



CHAPTER 4

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# A CASE FOR COMMUNITY MEDIA

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BY NKOPANE MAPHIRI

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## **Nkopane Maphiri**

Nkopane Maphiri, programme director at the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) has an extensive background in community media, policy development and media advocacy. Nkopane cut his teeth in the community media sector as the founder member and station manager of Soweto Community Radio (now Jozi FM). He has worked as the CEO of the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF), a national organisation of community broadcasters, and has served as a board member of AMARC Africa, a network of community radio broadcasters on the continent.

Nkopane has a vast knowledge of the advertising industry, having served on the SAARF RAMS scrutiny committee for a number of years. He has also worked as a marketing and advertising trainer and has authored the marketing and advertising toolkit for community radio and community print. Nkopane has been a marketing and advertising consultant, and has over the years done work for several private sector and public sector institutions. He holds an AAA diploma in media planning and management, and a Wits University information and telecommunications Policy certificate.

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## INTRODUCTION

Community media forms a vital part of any society. Since 1994, there have been many changes that have contributed towards its growth and expansion in South Africa. While success stories abound, there have also been many challenges. Much is being done to address these challenges, to ensure that the community media sector continues to grow and that access for previously disadvantaged communities is made possible.

This chapter traces the history of the community media sector, presents the successes and challenges, and makes recommendations for the future.

## TRACING THE HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY MEDIA SECTOR

### THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY MEDIA BEFORE 1994

Community media emerged out of the activism of pre-1994 South Africa and was seen mainly as an alternative press, responsible for building a democratic and anti-apartheid consciousness. This alternative media – at the time primarily appearing in a print media format that included posters, newsletters and pamphlets – was used as a platform to expose the brutality of apartheid, to provide an alternative point of view, and to help mobilise civil society and build political resistance.

Alternative media began to flourish. A number of different print titles such as *TOPS*, *Namato Voice* and *UmAfrika* were circulated in communities. Audio cassettes were distributed at university campuses, and strategic community


access points were also used as key distribution points.

At this time any material seen as pro-democracy was regarded as having the potential to incite instability. The alternative media's existence was not encouraged. Nor was it enabled by any law at the time, and this made it easy for the government to repress and harass those organisations actively involved in publishing it. Despite these difficult times, community media grew from strength to strength, as the consciousness among the vast majority of South Africans grew and pressure was put on the system for change.

### THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY MEDIA POST-APARTHEID

After 1994, with the introduction of a democratic government, a number of constitutional rights were put in place guaranteeing freedom of expression and, by extension, freedom of the press and other media. New legislation and regulations created an enabling environment for community media, allowed for support organisations to be established, and introduced funding models to support sustainability. This created the space for community media to prosper.

During this period, the role of the community media sector changed, and it continues to evolve today. It is perceived to have a unique role to play in the building and reconstruction of the social fabric of the communities in which it operates. Dialogue is initiated in and among communities, and the media is a much needed platform for the strengthening of social cohesion within societies often ravaged by poverty and inequality.



Community radio, TV and print are also used to gather and disseminate information relevant to local audiences. Community frustrations are expressed and their joys are celebrated in the pages of the local newspaper or on the airwaves. Set up for public benefit, run by non-profit entities and owned and controlled by the communities, media sparks conversation and can help to forge the destiny of a community. Through participating in the selection of programmes they would like to hear, communities can participate actively in their own development.

Audiences continue to grow year after year, owing to an increased yearning for programming that has a distinctive local flavour. It is the ability of those working in the community media to master the art and form of participatory content development and delivery that has resulted in the growth of the audience numbers over the past decade.

## **LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS: CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT**

### **THE CONSTITUTION AND BILL OF RIGHTS**

Through a raft of legislation and regulations, the government of national unity (post-1994) created an enabling environment for all media. Freedom of expression was guaranteed and detailed in the South African Constitution, Act No. 108 of 1996. This guarantee, which was introduced to foster an open society free from oppression and censorship, created opportunities for the community media to express their views openly and freely within the limits of the law. There was also tacit acknowledgement that media produced 'by the people for the people' was a vital part of South African society.


Through the Bill of Rights, media were also guaranteed access to 'any information held by the state; and any information that is held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights'. In the context of an emerging democracy, access to state information was seen as critical to inform discussions and debates and to get citizens talking. The distribution and broadcast of community media provided an accessible platform for local communities, often the target of government campaigns.

This was the dawn of a new era for community media in South Africa, an era which saw exponential growth of the free press – in the number of publications and radio stations as well as in the mechanisms aimed at sustaining the community media as a result of the recognition of its pivotal role in the maintenance and promotion of democracy, open discourse and access to information.

## **BROADCASTING LEGISLATION AND COMMUNITY MEDIA**

The legislation and regulations that have been enacted since the end of apartheid have also had a positive effect on the community media sector. The legislative instruments put in place after 1994 were tools aimed at democratising the media space and at creating access and promoting diversity in the form of gender, race, language and geographical spread.

The Independent Broadcasting Authority Act, No. 153 of 1993, was the first major piece of legislation to deal with broadcast media in a post-apartheid context. The Act introduced the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), an independent regulator for broadcasting respon-



sible for the licensing of community services as well as public and commercial services.

Community broadcasting was defined in the Act as a service which:

- (a) is fully controlled by a non-profit entity and carried on for non-profitable purposes;
- (b) serves a particular community;
- (c) encourages members of the community served by it or persons associated with or promoting the interests of such community to participate in the selection and provision of programmes to be broadcast in the course of such broadcasting service; and
- (d) may be funded by donations, grants, sponsorships or advertising or membership fees, or by any combination of the aforementioned.

These definitions remain the fundamental guidelines for all community media initiatives in South Africa, and provide for a clear distinction to be drawn with other forms of media.


With the convergence of broadcasting and telecommunications, the IBA merged with the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SATRA) to form the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (Icasa) through the enactment of the Icasa Act, 13 of 2000. Icasa has now assumed the role of the broadcast regulator. As part of its mandate, it is responsible for ensuring that this medium is fair and represents the diversity of views of all South Africans. Consideration of applications and the awarding of licensing for community and other broadcasters continue to be managed by Icasa exercising this mandate.

Other broadcast laws that have affected the community media sector include the Broadcasting Act, 4 of 1999, and the Electronic Communications Act, 36 of 2005. The Broadcasting Act of 1999 was enacted to repeal the Broadcasting Act of 1976 in order to establish a new broadcasting policy framework for a young South African democracy. The Act reaffirmed the legislative recognition of a community broadcasting service as first defined in the IBA Act of 1993. The Broadcasting Act acknowledges that the South African broadcasting services are owned and controlled by South Africans; and that the system uses radio frequencies that are a limited public resource to provide programming that is in the public interest and necessary for the maintenance of a South African identity, universal access, diversity and equality. The Act resolves to 'align the broadcasting system with the democratic values of the Constitution and to enhance and protect the fundamental rights of citizens'.

With the convergence of broadcasting and telecommunications came the Electronic Communications Act, 36 of 2005 (known as the ECA), enacted to replace the Broadcasting Act, which provides for the granting of new licences to all tiers of broadcasting.

Significantly for the community broadcaster, the ECA:

- Makes the procedure for accessing a licence for community broadcasting much simpler. Before community broadcasters had to wait for Icasa to request applications but now they can apply under a class licence.
- Provides for the contribution of all holders of a licence granted in terms of Chapter



3 of the ECA to pay contributions (which must not exceed 1 per cent of the licensee's annual turnover) into the MDDA account to advance the objectives of the MDDA Act, 14 of 2002.

## **PROMOTING MEDIA DEVELOPMENT AND DIVERSITY**

### **THE MEDIA DEVELOPMENT AND DIVERSITY AGENCY ACT, 14 OF 2002**

After 1994, government was committed to establish and fund an agency that would drive the growth of the community media sector and provide for alternative voices. This is the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA), a statutory body. The MDDA is entrusted with the responsibility of promoting media development and diversity in South Africa by providing financial and other support to community (non-profit) and small commercial media projects.

The MDDA Act defines media as all forms of mass communication, including printed publications, radio, television and new electronic platforms for delivering content. It also defines media development as the development of the media environment and infrastructure so that historically disadvantaged communities and persons have access to the media as owners, managers, producers and consumers of media. The objectives of the Agency are to:

- Encourage ownership and control of, and access to, media by historically disadvantaged communities and historically diminished indigenous language and cultural groups;
- Encourage the development of human resources and training, and capacity building, within the media industry, especially

among historically disadvantaged groups;


- Encourage the channelling of resources to the community media and small commercial media sectors;
- Raise public awareness of media development and diversity issues;
- Support initiatives which promote literacy and a culture of reading;
- Encourage the research of media development and diversity.

## **SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS IN THE COMMUNITY MEDIA SECTOR**

In 1994, the IBA began issuing community stations with temporary 12-month licences to broadcast. Radio Maritzburg in KwaZulu-Natal was the first community radio station to be licensed in 1994, followed by stations such as Bush Radio, Soweto Community Radio, Turf Radio and Radio Zibonele. Within all media sectors, community media practitioners began to establish, join or support organisations that were either engaged in developing the sector, supported diversification or wanted to extend the reach of this sector throughout South Africa. The role of sector network organisations is to advocate for the common benefits of the sector at large and its members in the main. These organisations coordinate and facilitate training and capacity building programmes and lobby for policy and legislative frameworks that create an enabling environment for the sector. Members are assisted to mobilise resources. Awareness is raised.

## **THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY RADIO FORUM (NCRF)**

The National Community Radio Forum (NCRF), registered as a Section 21 Company not for



gain, was formed in 1993 in Orlando East, Soweto, in order to lobby for the diversification of the airwaves, and to foster a dynamic broadcasting environment through the establishment of community radio stations.

About 120 community radio stations form part of the NCRF. Approximately 75 of these are on air while others are still waiting to be licensed by Icasa. Community radio is now collectively the third largest broadcaster nationally, according to SAARF RAMS, with almost 7.8 million listeners found in the most deeply rural areas of all the provinces.

### **THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS (NAB)**

The NAB is a non-profit organisation funded entirely by its members. Over 80 organisations made up of the public, commercial and community broadcasters belong to the NAB and hundreds of individuals working in broadcasting and associated industries are involved in its activities. The NAB therefore has access to a wealth of knowledge on broadcasting in South Africa and is able to advise members on a variety of issues.

The NAB's formation coincided with South Africa's democratisation and the freeing of the airwaves. Over the years the NAB's membership growth has matched that of the industry to a point where it is representative of most sectors of South African broadcasting.

The organisation exists to represent the interests of South African broadcasting and works to promote the following:

- A broadcasting system that provides choice and diversity for audiences;
- A favourable climate for broadcasters to operate within;
- A broadcasting industry grounded in the principles of democracy, diversity and freedom of expression.

### **ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT PUBLISHERS (AIP)**

The Association of Independent Publishers (AIP), established in 2005, is a coalition of grassroots and community newspapers in South Africa. The association is member and project driven and aims to improve the quality and economic sustainability of grassroots independent publications, ranging from traditional newspapers, magazines, journals and other news-driven newspapers.

Admitted as a constituent member of the PMSA cluster of media advocacy associations, it has won executive representation on important self-regulatory and standard-setting authorities. The association is an umbrella body that incorporates South Africa's 126-year-old Community Press Association (CPA) and the Independent Media Alliance (IMA) lobby group. The AIP has continued to lobby on behalf of independent publishers and has proactively developed technical training standards, management toolkits & tip sheets, and Open Source software products. This has helped the publishers to strengthen their businesses and has improved efficiency in some publications, increasing their chances of self-sustainability.



## SUCCESSSES

### EXPANSION OF COMMUNITY MEDIA

Since its inception the MDDA has supported over 484 projects with over R233 million allocated in all nine provinces. In the MDDA 2011/2012 annual report it is stated that in the 2011/2012 financial year the MDDA provided support to:

Category	Total
Community broadcasters	26
Community television	01
Community print	08
Small commercial print	23
Research and training	13
Number of people trained	1814
Number of bursaries awarded	247
Number of indirect jobs created	1632
Number of direct jobs created	416

This has had a positive influence on job creation.

Over the years, the agency has made progress towards the creation of an informed society that enhances and deepens democracy. The

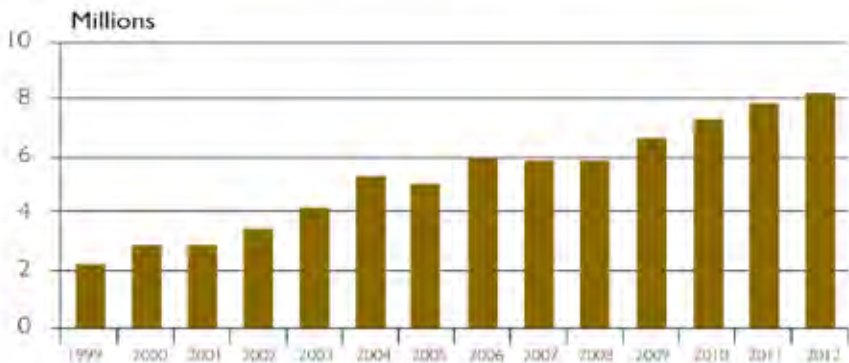
role of a strong and diverse media that supports nation building and builds democracy and social cohesion is essential for a developing democracy like South Africa. Progress has been made since 2004 towards the promotion of access to information and support for the development of more voices through the MDDA funding provided to community and small commercial media initiatives.

### INCREASE IN COMMUNITY RADIO AUDIENCES

In 2012 there were 218 licensed community radio stations and they were to be found in almost every district municipality of the country. More than 120 of them are on-air and broadcasting, thereby representing the largest media sector by number of entities on air.

Community Radio audiences have increased exponentially since 1999. In October 2012, the cumulative listeners of community radio stood at 8 738 000 across all income brackets. Total Community Radio share of audiences is 28 per cent of a total radio audience of 31 million (Source: SAARF).

#### RAMS Listenership



Source: SAARF RAMS 2012



The figures reflected in the RAMS Listenership graph on the page opposite indicate that there has been a real growth in audience numbers year on year on community radio platforms as a result of an increased demand by communities and the growth of the number of stations licensed.

**LICENSING OF COMMUNITY MEDIA**

Icasa has licensed 218 community radio stations and six community television stations across the country. The increased number of radio stations licensed speaks to the commitment of government to promote diversity and ownership of the media by historically disadvantaged communities.

**COMMUNITY MEDIA – A CREDIBLE AUDIENCE DELIVERY PLATFORM**

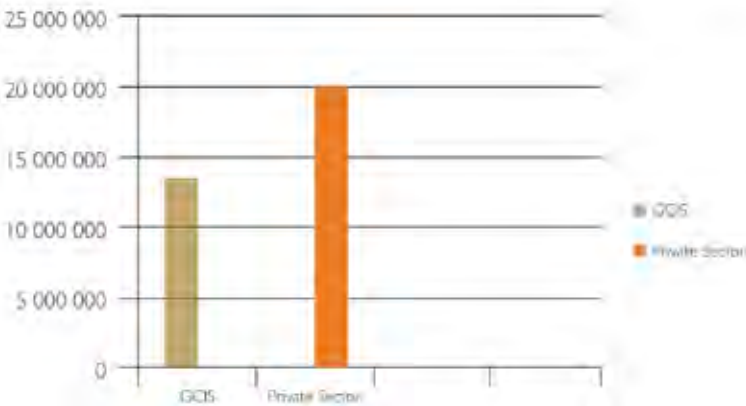
The total revenue traded on 120 community radio stations and 31 community and small commercial newspapers in the 2011/12 financial year (as reflected in the MDDA 2011/12 Annual Report) was R33.4 million

(GCIS R13.4 million and advertising industry through The Media Connection was R19.9 million). (as reflected in graph below)

Except for the figures provided by the MDDA in the 2011/12 Annual Report which state that a total of R543 222 has been spent by GCIS on community and small commercial print platforms, there are no reliable figures showing the accurate total spend on community and small commercial print platforms. The figures reported by the MDDA are incorporated in the total GCIS spend of R13.4 million. The MDDA is now working with GCIS and other organs of state to channel government advertising to community media projects. These will be projects that fall within the definition of the MDDA Act of 2002.

**SECURING GOVERNMENT FUNDING**

Since the establishment of the MDDA in 2004 there has been a marked increase in the government funding for community and small commercial media. In 2004, the MDDA ap-



Source: GCIS and The Media Connection)



proved grants of R4m whereas in 2012/13 it managed a total grant of R31.4 m for community and small commercial media.

The agency has funded 484 projects with over R233 million, and the socio-economic impact of the MDDA funding has resulted in the provision of 247 bursaries, and funded training for 1814 people. Through the agency, 1632 indirect jobs and 416 full-time and 259 part-time jobs have been created. Of the supported projects in 2011/12, more than 78 were new and did not exist prior to MDDA intervention.

## **ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF THE COMMUNITY MEDIA SECTOR TO SECURE GROWTH**

### **DEFINING COMMUNITY MEDIA**


Defining what constitutes community media has become increasingly important as this has had implications for the financial sustainability of the sector. Historically, community media within the print environment was loosely defined and included titles owned by the mainstream media houses (Caxton, Media 24, Times Media (previously Avusa) and Independent Newspapers Group), and media owned by the community. This was, however, not the definition as presented in the MDDA Act, which saw community media as non-profit and controlled by the community it served.

Over the years, the community media has been presented with challenges because of the confusion over the definition of community media. Small commercial newspapers from the mainstream media (Caxton, Times Media, and Me-

dia24) were included when calculating adspend, and a distorted view of what was being spent in the community media environment emerged. In some cases, advertising in the local knock-and-drop newspapers was surpassing advertising revenue from the sale of commercial newspapers. But these were not, strictly speaking, community newspapers and a false impression was being created about how much was being spent on advertising. Defining what community media actually is, and ensuring that the media landscape was accurately presented, therefore became imperative.

The MDDA, and the Print and Digital Media South Africa (PDMSA) (which includes Media24, Caxton, Independent Newspapers and Times Media) met in May 2012 and agreed to use the MDDA Act of 2002 as a basis to define community media:

- Community media – in terms of the MDDA Act – means any media project that is owned and controlled by a community where any financial surplus generated is reinvested in the media project; and ‘community’ means a geographically founded community or any group of persons or sector of the public having a specific ascertainable common interest;
- Small commercial media (SMME) – in terms of the MDDA Act – means independent media enterprises or initiatives run for personal gain as micro, very small or small businesses as classified in the National Small Business Act, 102 of 1996. This category will be considered as ‘emerging’: community print projects owned by small community enterprises or individuals and that have been in existence for two years.
- Local newspapers and magazines owned



and distributed by corporate media owners such as Caxton or Media24 are excluded.

The agreement represented a milestone for the community media sector in that appropriate advertising can now be directed towards this sector and media diversity developed and promoted.

## **PRINT MEDIA OWNERSHIP, CONTROL AND TRANSFORMATION**

Since 1994 the transformation of the print media environment has been happening at a snail's pace, and there is general consensus within government that this sector requires more focus. Transformation issues have plagued the industry since 1994. Already, in 1996, the Comtask report<sup>1</sup> initiated by former president Thabo Mbeki referred to the monopolistic control of the media particularly in the areas of distribution and printing. This was seen as creating barriers to entry for prospective media owners.

In 2007, this situation had not changed significantly. At its 51st National Congress<sup>2</sup> the African National Congress again spoke of the slow transformation in the print media environment – and noted that there was a need to address this issue as well as to allocate more funding to the MDDA to ensure that as broad and diverse an audience as possible would be reached. The Conference also recommended strongly that the MDDA should facilitate the development of media aimed at youth, women, children and persons with disability.

Print transformation issues are being addressed but no significant change has taken place yet. The four big media companies – Naspers (Media24), Caxton, Independent News Media and

Times Media still dominate, and media assets are still owned mainly by these companies. Monopolistic control of printing and distribution also affects this environment.

Ownership by historically disadvantaged individuals is also below the desired percentage and women still lack a voice in this sector, whilst language diversity remains at insignificant levels. The major print media players such as Media24 and Times Media have some degree of black ownership. The PDMSA report to Parliament (June 2011) on the state of print media transformation shows that Times Media has at least a 25.5 per cent black shareholding, Media24 has 15 per cent, and Caxton and Independent Newspapers have no black participation.

The community media sector including the small commercial print sector have been negatively affected by this lack of transformation, mainly due to the significant barriers to entry that exist. In addition, lack of diversity in ownership and control has led to a lack of diversity of language, race, gender, content and sources of news.

In a paper published in March 2011, 'The print media transformation dilemma', Jane Duncan supported the argument presented by media academics Dr Mashilo Boloka and Ron Krabill, who said that:

*... successful transformation would be achieved when the media 'reflects, in its ownership, staffing and product, the society within which it operates. This is only possible if access is opened – again in ownership, staffing, and product – not only to the emerging black elite, but also to grassroots communities of all colours.*

<sup>1</sup> Communications 2000: A vision for government communications in South Africa. Final Report: COMTASK. Report of the Task Group on Government Communications to Deputy President Thabo Mbeki: October 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Communication and the battle of ideas (ANC Congress Resolution 2007) [www.anc.org.za](http://www.anc.org.za).



This presented a strong argument as to why the community media needs to engage actively in the transformation process – to support a process that not only ensured the print media industry was a mirror of the present democratic dispensation but also one that opened up the environment further to a diversity of voices.

On 18 June 2012, the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on communication held its Parliamentary Print Media Transformation Indaba at Icasa premises in Johannesburg. The Committee called upon Government Communication and Information Services (GCIS) and MDDA to work with the industry on the roadmap towards the establishment of a print media charter, a stepping stone towards promoting broad based black economic empowerment (BBBEE) in the sector. Among other things, the charter was important in that it needed to address:

- The availability of print media in languages all South Africans speak;
- The specifics of the industry, including setting deadlines and targets to meet transformation objectives, seen as a commitment by the industry into a diverse and transformed print media in the entire value chain (newsroom, publishing, news sources, printing, distribution and advertising). These will include areas of ownership and control, language, race, gender, employment equity, conditions of employment, skills development, contributions to promoting media diversity (through MDDA), and accord on access to printing and distribution.


The launch of the Print and Digital Media Transformation Task Team (PDMTTT) initiated by PDMSA is against the background of the Parliamentary Print Media Transformation Indaba which was held on Monday 18 June 2012 at Icasa. The Task Team has been mandated to assist the industry to develop a common vision and strategy for transformation in mainstream, small private and community media businesses. It will also recommend areas of transformation, the methodology of implementing transformation, and targets and mechanisms to monitor and enforce transformation. The team is looking at both quantitative and qualitative indicators such as:

- Ownership, management, control and employment equity;
- Skills development;
- Preferential procurement and enterprise development;
- Socio-economic development, the low levels of black ownership within many large media groups, the extent to which concentration and market power results in anti-competitive behaviour that blocks new entrants, the need to develop new media products for regions and communities as well as the languages of those publications, and diversity of voices.

Their report detailing their findings and recommendations is likely to be available by the end of June 2013.

## **RESOURCE LIMITATIONS AND SUSTAINABILITY**

The advertising industry determines adspend, which drives the commercial media market. Unfortunately, this industry has not respond-



ed well to the community media platform, despite the evident and relentless annual audience growth. The result has been that a number of titles and programmes have been withdrawn owing to lack of funds.

Over the years, the advertising industry has come under scrutiny for its slow empowerment advancement, despite the MAC Transformation Charter (the industry's third charter) being gazetted on 29 August 2008 under Section 12 of the BBBEE Act (Act No. 53 of 2003).

In April 2011, the Portfolio Committee on Communications undertook oversight visits and stakeholder consultation meetings with all departments and agencies which report to it in all the nine provinces. During these oversight visits, the Committee noted with concern that challenges with the advertising industry remain. Community media projects lamented the lack of advertising support for community radio, small commercial media and community print media projects. The lack of support is as a result of the lack of understanding by the advertising industry of the community and small commercial media.

As a result of these complaints, the committee resolved that the advertising industry should appear before it to keep it abreast of the progress in transformation of the industry in general and how it is transforming to accommodate community media. These parliamentary public hearings into the transformation of the advertising industry were held on 14-15 June 2011. After hearing and considering presentations made before the committee from the MDDA, Association for Communication and Advertising (ACA), Advertising Standards

Authority of South Africa (ASA) and National Consumer Commission (NCC) the committee made the following recommendations:

- MDDA and ACA should meet, discuss, consider and take all issues raised by the community and small commercial media at the oversight visits forward and report back to the committee.
- The Marketing, Advertising and Communications (MAC) Sector Charter Council should have review mechanisms that include experiences encouraging media development and diversity. These may comprise industry business practices such as a percentage commitment of adspend to community media as defined in the MDDA Act.
- GCIS must commit and implement a percentage of adspend to community media as defined by the MDDA Act and to small commercial media.

Government organs and state owned enterprises are also being actively encouraged to advertise in community and small commercial media. The ANC has been a strong proponent of getting government advertising power to support community media, as it resolved at its 51st National Congress in Polokwane. Government advertising currently remains the single most important potential revenue source and is relevant as community media targets mainly poor rural and urban communities – the largest constituency of government. This means that government messages will therefore be able to reach its target market – and at the same time they will be supporting the idea of sustaining a diverse media platform.



The move by GCIS to centralise its media buying service is positive. The development of an online booking platform for community and small commercial media is seen as an enabling platform that would help to facilitate equitable access to government advertising spend.

## **DIVERSITY IN THE MEDIA**

Media ownership and editorial diversity is essential in a developing democracy such as South Africa. The lack of diversity in the media affects how stories are covered and limits opportunities for previously excluded groups, such as black people, different cultural groups, the disabled and women to have their voices heard. A varied and diverse media will promote a multiplicity of voices, views, languages and opinions on wide ranging matters affecting South Africans. Media is an essential enabler in this discourse and it has the potential to help South Africans to create an environment that encourages tolerance of divergent views and also presents diverse voices. This is an ideal to which we all should subscribe, unite behind and work tirelessly towards attaining.


There remain a number of challenges in respect of promoting diversity. Ownership and editorial control are being addressed through the transformation processes that are already underway. In respect of diversity of voices, the MDDA has already focused on gender and transformation of the media. A dialogue was convened in October 2009 that included the MDDA, Icasa, the SABC, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) and the SA Human Rights Commission. Arising out of these discussions, a number of recommendations have been made to tackle the issue of gen-

der exclusion from the media. While these relate to gender in particular, these can be extrapolated to other voices excluded from the mainstream media. These recommendations include:

- Gender should be highlighted in all information, communication and media laws;
- The media should portray a more diverse and positive range of images and realistic gender roles – and not perpetuate stereotypes;
- Licensing agreements should include a requirement that gender balance and sensitivity form a part of editorial content;
- The media code of practice should be aligned with South African legislation, international protocols and ratified agreements;
- Attention should be paid to the promotion and preservation of indigenous languages in the media;
- Icasa, the banking sector, the MDDA, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Communication should come on board to ensure that content creation is reviewed.

## **SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

Training and development is a never-ending need and requirement of the community sector. Generally, the sector has access to technical equipment, but the skills and capacity to maintain and use it is sometimes lacking. At other times, where skills and capacity have been built, the public and commercial broadcasters depend and draw on them, resulting in skills gaps in the community sector. The identification and development of talent with-



in the community media sector for the benefit of the public and commercial sectors provides a healthy ecosystem, but sustainability in all three media tiers should be developed.

## **A WAY FORWARD FOR THE SECTOR**

The MDDA, jointly with the GCIS, is collaborating to establish the online booking and monitoring platform for community and small commercial media. This will provide increased accountability, compliance and regulation of the advertising trade in the sector. The net effect will be increased revenue and accountability by all players in the sector. It is a development which will give meaning to the preamble of the MDDA Act: 'Promote media development and diversity by providing support primarily to community and small commercial media projects'; and Section 3: 'Encourage the channelling of resources to the community media and small commercial media sector'.

The MDDA has agreements in place with three printing companies to provide discounts to all community and small commercial publishers. These printing discounts are meant to provide an enabling business environment and reduce the barriers of entry into the industry for emerging publishers, as the high cost of printing has been regarded as the single most challenging factor for independent publishers to operate and sustain their businesses.

The MDDA continues to provide support to the Media Literacy programme which is aimed at promoting the culture of reading among young South African learners. The programme also encourages the development of media in indigenous languages in order to give meaning and effect to Sections 16 and 32 of the Constitution which provide for the freedom of expression and access to information.



