

Rwanda to switch off over 51,000 TVs as digital migration period elapses

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The Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (Rura) is set to switch off over 51,000 analogue TV sets as it concludes the migration process from analogue transmission to digital broadcasting.



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The New Times, a national English language newspaper in Rwanda, reported on scheduled operation, noting that the affected households will miss out on regular programming.

"Over 51,000 people won't be able to watch their favourite soap or news broadcasts beginning midnight tonight (31 July)," read the article on *The New Times* which was picked by AllAfrica.

According to figures from the 2010 national census, over 192,800 homes had TV sets in Rwanda.

"Out of those, 141,260 (70% of all people with TV sets) homes have acquired decoders," the regulators said. This means that about 51,540 (27%) do not have decoders. All people with TV sets were expected to have bought set top boxes, commonly known as decoders by end of today to enable the switchover to digital broadcasting.

Last phase of the switchover

According to the article, the last phase of the switchover from analogue TV transmission to digital broadcasting will involve the west and south-west regions, Patrick Nyirishema, the Rura director general, said last evening.

The four-phase switch from analogue to digital transmission started in January this year and ended yesterday, 31 July.

On 31 January Rura switched off analogue sets in Kigali, while those in the north-west and East were barred on 31 March

and on 31 May, the regulator switched off north-east and southern parts of the country.

In 2008, the government decided to digitalise the whole network of the Rwanda Broadcasting Agency following the deadline set by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for all countries to make the switchover from analogue to digital TV broadcasting by 17 June 2015.

Digital coverage currently 95%

According to Nyirishema, before the digital migration exercise started, 50% of the TV sets used in Rwanda relied on analogue transmission but currently, the digital coverage is currently at around 95%."

He said Rura adopted a phased approach to migrate due to decoder distribution constraints.

Rwanda will become the second country in sub-Saharan Africa after Tanzania to switch off its analogue television signal.

Tele 10, Sorim, TransAfrica and Star Africa Media are the four companies licensed to import decoders.

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