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# INSIDE FOUR WALLS

## Fibre and economic creativity in the townships

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**There's a persistent assumption** that township homes are analogue spaces. Small screens, tight budgets and fractured connectivity. That assumption doesn't survive reality. Homes are filled with technology and if they gain access to high-speed fire, the possibilities are transformative. The World Bank has found that improved access and speeds correlate with a move towards more productive content, online learning and services.

South Africa's gaming market, according to PwC, is gaining momentum, contributing $296 million to the more than $600 million in gaming revenue generated by South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya in 2024. It is perhaps the largest and most mature on the continent with the esports segment playing a significant role, growing to around $29 million in 2025. South Africa is also a regional hub for gaming content creation and esports events thanks to infrastructure, connectivity and larger gaming communities than many of its peers. There are also now around 26.5 million gamers in the country with the local industry growing at more than 50% year-on-year, driven overwhelmingly by mobile.

These numbers have historically only described one part of the market. The infrastructure that makes competitive gaming possible – low latency, high-speeds, and always-on connectivity – has been concentrated in affluent suburbs and established business districts. Fibre penetration in township and peri-urban communities has lagged behind, and this gap has meant that a generation of potential players, creators and digital earners has been competing with one proverbial hand tied behind their back, relying on mobile data that throttles under load and drops during electricity outages. It is also significantly more expensive as many young people can only play in informal gaming hubs, internet cafes or kasi lounges which cost per session.

Gaming is so much more than just some fun with friends and for youngsters who have a real talent, it is the doorway to a promising career. Companies like Crowd Control have evolved to provide youth from township communities with access to gaming tournaments so they can discover what it means to play competitively and how this can impact their futures.

Now, imagine what could happen if these kids had fibre offering unthrottled speeds of 100Mbps and beyond and improving connectivity significantly. Youth who could not have even considered a career in gaming can now start playing at an international level. This connectivity meets a very real need for youngsters to monetise their creativity.

In 2025, esports was recognised as an official university sport under University Sport South Africa, placing it alongside rugby, netball, football and athletics. In the same year, Comic Con Africa hosted tournaments with prize pools exceeding R600,000. The Mamelodi Sundowns Esports Championship offered a R200,000 prize pool for EA FC players and esports scholarships are now available as more professional teams are being formed.

There are incredible changes happening at the community level with initiatives like Kasi Flare, a township-focused EA FC esports tournament series, running qualifiers through hubs in townships across South Africa. In 2025, a first time Easter Cape hub, Malume Playground, produced the overall champion who beat established players from around the country to secure his share of a R50k prize pool. Kasi Flare exists precisely because the talent has always been here, what was missing was the infrastructure.

Fibre is that infrastructure. It places a young gamer from a township community on the same starting line as players in Cape Town's Atlantic Seaboard or Sandton. Unblocking this potential is essential and it starts with treating the communities as active partners in rollout and change, not as passive recipients of technology. When communities understand what is being built, and why, they will



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