

World Radio Day

Issued by [Media Development and Diversity Agency](#)

13 Feb 2014

The 13th of February is a day where South Africa joins the world in celebrating radio broadcast, a date proclaimed by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), as an occasion to draw attention to the unique value of radio, which remains the medium to reach the widest audience and is currently taking up new technological forms and devices.

The last 20 years in South Africa have had profound transformational changes in the radio industry, resulting in a new diverse industry that underpin nation-building and democracy, and a three-tier framework that encourages more voices, more views, greater freedom of the airwaves and fair competition. It is in this South African broader context that we have good reason to join the world in celebrating the World Radio Day. South African radio industry in 1994 is not comparable to it in 2014; it has changed for the better and for deepening our democracy. We have a good story and reason to celebrate. Radio has informed, educated and entertained our citizens even during the apartheid days, Radio Freedom and community radio (through cassettes, campaigns, etc.) continued to empower citizens with alternative information.

Now, in 2014, brought to us by our 20 year democracy, there is more radio licenses more than any other time in our history, with all three categories from public, commercial to community broadcasting service thriving. Radio listenership for community radio has increased to more than 25% of the total radio listenership. The legislative and regulatory environment is enabling growth and development of the radio industry, to the extent that community radio pays little application fees for a license, pays no license fees, signal distribution fees are discounted and subsidised by both MDDA and the Dept of Communications, frequency spectrum plan accommodates all three tiers, grant funding is provided for community radio stations through MDDA. Whilst SABC Radio reaches 77 years of age and it is now 52 years after the birth of Radio Freedom (the then voice of the ANC), we are celebrating 20 years of Community Radio, 20 years of the National Association of Broadcasters (NABSA) and until March 2014, 10 years of the MDDA. Radio continues to play a significant role in helping people in all their diversity to communicate with each other in order to strengthen our democracy, promote a culture of human rights and enable all to participate fully in our economic growth and speed up transformation and development. Radio is even more important in SA, where the rate of illiteracy is high. Radio reaches almost every corner of our country, rural, peri-urban and urban. Information is knowledge and power.

Every citizen irrespective of their social class, (where ever located, rural or urban, poor or rich) should have access to a choice of a diverse range of media. Access to communication and information empowers citizens, facilitates participatory democracy, and assists in defending, advancing and deepening our democracy. We must also support and create an enabling environment for media development and diversity. Looking forward to many years of radio to come.

"Deadline looms for MDDA-Sanlam Local Media Awards entries for 2014" 23 Jan 2015

"MDDA-Sanlam Local Media Awards entries for 2014 now open" 26 Nov 2014

"Entries open for MDDA-Sanlam Local Media Awards" 25 Nov 2014

"Mandla Langa acknowledges 20 years of media freedom and diversity" 28 May 2014

"MDDA-Sanlam Local Media Awards winners announced" 27 May 2014

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The Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) is a statutory development agency for promoting and ensuring media development and diversity.

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