

MEDIA STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA STATEMENT: MDDA RECONFIRMS ITS COMMITMENT TO LANGUAGE DIVERSITY

Johannesburg, South Africa, 20 February 2018. In celebration of International Mother Language Day 2018 (21 February), the Media Development & Diversity Agency (MDDA) reaffirms its commitment to supporting the growth of a robust, vibrant and sustainable community media sector through which the usage and status of the rich diversity of indigenous languages in South Africa are elevated and promoted.

Established by an Act of Parliament in 2002 (MDDA Act No 14 of 2002), the mandate of the MDDA specifically includes the provision to “Encourage ownership and control of, and access to, media by historically disadvantaged communities as well as by historically diminished indigenous language and cultural groups.” As a result, in its funding support of community and small commercial media projects, the MDDA applies a stringent set of criteria in order to identify those projects whose priority is to change material conditions in provinces and communities plagued by social and economic inequalities. In such circumstances, the broadcast or publishing language of the project is a key criterion as media in the language(s) of the community serves as a powerful platform to raise awareness around such issues and to increase access by communities to information.

Recently approved MDDA beneficiary projects illustrate how the community media sector, with the support of the MDDA, is delivering on this principle. Print and digital media projects approved by the MDDA Board for funding in November 2017 range from Mapepeza Newspaper, which distributes to the Lesedi Local Municipality in Gauteng, and publishes in mainly Zulu and Sesotho; to Nthakgolo News publishing in the Northern Cape’s Sol Plaatjie Local Municipality in Setswana and Xhosa. In the Western Cape, Mamre News, circulated on the Cape West Coast, is an Afrikaans and English paper, while The Youth Voice, Lerato La Thabo, targets the youth and schools of the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality in Mpumalanga, publishing 60% in Xitsonga. With the global trend to digital media, a notable project is the online publication, Kleva Nkleva Online in the Mpondoland region in the Eastern Cape, and publishing in IsiXhosa, IsiMpondo and English.

Similarly, broadcast projects approved for funding cover a wide geographic spread with North West based Diamond FM providing broadcast services, predominantly in Setswana, Sesotho and English, to



the Maquassie Hills Municipality, and Rise FM, broadcasting in IsiZulu and IsiSwati, targeting the Ehlanzeni District Municipality in Mpumalanga. In Limpopo, Musina Community Radio from the Vhembe District Municipality, broadcasts mainly in Tshivenda, Sepedi and English, and Vuwani Community Radio broadcasts predominantly in Vhenda and Tsonga. In Gauteng, Ga Rankuwa Community Radio broadcasts to the City of Tshwane Metro in SeTswana, English and Sepedi, while Ugu Youth Radio in KwaZulu-Natal is a youth-initiated community radio, targeting the Ugu District Municipality mainly in IsiZulu.

“UNESCO’s 2018 theme of *Linguistic Diversity and Multilingualism count for Sustainable Development* is particularly appropriate to South Africa’s community sector, which strives to contribute to community development and the alleviation of poverty and inequality by making the media accessible to all people, particularly the historically disadvantaged, in the language of their choice,” says Acting MDDA Board Chairperson, Musa Sishange. “The recently carried out MDDA Impact Study noted the burgeoning of both community and small commercial media since the establishment of the MDDA, with community radio audiences managing to reach an impressive 25% of South African audiences and community print media being read by over 7 million people weekly. Most encouragingly is that this media is being published or broadcast predominantly in indigenous languages, reflecting the diverse country demographics.”

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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