



Digital set top boxes to go on sale in 2010

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Set Top Boxes (STBs), which are to be used as part of the Broadcasting Digital Migration (BDM) process, are likely to be available at retail stores during the first half of 2010. BDM is a process of converting the broadcast of television signals from analogue to digital technology. The process aims to improve service delivery and further e-governance services to the public.

Addressing reporters ahead of the launch of the Digital Dzonga today, director of Broadcasting Policy in the Department of Communications, Mashilo Boloka, said the STBs are expected to be retailed from April 2010. "Once the services and technology have been tested adequately, and all other related processes are in place, STBs will be made available in retail stores.

On November 1, 2008, the country officially switched-on the digital signal converting its television broadcasting signals from analogue to digital technology. The analogue signal is expected to be switched-off on November 1, 2011.

In order to receive the digital signal on current analogue television sets, households will need to purchase STBs that convert the digital signal into analogue signal.

Boloka said a trial was currently being conducted with a small sample of viewers. He said currently there were a number of areas that still needed to be resolved before the service was available to the public.

In August 2008, the late Minister of Communications, Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri announced government's Scheme-for-Ownership-Support (SOS) to assist poor households that cannot afford a STB. As part of the scheme, government said it would subsidise 70% of the expected R700 cost of the STB.

At the time the Minister said the advantages of the software of the STB far outweighed the estimated cost of the technology in terms of access to more channels, including focused educational channels, and direct access to government services and information