



MINISTRY
COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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LAUNCH OF SA CONNECT PHASE TWO IN MOUNT AYLIFF, UMZIMVUBU LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, ALFRED NZO DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

On Saturday, 04 November 2023, the Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, Hon. Mondli Gungubele accompanied by the Deputy Minister, Hon. Philly Mapulane, the Eastern Cape MEC for COGTA (representing the Premier), Hon. Zolile Williams, the District Executive Mayor, Cllr Vukile Mhlelembana, executive leadership of DCDT entities, several other dignitaries and senior officials launched Phase Two of the SA Connect Project.

The SA Connect is Government's flagship programme intended to bridge the digital divide by connecting government institutions and providing wi-fi access to communities across the country with the target to achieve 80% internet connectivity for the population by the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

The aim of the project is to improve broadband penetration, reduce broadband prices and drive economic growth. The broadband Wi-Fi access to communities is implemented by the department's entities Sentech and Broad Band Infraco (BBI) working with local SMMEs Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and targets to connect 32 055 community wi-fi hotspots to benefit more than 5 573 258 households with connectivity across the country.

In the past weekend, the Minister launched the rollout of the infrastructure in the four villages of Mount Ayliff, which are Chitwa, Bhonga, Lugelweni and Dutyini. The connectivity is anchored by the Sentech tower situated at Simakamaka Mountain and providing a clear line of sight to the four villages. It has provided employment opportunities to a total of 120 skilled professionals and semi-skilled labour force and contributed immensely to the general economic upliftment of the area. It is envisaged that the overall Wi-Fi access to communities will result in excess over 75 small to medium sized companies offering employment opportunities to 4 505 skilled professionals and semi-skilled labour force.

Speaking at the launch, Minister Gungubele said, "The days of poverty in the area are numbered. The rollout of this project nullifies the vastness (geographic distance) of the district as well as the rural-urban divide as villagers no longer need to make long distance trips to towns to access services such as banking, education, e-commerce, etc. as well as various government services."

The words of the Minister were corroborated by the beneficiaries of the project who expressed excitement at the affordability and reliability of the connectivity. For R249 per month of unlimited access, a subscribing household has 30 days unlimited access to robust internet. The project has realised cheaper data costs as low as R5 per 1 Gig for a day.

Small businesses, informal traders, local schools, and traditional leaders demonstrated how the rollout of connectivity in their areas have improved their lives and assisted in making their work more efficient and effective.

The Mount Ayliff segment of the project has exceeded the 500 households it originally intended to connect and is currently oversubscribed with many more potential subscribers still requesting the service.

The department will launch other pilots of Phase Two of SA Connect in Harry Gwala Municipality in Kwazulu-Natal as well as Modimolle Local Municipality, Waterberg District in Limpopo in the next coming weeks. Overall, connectivity will be rolled out in 16 districts by March 2024.

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