



TELECOMS, INTERNET AND BROADCAST IN AFRICA
SOUTHWOOD CONSULTANTS LTD TRADING AS BALANCING ACT



Report on the Workshop on Digital Migration in Ghana¹

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² From Internet Research

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1. Introduction

The Ghana analog to digital migration workshop went on successfully on Thursday June 30th 2011. It met its objectives to provide information on the key issues related to digital migration; explore the current state of play in Ghana; and discuss approaches to addressing some of the key challenges. The partners for this workshop were the Association for Progressive Communication (APC), Open Society Institute (OSI), Balancing Act, Internet Research, and PenPlusBytes.

It brought together almost 40 key stakeholders from the different sectors (please see list of 27 organizations represented below) impacted by digital migration and provided them with key information of the mandated migration and educated them of the urgency, consequences, cost and strategies that could be taken during this initiative.

2. The Minister of Communications

The Minister for Communication was represented by his deputy Hon. Ernest Armah who presented a statement (please see Minister's speech below) discussing the current ongoing projects events associated with the migration. He mentioned the national committee that had been established especially for this migration. He talked about the recent request for proposal for a Turnkey Digital Terrestrial Television Network that had just been published in various media.

3. The Issues, Challenges and Potential Benefits of the Migration

Mr. Russell Southwood of Balancing Act discussed via a PowerPoint presentation, the issues, challenges and potential benefits of the migration. He talked about the dumping effect from other countries if Ghana delayed to raising awareness on the topic. He mentioned the positive aspects of the migration such as the clearer TV picture on the digital screen and the increase in coverage in the populated areas of the countries.

4. The Panel Discussion

During the panel discussion Mr. Berefi Apenteng of TV Africa discussed the strategies currently used in China where the government imposed a minor fee that was in turn used to pay for the set-top boxes for all nationals. He also mentioned the case of the USA where the government and TV stations subsidized the price of the set-top box. He recommended the China model for Ghana as opposed to the US.

Mr. Stanley Opoku of National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI), a member of the original 26 member digital migration committee provided some technical explanation of the initiative. He made note of the fact that originally the committee had suggested a DVB-T technology to be adopted which was mentioned in the report from APC Ghana report. This technology has since been changed to DVB-T2 so Ghana may be in sync with the European countries, and this was one reason that was making it difficult for the committee to do outreach very early as standards continue to change.

Mr. Mohammed Shardow of the Media Foundation provided requests of items that must be considered during the migration (please see notes from MFWA below). In addition he cautioned the implementation team to take into consideration the distribution of Ghanaian language programs across the country.

The Chief Operating Officer of Multi-TV Mr. Kenneth Ashigbey, was an active participant of the workshop. He expressed concern that Ghana since Ghana is so far behind time in meeting the deadline by 2015, and

said more effort must be made for a successful roll-out of the programme. He added that key issues that key stakeholders should be discussing in this migration process are local content, procedure and installation process and the need to acquire quality decoders subsidized by Government.

Others discussed essential issues such as in the haste to avoid of "dumping" the government may put a quota on TV sets that are imported and that could actually prevent TV viewers interested in using the set-top boxes from acquiring good reasonably priced TV sets.

5. Next Steps

The event was well covered by the media. It was televised on the 6pm news by eTV. Several radio stations discussed the topic. A number of newspapers (please see news clips below) also reported on the workshop.

For follow-up the hope is for the attendees to pick up the topic and help spread the word. Kenneth Ashigbey has already expressed interest in partnering with Internet Research to organize a TV programme version of the workshop.

In addition, those present identified the following issues as ones that needed further attention as the process moved forward:

- There needed to be a greater level of consumer awareness raising. Whilst the Government felt that this process should wait until the resolution of the signal carrier tender, those at the meeting felt that it should start as soon as possible and cover: the cost of the set top box and what it does, the programmes that will be available once a set top box installed, the help and support in place for the consumer and the timings of the roll-out areas.
- There needed to be a clear policy on the subsidy of set-top boxes for those who cannot afford them. Currently the proposed price of the set-top box is too high for many TV owners and this will mean that there is a danger that those who cannot afford the current proposed price may find themselves without a TV signal at some point. The Government is concerned that subsidized set top boxes will simply be exported to neighbouring countries and therefore needs to make sure it co-ordinates its subsidy policy with other countries.
- Currently Ghana has multiple TV broadcasters who manage their own transmission. With the proposal for a single Free To Air signal carrier, concerns were expressed that it would be possible for a future Government to control and/or switch off the television signals as used to happen in military coups in the past. The Government needed to be clearer what the legal framework was for the single signal carrier so that this is avoided.
- Concerns were expressed by broadcasters that the overall process of creating a single signal carrier was not transparent enough and that it was a shame that alternative signal carriers were not available. The proposed governance structure of the signal carrier is complicated and how it will operate is far from clear.

6. Organizations Represented

Organization	# of people
Choice FM	1
Consumer Advocacy Group	1
Daily Dispatch	2
Daily Graphic	2
Daily Guide	1
DBMC	1
DSTV mobile	1
eTV	3
Freelance F	1
Ghana Institute of Journalism	1
Ghana News Agency	2
GINKS	1
I.S.D information services	1
Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Program	1
Media Foundation for West Africa	2
Ministry of Communication	2
Mrs. Ogilvy Communication Agency	1
Multi TV	1
Multichoice Ghana	1
NAFTI	1
Next Generation Broadcasting	1
Peace FM	1
Radio Frequency Systems	2
Skyy Digital	1
The Insight	2
TV Africa	1
TV3 Network	1

African countries are committed to migrating to digital broadcasting by June 2015. This will be a costly process (both for Government and citizens) and it is currently unclear who will benefit from it or where the resources needed to make the transition will come from. Arguably it is one of the most fundamental changes in African broadcasting for over a decade and raises wider questions about how the "public interest" is expressed in broadcasting and its relationship with interactive, converged media. However, only a minority of African countries have started the policy work needed to create the transition and most of the discussion is focused on technical questions.

APC and Balancing Act's «Digital Broadcast Migration in West Africa » project aims to provide information about the transition to digital broadcasting in Africa and looks the costs, potential benefits and policy issues. The project has a particular focus on Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal and has been possible thanks to support from Open Society Institute (OSI).

For more information <http://digmig.apc.org/>