

Strategy needed for community media

By [Nthambeleni Gabara](#)

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Communications Minister, Faith Muthambi, says South Africa needs a strategy to iron out the challenges facing both community and commercial media.

"We need a strategy to ensure that we have a sustainability model for all these community media houses, as they are complaining of not getting enough government support, especially in local government.

"As government, community is our baby, as it is at the doorsteps of our communities," said the Minister on Friday.

She said the strategy would need to focus on encouraging local government to take advantage of community media.

Minister Muthambi was speaking at the Community Media Imbizo at the East London Golf Club in the Eastern Cape. The event was aimed at giving community media an opportunity to map out the status of their industry as well as developing the way forward.



Faith Muthambi

Top priority

Themed "Together we move South Africa forward", the Imbizo provided a platform to reflect and engage on successes and failures, opportunities and challenges of building a sustainable community media in South Africa in the Eastern Cape.

Minister Muthambi, who praised the Eastern Cape community media for being well-organised, said she was expecting them to have good and strong governance.

"I was really impressed by the unity displayed by community media in this province. They speak in one voice and it is my view that other community media in other provinces should learn from them.

"As government, we need to engage on a rigorous training for community media corporate governance matters that would include accounting and reporting mechanisms. This is our top priority as we've presented our strategy to the Portfolio Committee on Communications earlier this week."

She said she had delegated Deputy Communications Minister Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams to focus on community media because this was an industry that needed more attention than other sectors.

Professor Franz Kruger from the Journalism and Media Studies Programme at Wits said government needed to be commended for initiating the Imbizo with the community media throughout the country.

"This is a right move which will help to improve the dissemination of government programme of action at the community level."

Working together

The first person to map out the state of electronic media in the province was Xola Nozewu. He said most of the 18 community radio stations in the province were experiencing management problems that were also affecting the image of the industry.

"In most instances, these problems are caused by the infighting between Board members and the stations management," he said.

Eastern Cape Community Print Media representative, Abongile Maqwazima, said information was power and community media in the province wants to help government in moving the country forward.

"The more we have community media, the more we will also be helping to reduce unemployment of young people in our communities. Community media are the relevant platform to promote major government campaigns."

IDikelethu News Editor, Thembisa Makasi, suggested a workshop for those communicators at local municipalities to assist them in understanding the role of community media.

Support for community media

"As the training ground of journalists, we are being hit hard most by the mass departure of experienced writers to the mainstream media as we are unable to pay them decent salaries.

"The printing costs are very high in the province and when we failed to print our paper regularly, we are labeled as unprofessional."

Makasi said as the result of the exorbitant printing costs, they are now printing their weekly newspaper in Durban.

However, all is not gloom and doom as Lizo Ntsokwana also from the Provincial Community Print Media applauded Amathole district for giving maximum support to all community media within their area of jurisdiction.

"While there are municipalities which are not supporting community media at all, it is important to applaud Amathole district municipality for giving community media in their area through placing advertisements in all the community media platforms.

Bay TV's Lungile Nduvane said the engagement will enhance working relationship with government communicators.

Mandisa Titi from the Premiers Office pledged to maintain a constant working relationship with the community media

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