

Partners Against Piracy launches to fight content piracy

By [Chola Makgamathe](#)

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The recently gathering of content and creative industry stakeholders culminated in the launch of Partners Against Piracy (PAP), a pan-African initiative to combat one of the most fundamental issues in the sector; content piracy.



Chola Makgamathe, chairperson of the Copyright Coalition of South Africa

It was encouraging to see the turnout at the event, which included Justice and Correctional Services Minister Ronald Lamola and representatives from the film, music and publishing industries, economists, and intellectual property (IP) lawyers.

All delegates expressed the urgent need to protect IP and build a content economy where content is fairly paid for, where creators, content professionals, broadcast platforms and media workers can earn the living they are entitled to and deserve from their labour.

Stealing from audiences

Content piracy affects the music, film and TV, academia, publishing, blogging and sports broadcasting industries, among others. It not only steals from the people who might earn a living from the content created, but from the audiences who might otherwise get to enjoy more relevant shows, movies, series, written work and music.

When the local industry is not viable, because of content piracy and the violation of copyright, content platforms stop commissioning local content and then it is easily replaced with cheaper alternatives, which include international content produced in the US and the Global North.

While possibly more affordable, importing content at the expense of locally produced works stagnate growth of the local industry and retards industry job creation efforts for both emerging and established creatives.

If left unchecked, content piracy could mean the end of Africa's creative industries, which would have negative spill over effects into adjacent industries such as tourism, fashion and hospitality, to name a few.

Cybercrimes Act of 2020

Content piracy is also a serious international crime, involving certain global syndicates that are involved in cyberhacking, pornography, identity theft and illicit gambling, via the websites where pirated content is often shared.

Speaking at the launch, Lamola reminded delegates that the government had already empowered law-enforcement agencies to act against cybercrimes including content piracy through the Cybercrimes Act of 2020.



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"We are constantly improving our systems and working to arrest the ringleaders of organised cybercrimes such as content piracy," he said.

The minister added that government is looking forward to working with PAP to wage a coordinated war against piracy.

Already producing results

The PAP partnership is already producing results in South Africa. A joint operation between law-enforcement agencies and content-piracy investigators this year stopped a group who was stealing and distributing episodes of popular Showmax series *The Wife* via social media channels.

Police warnings were issued and the piracy account was shut down. This is testament that law enforcement in South Africa takes all forms of piracy seriously and that it is no longer a faceless crime, but rather one that will bear consequences.

While this example may seem small, it forms part of a bigger picture where each instance of piracy needs to be tackled as the wider impact of this theft of intellectual copyright is enormous.

R690m lost to piracy

Jotam Matariro, CEO of the Composers, Authors and Publishers Association (Capasso), pointed out at the launch that of all music downloaded or streamed via digital platforms, it is estimated that only 37% is extracted legally. "In South Africa, this means that an estimated R690m in revenue is lost to piracy."

Clearly, we need laws that hold internet platforms accountable and liable for internet piracy that happens on their platforms, with dedicated enforcement of those laws, across platforms and media.

A global monster

Content piracy is a monster with its tentacles across the entire globe. It takes place across multiple jurisdictions. It is precisely why we need partners like the Justice Ministry and enforcement bodies, business, civil society, NGOs, other private and public sector groups and the country at large, to lend their voices to making this cause purposeful and impactful.

We are encouraged by the response to the launch of PAP, and we call on everyone with a stake in the content industry to join us in the war on piracy because the responsibility does not lie with one entity – it lies with all of us.

We look forward to building an industry that supports legitimate content platforms, ensures creators get what they deserve, and which creates opportunities.

When we pay fair prices for content, we grow the industry. Audiences are then able to get content reflects their reality, and we can inspire the next generation of young creatives.

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