

# RELIGIOUS BROADCASTING

## INTRODUCTION

South Africa is a multicultural and multiple faith society that is united by a common humanity and moral order. Within its diversity there are human values that call for the promotion of social harmony, national healing, reconciliation, social reconstruction and nation building.

Most South Africans acknowledge the Divine, which is expressed through a variety of religious beliefs and practices, and religious institutions. As the public broadcaster, the SABC has an obligation to provide religious programmes and to broadcast religious material in a manner that is unbiased and representative of South Africa's religious plurality. In so doing, the SABC seeks to promote mutual respect for religious beliefs among the country's different religious groups.

The SABC's religious programming should therefore reflect South Africa's major religions, while allowing expression for those religions that do not have an extensive following. For the purposes of this policy, major religions are understood to include Christianity, African Religion, Islam, Hinduism and Judaism.

In its religious programming, the SABC seeks to correct gender, racial, religious and resource allocation imbalances associated with religious broadcasting in the past. Further, it seeks to ensure that the distinctive identities of the religious traditions are broadcast in a way that facilitates the religious and moral objectives of justice, social harmony and the common good. Religious programming should play a meaningful part in the moral regeneration of South Africa.

### **Religious broadcasting should be undertaken in accordance with values that include:**

- Sensitivity to the diverse nature of South African society and the need for justice, healing and reconciliation
- Compassion and concern for human dignity and for all life, including the earth
- A common South Africanness
- Integrity, transparency and trust in all relationships
- Commitment to the independence and autonomy of the SABC, within the parameters of its accountability to the South African public
- A spirit of co-operation between the SABC and the religious community.

## NATURE AND CONTENT OF RELIGIOUS PROGRAMMES

### **The following principles underpin the SABC's approach to religious programming:**

- In achieving its religious programming mandate, the SABC provides both faith specific and multifaith programmes. Faith specific programmes should give the major religious groups the scope to celebrate their life of faith and understanding of the Divine fully and without censure. Multifaith programmes are in addition to faith specific programmes and should promote religious dialogue, respect and understanding among all the religious groupings in South Africa. The vehicles for delivery of religious programmes are the radio stations and TV channels in the SABC's public broadcasting portfolio
- Whereas religious broadcasts have necessarily to comply with the SABC's Policy on Programming, the SABC takes particular care to ensure that in such programmes there is sensitivity to the beliefs of others, and that no religion is either attacked or undermined in such programmes
- Religious broadcasting may not be used to solicit funds, nor to support any programme of a political or ideological nature. Permission for fundraising, whether for emergency relief and/or social welfare, or for religious causes, should be obtained from the SABC before the broadcast





- The theological content of meditational and worship programmes is at the discretion of the presenter, as a member of a particular religious organisation, but should comply with the Policy on Religious Broadcasting and other relevant SABC policies
- The format of religious programmes and the choice of presenters should meet the technical, creative and professional criteria required by the SABC
- The SABC provides religious programmes in a variety of formats including documentaries, magazines and actuality programmes. The aim of these is to encourage religious comment on matters of national concern, and to introduce people to faiths practised in South Africa and, where appropriate, elsewhere
- The SABC sources religious programmes through its standard content procurement procedures including commissioning, licensing and /or content that may be acquired at no cost to the Corporation or the supplier
- Religious broadcasting should strive to be contextual and relevant, and to reflect our African reality. Towards further correction of the neglect of African culture in the public media, special attention is given to African Religion and traditional cultures
- Religious programmes should take account of regional factors, target audiences, language and cultural preferences, and the devotional needs of specific groups.

## ALLOCATION OF TIME

The SABC has relatively little air time available and, in addition to religious programming, has to provide a wide range of public interest programmes in its schedules. Despite these constraints, the SABC undertakes to offering meaningful and sufficient religious programming on its radio and television services.

In allocating air time to religious groups, the SABC is committed to the principle of fairness and applies this principle in determining the time allocated to each group. These allocations are made on a three-yearly basis, after consultation with the Religious Broadcasting Panel (RPB), taking the following into account:

- Data on the percentage of the population in each religious group, as per the latest available census information
- The need for each of the major religions to enjoy meaningful and sufficient programming of a faith specific nature
- The need for all the religions to be reflected in religious programmes
- The need for sufficient programming of a multifaith nature
- The need to redress past imbalances in religious broadcasting.

## SCHEDULING

Religious programmes should not be confined to Sundays, or the fringes of the programme schedules, but be placed at times when audiences are available and be broadcast on days that are appropriate to individual religions.

## PAID BROADCASTING

In addition to its normal provision of religious programmes, the SABC may make air time available for purchasing by religious groups for broadcasting of religious material. The sale of such air time would be negotiated on a commercial basis and be guided by the following:

- The sale of air time to religious groups may in no way detract from the SABC's mandate to provide religious programming.
- The sale of air time to particular religious groups should be consistent with the time allocated to those groups, as determined every three years. Within this, the SABC shall also ensure that there is a fair representation of various denominations in religious groups.

- Religious material broadcast in slots that have been sold to religious groups is always to be consistent with the SABC's Policy on Religious Broadcasting and all the other relevant policies. The SABC reserves the right to accept or reject an offer to purchase air time based on the material proposed
- In considering offers to purchase air time, the SABC gives preference to good quality local material
- Profits from the sale of air time to religious groups should be directed to the funding of religious programmes
- Scheduling of such air time is the prerogative of the SABC
- Sponsorship, fundraising, advertising and commercial branding in air time sold to religious groups is governed by the rules of SABC Airtime Sales
- Operational Guidelines to guide transactions on air time sales are available on request.

### **RELIGIOUS BROADCASTING PANEL (RBP)**

The SABC's approach to religious programming is informed by advice of the RBP, a body appointed by the SABC Board and representative of South Africa's religious community.

The RBP is nominated by the religious community and appointed by the Board. The appointments are made on the basis of public interviews conducted by a selection committee appointed by the Board and in accordance with the SABC's Corrective Action Policy. In addition to the Chairperson, who sits on the Board, the RBP consists of at least fifteen people drawn from various religious groups and includes professional advisers. There are at least two members from each of the five major religions in South Africa. Senior management from both radio and television represent SABC management at RBP meetings.

The RBP's term of office is two years and may be extended only once. Members who are unable to complete their term of office are replaced immediately as per the appointment criteria outlined above.

The relationship between the RBP, the Board, management and the religious community should be one of co-operation, while recognising that the SABC Board is ultimately responsible for matters of policy.

The mandate of the RBP is to promote co-operation between the SABC and the religious groups in the country. Further, the RBP advises the SABC specifically on:

- Review of SABC Religious Broadcasting Policy, including the composition of the RBP and how it is appointed
- Liaison with religious communities
- Allocation of time for the religious groups in both faith specific and multifaith programmes.

Members of the RBP are entitled to an honorarium as approved by the Board and are reimbursed for subsistence, travelling and accommodation expenses.

### **MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The Board requires management to submit an annual religious broadcasting action plan that identifies future goals arising from this policy. A summary of achievements from the previous year is to be attached in order to facilitate a review of the achievements, opportunities and challenges.

### **REVIEW**

This policy is reviewed by the SABC Board every five years.

