

# SABC-TVIEC local content 'war' turns nasty



By [Issa Sikiti da Silva](#)

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Accusations, counter-accusations, hunger strike, protests, name-calling, defiance, denialism, late payments, delayed procurement, deferrals and axing. These are just some of the fundamental characteristics of the local content 'battle for survival' currently being fought between the SABC and the TV Industry Emergency Coalition (TVIEC). And it is turning nastier day after day.



Television Industry Emergency Coalition

In the latest development, the TVIEC has vehemently rejected what it called 'intolerable' statements made by SABC spokesperson Kaizer Kganyago about the industry, saying his response smacks of the old SABC's arrogant and dismissive attitude to the industry and public.

Apart from claiming that the SABC made an enormous contribution to the growth of the independent production industry (from 20 companies in 2004 to 408 in 2009), Kganyago slammed the industry for leaning too much on the SABC and being unprepared for the ensuing crisis.

## **“Question the facts”**

The coalition stated: “We question the facts of this statement and challenge the SABC to furnish us with the list of 20 companies in 2004 and the list of 408 operational companies in 2009.

“Saying we should have been prepared for the SABC's financial crisis and not been solely reliant on them is outrageous.”

The TVIEC said it approached the SABC in April this year, asking if it were facing a financial crisis that would impact on its sector, but it responded that it can meet its contractual and financial obligations to the industry and will honour the 2008 agreement.

However, weeks later, the SABC allegedly admitted it could not meet the obligations and was working on a payment plan that sees the independent production industry carry SABC debts through to December 2009.

Furthermore, Kganyago said the SABC was the primary TV market for content creators in SA, and has over the past three years grown local content from ratios of 60% international/40% local to 70% local/30% international content at present.

## Rejects

But the TVIEC rejects this statement, calling it irrelevant to - and an attempt to excuse - the SABC's current failure to uphold its local content commitments.

“Further, this statement seems to indicate that the SABC did not meet its ICASA mandate three years ago. If so, did the SABC declare this to ICASA and did ICASA investigate this matter?

“We refuse to accept the SABC's local content claims at face value, both with regard to percentages and qualifying content, since ICASA has patently been unable to exercise its monitoring responsibility.”

The coalition also lashed out at the public broadcaster's claims to have heavily invested in the development and growth of the industry, ‘as if this were some form of philanthropic good will’.

“It is the SABC's mandate as a 100% government-owned institution to align itself with the government's objectives for the country. Job creation and SMMEs are high on this agenda. It is in the SABC's interest to build a vibrant industry.”

## Intellectual property rights

On the issue of intellectual property, the TVIEC said it has been fighting for intellectual property rights for five years.

“The SABC relies on apartheid legislation to steal all intellectual property from the production sector. They do not pay an ‘ideas or concept’ fee to local productions, or for broadcast use in the SA territory alone.”

## ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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