

Vodacom to connect over 200 new rural network sites

As part of its accelerated rural coverage programme, Vodacom has announced that it will launch over 200 new rural network sites across all nine provinces in the year ahead. This comes after the company extended its South African rural coverage by 101 villages, in areas which did not previously have network access.



Andries Delport, Vodacom's chief technology officer.

The sites are located predominantly in KwaZulu Natal, the Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Mpumalanga. Eighty-two builds are already in progress and the villages were selected through an extensive prioritisation process. Vodacom has focused on areas of no or low coverage where the network is most needed. In making its selection, Vodacom also looked at rural areas with places of interest that would benefit from better connectivity; including hospitals, schools, police stations and transportation hubs.

Andries Delport, Vodacom's chief technology officer, says, "Vodacom's rural coverage acceleration programme has seen us make significant progress in connecting villages which have never experienced the various economic and societal benefits of cellphone connectivity. As Africa's leading mobile network operator, Vodacom remains focused on providing the widest and best rural connectivity in South Africa. We look forward to connecting the new sites in the year ahead."

In keeping with Vodacom's commitment to SMME development, the majority of the sites were allocated to small black-owned businesses to build. Vodacom is empowering these companies to become mobile tower operators, whereby they will build the sites and Vodacom will lease them back in return.

All sites will be installed with 2G/3G capability with the possibility to upgrade to 4G when spectrum becomes available. In villages with clinics, SASSA pay points or other important landmarks, Vodacom will prioritise 4G coverage.

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