

SABC crisis reaches boiling point



By [lssa Sikiti da Silva](#)

17 Jun 2008

From 'Mighty SABC' to 'Mickey Mouse SABC', South Africa's public broadcaster has become a laughing stock, and its reputation and credibility dented by a succession of dodgy suspensions, intense infighting, political manipulations and rebellion. As CEO Dali Mpofu's career in Auckland Park seems to have come to an abrupt and sad end, more than 100 managers are now calling on President Thabo Mbeki to intervene to protect the institution against what many call a 'hit-and-run' and 'soulless' board.

SABC spokesperson Kaizer Kganyago told Bizcommunity.com last night, Monday, 16 June 2008, that the Senior Management Forum (SMF), a group made up of senior and middle managers, will meet today, Tuesday 17 June, to see as to how they will proceed with their quest to present their case to the president.

'Magnificent Seven'

The SMF, in support of the 'Magnificent Seven' - the seven executives who signed a petition two weeks ago calling on the board to step down - also joined the chorus and on Thursday signed another petition calling the board to resign.

However, the fate of the 'Magnificent Seven' is still unknown. But a source told Bizcommunity.com on Sunday: "The board wants to meet them one by one to intimidate them. But they refused. They said the board must meet them as a group because they made the decision to sign the petition as a group."

Also last week, members of several civil society organisations led by the Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI) picketed outside the SABC headquarters in support of staff and management, calling on the board to resign. One protester held a banner that read: "We don't want a Mickey Mouse SABC, but a public broadcaster."

Thrice-suspended Mpofu is said to go to court one more time to try to inflict another defeat on the board chairperson Khanyisiwe Mkhonza and her deputy Christina Qunta.

Asked how soon Mpofu will head to court, Kganyago replied: "I have no idea."

Calling the shots

Sources said that Mkhonza and Qunta, two 'iron-fist' ladies who are said to be calling the shots, want to appoint suspended director of news Snuki Zikalala as SABC CEO. Zikalala is expected to present his case to the CCMA on Wednesday.

“This is what they wanted,” a source said. “To suspend Mpofu so that when Snuki goes to CCMA, they would say we don't have a case against him and the person who suspended him is not here. Then they can have Snuki reinstated. These people are malicious.”

Asked why the board does not bring Zikalala back instead of turning and twisting, the source said: “They can't, because they don't have the power to do so. The board is only a policy-making body which has no power on the management. The CEO reports on the board and the management reports on the CEO. Mpofu is the only one who can bring Snuki back because he has the legal power to do that.

“That is why we have three senior managers on the board as executive directors, so that there can be a link between management and board.”

The board issued a statement on Friday, slamming ‘certain individuals and groups for waging media campaigns which seek to dissuade it from fulfilling its mandate’.

‘Cast of clowns’

The Sunday Independent called the SABC rivals a ‘cast of clowns that is running amok’.

The source added: “These people (board) are raising lousy issues which they don't even know what they are talking about. They accuse us of losing the PSL rights and not making money.

“Look, we are not a money-making organisation. We are a public broadcaster with a public mandate to fulfil so when we make money it is a bonus for us. We made about R380 million of profit in 2006 and last year we made about R150 million.

“And this year, believe me we are still going to make profit. I don't know how much but they are still working on the figures.

“How can you fire the CEO if the company loses the rights to host, build or broadcast something? It is a competition, and whoever wins, wins. We used to hold the PSL gatekeeper's rights and we showed about 100 games. We have lost those rights but we have to show about 143 games and we are still going to make money because of that advertising space! They don't know what they want.”

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

- Angola tense as journalists, protesting youth targeted by government - 1 Nov 2011
- Managing promotional resources: are TV broadcasters getting it right? - 1 Nov 2011
- Mbalula vs the media: privacy, dignity vs public interest - 31 Oct 2011
- Multimillion-rand Motorola Razr marketing campaign - 28 Oct 2011
- [Tech4Africa] Power failures, low bandwidth? Try cloud computing - 28 Oct 2011

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>