

MEDIA STATEMENT

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MEDIA STATEMENT: MDDA PRESENTS IMPACT STUDY IN PARLIAMENT

Johannesburg, South Africa, 28 February 2018. The Media Development & Diversity Agency (MDDA) presented, yesterday (27 February 2018), the recently completed Study into the Impact of the MDDA to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communications.

The wide-ranging Impact Study was commissioned in 2016 with the brief to reflect and evaluate the extent to which the MDDA is responding to its mandate of community media development, and to describe the impact of MDDA funded projects in terms of how they have made a difference in the communities they serve.

The study concluded that the MDDA has been able to carry out different aspects of its mandate to a greater or lesser degree and that political parties, government and stakeholder groups saw the need to build a thriving community and small commercial sector.

Through its grant funding, the agency has channelled resources to the community and small commercial media sector and in this way, contributed towards the expansion of ownership and control as well as access of media to historically disadvantaged communities. This is evidenced in the burgeoning of both community and small commercial media, which is being published or broadcast in all indigenous languages.

The study further noted that, as much as there has been progress, limitations – both in terms of the broader media landscape and the agency itself - had impacted the sector negatively, citing a restrictive MDDA budget, and laws and regulations inhibiting sufficient allocation of MDDA funds to training and capacity building, which was identified as a core need. Issues with Project sustainability centred around funding criteria and the impasse with government and the commercial sector to secure advertising support for projects.

Internally, organisational instability was a further limitation, while the media landscape presented its own unique challenges, both due to the recession and technology disruptions within the media industry,



resulting in media concentration becoming an increasing threat. Despite the challenges, the study noted that media projects presented successes and opportunities against all odds.

“As it was more than a decade since the MDDA had been established by an Act of Parliament in 2002 (MDDA Act No 14 of 2002), and since the MDDA had funded its first community media project in 2004, it was considered necessary to commission research into the impact the Agency has had through its funding and non-financial support activities,” said Acting Chairperson of the MDDA Board, Musa Sishange. “The findings of the Impact Study will provide key input into the MDDA’s strategic planning processes, ensuring that it can continue to play a vital role in providing media access to all, in a rapidly changing media landscape. In addition, the Impact Study will be valuable in the upcoming review of the MDDA Act.”

The MDDA is a statutory development agency, deriving its mandate, from Section 16 and 32 of the Constitution Act No. 108 of 1996, thereby providing for freedom of expression and access to information. As a partnership between the South African Government and major print and broadcasting companies, it promotes and assists in the development of community media and small commercial media in South Africa and the transformation of the media, by providing support (financial, capacity building, etc.) in terms of the MDDA Act No 14 of 2002. It also aims to raise public awareness with regard to media development and diversity issues, and to encourage media literacy and a culture of reading. For further information: www.mdda.org.za

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