

Press Release - March 2020

URGENT CALL ON MOBILE NETWORK OPERATORS TO ZERO-RATE THE MOBILE SERVICES OF PUBLIC BENEFIT ORGANISATIONS TO ALLOW EARLY LEARNING AND EDUCATION TO CONTINUE

The DG Murray Trust calls on mobile network operators to urgently zero-rate the services of all public benefit organisations (PBOs) that provide digital content for early learning and education. In this way, preschool and schooling will be able to continue to some extent, reaching children on cellphones in their own homes. This is crucial, given the closure of early childhood development centres and schools.

DGMT CEO Dr David Harrison states that “the recommendation to zero-rate mobile content provided by PBOs is contained in the report of the Competition Commission into mobile data costs, and network operators have already indicated their willingness to implement that proposal. The time to do it is now.”

DGMT supports a number of community-level programmes which together reach hundreds of thousands of young children. They include the Na’ibali national reading campaign, SmartStart early learning programme, Grow Great national zero-stunting campaign (which provides nutrition-related support and training to young mothers), Public Schools Partnerships, Activate! Leadership and JobStarter. All of these programmes will now rely heavily on mobile data to continue to reach and support practitioners, parents and children. In addition to these programmes, there are hundreds of other non-profit organisations providing services for early childhood development and literacy and numeracy development.

“Access to these crucial services for education now rests squarely in the hands of the leadership of mobile network operators”, says Dr Harrison. “The coronavirus will hit poorer communities hardest. We trust that they will take the lead in ensuring that its impact does not further erode the prospects for our nation’s children.”

DGMT has written to the CEOs of the network operators to offer its services to review and monitor the services provided by public benefit organisations working with the network operators, to ensure that zero-rating is only used for its intended purposes.



DGMT is a South African foundation committed to developing South Africa’s potential through public innovation and strategic investment. Our goal for South Africa is a flourishing people, economy and society (www.dgmt.co.za).

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