**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 17 MAY 2022**

**VOTE NO 4 – GCIS**

**TUESDAY, 17 MAY 2022**

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**P*ROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MINI-PLENARY 1 – VIRTUAL***

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Members of the mini-plenary session met on the virtual platform at 10:02.

Acting Chairperson Mr M G Mahlaule took the Chair and

requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or

meditation.

The Chairperson announced that the virtual mini-plenary

sitting constituted a meeting of the National Assembly.

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

Debate on Vote No 4 – Government Communications and

Information System:

The MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY: Hon Chairperson of this Mini

Plenary, ... Am I audible?



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The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): Yes, you are!

The MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY: Deputy Minister in the

Presidency, Ms Pinky Kekana, Chairperson of the Portfolio

Committee on Communication, hon Boyce Maneli, members of the

Portfolio Committee on Communication, hon members, Director-

General of GCIS, Ms Phumla Williams, members of the management

of GCIS, Chairperson, we are honoured to be presenting this

Budget Vote of the Government Communication and Information

System, GCIS, since my appointment in this job.

I want to dedicate this Budget Vote to the memory of the

nearly 500 compatriots we lost in the recent natural disaster

in KwaZulu-Natal. I also dedicate this Budget Vote to those

South Africans and international partners who came to the

assistance of our people who were affected by the disaster in

so many unfortunate ways.

This dedication is borne out of our appreciation that the

provision of information to the nation and to our partners

globally - and our engagement with stakeholders at home and

abroad - is about touching and transforming lives and our

economic fortunes for the better.



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Just a few weeks ago, I was deeply touched by the visit

undertaken by our President, some of my colleagues in Cabinet

and provincial and municipal leadership to flood-affected

communities in KwaZulu-Natal.

The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): Hon Minister, you

are muted. And hon McGluwa, you are the one causing

disturbances in a meeting. Can you please mute your

microphone? Continue, hon Minister!

The MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY: On that visit, we shared

heartrending moments, sympathising with bereaved and affected

families. From all walks of life, backgrounds and political

persuasion, citizens, businesses and partners in the rescue

and recovery efforts had questions that needed answering.

These were questions about: How people could access relief and

support services; where do we report missing persons; how do

we find out who is searching for our relatives; how will we

find out if missing people are found; who can help us with

food ... [Phone rings.] ... or accommodation – I beg your

pardon, Chair; will government provide assistance with



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funerals; and will other schools take in learners from schools

that are damaged?

These basic questions of survival and the necessities of life

brought into sharp focus the responsibility that rests on the

Government Communication and Information System as the centre

of public communications in government. This is also a

collective responsibility that is shared by all clusters,

departments and entities that make up the government

communication system.

The disaster in KwaZulu-Natal reminds us that the effective

dissemination of information based on engagement with

communities and social partners is a key contribution towards

healing psychosocial and physical scars, and restoring a

decimated landscape.

This hour of difficulty also reminds us that effective

communication has the ability to unlock the very real power of

our national treasure of ubuntu, and to open the hearts and

pockets of South Africans who want to reach out to people in

distress.



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Tragically, the floods of destruction in KwaZulu-Natal

followed waves of Covid-19 infections that claimed many lives

and livelihoods, but which also fostered resilience,

compliance and creativity in our nation.

Hon members, what I have outlined is part of the backdrop

against which we are tabling GCIS’s 2022-23 Budget Vote,

today. The Government Communication and Information System has

been allocated R719,9 million for the 2022-23 financial year.

This allocation reflects baseline reductions of R37,5 million

in 2022-23; R5 million in 2023-24; and a baseline increase of

R31,9 million in 2024-25.

The baseline reductions can be attributed to the fact that

there is no additional allocation for the Covid-19 Vaccine

Roll-out Campaign, compared to 2020-21 and 2021-22 financial

years. Over the next three-year MTEF period, 2022-23 to 2024-

25, GCIS spending plan amounts to R2,182 billion which is

spread as follows: In 2022-23 - R719,9 million; in 2023-24 -

R714,9 million; and in 2024-25 - R746,8 million.

The department’s current budget of R719,9 million for the

2022-23 financial year is allocated as follows: Operating



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budget of R461,8 million consumes 64,2% of the budget

allocation; an operating budget caters for compensation of

employees to the value of R282,1 million, for funded

establishment of 498 permanent positions and goods and

services to the value of R179,7 million; transfers and

subsidies of R255 million consumes 35,4% of the entire GCIS

budget allocation; included in the transfers and subsidies

allocation is R36,822 million allocation for the Media

Development and Diversity Agency, MDDA; and R218,122 million

allocation for Brand South Africa, Brand SA.

The capital budget of R3,1 million consumes 0,4% of the budget

allocation. These funds are set aside for the purchase of

capital assets that will enhance the smooth operations of the

department as well as improve service delivery mechanisms. The

funding provided to Brand SA and the Media Development and

Diversity Agency will allow these two important entities to

continue their work in support of the President’s investment

drive, our nation brand, ... social cohesion and to ensure a

vibrant and sustainable community media sector.

The funding provided to the GCIS over the three-year Medium-

Term Expenditure Framework period, MTEF period, 2022-23 to



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2024-25, will allow us to carry out the constitutionally

mandated task of ensuring that all citizens and communities

have access to information.

The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): Hon Minister!

The MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY: Chair!

The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): My apologies! There

is a small button on the side of your phone that will allow

you phone to be on silent. It is causing some disruptions.

Thank you so much. You may proceed!

The MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY: Chair, I have just switched it

off. Thank you for that intervention, Chair. The Deputy

Minister, Pinky Kekana, will give a full account of the work

of these two entities, however, I want to highlight a few

important undertakings by the MDDA and Brand SA. During the

2021-22 financial year, the inaugural Marketing, Advertising

and Communication- B-BBEE Sector Council was established. The

main function of council is to ensure that transformation in

the media, advertising and communications sector, including

JSE-listed companies, is promoted, monitored and reported on.



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Furthermore, in the 2021-2022 financial year, GCIS developed a

Draft Media Development and Diversity Amendment Bill which is

expected to be finalised in the outer financial year. During

the 2022-23 financial year, working with the sector, the GCIS

will facilitate the development of the Media Transformation

and Diversity Sector Code. Brand SA continues to build our

nation brand and to market South Africa internationally.

Work continues to leverage on the African Continental Free

Trade Area, AFCFTA, platform to ensure that South Africa and

the rest of the continent can build a strong African

reputation brand. While existing initiatives such as Play Your

Part are being expanded to focus on international audiences.

The GCIS is keenly aware of the constraints on the fiscus that

affect all components of government and we nurture the hope

that economic reconstruction and recovery will in the

foreseeable future place more resources at our disposal.

While we will not abandon our hope of a brighter budget, we

are forced to acknowledge that after years of doing more with

less, we are approaching the precipice of doing less with

less. We are therefore in a position where we do need to be

strategically selective in what we choose to focus on, without



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compromising the nation’s right to information. And, we need

to do so without stemming the flow of information to

neighbours and partners on our continent and around the world.

The GCIS’s content focus is built around the priorities

President Ramaphosa set out in the 2022 State of the Nation

Address, namely: Overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic; a massive

rollout of infrastructure; a substantial increase in local

production; an employment stimulus to create jobs and support

livelihoods; and the rapid expansion of our energy generation

capacity.

To this we have added the shameful and tragic pandemic of

gender-based violence which, in the past few days, has again

visited horrific violence and death on families, including the

family of a former Member of this House, Mr Godrich Gardee. I

trust, hon members, that all of us are united in offering our

condolences to the Gardee family; as well as families just a

few kilometres away from Parliament on the Cape Flats; and

further afield in the Northern Cape who have been struck by

this social disaster.



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Hon Chairperson of the session, the focal areas I have

highlighted call for communication that is credible,

compelling and competitive in the sense that our

communications flow beyond our national boundaries into a

global marketplace.

We will deepen the symmetry between proactive communications

that will build the nation’s trust and pride in what

government and our country is achieving, and communications

that will particularly bring opportunities and hope to South

Africa’s 12 million unemployed people.

We will deepen regular engagement with the nation through

media and through direct interaction to demonstrate that we

are a government of our word and we are a government in

partnership with all sectors of society. This is the social

compact to which the President refers.

Our content and form of presentation fights for eyeballs,

airtime, readership, viewership and followings around our

country, around our continent and around the world. This means

we have to respond to change and we need to be ambitious

enough to set trends and practices that others could follow in



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the spirit of contributing, through communications, to a

better Africa and a better world.

South Africa, as a country, and our President, as a leader,

are significant and highly respected players in global

affairs, and our communications must project and respect this

reality. The much-changed communication environment in the

past two years has necessitated that GCIS fast-track the

upskilling of the workforce to align the organisation to the

occupational demands associated with the Fourth Industrial

Revolution, 4IR.

It also required that Information and Communications

Technology, ICT, systems had to be upgraded to provide the

capacity for regular virtual/webinar meetings using various

platforms. It is self-evident that the numerous virtual

platforms and social media platforms used by GCIS in this

period will have to be maintained or further increased into

the future. This will go hand in hand with stepped-up face-to-

face engagement. A number of Presidential outreach izimbizo

are planned for this year, and GCIS will continue to play a

key supporting role in this regard.



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Hon members, in the coming period, GCIS will continue actively

building on our many partnerships and collaborations to

support our country’s efforts to vaccinate over 70% of the

target population. We will also continue to drive the message

that vaccines are effective in preventing serious illness,

hospitalisation and death, and they remain our quickest path

to normality. GCIS will also continue to play a pivotal role

in proactive campaigns such as KeReady and Vooma Vaccination

Weekends, which have succeeded in driving higher vaccination

numbers, especially amongst younger people.

On 9 December 2021, I joined my colleagues at the GCIS on a

picket commemorating International Anti-Corruption Day. During

this event we spoke on the importance of whistle blowers in

the fight against corruption. Many of the worrying revelations

at the Zondo Commission of Inquiry were only brought to light

because citizens stepped forward and told their stories.

As government, we know that there have been many occasions

where we have fallen short. Public trust has been eroded and

people are rightly sceptical at times. As a collective, we

have vowed to do better and we must continue to do so.



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Corruption threatens to eat at the very soul of our young

democracy, and it has to end.

It is therefore heartening that government has made huge

strides with a number of successful investigations by the SIU,

as well as the forfeiture of assets. GCIS supported the anti-

corruption drive by profiling our various anti-corruption

initiatives and programmes on our suite of platforms, across

media and social media, public engagements, and through

comprehensive messaging.

The overall thrust has been to highlight positive

interventions while also calling on the public to join the

fight. Active citizens are the bedrock of any democracy and

are key to greater social cohesion and nation building.

I believe our key task in this period is to ensure that no

South African is left behind, in line with the President’s

call to action in this year’s State of the Nation Address. Our

communication must touch and change lives, while also being

relevant and easily understood. We dare not rest on our

laurels by believing that what worked today will still be

relevant tomorrow.



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We cannot allow a new divide to be created between those with

access to resources and technology and those without. Our

communication must therefore be a mixture of the old and the

new. We must blend the best of both worlds and find ways to

reach people where they live in a language or medium they

understand.

We will deploy our tried, trusted and necessary direct

engagement methods of imbizo, activations, outreach

activities, community dialogues and loud hailing. Similarly,

*Vuk’uzenzele* newspaper, which is distributed once a month in

hard copy, with 850 000 copies per edition since October 2021

and published twice a month online, is steadily changing

lives.

The media sector as a whole has walked with GCIS and

government every step of the way during these past two years.

They have covered every angle of the pandemic and have been

instrumental in supporting the call to vaccinate. They have

been our partners in fighting vaccine hesitancy, dispelling

vaccine myths and have tackled fake news head on.



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GCIS has worked closely with our partners in the media on a

daily basis either through media conferences, engagements,

sharing of online content, webinars and the bi-weekly Cabinet

media briefings and statements. We intend to build on these

relationships to ensure an informed, educated and ultimately

active citizenry.

Honourable members, a close companion on our journey of

reaching out to the nation and the world is the esteemed

Portfolio Committee on Communications. This is a committee we

respect deeply as the elected representatives of our nation.

It is a committee we respect for its commitment to the

integrity and efficiency of government communications.

It is a committee we respect for its firm exercise of

oversight and its creative exercise of making proposals that

aid us in moving government communications forward. It is a

committee that is tough in its critique and generous in its

appreciation of the work we do.

We thank the chair and members from all parties for their

support and guidance and we look forward to another year of

partnership in the service of the nation – robust and frank



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about the future of our country. I assure the committee that

its commitment will be reciprocated by that of my colleagues

at the GCIS, who will ensure that no one is left behind as we

talk to and with South Africans. It is an honour for me to

table the GCIS Budget Vote for 2022-23. I thank you, Chair.

Mr B M MANELI: Hon House Chairperson, hon members, hon

Ministers and Deputy Ministers, fellow South Africans, let me

from the outset state that I rise on behalf of the ANC to

support Budget Vote 4 - Government Communications and

Information Systems. This debate takes place in the month

dedicated to the continent of Africa every year with 25 May as

the most important highlight of the month.

Let us, as Africans, use this month not only to remember the

formation of the Organization of African Unity now the African

Union or the wars and instability in some countries on the

continent. But use this as an opportunity to communicate the

achievements and further the implementable plans to take

Africa and its people progressively to new heights. This

brings to the fore the importance of the Department of

Government Communications and Information Systems in factually



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reporting on what the African governments do on behalf of the

people who installed them.

Fellow South Africans, in the context of South Africa, it is

always important to remind ourselves that the Constitution of

the Republic of Africa, adopted in 1996, as the supreme law of

the country, directs the mandate of the Department of

Government Communications and Information Systems. Section 195

(g) of the Constitution directs that the public should be

provided with information that is timely, accurate, and

importantly, accessible as a way of ensuring transparency. It

is against this constitutional mandate that in 1998, the SA

Communications Services, a perceived former apartheid

government propaganda machinery was dissolved and the

Government Communications and Information Systems Department

was established by the Cabinet.

This was largely based on recommendations contained in the

report of the Task Group on Government Communications, known

as Comtask. Therefore, the department is responsible for

providing strategic leadership and coordinating a government

communication and information system that ensures the public

is informed and has access to government information,



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programmes, and policies that benefit them. The Media

Development and Diversity Agency, MDDA, an entity of this

department established in terms of the Media Development and

Diversity Agency Act of 2002, strengthens the need for the

government and the public to communicate by ensuring the

plurality of views through community broadcasting and print

media. The Media Development and Diversity Agency, MDDA, makes

grants available to deserving applicants as a way of ensuring

the lack of resources is not the reason for community media

not to give life to the spirit and intent of the Media

Development and Diversity Agency Act. In his 54th national

conference, the ANC, amongst others, resolved the following

with regards to government communication. One, is that

government communications must be improved, coherent and

centralised through the Department of Government

Communications and Information Systems; government

communicators, including spokespersons, must comply with

government policy on communications and continues.

The Department of Government Communications and Information

Systems should play a central role in government communication

and must be adequately capacitated to achieve this; more

emphasis should be placed on the co-ordination role of the



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Department of Government Communications and Information

Systems to ensure coherent messaging Two, that existing co-

ordination mechanisms such as the Government Communication

Forum should be strengthened. There is a need to review the

location of the Department of Government Communications and

Information Systems in the Presidency, as a way to give it the

necessary authority to oversee and co-ordinate government

communications. Three, the imbizo concept needs to be

strengthened to ensure that it achieves its purpose, which is

unmediated and direct communications with the people. More

creative ways are needed to enable and achieve this. In giving

meaning to these resolutions, Budget Vote 4 allocates the

department R719,9 million in 2022-2023, R714,9 million in

2023-2024 and R746,8 million in 2024-2025, which includes

transfers to public entities Brand South Africa, BSA and the

MDDA. In terms of programmes, the department has allocated 75%

of the budget to the programme of content processing,

dissemination, governmental co-ordination and stakeholder

management, and 25% to the programme of the administration.

Fellow South Africans, the department's track record in

spending allocated resources in line with approved priorities,

inspires confidence, as demonstrated in the previous financial



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years. His Excellency President, Cyril Ramaphosa’s February

2021 state of the nation address, set out the key government

priorities which centred, at the time; on defeating the COVID-

19 pandemic, promoting economic reconstruction and recovery;

building a capable state and combating corruption. In

addition, the fight against gender-based violence and femicide

should remain a top priority. This informed the Government

Communications and Information Systems Department’s co-

ordination of government-wide communication at the time. The

department was also allocated R50 billion in the 2021-2022

financial year to drive a centralised COVID-19 vaccination

roll-out campaign. Through this allocation, communication

activities raised across the following areas from Brand SA

2021 to date; Educating and reassuring the public around the

roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines during the early phases of the

vaccination programme; Combating vaccine hesitancy and

disinformation; profiling the President's globally important

role as an AU COVID-19 champion; Communication support to the

Deputy President as chair of the Inter-Ministerial Committee,

IMC, on Vaccines; Communication support to the National

Coronavirus Command Council and the President's Co-ordinating

Council, PCC, and special sessions of the Cabinet devoted to

COVID-19 et cetera.



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This was also demonstrated during the hard lockdown periods

when the message was focused on saving the lives of South

Africans. The department did not only ensure a reliable single

message from the government, but it also ensured that a clean

audit record is kept even with the emergency measures imposed

by the State of Disaster. We appreciate that the reliable

message was not without destructive fake news. However, the

department, working with all communications stakeholders,

including social media platforms, was able to rebut the fake

news as it occurred. Whilst noting with appreciation that

technology advancement as content processing and

dissemination, thereby making information easily accessible.

South Africa remains a country with fault lines of poverty,

unemployment and inequality, owing to many years of apartheid

national oppression characterised by race, gender, and class.

Almost three decades since the advent of democracy, there are

areas that have not yet enjoyed the benefits of connectivity

brought about by the information age due to limited or no

access to mainstream information platforms, especially those

controlled by the private sector. The constitutional

obligation of public service transparency brought about by

providing the public with information that is timely,



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accurate, and importantly accessible, shall remain a dream yet

to be fulfilled.

Therefore, government communications play an important role in

closing the information gap as envisaged by the 2016

Government Segmentation Model, which ensures all five agreed

societal segments receive diverse communication products and

platforms. This Budget Vote 4 ensures that the department

delivers on this, irrespective of the limited resources

available.

As I conclude, allow me to reflect on a few observations and

recommendations as follows; observations, in this Budget Vote,

the Department of Government Communications and Information

systems commits to increasing its capacity, which includes

bringing in the youth through internships and general internal

training of the government communicators in different aspects,

to meet the demands of our times. I also make an observation

that inadequate budget allocations forcing budget cuts on key

programmes like ICT infrastructure, leaving studios

unutilised, will not only diminish the relevance of the

Department of Government Communications and Information

Systems but has imminent potential to collapse the whole



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government communication and information system envisaged by

the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa if low

intervention is made.

And, therefore, we want to make the recommendation that the

Ministry and the committee must engage the National Treasury

and the Portfolio Committee on Appropriations respectively, on

the funding of the Department of Government Communications and

Information Systems to prevent the potential collapse. Once

again, House Chair, the ANC supports Budget Vote 4, and I

thank you.

Ms T BODLANI: Thank you, Chairperson, good morning hon members

and good morning fellow South Africans. The Government

Communication and Information System, GCIS, is well on its way

to turning a corner, after years of being used as a personal

instrument for personal enrichment by those in the ruling

party. Noting the above, it is unfortunate that the GCIS is

featured prominently in the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into

State Capture, which was headed by then Acting Chief Justice

Raymond Zondo.



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To appropriate from President Cyril Ramaphosa in his state of

the nation address, 2022, after receiving the first two parts of

the Zondo Report, he said: “The first two parts of the report

make it plain to see that there was indeed state capture.

Chairperson, this means that public institutions and state-

owned entities were infiltrated by a criminal network intent

on looting public money for private gain. The President goes

on to say that: “The reports have detailed the devastating

effects of this criminal activity on SA Airways, SAA, Transnet,

Denel, the SA Revenue Service, SARS, as well as Government

Communications.”

Unfortunately, due to a lack of political will in prosecuting

these criminals, some of whom have not fled to Dubai, and are

still out there, we can only pray for divine intervention for

such humans. Let me place it on record that President

Ramaphosa has done very little to bring stability to this

department with the continued cabinet reshuffle, which has

just added to the instability in the department over the past

few years. That said, we now have a Minister who has reached

only 19% of the Presidential Performance Agreement targets.



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While the DA applauds the GCIS for seven consecutive years

that it has repeatedly demonstrated sound corporate

governance. It is apt that we make a clarion call to President

Ramaphosa to do his part in stabilising the department and its

entities. We note that the 2021-22 financial year has been

premised on the government’s key priorities, as set out in

President Ramaphosa’s February 2021, state of the nation

address. These priorities centred on defeating the Covid

pandemic, promoting economic reforms and recovery, building a

state capable of combating corruption, and the dreadful

gender-based violence.

The department plays an integral part in championing

programmes which highlight the scourge of gender-based

violence. As the DA, we are concerned about how these

programmes will be compromised due to the budget cuts at a

time when women of South Africa live in fear because of

gender-based violence and femicide. The department managed to

reduce the vacancy rate from 8,44% in the 2020-21 financial

year to 6,32% by February 2022, with the appointment of three

new Deputy-Director Generals, DDGs, who assumed duty on 1

March 2022. Overall, the department experienced a turnover

rate of 5,95% between 1 April 2021 and 28 February 2022.



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Noting that the compensation of the department’s 441 employees

in 2020-21 was the largest expenditure item, comprising of an

estimated 38,3% percent of the total budget over the Medium-

Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF, period, the DA categorically

states that, it is not the responsibility of the state to

create jobs, but rather, as research has shown, the government

should strive to create an environment suitable for economic

growth and indeed jobs. Nonetheless, we do need to state our

support for public servants to earn competitive salaries to

avoid having the government used as a training ground for the

private sector, leading to brain drain and the institutional

knowledge drop.

The DA supports the endeavours of the department to

professionalise government communication and making it as

cost-effective as possible. This can be achieved if the

department streamline its processes and get rid of deadwood

and political appointees who are just burdening the system.

Chairperson, the recruitment of 22 graduate interns in line

with the Presidential Youth Employment Programme during the

2021-22 financial year, with the aim of alleviating

unemployment amongst young graduates and providing

opportunities to gain work experience, is indeed welcomed. In



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the same breath, we warn and cautions that these opportunities

should be given to persons on merit and not on political

affiliation, as is the norm in our government.

While the Vuk’uzenzele newspaper is distributed digitally and

physically countrywide, and is the only national publication

that is focused on the government’s key priorities, with an

emphasis on service delivery programmes and the opportunities

created by the government, we are worried that the department

has no measures in place to monitor its impact, only focusing

on stock levels as opposed to the impact of the distribution

mechanisms and that of the ... [Interjections.] ... [Time expired.]

Mr V PAMBO: Thank you very much, Chairperson, the EFF rejects

Budget Vote 4 on Government Communications and Information

Systems, GCIS. We reject the committee report and the proposed

budget of more than R700 million a year because, to support

this budget is to support Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa propaganda

machinery at the expense of taxpayers’ money. One of the

primary purposes of having a platform such as government

communications ought to have been to ensure that there is

uniformity in the manner government communicates its

decisions, plans and how it responds during times of crises.



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This department has been caught napping far too long, and

often during key moments when a solid and reaffirming message

from government was needed over the past twelve months. In

July last year, when the country was caught up in violent

frenzy whose origins can only be the destructive factional

battles in the ANC, during which a President foolishly claimed

that the violence in KwaZulu-Natal was a result of an

insurrection and ethnic mobilization.

It was left up to the then Minister of Defense to correct that

foolishness and dismiss claims of an insurrection. The GCIS

was nowhere to be seen. ... [Interjections.]

The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): Hon Pambo.

Mr V PAMBO: Yes, sir.

The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): My apologies. There

is a hand from hon Radebe.

Mr B A RADEBE: Correct. Thank you, hon Chairperson, I’m rising

on Rule 84. The member has just uttered unparliamentary words,

like saying that the President is foolish.



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The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): Hon Radebe, I did

not hear him referring to the President as such, but I will

consult with the Table. Can you proceed in the meantime, hon

Pambo.

Mr V PAMBO: The GCIS was nowhere to be seen as infrastructure

was destroyed, and as many as 400 African people were killed

by a mob of racists in Phoenix, and when the police and the

army were caught literally napping, unable to reassure

citizens what the government was doing in that part of the

country. This GCIS is also fiddling today, unable to

communicate in any meaningful way the government’s position on

measures to fight the Coronavirus pandemic.

It is exactly as a result of this sloth-like way of working

those corrupt opportunists such as the former Minister of

Health saw an opportunity to loot millions of public money

through the Digital Vibes scandal. If we had a properly

functioning government communications systems, there would be

no confusion on the government’s approach to vaccination,

there would be little room for information peddlers and

swindlers who confuse the general public about the so-called

dangers of vaccination.



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The end result of this poor handling of such a critical

intervention is surely going to be loss of life of people who

are not vaccinating because the information market is flooded

by negative messages of the impacts of the vaccine. To date,

government’s response to the humanitarian crisis in KwaZulu-

Natal and the Eastern Cape that resulted from the torrent

rains and floods in those two provinces has been left to a

corrupt and inept bunch that constitutes the provincial

government of KwaZulu-Natal with stink tank water.

Thousands of people still do not know where to go for help,

because the state has no capacity to communicate to her own

people. Today, the country does not know whether SA Airways,

SAA, has been sold or just handed over to a group of private

people with ties to the ANC or not. This has been left to

Jamnandas’s department, a department that consistently gives

out conflicting messages on the matter. The country also has

... [Interjections.]

The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): Hon Pambo.

Mr V PAMBO: Yes, sir.



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The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): There is a hand from

hon Radebe.

Mr B A RADEBE: Thank you, hon Chairperson, I’m rising on Rule

82. The member knows very well that we cannot call each other

on first name terms. Thank you, Chair.

The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): Hon Pambo, I heard

that as well, you called hon Gordhan, Jamnandas. Can you use

proper names to call colleagues?

Mr V PAMBO: Mr Gordhan. The country also has been left

wondering as to what exactly the government is doing to deal

with load shedding, as this responsibility is left to an

evasive group of people who are intent of defending the

current incompetence at Eskom. These are key communication

messages the GCIS ought to be communicating on behalf of

government, to ensure that there is uniformity and a

standardized way of communicating. Government information

sources such as the Vuk’uzenzele newsletter that has the

potential to spread information to all corners of the country

have been neglected and used only to give tenders to a



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disinterested group of ANC aligned tenderpreneurs, whose sole

obsession is looting of state resources.

To date, more than 74% of young people who are unemployed do

not have a faintest clue of what the department is doing to

avert an unemployment disaster in this country. The so-called

Thusong Service Centers that the GCIS runs are hopelessly

useless for the vast majority of our people. Minister, under

your leadership, the GCIS is a shadow of what it once was and

is woefully incapable to restoring our people’s confidence in

the government. You even collapsed the Media Development and

Diversity Agency, the MDDA.

The firing of the CEO is just a symptom to a much larger

problem of political incompetence. In the absence of a

functional MDDA, it is black media companies that continue to

be marginalised when the same white-owned media companies

continue to curate their racist message and print even through

taxpayers’ money. The EFF rejects this budget. I thank you,

Chair.

The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): Thank you very much,

hon Pambo. Hon Pambo, as much as you did not appear to call



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the President foolishness, you appeared to refer to his

actions as foolishness. I want to caution that, hon members,

we use proper language that is deemed to be fit for

Parliament. Thank you very much.

Mr M HLENGWA: Hon Chairperson, I read this on behalf of the

hon Majozi. It is fitting that we meet on 17 May, World

Telecommunication and Information Society Day. It is a day

founded to help raise awareness of the possibilities the

internet and other information and communication technologies

can bring to societies and economies. Communication is central

to everything we do. It is how we share information, and in

today’s world there are multiple platforms and mediums used to

get messages across to audiences.

The importance of the Department of Government Communication

and Information System can therefore not be overstated. In

brief the department is responsible for providing strategic

leadership and co-ordinating a government communication system

that ensures that the public is informed and has access to

government information, programmes and policies that benefit

them.



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As the IFP we would like to remind all those present today,

and joining us online, that the Department of Government

Communication and Information System, GCIS’s, co-ordination

role cuts across all three spheres; national, provincial and

local government. One would hope that this would automatically

ensure co-operation between various departments. However, it

seems, this is not the case. According to the portfolio

committee, and I quote:

Although GCIS has a constitutional mandate, it however

still relies on the power of persuasion to compel some

departments to fulfil their communication obligations.

Considering the type of information GCIS is tasked with

disseminating at times, life-saving, we call on all

noncompliant departments to get their houses in order.

It is further of concern to the IFP that in a country with

over 60 million people, the digital footprint of this

department is relatively small. Despite the department’s claim

to have seamlessly adapted to the modern ways in which the

public consume or receive information by embarking on an

intensive penetration and sustained presence in the digital

media space, the numbers tell a different story. On Facebook,



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this department has just over 8 000 followers, on Twitter,

slightly more with almost 122 000 followers, while on YouTube,

the department has 64 000 subscribers.

However, who is speaking to the youth? Why does the

department, for example, not have an Instagram account?

According to international research agency, Statista, as of

March 2022, there were 6,8 million Instagram users in South

Africa, with 18 to 23-year-olds making up 30,8% of Instagram’s

audience and users aged 25 to 34 years with 30,3%.

Interestingly, no mention is made in the budget report of

specific allocations to increase the department’s footprint on

social media. Instead, it seems that GCIS is directing a large

chunk of its budget on what is arguably a dying medium, print.

The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): Hon Seoposengwe, can

you please mute your microphone. You are disturbing the

proceedings. Continue, hon Hlengwa.

Interestingly, no mention is made in the budget report of

specific allocations to increase the department’s footprint on



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social media. Instead, it seems that GCIS is directing a large

chunk of its budget on what is arguably a dying medium, print.

According to the report over the medium-term the department

plans to produce 30,6 million copies of Vuk’uzenzele at an

estimated cost of R75 million to R50,4 million per year for

printing. Has the department conducted any monitoring and

evaluation on the efficiency of Vuk’uzenzele as a vehicle to

convey essential news to the broader public? This is a line

item that possibly might need to be reviewed and the monies

invested more wisely.

We welcome the plans for 1 140 community and stakeholder

engagements per year, which include community radio talk

shows, activations at taxi ranks and mall, information blitzes

on commuter trains and social media campaigns. As the IFP, we

feel this type of engagement is much more appropriate for

reaching South Africans where they travel, work and engage and

should be expanded.

We further welcome the department’s plans to invest in

technological reforms in light of cybersecurity issues, as



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well as to enable to department to function effectively in a

fast moving digital environment.

As the IFP, we must register concern in relation to the Media

Development and Diversity Agency that overall expenditure on

community and small commercial print and digital projects and

community broadcast projects is expected to decrease from

R5,8 million in 2021-22 to R4,3 million in 2022-23. This

agency’s all important goal is to enable historically

disadvantaged communities and individuals to gain access to

the media. There should be more funding directed to this

agency, and not less. [Time expired.]

The DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY (Ms P S Kekana): Hon

House Chair, let me recognise the chairperson of the portfolio

committee, hon Maneli, hon members, the Minister in the

Presidency and members of Parliament, as we table the

Government Communication and Information System 2022-23

budget, let us reflect on a year that has showed the resolve

of South Africa, our people and this government.

Most recently, devastating floods hit several parts of our

country causing a tremendous upheaval in the lives of our



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people, mostly in KwaZulu-Natal, who was still in the process

of building back after the riots less than a year ago.

Ravaging floodwaters and the endless COVID-19 pandemic proved

though, that yet again, when we stand together as one nation

there is no challenge that we cannot overcome.

We heard inspiring stories of citizens who risked their own

lives to save others, and how communities across geographical,

racial, and cultural divides came together in support of one

another. The helping hands and brave actions that the whole

world bore witness to crystalised President Cyril Ramaphosa’s

concluding words of the 2022 state of the nation address when

he said that we should leave no one behind. The one silver

lining in the midst of any crisis in South Africa is that we

don’t talk about ubuntu; we live it.

Honourable House Chair, during these testing times, our

nation’s communication system, spearheaded by the Government

Communication and Information System, GCIS, has been at the

forefront to ensure that South Africans are kept abreast of

critical developments and interventions. Communication became

an essential tool as it provided reliable information that



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enabled residents to access government support and make

informed decisions.

Government Communication and Information System convened the

communication workstreams consisting of government

communicators to provide accurate, useful and up to date

information frequently to assist those affected by the floods,

while at the same time ensuring that the media network in the

country was well informed of all official undertakings and

processes.

We will continue to use the power of communication to support

the rebuilding efforts, and in the same way draw all South

Africans into a united and focused national drive on the

President’s Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan towards

a prosperous South Africa that we can one day say we built

back better.

Hon members, the work of Brand South Africa remains crucial in

ensuring that South Africa is positioned to strengthen our

competitiveness and effectively bring the world to our door.

As such, we will invest R33 million to drive Brand SA



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activities that contribute to social cohesion, national pride,

and active citizenship, through the Play Your Part programme.

We must create favourable conditions to attract both domestic

and foreign investment, tourism and optimised trade relations

with other countries. Therefore, the main thrust of the

programme will be promoting constitutional values, encouraging

entrepreneurship to boost the economy and job creation, and

doubling efforts to deal with the issues that negate our

nation brand’s reputation. Brand South Africa will invest

R63 million in activities that advance our country’s nation

brand reputation to improve our global attractiveness and

competitiveness. In doing so, we will support our drive to

attract foreign direct investment as part of the government’s

work to reignite economic growth and create much needed jobs.

Through targeted marketing campaigns of “We invite you to

believe in SA” and “Think South Africa, think opportunity”,

will positively position our nation with international,

regional and domestic investors. The campaigns will bring to

the fore South Africa as a strategic entry point for

investors, through the African Continental Free Trade Area,

AFCFTA, and we will optimise these campaigns through support



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of programmes for example, to train 1 million women and youth

on the AFCFTA by 2025.

We will also use our nation’s participation in the World

Economic Forum, Mining Indaba, BRICS and United Nations

General Assembly to position South Africa as a trade and

investment partner of choice. This will be complemented by our

growing brand advocacy through the global South Africans

network that targets South Africans living in the USA, UK,

China, Australia and other key markets on the African

continent.

Hon members, I would like to draw your attention to an

important sector that is the heartbeat of our nation’s vibrant

smaller communities. Community media has emerged as an

alternate voice to the mainstream media. It adds to the

plurality of voices we desperately seek as a thriving

democracy.

This sector has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic which

placed a massive strain on the financial resources of many

community media initiatives, compromising the many gains we

have achieved in the sector since the start of democracy. This



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year will therefore be a period of recovery for the community

and small commercial media supported by government through the

Media Development and Diversity Agency, MDDA. The MDDA is in

the process of finalising the sustainability model for the

community and small commercial media projects, which will be a

first for the local community media sector and is supported by

the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organisation, UNESCO. The thrust for the model is centred

around the theme of building a resilient and future-forward

community and small commercial media sector.

We will also support the sector through a grant funding policy

to ensure the growth of the community and small commercial

media projects. The MDDA has approved grant and seed funding

for 24 community radio stations and 10 community and small

commercial print projects across the country. We believe that

this will go a long way in helping the sector stabilise and

begin a path to recovery.

Community media that operate in the poorest, vulnerable and

most economically underdeveloped communities find it nearly

impossible to generate revenue through traditional means such

as advertising. Our fundraising and support strategy aims to



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assist these media to become self sustainable over the longer

term.

We are targeting international donors and major media

companies for financial and non-financial support. In this

regard, over the last financial year, we launched an official

fundraising strategy. This year the agency introduced bold and

innovative interventions to the community media sector. The

agency has set aside R40,5 million for its digital innovation

strategy, embracing innovation as a catalyst for change within

the community media sector. We will also champion research to

advance media development and create a body of knowledge for

the sector. Our programme will ensure that research becomes

the bedrock for the strengthening and sustainability of the

community and small commercial media sector.

The MDDA has developed capacity building programmes to provide

community and small commercial media with the necessary skills

and training, specifically targeting historically

disadvantaged groups. The agency has set aside R4 million for

research and training interventions.



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Next year the MDDA will celebrate its 20th anniversary, and as

we prepare to mark this milestone, we remember many successes

such as the funding of 512 community media projects. We will

continue to build on this legacy as we create an environment

for media development and diversity that reflects the needs

and aspirations of South Africans.

Hon House Chair, as I conclude, on behalf of our Deputy

Minister, Siweya, communication allows us to transcend

barriers and division. It allows us to drive our economy and

society forward. We will use the power of communication to

harness the unyielding spirit of South Africans. [Time

expired.] Thank you very much, hon House Chair

Dr M BASOPU: Hon Chairperson, hon members of the House,

perhaps, upfront, allow me to declare that, as the ANC, we

support this Budget Vote, in case you stop me before I do

that. The Budget Vote for the Government Communication and

Information System is presented this year whilst we are still

experiencing the devastation of the deadly Covid-19 pandemic,

which continues to leave behind a trail of debt and a wrecked

economy.



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The pandemic spurred a massive loss of revenue for both the

mainstream and community media sectors. It brings in sources

for the community media sector, who are normally represented

by small publishing houses who are working on minimal budgets.

Community media have to rely on sourcing advertising revenue

from even smaller businesses around their localities.

The responsibility of government, therefore, is to work to

restore hope among workers in the sector and communities

ravelled by this pandemic. This hope must not only be

coherently communicated, but it must show practically what it

is doing and how it is working with social partners to rebuild

the national economy and advance what would hold communities

together.

The Media Development and Diversity Agency, MDDA, plays an

important role in diversifying our media space, by providing

financial and nonfinancial support to community media

projects. Community and small commercial media print, as well

as digital projects demanded of the MDDA to promote indigenous

languages, contribute to community development. And poverty

alleviation and equality is critical during this recovery

period.



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Its medium-term plan to intensity its focus on sectors such as

people with disability, who are under the mainstream media and

on issues associated with gender and young people, aligns very

well with the President’s pledge made during the Sona that

government is focused on empowering women and young people in

its programmes.

Underscoring the agency’s commitment to grassroots

empowerment, an estimated 50% of its budget over the medium

term will be directed towards grant funding for 60 community

broadcast projects and 80 community and small commercial media

print and digital projects.

the community broadcast grant assists with the initiation of

new projects and the strengthening of the existing projects

and account for an estimated 30% of the agency’s total budget

for the MTEF period. In this context, the MDDA should continue

to play a critical role in ensuring a flourishing, sustainable

and robust local media sector, a sector which supports nation-

building and defends and strengthens our democracy, social

cohesion as well as good governance.



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As the world embraces an information society, and the Fourth

Industrial Revolution becomes even more of a reality, it is

critical therefore that all citizens have access to the widest

range of information, in order to participate fully and

effectively in an increasingly connected world.

The budget allocation to the MDDA supports the work to

transform the media industry, it assists to align it to key

technology development in the sector and ensures good

corporate governance practices. Community radio has proven to

be one of the most effective platforms that was utilised from

the start of this pandemic. In the process, GCIS increased its

network of community radios from 60 up to about 199 connected

community radio stations. This increased network is a

significant shift towards the transformation of the media

through community media.

The MDDA has been able to carry out different aspects of this

mandate to a greater or less degree. To its grant funding, the

agency has channelled resources to the community and small

commercial media sector in this way, hence, contributed to the

expansion of ownership and control, as well as access of media

to historical disadvantaged communities.



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There is evidence of the flourishing of both community and

small commercial media, with radio audiences managing to reach

an impressive 25% of South African audiences and print media

being read by about 25 million monthly readers. This media is

also being published and broadcasted in all indigenous

languages, reflecting the diversity of our country.

Training and capacity-building interventions have been rolled

out to support projects that have been experienced gaps. In

this context therefore, the MDDA continues to play a critical

working role towards ensuring a flourishing, sustainable and

robust media sector.

As the ANC, it is our firm belief that democracy in South

Africa entails a movement from a closed society into one based

on free flow of information and a culture of open debate. At

the core of democracy lies the recognition of the right of all

citizens to take part in societal decision-making processes.

This means that individuals are armed with the necessary

information and have access to contesting options they require

to make informed decisions.



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An ignorant society cannot be democratic and that is a fact.

With this as a foundation, we believe that the focal point for

media transformation involve diversifying a range of our media

voices through decisive action, to break down the massive

monopolies dominating information generation and distribution

on all media platforms, and achieve equitable distribution of

media resources, development programmes and a deliberate

effort to endeavour a culture of debate.

This will add new media voices to the sector that are able to

record the word from other perspectives, and not that which is

currently offered by the South Africans, largely homogenous

media, and able to rethink the standards of accuracy,

reliability and credibility of the content of the South

African media, with a combination of incentives and sanctions,

to motivate allocation of greater resources to the production

and distribution of more reliable, accurate and credible

information.

In conclusion, the ANC is working tirelessly to achieve a

diverse, dynamic and sustainable media space, which is able

... [Time expired.] As the ANC, we support the Budget Vote.



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Mr S M JAFTA: Hon Chairperson, the Government Communication

and Information System, GCIS, articulate its mandate as

involving the co-ordination of wide government communication

system. Thus ensuring that citizens are informed and have

access to government policies, plans and programmes.

In our support for this Budget Vote we must be convinced that

our citizens enjoy uninterrupted access to government

information. This information must be readily available and

accessible to poor communities and communicated in the

language of their choice.

In the past, we have seen how the diminished GCIS role has

weakened public trust in government processes. The most

immediate example of this trust deficit pronounced itself in

the form of the arms deal corruption in the early 90s. The

nuclear procurement saga involving Russia in 2017. And just

recently, the government’s poor communication relating to

COVID-19 vaccine. More disturbing is the GCIS’s absence in the

the work of the Independent Electoral Commission, IEC, to

drive voter education and registration campaigns.



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As a result, - in order for us to support this Budget Vote, we

need clarity on the following questions. Firstly, is the GCIS

currently rolling out telecentres and multipurpose community

centres with the idea of putting an end to a one stop

government service centre? Secondly, what practical steps is

the GCIS taking to feature the work of this government in the

arena of the 4th Industrial Revolution? Thirdly, what is the

main flagship programme the GCIS is currently driving in the

country? Lastly, what was the role of the GCIS in the launch

of the Department of Health’s corrupt COVID-19 communication

strategy under the former Minister of Health.

Hon members, our view is that GCIS is sleeping on the job. Its

very Facebook handle page has no substantial volume. We will

nonetheless support this Budget Vote. I thank you.

Mr M S MALATSI: Thank you very much, House Chairperson. In

life some problems can be fixed by having the money to afford

the resources we need to succeed. Others require us to spend

the little we have wisely so that we can live within our

means.



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In the case of the Media Development and Diversity Agency,

MDDA, it requires both. The harsh reality is that it is

severely underfunded to support the development of a vibrant,

innovative, sustainable, and people-centred community and

small commercial media sector through resourcing, critical

sector insights, capacity building and ensuring inclusive

participation of historically disadvantaged communities.

South Africa has over 270 community radio stations, at least

200 community newspapers and five licensed community

television, TV, stations. The majority of these are in

financial distress often scrambling to pay basic bills like

office space. Therefore, to measure the effectiveness of the

MDDA to deliver on its mandate to support the development of

community media outlets, we must at all times measure its

performance targets against outputs. By so doing, we will only

be in a position to fairly establish whether it is fulfilling

its mission or betraying it. To this end, the entity is

underperforming.

In the 2020-21 financial year, the MDDA funded only nine of

the 120 community newspapers that applied for financial

assistance. While the entity will no doubt argue that its



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funding performance depends on the quality of the number of

applications it has received per financial year, the reality

is that it has a legal obligation to raise more awareness

about services it offers to the community media.

It is simply not good enough to release two media statements

and embark on a few roadshows and hope that it will reach the

expansive public awareness needed to reach the extent of its

beneficiaries. It is our view that the MDDA is struggling to

fully leverage its proximity to the GCIS to widely market its

support programmes to the community media sector, so that they

can take full advantage of the services it offers, thereby

enhance its promotion of media development and diversity.

Given the financial struggles that many of the community media

outlets face to keep basic operations afloat, it is incumbent

on the MDDA to do more. Yet, the current funding percentages

and projections for the rest of the Medium Term Expenditure

Framework, MTEF, period are too low to meet the demand. In

addition, the MDDA needs to be more proactive in supporting

these entities into adopting commercially viable strategies

that will empower them to be more financially sustainable and

not solely dependent on charitable interventions.



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Currently, many of the community media outlets have no

credible financial viability, leaving them to scramble for

survival on a month-to-month basis. This makes many of them to

be vulnerable to unhealthy professional influences that can

often influence their journalistic independence. Yet, we know

that community media outlets are the lifeblood of journalism.

For many communities, they consume their news through their

community newspaper or local radio station. They help to keep

millions of South Africans, mostly in poor communities to be

informed of current affairs and international affairs.

Some of the most shameless theft of public funds that would

have otherwise remained uncovered in secrecy in local

municipalities have been exposed by community papers such as

the *Limpopo Mirror*. On the one hand, these community media

platforms continue to launch hundreds of careers for many

broadcasters who go on to become household names in media and

are the flagbearers of journalism best practices in our

country.

House Chairperson, one of the immediate ways in which this

administration can proactively provide the financial injection



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that these community media outlets need to improve their

revenue generation streams, is to increase government spending

on advertising. As recently as two-years ago, government’s

advertising spending on community media was as low as 5% of

its total advertising expenditure.

In response, this administration made all the right noises

about lobbying National Treasury to commit government to

dedicate 30% of its advertising budget towards community-based

media. Yet two-years later, this remains a pipedream.

The ongoing tension between the MDDA Board and the suspended

chief executive officer, CEO, needs to be resolved as soon as

possible to restore the entity’s prospects of operating as

optimally as it should. Quite frankly speaking, the MDDA can

no longer afford another extended episode of instability at

senior management level as has been the case for the last few

years. Nothing illustrates this more blatantly than the fact

that it has had at least nine different acting CEOs since

2017.



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There is no organization anywhere in the world that stands a

real chance of functioning smoothly with such a high turnover

of CEOs.

It is time to stop the MDDA from being reduced to a has been

reduced to an arena for a series of boardroom wrestling

contests between senior executives and the board. We need it

to function so that community media outlets can thrive in our

country and help entrench our democracy.

Minister, no matter how much money you dedicate to Brand South

Africa, the best way to build social cohesion is to make sure

that you deliver services where they are needed the most. That

you govern well, and that your administration becomes totally

intolerant of corruption whenever it happens. You cannot have

a situation where the only entity that is responsible for

marketing South Africa, positioning it as an investment

attraction being Brand SA, itself is beset by controversy with

internal squabbles between the board and the CEO.

With regards to Government Communication Information System,

GCIS, perhaps the Minister can use this opportunity to reply

in his final remarks to clarify the stand with regard to the



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former Presidential spokesperson’s role in government, Khusela

Diko. When she was suspended it was indicated that she will be

redeployed, and there was a hint that she will be redeployed

to the GCIS. We now need an indication of what is the outcome

of that disciplinary hearing and whether she would still be

recycled into government.

Lastly, Chairperson, the GCIS’s weakness is illustrated in the

level of misinformation and propaganda against vaccination

programmes of the government. If the GCIS was as well an oiled

machine as it should and it was leveraging all the resources

at its disposal, it would have been able to proactively push

back against this propaganda by ensuring that from local,

provincial and national government, it informs the public of

the advantages and benefits of vaccination. I thank you.

Mr T T GUMBU: Thank you, hon House Chair, Ministers and Deputy

Ministers, and hon members, we are facing unprecedented times

as a country and the world at large.

A few weeks ago, a great tragedy befell our nation causing

widespread destruction and a significant loss of life. The

floods in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and North West destroyed



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hundreds of livelihoods and important infrastructure that is

imperative for economic participation and growth.

Just when we are rebuilding the lives shattered by the COVID-

19 pandemic, and just as our economy was showing signs of

recovery, we have been plunged into mourning again. Our

thoughts and prayers are with all those who were affected by

the floods. This calls upon the media and the communication

sector to educate our people about the impact of climate

change and other environmental hazards facing the global

community and Africa in particular.

The Government Communication and Information System, GCIS, has

an important role to play in educating the nation about the

interventions government is making to provide support to

families and the work that is being undertaken to rebuild

infrastructure in the provinces destroyed by floods.

It is critically important that a diversified voice that

incorporates local and community media houses be capacitated

to arm society with the necessary knowledge to gain access to

government programmes and support.



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In line with the constitutional imperatives of the GCIS to

inform the public about the government’s plans and programmes,

conveying information that is accurate timely, empowers and

improves people’s lives. The GCIS must continue to support

communication on the rollout of vaccines by providing our

communities with relevant information regarding the national

programmes. This is to counter the conspiracy theories and

antivaccine advocates, some of whom are represented in this

House, who seek to show doubt amongst our people about the

efficiency of vaccines.

Through this Budget, the GCIS will continue to implement

outreach programmes designed to reach people where they work

or reside. This will include taxi ranks, mall activations,

panel discussions on local community media and maintain

mainstream radio and television stations. The packaging of

messages in all 11 official languages is essential in reaching

all South Africans of all backgrounds.

While the ANC welcomes the efforts of the Department of

Communications and Digital Technologies on the good work done

around generating key content that is user-friendly to help us

manage the spread of COVID-19, the ANC is of the view that the



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same effort needs to be channelled towards ensuring that the

country’s economic reconstruction and recovery efforts do not

leave a single South African behind.

The Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan, ERRP, provides

a good basis for a new growth trajectory. It focuses our

nation’s effort to pursue new sources of growth as we work to

rebuild and grow the economy. It redoubles our work on

critical areas such as securing our nation’s energy supply,

growing the small and medium enterprise sector, and an

agricultural sector that delivers food for security.

The GCIS has to take full advantage of the District

Development Model in its communication which seeks to do away

with the silo mentality of working by ensuring seamless co-

ordination, coherence, efficiency and effectiveness in the

implementation of government programmes.

The ANC supports the continued maintenance of the multilingual

*Vuk’uzenzele* newspaper that continues to provide government

related information and opportunities mainly to the persons

without access to the mainstream media. The 850 000 copies of

the GCIS prints every two weeks makes it the largest print



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circulation in South Africa. It reaches even the most remote

parts of the country and is also produced in braille, online

and on Apps.

In 2020, the GCIS commenced with the appointment of Marketing,

Advertising and Communication Charter Council to ensure that

transformation in the sector is reported and monitored. The

GCIS’ success extend to using its flagship communication

platform and products to share information on government’s key

priorities such as employment, economic opportunities, youth

programmes, service delivery and the fight against corruption

and gender-based violence and femicide – I hope, hon Bodlani

is listening.

Marketing, advertising and communication serves as a catalyst

of a free market-based economy and its intrusive form of

communication to which over 47 million South Africans are

subjected to every day of their lives. For such a small

industry, its power to influence South Africa is

disproportionate to its size, hence the need to make it a

truly South African industry separately.



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We further recognise that the industry plays a critical role

in the creation of wealth and the development of our economy,

and believe that transformation of the industry is essential

for its long-term growth and the upliftment of people who have

been historically disadvantaged.

In the spirit of the Constitution of South Africa, we believe

that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our

diversity, and committed to improve the quality of lives of

all citizens, and the potential of each person.

Communication should serve as a strategic tool in

implementation of people-centred social policy. As such, it is

imperative that the government’s message is heard while

providing the citizenry with ample opportunities to express

their views and opinions through a range of communication

platforms.

The ANC believes that communication should be used to

strengthen our nation’s fight against all social ills by

empowering people with information to reverse the moral

degeneration that leads to these social problems.

Communication should also be used to mobilise people to become



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their own liberators. It is important, therefore, that the

GCIS should build confidence in the people of South Africa by

continuously updating them on what is done in the fight

against the foremost concerns such as crime and corruption.

As I conclude, as we move forward, we must never forget the

vision that Oliver Reginald Tambo shared with us and I quote:

It is our responsibility to break down barriers of

division and create a country where there will be neither

whites nor blacks, just South Africans, free and united

in diversity.

This vision of a diverse but united nation is urged into a

Constitution and the GCIS helps to foster this values of

nationhood. Let this serve as a reminder that Oliver Tambo has

never died because the ideals which he sacrificed his life

lives on the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

Communication allows us to transcend the barriers and

divisions and it allows us to propel our economy and society.

It is for this reason the ANC supports this Budget Vote

because it advances key policy priorities of the ANC



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government of building one nation, united in diversity of its

people.

*Tshivenḓa*:

Ndi a livhuwa, Mulangadzulo wa Nnḓu.

*English*:

I thank you.

The MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY: Hon Acting House Chairperson,

I think one, needs to acknowledge and highly appreciate very

constructive engagements by Members of Parliament on this

debate. I think a number of issues have been raised around

capacity and its implications. There was also the optimal use

of our limited resources at our disposal and the question of

digital footprint has also been mentioned. Although we are not

absent there but one thought it is important to share.

We have 838 000 followers on the Facebook page which is a

number but government should move fast and we accept that. But

it is not the number the AIC member said. We are present in

YouTube and Instagram and we want to get better. Of course we

cannot do better than we are doing. Are we comfortable with



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those numbers? Not at all but there is some presence in the

digital space. That criticism is openly taken hon members.

Of course members spoke about continuous clarification of a

series of a narrative relating to the state in the eyes of the

public. That is a point that has been raised and is a point we

are going to take action on. There is also a Call me to ensure

various departments do not treat communication as “by the

way”. In other words, a need to demonstrate that the entire

government, not just the Government Communications and

Information System, takes communication very seriously. I

think we take that point.

We also acknowledge positives comments, like the department

has been recommended for a good explanation record and the

audit record. Those are the things we should be proud of

because those are “ABCs” that can send a message that, at

least the platform where we start is a transparent and a

credible one in as far as the use of state resources is

concerned. We acknowledge that.

We take the points on the various entities, be it the Media

Development and Diversity Agency MDDA and Brand South Africa,



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BSA. I am very happy that Deputy Minister Kekana has been able

to elaborate on the work done by those entities. Having said

all that, we also take the criticism there. I am happy that

one of our members clarified that on the MDDA, I think it was

hon Malatsi, that no one was fired there. There are internal

issues but we deliberately let the board to deal with them. We

take a view that corporate governance requires that and we

respect certain principles. Agencies have got boards who must

actually take responsibilities for the challenges that their

agencies are facing. We should only come in as government when

it is necessary to do so.

That MDDA is the one that got clean audit and so on.

Generally, when it comes to administration MDDA’s record has

been improving over time but there will always be teething

problems, people not seeing things alike and that is when we

prefer to leave that to the agency. It is not that we are

excited about it. We do not like the negative story about any

agency. We acknowledge the criticism and a lot of

constructively made comments, hon members.

Another issue that has been raised is the community media

houses that lacked resources. One of the members mentioned a



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point that community media houses that lack resources can be

vulnerable to exploitation for nefarious purposes. We take

that point very seriously and taking into account that if they

were funded, a number of them would be a benefit to the

country.

I thought I want to make this point and acknowledge that you

talked about *Vukuzenzele* Publication which continues to be on

the *Cutting Edge*. We acknowledge that members have spoken

positively about that and that it can still do better than it

is doing. We must also acknowledge that it has given space to

young people who have made *Cutting Edge* stories.

We also want to assure members, on the use of young

journalists that it is going to be a transparent and a clean

procurement process. There is nothing that is going to be done

which is not auditable in as far as that regard. On the issue

of Thusong Service Centre we just want to put it to members

that no less than 122 Thusong Service Centre are really

functioning. What is most amazing in the recent past alone is

the total four Thusong Service Centre that have been

revitalised.



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In the Northern Cape, for instance, we want to share with

members that the Manne Dipico Thusong Service Centre in

Kimberley which was totally overalled and relaunched following

its devastation in a community protest. The centre is now

offering a full range of government services. Additionally,

the Augrabies Thusong Service centre which was in disrepair

has been resuscitated in partnership with the NGO called Wifi

which is offering free digital services to young Augrabies

people.

We want to say that the Department of Government

Communications and Information System will continue to work

with the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional

Affairs and Offices of the Premiers to identify additional

centres for resuscitation and improvement. It is also

important to draw the attention of the House that 70 centres

have been decommissioned due to funding which is not a good

story, by the way.

Having said all that, I want to repeat again and appreciate

the constructive engagements by all Members of Parliament,

even in the instance of scarce resources. Optimal utilisation

of our resources remains a key point. I thought I would not



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have made my point if I did not say this. I just want to say

to hon Phambo and maybe to his peers that, in the African

culture, the use of words like foolish, stupid and so on, to

elderly ...

*IsiXhosa*:

... kubantu abadala ...

*English*:

... is un African because I am deliberately saying this

because they claim to be the purest Africanist champions of

some time. You know, even if ...

*IsiXhosa*:

... umntu omdala usisibhanxa ...

*English*:

... it is not unthought-of to say ...

*IsiXhosa*:

... umntu omdala usisibhanxa ...

*English*:



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... even if he is an imbecile, it is un African because there

is a deliberate respect for ...

*IsiXhosa*:

... abantu abadala. Ngamanye amaxesha umntu omdala xa sele

ekhuphe umoya wesinqe, siyancumelana ...

*English*:

... we run out of the house because there is a particular

demeanour that is acceptable towards elderly. You can

criticise them frankly for their incapacity and for their

weaknesses but ...

*IsiXhosa*:

... musani ukuthuka abantu abadala.

*English*:

Thank you, hon Acting House Chairperson.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: If they are old, they must go home. We

are in Parliament here. We are working here.

The mini plenary rose at 11:44.

