

## Digital revolution hits Northern Cape

It was a historic day for the Northern Cape on Wednesday, when the province became the first in the country to enjoy the digital revolution with the launch of the demonstration of digital migration technology.



(Image: GCIS)

Communications Minister Dina Pule was in Motswedimosa outside Kimberley, for the launch that marked the latest milestone in South Africa's move towards Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) migration.

Wednesday's launch marked the first phase of an awareness campaign that plans to create understanding around the Digital Migration Process.

The Department of Communication plans to migrate from analogue broadcast signal to digital broadcasting system.

"We have decided to showcase our proof of concept launch on DTT in a province that is hosting the Square Kilometre Array territory. This area presents unique challenges in the rollout of DTT," the minister said.

If DTT worked in the Northern Cape, it can work anywhere else in the country, she pointed out.

The Northern Cape is home to 30 communities that either never had broadcasting coverage or had poor and unreliable coverage. Currently, the Northern Cape has 30% DTT network coverage. Sentech is planning to complete the rollout of the network coverage by October 2013.

"In keeping with our mandate, we will ensure universal service and access by providing broadcasting services through the digital migration process that promises to enhance diversity and access, especially for the previously marginalised. All South Africans will benefit from and be able to afford to move from analogue to digital television in line with world standards," says Minister Pule.

During the launch, the department demonstrated the different types of technology that will be needed by the communities during the migration process.

The minister reiterated government's commitment to helping the poor, reminding the community that whatever government would subsidise 70% of the price of a Set-Top-Box (STB) for the poorest of the poor.

The STBs would be distributed from the country's post offices and in areas where there were no post offices; mobile post offices would be made available.

Apart from providing better picture quality, enhanced clarity, more channels and content, thousands of jobs will also be created, she added.

### Jobs created

"We envisage that 800 jobs will be created in the manufacturing industry. 20 000 youth will be trained in the installation and maintenance of STBs and ultimately, we trust that up to six thousand youth will be entrepreneurial and run their businesses," she said.

Four thousand call centre operators will be employed to deal with queries relating to the STBs while the South African Post Office will have to employ an additional five hundred staff to assist with the distribution of STBs.

Forty thousand job opportunities are expected to be created across the country within 12 months of the rollout of digital migration.

The focus will be on rural and under-serviced areas to ensure that these job creation opportunities are spread throughout the country.

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Communications Eric Kholwane said Wednesday's event marked a critical milestone in the digital migration process.

Access to information and community services, which would be facilitated through DTT, was an important lifeblood of the country and the fundamental right of every South African, he added.

Digital migration should not be the privilege of the selected but must benefit all South Africans. Citizens in all parts of the country must have digital TV, Kholwane stressed.

The first deliveries of STBs are expected to take place at the end of November 2012 and the commercial launch of digital television in December 2012.

Pule also unveiled the DTT commemorative stamp that will be used by the SA Post Office to celebrate today's occasion.

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