



**REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION, MEDIA AND
BROADCASTING SERVICES ON ZIMBABWE DIGITAL MIGRATION PROJECT**

FORTH SESSION - NINTH PARLIAMENT

MARCH 2022

Presented to Parliament in2022

S. C.8, 2022

NOTE BY VERITAS

This report was presented to the National Assembly
on 21st June 2022 and adopted on 23rd June
2022.

ly

DISTRIBUTED BY VERITAS
E-mail: veritas@mango.zw Website: www.veritaszim.net
VERITAS MAKES EVERY EFFORT TO ENSURE THE PROVISION OF RELIABLE INFORMATION,
BUT CANNOT TAKE LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR INFORMATION SUPPLIED.

ORDERED IN TERMS OF STANDING ORDER No. 18:

- At the commencement of every session, there shall be as many Committees to be designated according to government portfolios as the Standing Rules and Orders Committee may deem fit.
- It shall be the function of such committees to examine expenditure administration and policy of government departments and other matters falling under their jurisdictions as Parliament may, by resolution determine.
- The members of such committees shall be appointed by the Standing Rules and Orders Committee, from one or both Houses of Parliament, and such appointments shall take into account the expressed interests or expertise of the Members and Senators and the political and gender composition of Parliament.
- Each select committee shall be known by the portfolio determined for it by the Standing Rules and Orders Committee.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES S.O 21

Subject to these Standing Orders a Portfolio Committee shall:

1. Consider and deal with all Bills and Statutory Instruments or other matters which are referred to it by or under a resolution of the House or by the Speaker;
2. Consider or deal with an appropriation or money bill or any aspect of an appropriation or money bill referred to it by these Standing Orders or by or under resolution of this House;
3. Monitor, investigate, inquire into and make recommendations relating to any aspect of the legislative programme, budget, rationalization, policy formulation or any other matter it may consider relevant of the government department falling within the category of affairs assigned to it, and may for that purpose consult and liaise with such a department;
4. Consider or deal with all international treaties, conventions and agreements relevant to it, which are from time to time negotiated, entered into or agreed upon.

SPEAKER'S ANNOUNCEMENT

On Tuesday, 27 October, 2021, the Speaker announced that the Committee on Standing Rules and Orders had nominated the following Members to serve on the Portfolio Committee on Information, Media and Broadcasting Services: -

Hon. Bhudha -Masara S; Hon. Dube G; Hon. Hamauswa S; Hon Miranzi B; Hon. Mamombe J; Hon. Masiya D.; Hon Mokone S; Hon. Moyo L.; Hon. Mudarikwa S; Hon Mudau M; Hon. Ndebele A.; Hon. Nguluvhe A.; Hon. Nyabani T.; Hon. Nyathi E.; Hon Sawuke J; Hon. Shamu W.K.; Hon. Sithole Josiah.

Hon. Mokone S to be Chairperson

1.0. Introduction

1.1. The call by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) required that all states in the Southern region completely migrate from analogue to digital broadcasting by June 2015. In an effort to comply with the ITU requirements and improve the broadcasting environment, the Government of Zimbabwe embarked on the Digital Migration Project, with the aim of digitalizing the whole broadcasting chain from the studios to the transmission equipment. The project commenced in 2015 and was expected to be completed in 2017. Pursuant to its oversight function, the Portfolio Committee on Information, Media and Broadcasting Services conducted an inquiry into the progress made towards the Zimbabwe Digital Migration Project. To that end, this report provides highlights of the Committee's findings, observations and recommendations with respect to the progress made on the Zimbabwe Digital Migration project.

2.0 Objectives

- 2.1 To assess progress made towards the completion of the Zimbabwe Digital Migration Project;
- 2.2 To assess the state of the transmission sites in view of the Community Radio Stations and the 6 television players which are coming on board;
- 2.3 To have an understanding of the challenges being faced in completion of the project; and
- 2.4 To offer recommendation for speeding up the completion of the project.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 The Committee held oral evidence sessions on the progress made on Zimbabwe Digital Migration Project with the following institutions: Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services; Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ); Transmedia Corporation Pvt Ltd; and Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC).

3.2 In a bid to assess the progress made towards the completion of the digitization project, the Committee conducted verification visits to transmission sites in Kotwa, Harare, Gwanda, Bulawayo and Kamativi, Hwange.

4.0 Committee's Findings

4.1 Background of the digitization project in Zimbabwe

4.1.1 The Committee was informed that the process of digitization started in 2006 during the regional conference held in Geneva with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). An agreement was signed in Geneva (GE06) heralding the roadmap for the migration of television broadcasting from Analogue to Digital. It was submitted that ITU members of states in the

Southern Africa region were expected to complete the migration by June 2015, Zimbabwe having commenced in 2015, it was expected to complete in 2017. At the time of the Committee's enquiry, the project was 43% complete. The Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) highlighted that the migration to digital television comes with a number of advantages, amongst them were more television channels, better picture and audio quality, high-definition television supported and efficient spectrum utilization.

4.2 Progress on analogue to digital migration

4.2.1 During an oral evidence session with BAZ, Transmedia and ZBC it was submitted that eighteen (18) out of the forty-eight (48) sites were digital-ready. The Permanent Secretary informed the Committee that fourteen (14) new transmission towers were completed and were awaiting equipment installation whereas four (4) transmission towers were at different stages of construction. It was further submitted that seven (7) transmission towers were to be decommissioned and no construction work was commenced on six (6) new identified sites. It was highlighted that five (5) out of twenty-four (24) radio sites were digitally installed.

4.2.3 The Committee was informed that the digital signal was to be received through Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) on the eighteen (18) sites and Direct-to-Home (DTH) for the rest of the country. Additionally, it was highlighted that two (2) live uplink terminals which relay the digital signals to the satellite were installed, the main one in Harare and the backup in Bulawayo.

4.2.4 Digital Television Reception Equipment

4.2.4.1 The Acting CEO, submitted that for one to receive Digital TV services in Zimbabwe, the following reception equipment was required:

- i. Option 1: Digital or Integrated TV and an Ultra High Frequency (UHF) antenna/ Aerial pointing to the nearest digital TV transmitter site.
- ii. Option 2: Analog TV, Set Top Box (Digital Terrestrial TV decoder) and UHF Antenna/ Aerial pointing to the nearest digital TV transmitter site.
- iii. Option 3: Digital/ Integrated TV set with a digital satellite TV tuner and a satellite dish pointing to Eutelsat 7B, the satellite used for signal distribution in Zimbabwe. This is the same satellite Kwese TV used to use; so former Kwese TV viewers may need little or no dish tuning at all.
- iv. Option 4: Analogy TV, satellite dish pointing to Eutelsat 7B and free to air Digital Satellite TV decoder.

4.3 Status of funding of the project

4.3.1 The Zimbabwe Digital Migration Project is funded by the Government of Zimbabwe and initially the project was costing US\$175,000,000 and after rescoping the project, the amount was reduced to US\$145,000,000. The Committee was informed that funds were allocated towards the project since commencement in 2015 as shown in the table below:

Year	Amount	Amount	Disbursed by	Disbursed to
	USD	ZWL		
2015	4,986,301.37		Interest Accrued	BAZ
2015	14,629,456.95		RBZ T/Bills	Huawei
2015	13,139,460.00		RBZ T/Bills	BAZ
2016	16,207,595.64		RBZ	BAZ
2017	5,000,000.00		RBZ/MIP	Huawei
2018	10,000,000.00		MIP	BAZ
2018	582,000.00		MIP	BAZ
2019		35,738,000.00	MIP	BAZ
2020		199,400,000.00	MIP	BAZ
2021		300,778,000.00	MIP	BAZ

Key: Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ)

Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Treasury Bills (RBZ)

Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services (MIP)

Table 1: showing the amount disbursed from 2015 to 2020.

4.3.2 The Committee was informed that the Project was initially allocated ZWL \$684,682,000 for the 2021 financial year by Treasury and the allocation was further increased by ZWL \$ 213 million. From this budget allocation, ZWL\$300,778,000.00 was disbursed to the Project with the balance of ZWL\$596,904,000.00 still expected to be disbursed before the end of 2021. It was submitted that US\$71,360,059.00 was required to fully complete the project and conservatively the project will end in 30 September 2022 if the funds were to be disbursed timeously.

The breakdown and status of the utilization of the \$300 778 000 is shown in Table 1 below:

Item (Scope of Work)	Amount ZWL
Contract renewal with Eutelsat satellite service lease	\$ 70,200,000.00

Revamping of FM Transmitters	\$ 98,400,000.00
Procurement of Frequency Planning Software & Portable Spectrum Monitoring Equipment	\$ 9,800,000.00
Procurement of Aucom Service Level Agreement for Head end	\$ 4,000,000.00
Huawei Legacy Debt	\$ 62,000,000.00
Procurement of TV Studio Media Asset Management (MAM) equipment	\$ 32,800,000.00
Procurement of Digitalization of 2 Radio Studio (Mbare Studios)	\$ 20,000,000.00
Project Management	\$ 3,570,000.00

Table 2: showing the status of utilization of the disbursed amount.

4.4 Appointment of a project manager

4.4.1 The Permanent Secretary informed the Committee that the project lacked a drive, thus they were considering employing a project manager whose focus will be the fulfillment of the project and his/her performance contract will be centered on the DTT project.

4.5 Digitalization tour: Status of transmission sites

4.5.1 Kotwa Transmission site

4.5.1.1 The Committee visited Kotwa transmission site which is one of the eighteen (18) sites that was completed through the Project. The Committee was informed that the site was an abandoned Tel-one site and it houses digital television only including the recently licensed television broadcasters. Kotwa has two (2) digital transmitters integrated in one rank which accommodate twelve HD services and at the moment its running three that is two ZBC channels and ZTN. The installed transmitter covers a radius of forty (40) to sixty (60) kilometer (km) and providing coverage to Nyamapanda, Pfungwe, Suswe and Susamoya. Additionally, the site had a downlink satellite that receives signals, generator, power system (automatic voltage regulator and uninterrupted power supply) and the Set-top box. The Committee gathered that the use of a generator is unsustainable as it consumes fifteen (15) litres per hour.

4.5.2 ZBC Pockets hill

4.5.2.1 The Committee toured ZBC Pockets Hill during which they were informed that two out of eleven studios were installed. Six channel playout system which play six high-definition channels that are used for monitoring, play out and signaling were installed. Additionally, ZBC has a Master Control Room which receives signals for internal and external studios. The power room consists of back up batteries, the Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) and an 800KVA Generator. It was highlighted that US\$1.3 million is required for procurement of equipment whilst US\$200 000 is

required for construction of structure for studios in every province so that all languages are catered for.

4.5.2.2 The Committee was informed that the satellite uplink system civil work was completed and satellite capacity was secured from Eutelsat. The satellite uplink system is used to send signals to transmitters in other areas and to receive satellite directly from the uplink using UHF antennas. It was submitted that the site has radio and television transmitters, power bank and two generators for continual supply of power to the equipments. It was further highlighted that the Head- end equipment was installed at Pockets Hill and is the section where signals converge. The Committee was informed that at the head-end the Transmedia monitors the reception of signals by the citizens and they also conduct quality assurance.

4.5.3. Gwanda transmission site

4.5.3.1 The Committee was informed that the Gwanda transmission site is one of the eighteen sites which was completed under the digitization project and it is one of the existing sites. The site had TV and an FM radio stations, but the radio services need to be revamped as they would require it to cover at least a radius of about 100km and the equipment had outlived its lifespan. It was submitted that currently FM Transmission site has a range of 40 to 60km because the transmitters and antenna systems are old and they need to be replaced. The Acting CEO, BAZ highlighted that they submitted a budget proposal for revamping of radio service for 2022 and nothing was allocated.

4.5.3.2 The Committee was informed that the site had small air con units which did not cope up with the temperature, however they were in the process of buying one big unit for the cooling system. The site had two transmitters covering a radius of 50km covering parts of West Nicholson, parts of Filabusi and other areas which are within the 50km radius. The official from Transmedia highlighted that they were ready to avail the digital TV services to the viewers, however the challenge was of unavailability of receiving gadgets known as Set-Top boxes.

4.5.4 Bulawayo Montrose

4.5.4.1 The Committee visited Bulawayo Montrose and was informed that it was the second biggest transmission site with a redundant system whereby if a fault is experienced on the satellite in Harare, the satellite in Bulawayo will take over for the distribution of the signals. It was submitted that the site has eight transmitters with analogue and digital system. The site was 50% complete as they installed the digital TV transmitter and they were yet to renew the FM radio system. The Committee was informed that Montrose has the analogue TV transmitter currently servicing the Bulawayo area and covering a radius of about 50km.

4.5.4.2 It was further submitted that the site had six national radio services, four for ZBC and two

for the private players that is Star FM and ZiFM and two commercial radio stations. The site also houses transmission system for Khulumani FM and another one for Skyz FM. The Committee was informed that they were going to install 5 000 watts transmitters so as to improve on quality service and availability in the interim. It was highlighted that the transmission site did not have an allocation for community radio stations since there were no licensed community radio stations for metro areas.

4.5.4.3 The Committee was informed that the site had two satellite distribution system, the primary was the internet protocol (IP) based fibre network which connected Montrose and Pockets Hills and the standby facility from the satellite system. It was highlighted that an approximation of US\$20 million is required for all sites to be fibre connected. It further highlighted that the procurement process for equipments was cumbersome as they had to follow the national procuring procedures and the PRAZ sits once per week to review all submitted bids from a whole of Government departments. It was highlighted that the BAZ purchases broadcasting equipment from different countries and the importation of some equipment was affected by the issue of sanctions for instance the purchase of spectrum monitoring equipment in Germany.

4.5.5 Kamativi Transmission site

4.5.5.1 The Committee toured the Kamativi Transmission site and was informed that the site was one of the existing sites. The site was 100% done with both TV, radio and the signals from the site covered up to Binga centre which was 120km. It was highlighted that the coverage also goes as far as Victoria Falls Airport, Jotsholo and overlapping with the site in Lupane. The site has 5 000 watts transmitters. The Transmedia Corporation submitted that they decided to put a gap filler (small low-cost transmitters) in Binga as the Kamativi site was not reaching areas after Binga side going to Siabuwa and Siakobvu. It was highlighted that the gap fillers cost about US\$10 million.

4.5.6 Challenges being faced in completion of the digitization programme

4.5.6.1 Unavailability of set-top-boxes

4.5.6.1.1 The Committee was informed that for the majority of Zimbabweans to receive the new television services either on DTT or DTH platforms, there was need for Set Top Boxes (STB) which were not available. It was submitted that Zimbabwe required approximately of 3.5 million STBs to meet the intended target of viewership. The Permanent Secretary highlighted that the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe published the Broadcasting Services (Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting Services) Regulations of 2020 which provide the conditions for the supply of television receivers (STBs). The invitation to supply STBs was extended to any potential supplier, provided their samples meet the specifications prescribed in the regulations.

In 2021 the Authority had certified two (2) suppliers through a type approval process to distribute the approved STBs in the market. However, there has been no significant traction from these suppliers to provide the commercial units. This turned to be another hurdle hindering the migration process.

4.5.6.2 The Committee was apprised of the following recommendations with regards to the purchase of set-top-boxes:

- i. The central government may consider stimulating the local market by injecting funds towards the provision of set-top boxes;
- ii. As the market has been opened to private players who, however, remain sceptical about uptake, the central government can waive import duties to lower economic barriers and give confidence to the private sector;
- iii. The government may consider providing subsidies to vulnerable families to offset market failure. This will be made available in the form of coupons that will be given to the vulnerable people who wish to buy Digital TV reception equipment; and
- iv. BAZ to monitor the retail market to ensure the availability of type-approved receivers to protect consumer interest purchase of Set-top Boxes.

4.5.6.3 The Committee was informed that underfunding, late disbursements of funds, inaccessibility of foreign currency on auction floor and shortages of foreign currency were other impediments of the completion of the project. It was submitted that to date ZWL\$300,778,000.00 was disbursed to the Project with the balance of ZWL\$596,904,000.00 still expected to be disbursed before the end of 2021. It was highlighted that the above-mentioned challenges had affected the procurement of equipment and installation of digital transmission sites, hence affecting the dissemination of information to the citizens especially the marginalized community.

4.5.6.4 The Transmedia Corporation submitted that load shedding was affecting service provision and transmission of signals. The transmission sites were using generators as a back-up plan, however, it was submitted that the cost of fueling backup power was unbearable.

5.0 Committee Observations

5.1 The Committee noted with great concern the slow pace of progress with regards to the installation of digital transmitters as this is slowing the completion of the digitization project. It

was noted that BAZ was installing 2 or 3 transmitters per year since commencement of the project in 2015. At their current pace they would take almost 15 years to install all the 48 transmitters.

5.2 The Committee observed that the slow pace of migration to digital was short changing the players putting investment into broadcasting as they will operate on an analogue system which is associated with poor quality. The Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe licensed 6 new Television broadcasters and these players are expected to produce quality programmes, yet only 18 transmitters were digitally completed. This will affect their profitability due to low viewership.

5.3 The Committee did not agree with the idea of employing a project manager considering that institutions such as ZBC had engineers who can assist in the monitoring of the Project implementation.

5.4 It was noted that several transmission sites did not have the much-needed security which made them vulnerable to theft and vandalism of equipment.

5.5 The Committee noted that there was need to educate members of the public on the use of satellite signals. Transmedia should provide education to the citizens especially in remote areas on how they can use the satellite signals to receive news and information. Transmedia should also demonstrate how the gadgets (Set-top boxes) can be used in order to receive satellite signals.

5.7 The Committee was disturbed by the slow pace being taken by ZBC with regards to installation of digitalized studios. Further, the Committee was concerned that some of the technologies at ZBC were being redundant way before their use due to lack of adequate funding on time. It was observed that a further delay in the completion of the digitization project would lead to the equipment reaching its lifespan to the point that it would require replacement before being used for the benefit of the citizens.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 The Committee recommends the following:

6.1.1 That the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development should timeously disburse the funds to the Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services to enable the Ministry to complete the digitization project;

6.1.2 The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development should assist the Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services in accessing foreign currency so that they can

acquire digital transmitters by August 2022;

6.1.3 The Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services should by September 2022 delegate responsibility of the project management to the engineers that are within the ZBC who are already on the payroll and they should report to the Ministry on progress regarding the completion of the Project on a monthly basis;

6.1.4 The Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services should provide set-top-boxes to the citizens so that they will be able to access high quality signal on both TV and radio by October 2022;

6.1.5 The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development should waive import duty on Set-top boxes by August 2022 to make them affordable;

6.1.6 The Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services should introduce a law that restrict the importation of television without a digital tuner and that does not comply with the current waves of the digitization programme by December 2022;

6.1.7 Transmedia should ensure that at every site there are adequate security measures by September 2022;

6.1.9 The Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services in conjunction with the Ministry of Energy, Power and Development should install solar power plants at all transmission sites as back-up in case of power cuts by December 2022.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 The Zimbabwe Digital Migration Project is an important national programme which will bring a lot of development and employment creation. Progress on the ground has been done, as eighteen (18) transmission sites were now digital. However, late disbursement and underfunding of the project has stalled the progress hence the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development should prioritize the funding of the project.

