary oversight.

For SOS, the Summit represents an important step towards building a more coordinated public-interest response to South Africa's digital broadcasting transition. It reinforced that BDM is not simply a technological or spectrum-management exercise. It is fundamentally about people's access to information, media diversity, public participation and the continued availability of trusted public-interest content.

As South Africa considers the future of broadcasting in an increasingly digital environment, the challenge is now to translate the commitments emerging from the Summit into concrete policy, regulatory and implementation measures. SOS will continue working with Parliament, government, the Regulator, broadcasters, community media, civil society and affected communities to ensure that the transition strengthens democracy, protects universal access and leaves no one behind.

Read the PCCDT Report [here](#).

Latest activities

Bekkersdaal Community Workshop Highlights Ongoing Digital Migration Challenge



On 28 September 2026, the SOS Coalition returned to Bekkersdaal for a third community engagement on South Africa's BDM programme and the proposed analogue switch off (ASO). Convened outside a local community church, the workshop provided an opportunity for residents to engage directly with SOS about the digital migration process. Community members came to seek information about ASO, the availability of set-top boxes, and what the transition would mean for their continued access to television.

A key objective of the engagement was to assist eligible residents with STB registration. However, as community members arrived and the registration process was initiated, the STB registration system was unavailable. This meant that residents who had come specifically to register could not be assisted through the system. For those residents for whom the team was able to access the system, another concern emerged. In several cases, the system continued to reflect residents as "pre-approved" from April 2026, despite the passage of several months and their continued efforts to access assistance.

These experiences raise practical questions about the readiness of the BDM process and, importantly, the extent to which communities can be expected to participate in an analogue switch-off process when the system intended to facilitate their migration is not consistently operational. The experience in Bekkersdaal reinforces concerns raised at SOS's July 2026 SOS Summit on the Future of Public Interest Television Broadcasting, where participants emphasised that ASO readiness must be assessed through more than technical coverage. Readiness must include functioning reception equipment, affordability, reliable administrative systems and meaningful engagement with affected communities. The Summit Declaration called for a rights-based and inclusive migration process in which no person or household loses access to public-interest television as a result of ASO.

The workshop therefore served not only as a community information and support intervention, but also as an important opportunity to document the lived experiences of residents navigating the BDM process. These experiences are critical to ensuring that policy and implementation decisions are informed by what is happening on the ground.

SOS Coalition and Moxii Africa to Engage Parliament on Broadcasting Digital Migration



on 06 October 2026, the SOS Support Public Broadcasting Coalition co-presented with Moxii Africa as part of the Portfolio Committee on Communications and Digital Technologies' engagement on South Africa's Broadcasting Digital Migration (BDM) process.

The engagement forms part of the Committee's broader programme for the day, with the BDM discussion including a briefing by the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies and broadcasters. For SOS and Moxii Africa, the engagement provides an opportunity to bring current concerns about the implementation of BDM directly before Parliament. These include the practical challenges experienced by communities attempting to access and register for set-top boxes, questions around household readiness for Analogue Switch-Off (ASO), affordability and the position of households that fall outside existing subsidy arrangements.

The discussion also drew attention to the experiences emerging from SOS's community engagements. These experiences provide an important community-level perspective on the implementation of the migration programme and raise questions about whether existing systems are functioning effectively for households expected to transition.

The engagement allowed SOS and Moxii Africa to place these practical experiences before Parliament and contribute to the Committee's consideration of the current state of the BDM process. As the process moves forward, SOS will continue to advocate for effective parliamentary oversight and for the experiences of affected communities to remain central to decisions concerning the future of free-to-air public-interest television in South Africa.

SOS Coalition at FIFAfrica26: Connecting Public Service Media to Africa's Digital Rights Agenda

The SOS Coalition's National Coordinator, Uyanda Siyotula, participated in the 2026 Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFAfrica26), held in Mauritius from 28 September to 1 October 2026.

Hosted by Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) in partnership with the Halley Movement Coalition, FIFAfrica26 brought together more than 500 policymakers, journalists, researchers, civil society organisations, technology practitioners and digital rights advocates from across Africa and beyond.

The Forum provided an important space to explore how technology is reshaping media, democracy, human rights and access to information.



Key takeaways included:

- AI governance must be inclusive and people-centred, with African voices playing a meaningful role in shaping policies and standards.
- Digital transformation must not leave communities behind, making digital inclusion and access essential.
- AI is reshaping journalism, creating new challenges around misinformation, deepfakes, synthetic media and accountability.
- Information integrity is critical to democracy, particularly in the context of elections and digital platforms.
- Independent journalism remains essential for holding powerful institutions, platforms and emerging technologies accountable.
- Media sustainability remains a pressing issue, particularly as news organisations navigate their relationship with digital platforms.
- Collaboration is key to advancing digital rights, media freedom and inclusive digital development across the continent.

For SOS, FIFAfrica26 reinforced the importance of connecting public service media advocacy with broader conversations on AI, digital rights, access to information and Africa's digital future. The Forum also provided valuable opportunities to strengthen partnerships and build new networks across the continent.

Latest media statements

Broadcasters, the Television Industry and Civil Society Unite Behind a Shared Vision for The Future of Public Interest Television

The SOS Coalition returns for the third edition of the PSM Symposium

Media Statement: SOS Coalition Calls for Stronger Public Service Media Advocacy Across Southern Africa Following its 3rd Annual PSM Symposium

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