

The Country Report for Barbados

Barbados, through the Telecommunications Unit, has been planning the introduction of Digital Television since 2005 and has gone as far as producing two Draft Papers after consultations with the stakeholders.

The first draft paper which was titled “Proposal for Digital Television Broadcasting in Barbados, was submitted for final comments in 2007.

That paper made reference to the growing convergence between computing and broadcasting sectors and the rapid developments in information and communications technologies (ICTs).

It predicted that Digitalization, to a Small Island Developing State like Barbados, would be innovative and thus create services even beyond the traditional communications sectors. It stated that Internet services that went beyond the regular broadcast services would have made a significant impact on the broadcasting market since demands for those services would increase with Internet penetration.

It also predicted that the internet would reach the required speeds for transmission of video services, hence making the Internet one of the potentially viable platforms for interactive television services.

Additionally, it recognized the advantage of Digital Terrestrial Television over Analogue with its reduction in bandwidth, increase in number of channels per bandwidth allocation, its ability to produce High Definition Television (HDTV) and the provision of other non-traditional television services such as pay-multimedia or interactive services.

Those definite advantages made DTT an attractive broadcasting service for implementation as quickly as possible.

However, we, in Barbados, were closely monitoring the attempts by

the USA for Digital Switch Over and the several postponements of the dates prompted us to tread more cautiously.

It was therefore agreed that a well-planned introduction of DTT where all the stakeholders were in unanimity would have significant benefits to the country's social and economic development.

Some of the stakeholders suggested that a dual digital broadcast system i.e. North American region's ATSC and the European region's DVB-T be considered. The Telecommunications Unit supported that position and agreed that the analogue system should be maintained for at least another ten years, to allow for the purchase of either new Television sets or digital conversion boxes.

In Barbados, spectrum of analogue Television exists at the low VHF 54 to 60 Channel 2, 60 to 66 old CBC Channel 3, and 66 to 72 Channel 4, with a Bandwidth of 6 MHz per Channel. In the High VHF, there were 6 Channels available from 180 to 216 MHz with 6 MHz bandwidth. CBC Channel 8 uses 180.000 to 186.000 MHz with 181.250 Video and 185.750 MHz for Audio.

The paper suggested that there were some 17 Digital Television Channels available from 470.000 to 608.000 MHz each with 8 MHz of Bandwidth.

At that time there were 9 analogue and 17 digital channels available for simulcast broadcasts.

The Telecommunications Unit was of the belief then that there would never a need for more than six (6) Television stations in Barbados, and hence the following frequencies should be maintained:

- 180.000 to 216.000 MHz with a 6 MHz bandwidth
- 512.000 to 560.000 MHz with an 8 MHz bandwidth.

And that the following frequencies should be allocated as follows and assigned in the National Spectrum Management Plan of Barbados:

- 470.000 to 512.000 MHz for Fixed and Mobile Services on a primary basis (ITU footnote 5.293);
- 560.000 to 608.000 MHz for Fixed and Mobile Services on a primary basis (ITU footnote 5.297);
- Application would have to be made to the ITU (WRC-07) to have the Radio Regulations Footnotes amended, to reflect these new allocations in Barbados

The frequency 54.000 to 72.000 MHz should be allocated to Fixed and Mobile on a primary basis and amendment to ITU footnote 5.172.

In 2009, Barbados once again produced a paper entitled “proposal for the assignment of spectrum preparatory to the implementation of Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting (DTT-TV) in Barbados. An extract follows.

The Barbados Situation 2009

The Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) launched its analogue monochrome (Black and White) broadcast television services in Barbados during December, 1964. Colour television broadcasting followed soon after. To date, this Government-owned company is the sole licensed broadcast television station operating in Barbados.

The station broadcasts on TV Channel 8 which occupies 6 MHz of radio spectrum (180 – 186 MHz). The CBC has adopted the USA’s National Television System Committee (NTSC) analogue standard. The Chief Telecommunications Officer recommends that Barbados adopts the **ATSC** set of standards simply because it is expected that Barbadians will continue to purchase most of their electronic and communications goods and devices from North America. Also, no DTT-TV standard has an absolute advantage over the other.

We are aware that the CBC has commenced action on the preparation of a plan on the likely conversion to digital transmission. This would have to take into account the details of the technical and financial viability of the project as well as the

social considerations and constraints. This would first have to attract the approval of the CBC Board of Directors and ultimately the Minister responsible for broadcasting.

In anticipation of a decision to transition the television broadcast from analogue to digital, the Chief Telecommunications Officer has temporarily allocated TV Channel 11 (198 – 204 MHz) to the CBC so that the CBC can conduct tests and develop its DTB-TV service to the public of Barbados. Once full transition has been achieved, the CBC will relinquish its Channel 8 spectrum.

The current allocations for Broadcast Television are listed in the Barbados National Spectrum Management Plan (NSMP). It is to be noted that unlike the USA, the Barbados spectrum assignments for analogue terrestrial broadcast television only covers the VHF band and only between 470 and 608 MHz in the UHF band. Considering Barbados' population and market size, it has never been (and still is not) envisioned that Barbados will ever need to accommodate the number of television broadcast stations as is the case in the larger markets.

Status 2012

In 2012 – Barbados is anxious to introduce a policy on Digital Terrestrial Broadcasting and this time in concert with the rest of the region. As you may have noticed the changes in our positions as the technology advanced since 2005, but at some stage we must make a decision and we would be extremely pleased to reach a common position during this workshop. This would allow us to forge ahead with a policy for DTT, taking into consideration the sovereignty of our Small Island Developing States in frequency coordination, allowing all to benefit from economy of scale through standardization and the concomitant reductions in costs.

It has not be lost on our Regulators and Broadcasting Authorities region-wide that our cultural industries have been seriously infiltrated as a direct result of the imported cultures which are freely disseminated through radio and television broadcasting. The savings gleaned from this regional cooperation could be ploughed back into our own cultural industries with more content produced

locally and regionally for ubiquitous transmission especially to the Caricom diaspora and Friends of the Caribbean worldwide. In this way our region may become an exporter of culture rather than the present trend which as we say in Barbados - swallow other people culture lock stock and barrel.

Barbados Statistics

Barbados has a population of some 275,000 residents and on average 1.75 million visitors (cruise and land-based) annually. The topography is rather flat which lends itself to good reception of broadcasting signals.

A check on the telecommunications website at www.telecoms.gov.bb shows that TV Broadcast spectrum has been allocated to 1 entity which is the Caribbean Broadcasting Station (CBC) through Multi-Choice and Free to Air Channel 8.

However, television broadcasting content is known to be received in Barbados from

- DirectTV (Barbados) Ltd,
- US Satellite Service Providers such as DishNetwork, DirecTV
- NetuVu
- LIMETV
- Over the Internet from a variety of sources like Netflix, Hulu, OnlineTV etc.

Country Statistics

Country population: **284,000**

Percentage of population covered by Free to Air: **100%**

Percentage of population covered by Cable TV: **35 %**

Percentage of population covered by Satellite TV: **35%**

Current plans to Migrate to Digital Terrestrial TV: **Yes**

Chosen Standard: **ATSC**

UHF analogue TV Band used: **NO**

VHF TV band use: **YES**

Number of state Broadcasters: **1**

Number of public Broadcasters: **0**

Have Digital TV Licences been offered/renewed: **NO**

Has your Administration received any submission of interest for use of Digital dividend band in 700 or 800 MHz for mobile services: **YES**

Has your Administration planned a channelization of the digital Band for mobile services? **YES- US Channel plans.**

Date: 22 May 2012