

Work to complete digital migration project underway

Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, Khumbudzo Ntshavheni, has established a Project Steering Committee to ensure the country meets its deadline to complete the broadcast digital migration project.



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Addressing a media briefing on Tuesday, the Minister said the committee is constituted by chief executive officers and technology executives of all affected and participating stakeholders.

The Steering Committee is chaired by the Minister and meets on a fortnightly basis to lead the switchover process.

"I have also appointed a project manager to oversee the digital migration and analogue switch off (ASO) process. We will report to the Cabinet on a monthly basis and update the nation about the progress at least once a month," Ntshavheni said.

Cabinet recently approved the revised integrated analogue switch-off implementation plan, which is a schedule to complete the remaining areas by March 2022.

"Cabinet has approved the adoption of a Managed Integrated Model that actively involves all broadcast media players to contribute to ramping up the Set-Top Box (STB) installation capacity through the use of their boxes to ensure rapid reach.

"The broadcasters and Sentech will continue to use local installers as part of the small, micro, or medium enterprise (SMME) development. The department has started engagements with industry players and enterprise development entities including funders on additional opportunities and enterprise development support that could be made available to these installers amongst others," the Minister said.

Government has shifted from a staggered provincial approach towards a consolidated national approach, where STB installations and ASO will happen simultaneously in all nine provinces.

"The government undertook to assist beneficiary households (households earning total salary of less than R3500 per month) with installation of set-top-boxes to ensure universal migration," the Minister said.

The process of registering beneficiary households to be supported commenced in 2015. To date 1.184 million qualifying households have been registered out of the estimated 3.75 million qualifying households (as per Stats SA 2018 data).

"Since the inception of the Broadcasting Digital Migration (BDM) programme, 556,954 beneficiary households have been migrated from the current total of 1.184 million. In addition, almost 10.5 million households out of just over 14 million TV households (2018 Stats SA estimates) self-migrated through private satellite boxes," the Minister said.

To date, Sentech has been able to switch off all (84 sites) Multichoice analogue transmissions, 105 out of 288 (37%) South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) analogue transmissions and four of the 95 (4%) eTV analogue transmissions.

"South African citizens who are still receiving television services directly from an Aerial/Antenna that get mounted on a pole and do not have set-top box or smart TV set, should find themselves a set-top box or a smart TV to be able to receive digital television

"A set-top box is a device that enables you to receive digital television services, they can be accessed from the South African Post Office and various retailers across the country," the Minister said.

Cabinet approved a last call for registration with a cut-off date of 31 October 2021, for government assistance with the STB installation.

"We call upon all eligible households to register at the nearest Post Office on or before the 31st October 2021 to receive government assistance for your STB installation. We are also finalising a registration app and the details will be announced in the near future.

"You will not be affected by the analogue switch-off, if you are already receiving your television through DSTV, OVHD, Telkom-One, StarSat and any other streaming platforms or you have a digital tv," the Minister said.