

## **Township Tech Takes Centre Stage as e-Kasi Expo Kicks Off**

Walter Sisulu Square in historic Kliptown, Soweto, is set to host the inaugural e-Kasi Tech Festival & Gaming Expo from 25 to 27 October 2017.

The i-Village Foundation and its business, ICT, education and consulting partners will stage South Africa's biggest ever gathering of policy makers, industry players, entrepreneurs and experts in township technology innovation.

"The World Bank says almost 40% of South Africa's working age population lives in townships and informal settlements and yet they hardly feature in the country's ICT scene. South African democracy took hold in the country's townships and now they have a role to play in the Fourth Industrial Revolution," says Mpho Tladi, i-Village Chief Operating Officer (COO) and member of the expo Organising Committee.

The event will specifically provide a platform for entrepreneurs, ICT pioneers and the youth to engage each other and exchange ideas about the ownership, management, and participation of SMMEs in townships. "The support of our valued partners means attendance at the e-Kasi Tech Festival & Gaming Expo is free and we encourage participants to come learn about the digital transformation of the African economy," Mr Tladi added.

The three primary challenges when it comes to understanding innovation in townships are comprehending the link between private sector innovation and public economic policy, understanding that innovation comes in many forms, and understanding the need for collaborative and mutually-beneficial partnerships between local places and government on all levels.

The e-Kasi Tech Fest will address these and other challenges. "A big focus of the event is specifically to create an Innovation Accelerator focused on under-represented groups that will feed new entrepreneurial initiatives, break down barriers to entry and assist innovators along the path to success," explained Mr Tladi.

In addition, developing the e-Kasi Innovation Economy, Smart Cities, Blockchain Technologies, Bitcoin and the SA eSports Symposium will all feature during the three-day Tech Fest.

"We aim to provide a platform for start-ups determined to disrupt the ICT sector by engaging in intelligent, robust discussions examining the township's readiness for the next Industrial Revolution. Young scholars, start-ups and investors will be able to tap into the best minds in the ICT and innovation sector while also realising the benefits of networking," said Mr Tladi.

Speakers include the Deputy Minister of Telecommunications & Postal Services - Stella Ndabeni Abrahams, Lorien Gamaroff - CEO of Banky Moon, Dr Erika Kraemer - Mbula Professor at the University of Johannesburg, Cambridge Mokanyane - CEO of VS Gaming, and Mr Warren Hero - CTO of Microsoft SA, amongst others.

Blacks, the youth and women are not participating near the levels of other communities in many of the high-growth, high-value sectors of the economy. Including these groups in the innovation economy has become an urgent national imperative that the eKasi Tech Fest hopes to help address.

The targeted audience for the e-Kasi Tech Festival & Gaming Expo is township entrepreneurs; existing corporations and government entities looking to change the way they do business; students and young people interested in entrepreneurship or a career in ICT; incubators; eSports brands and organisations and community groups or individuals members who have innovative ideas they would like to share.

For further information about early registration for the free event please visit [www.e-kasifest.co.za](http://www.e-kasifest.co.za). A limited number of sponsorship and exhibition opportunities are available.