

Rural South Africa to get free Wi-Fi

Rural Eastern Cape is about to get high-speed internet service through a dedicated Wi-Fi connection.



Project Isizwe is well known for rolling out the City of Tshwane's massive Wi-Fi programme which is part of the city's vision for universal internet access. But taking wi-fi to the Ingwe Technical Vocational Education and Training College on their Mount Frere and Lusikisiki campuses in a pilot project was not without its critics.

"Everyone says 'It's easy in Tshwane, but you can't do it in a rural area', but here we are," said Alan Knott-Craig junior, the brains behind Project Isizwe.

The pilot would focus on the Department of Higher Education and Training being able to deliver internet access on campus and surrounding areas, he explained.

"The idea is for the Department of Higher Education to deploy free Wi-Fi on campus and for surrounding communities (where students live) throughout the country."

The wi-fi deployment is scheduled for 17 June 2015 and Knott-Craig said that the rural area provided an ideal test-bed for how the poor would be able to participate on the internet.

"Eastern Cape is ideal because it is as rural as you get and is densely populated. Until we solve connectivity problems there, South Africa will always have a problem."

It's a sentiment similar to that expressed by Facebook chief executive Mark Zuckerberg in his drive to push Internet.org, despite criticism the platform has received.

"Giving people free access is the right thing to do. Facebook will keep connecting more people and more countries, and won't stop until every person in the world can connect to the internet," Zuckerberg said when he announced the availability of the platform in Malawi.

In South Africa, Tshwane's city-wide wi-fi programme continues to grow beyond expectations.

The service is now available in 96 wards with 575 live sites. Project Isizwe has 161,577 users of the service, up from just 1,567 in 2013.

In Western Cape, Stellenbosch - where the free wi-fi project was initiated - is still considering how to best offer citizens internet access.

"We continue to try to engage the municipality but they are going through an internal process... as to how to take Stellenbosch Free Wi-Fi forward," said Knott- Craig.

Source: News24Wire

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