Government commits to providing access to ICT

PRETORIA: Government is committed to promoting digital inclusion where individuals and communities will be able to access and use Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

"Plans have been made for the implementation of digital opportunities programmes in the National Health Insurance (NHI) pilot sites to ensure that residents in these areas are able to benefit from the rollout of broadband infrastructure," Telecommunications and Postal Services Deputy Minister Prof Hlengiwe Mkhize said.

Women moving into the ICT sector

Prof Hlengiwe Mkhize

Speaking in Cape Town at the United Nations (UN) digital workshop on empowering women through ICT's, she said South Africa had already started working with the private sector to make use of ICTs to improve the livelihood of women.

"The department has in the previous year opened an ICT Centre in Tlhabane where Women can have access to information and knowledge that will ensure that they are empowered," Mkhize said on Tuesday.

The department has partnered with Deloitte and Intel to establish a website which will assist to push the agenda of women ICT forward.

Government has developed number of policies which will ensure digital gender inclusion.

Clear targets for the ICT sector

The National Development Plan has set clear targets for the ICT sector in line with South Africa's Connect Policy, the country's broadband policy and strategy.

According to the NDP by 2020, 100 percent of South Africans will have access to broadband services at 2.5 percent or less of the population's average monthly income.

Digital developement and availability of broadband

"With regards to digital development, the purpose is to catalyse broadband connectivity, aiming to provide access to broadband to 50 percent of the population by 2016 and 90 percent by 2020," she said.

Mkhize said broadband access is now being treated as a basic necessity.

"The availability of broadband brings with it lots of entrepreneurial opportunities particularly for the youth who are a very critical sector in communities," she said.

Support through skills development and training

Support to small, medium and micro-sized enterprises will be given through skills development.

The Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services increases the ICT skills pool by providing training through agencies such as iKamva National e-Skills Institute (iNeSI).

"iNeSI brings together government, business, schools, further education and training colleges, Universities, civil society and global development partners to advance the development of local ICT skills that will make South Africa globally competitive, facilitate economic and social inclusion and contribute to economic growth," Mkhize said.

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