

Rural reality hits our screens

There is no doubt that the public's fascination with reality TV is on-going, with the audience for the South African series Kaelo - The Miracle Stories on SABC 2 doubling since the show started in January and prompting the launch of a new segment that is focused on true survival and tells a truly South African story.

Picture a community in a rural area of the Eastern Cape. Like many rural communities in South Africa, it is desperately poor, and has very little infrastructure and resources. It consists of six villages of approximately 800 households. There are four poorly funded schools; some are just mud structures. Although a river runs through the community, the children walk with buckets to the few tap points for water. The community is ravaged by HIV/Aids and there are limited healthcare facilities. It is overseen by traditional leaders - a female chief and a headman.

In a pioneering project, this community called Dutyini, has been selected to become part of Kaelo and will be transformed and uplifted over a period of several months. The Department Of Social Development together with the Independent Development Trust, the National Development Agency, CSI Solutions and Kaelo Worldwide Media have embarked on a Public Private Partnership project to uplift Dutyini.

Rory Boyes-Varley, executive producer of Kaelo, says: "Corporates, government and local bodies will be working together to spark sustainable initiatives in the community, breaking the barriers of poverty.

"As illustrated by many of these initiatives, often all it takes is an idea and assistance to trigger action that can cause major social changes. This new weekly insert on progress in the Kaelo community will add another dimension and engage people in real-time development, showing the pitfalls and successes.

Michelle van Diggelen of CSI Solutions says: "It also provides an opportunity to see how corporates and government can work together to uplift communities in a holistic way, using the best CSR and CSI initiatives as catalysts for sustainable development. We hope to develop a blueprint that may be applied across the hundreds of other disadvantaged communities of our country."

The documentary-style footage will be broadcast as a weekly insert in Kaelo - The Miracle Stories on Wednesday evenings at 21h00 and Fridays at 12h00 on SABC 2, from Wednesday 18 May through to 29 June 2005.

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