

Philisiwe Mazibuko of the Right2Know Campaign on '#DataMustFall'

CCS Activist Brief March 2019

#DataMustFall

The #DataMustFall campaign was initiated in by the Right2Know (R2K) under its right to access the internet pillar. The first phase of the campaign included marching on offices of the main telecommunications providers: Vodacom, CellC and MTN. The second phase focused on marching and engaging with the Independent Broadcasting Authority of South Africa (ICASA) whose mandate it is to regulate the telecommunications industry.

Data Costs

South Africa currently has the highest costs for data on the continent:

In its submission to the Competition Commission, R2K argued that "the outrageous cost of communication in South Africa is undermining people's basic rights to access and share information – their right to communicate"¹. "South Africa has one of the most expensive data prices in the world, even when adjusted for cost of living. To put this into perspective, India only charges R11 for 1GB, Nigeria charges R22, Ghana R71, Russia R24 and Vodacom in Tanzania charges R98 for 1GB but R149 in South Africa," R2K stated.²

The problem is that ICASA is toothless

Despite the concessions won engaging ICASA data costs remain high in South Africa and this is mainly because ICASA has failed to issue a clear directive to reduce data costs. Further, Telkom has been unable to serve the interests of ordinary citizens despite the states stake in it.

Developments and Innovations

There have been some interesting developments in this area with regards co-operatives and access to the internet and the G5 debates.

***All views are author's own.**

¹ TimesLive, 17 October 2018: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/business/2018-10-17-r2k-calls-for-action-against-high-data-costs/>

² TimesLive, 17 October 2018: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/business/2018-10-17-r2k-calls-for-action-against-high-data-costs/>