

**NATIONAL COMMUNITY
RADIO FORUM (NCRF)**

Postal: P.O. Box 32982,
Braamfontein 2017, South
Africa

Mobile: +27 61 473 1239
Email: ncrfsa@gmail.com

National Office Bearers

Mr. Xola Nozewu
(President)

Mr. Jimmy Dhlamini
(Deputy President)

Mr. Thabang Pusoyabone
(General Secretary)

Ms. Nthabiseng Ditshego
(Treasurer)

*An Association
Incorporated Under
Section 21 - Reg. No.
2001/019455/08*

NCRF Comments: Draft digit Sound Broadcasting services Regulations 2020

National Community Radio forum wishes to thank ICASA for taking into consideration, contributions made by NCRF when the public hearings were held and the forum was invited. We hope the relationship will continue in this fashion, especially with the modus operandi of broadcasting is facing an inevitable change. It is in the best interest of NCRF that the change broad about by digitalization of broadcasting and 4IR do not lead to closure of stations but strengthening of this pivotal pillar of broadcasting. It is the aspiration of the forum to ensure no station is left behind by the switch off date but instead, if anything, the digital migration offers more and broader ground of operations for the community radio sector which will benefit the grass roots communities, who at most are without choice when it comes to radio channels.

Framework for DSB Services

(2) NCRF supports the simulcast and the dual operations of both analogue and digital broadcasts. We believe this will provide a great opportunity to have a smooth transition. Most importantly, to ensure our listeners are prepared. NCRF notes the significant amount of people who rely on radio for their daily consumption of news and information. According to ITU¹, radio in Africa has 95% reach with remains remarkable. Most of this people would not afford fancy digital handset. The period will allow new players and manufacture and handset will become cheaper.

(3) NCRF acknowledge and welcome the 2 year delay of licensing new applicants as a way to ensure that existing station have an opportunity to cross over. However, as previously stated, NCRF still calls for much-needed tighter rules when it comes to licensing to avoid partly what led to the moratorium, with station emerging everywhere with no prospect for sustainability and no plan of support. Also as such leads to stations occupying frequencies while failing to go on air and perhaps due to various reasons.

While we have full confidence on the regulator, we also anticipate the process to pose some challenges and the 2 year period will allow both the regulator to ensure that such challenges are ironed out before new entrants are welcomed. Kenya², as one country that has made some great strides in digital migrations did face such challenges, albeit it being mpeg4 signal.

(4) NCRF welcomes the formation of multi stakeholder group for technical advisory. Considering that there are numerous formations representing the community radio sector, NCRF wishes to express its deep interest to form part of such group as forum

¹ ITU [Document](#)

² [Digital Migration Process in Kenya](#)

representing majority of stations in the country and having been with the sector for decades.

(5) While NCRF understands that the switch off of analogue is long overdue, it further advises that the minister ensure all legally operating stations have crossed over before switch off. Secondly, considering that most households access radio through analogue devices, it will be imperative to ensure that listeners are not compromised in the process of the South African government complying with the ITU statutes as a signatory state.

Standard applicable to DSB Services

DRM and DAB/DAB+, both born in Europe, present a comprehensive and overall response for digital migration in our country. DRM can futureproof the medium wave and shortwave bands and infrastructure, while DAB/DAB+ brings along a much needed relief to our already strained spectrum. However, both have their pros and cons, especially when it comes to radio consumers who are driving.

NCRF supports that both be available for licensing, as we acknowledge that the DRM+ fully as it can operate with FM bandwidth, making it more ideal, especially during dual broadcast. In addition, since the multiplexes are really at their best when full, for smaller places, DRM in the FM band could be easily deployed. That is unless of course the regulator has set its heart on solving the small area, small broadcaster challenge by using a miniature DAB+ solution.

Licensing of DSB Services

NCRF welcomes assertions here and understand that not only will be broaden the scope of the sector but enable the community radio sector to seize the opportunities that comes with the ability to avail MUX service.

Costing and implications

NCRF, wishes for the policy framework to be explicit as far as licensing fees are concerned. As a leading lobby group, it is within our mandate to ensure we lobby support, particularly of funder. Having an explicit funding model and cost implications will allow NCRF to effectively carry out its mandate, contribute to the policy formulation and transformation of the sector to a digital era. Furthermore, NCRF understands that



**NATIONAL COMMUNITY
RADIO FORUM (NCRF)**

Postal: P.O. Box 32982,
Braamfontein 2017, South
Africa

Mobile: +27 61 473 1239
Email: ncrfsa@gmail.com

National Office Bearers

Mr. Xola Nozewu
(President)

Mr. Jimmy Dhlamini
(Deputy President)

Mr. Thabang Pusoyabone
(General Secretary)

Ms. Nthabiseng Ditshego
(Treasurer)

*An Association
Incorporated Under
Section 21 - Reg. No.
2001/019455/08*

community radio sector's engraved privilege is enjoying hyper locality. It is against that background that the sector remain on geographic specific coverage as opposed to a regional coverage, which might influence licensing fees.

In conclusion, National Community Radio forum continues to express its view that more and continuous, robust engagements are needed to ensure that the lull that happens is done away with. NCRF further wishes to highlight that the past two years saw many stations suffering due to various issues regarding compliance. We therefore submit that the regulator enter the digital migration with a different approach of working together with stations instead of punitive approach. NCRF strongly support and aspire to lead compliant, efficient and effective stations. And the forum is ready to work with the regulator to build highly professional broadcasting sector, community sound broadcasting in particular, in this new dawn of 4IR.

Professional Regards

Thabang Pusoyabone
General Secretary
NCRF
084 500 1219