



Villager Lands 2010 Soccer World Cup Commission

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By Anna Makhubele
Tzaneen

When Kenneth Dube, 35, started making electric bedside lamps using wood and animal horns, he never imagined he would one day receive an order for a 2010 Soccer World Cup tourism project.

Today, Mr Dube is making bedside lamps for five guesthouses which have been built in Muhlava village near Tzaneen to cater for the biggest soccer event on African soil.

The project is funded by Irish Aid, costing R15 million.

"When I was asked to make lamps for the project, I couldn't believe my ears. I know now that to succeed in life, you must persevere," he said.

Mr Dube left school in Grade 11 because of ill-health, and is now living in Sasekani village near Tzaneen with his wife and child.

He started making his lamps in 2002 after many years of unsuccessful job-hunting.

"When I started collecting animal horns to make the lamps, some people laughed at me, saying I was crazy. But I didn't care about them because I knew what I was doing," he said.

Mr Dube sold the lamps in the streets, at social grant pay-points, at government functions and alongside major roads in the area.

His business grew by word of mouth and soon he was receiving calls from curio shop owners from Phalaborwa, Giyani and even as far as Gauteng.

He now sells more than 20 lamps a month at about R50 a piece. "With the money I get, I am able to buy food and clothes for my family."

Coba Wilsenach, a tourism officer at the Mafikeng Tourism project, said she was impressed by Dube's originality and innovativeness.

"We have asked him to design special bedside lamps for our guesthouses," she said.

Mr Dube was one of more than 300 villagers who are going to benefit from the tourism project, including story tellers and traditional dancers.

The project, which is building five guesthouses and an exhibition centre in the area, is expected to be completed by the end of this year. -

You can make a difference in the lives of poor, says Chris Rock's wife

By Nthambeleni Gabara

Johannesburg - Everyone can make a difference in the lives of those who are less fortunate in life, says Malaak Compton-Rock, wife of American actor and comedian Chris Rock, who is currently in South Africa.

The founder of the Angel Rock Project is here to bring support to the community of Diepsloot and the residents of Soweto in the form of food parcels and volunteer work.

"Everyone can make a difference in the lives of our less fortunate and impoverished communities. We have come to help improve the lives of those South Africans who are still living below the poverty line.

"We strongly believe that poverty is not inevitable. We believe it is a social injustice which can be tackled," she told BuaNews.

The American has brought a team of young people over to South Africa from Brooklyn, New York to distribute food parcels and clothing to impoverished households and to do volunteer work for the elderly and sick in Soweto and Diepsloot.

The team distributed food parcels and clothing for children and adults who come from needy families in Kliptown, Soweto on Tuesday. They were joined by members of the local non-profit organisation, Hope Worldwide.

The team, which arrived in the country on Saturday, will be here for two weeks.

The former United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) employee said she brought the American youngsters to South Africa to help them develop a passion to help the poor and to change their perception that they are not merely a burden on society.

In an exclusive interview with BuaNews, Ms Compton-Rock said when she visited the country three years ago she decided to return and make a difference in the lives of the poor.

"Irrespective of the circumstances and challenges, South Africans have a strong sense of pride for their country and a passion for their communities. I am doing all this because I like this country," she said.

Flora Gama, 67, of Kliptown smiled from ear to ear when the crew arrived with the food parcels as well as toys and clothing for her grandchildren.

"I am happy. I never thought I would receive this help. God must bless you good people. You must also help other poor families," she told the volunteers.

Gogo Gama lives with her daughter, three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren, as they are struggling to find employment and rely on monthly pension grant.

Her granddaughter, Jessica Gama, 25, said the family sometimes had to go to bed with empty stomachs as there was not enough food. "I do not have enough words to thank the Angel Rock Project," she said.

Jessica matriculated last year but due to financial constraints she is unable to further her studies.

The American youth told BuaNews they had been touched by what they had witnessed in South African.

Peter Croffie, 25, said: "I have been inspired by those poor people who always strive to improve their lives and their country irrespective of the challenging environment they find themselves in.

"These people have inspired me because they seem to have a strong vision for their families, so as a youth, being part of this project I realised that our contribution is already making an impact," he said.

Jonathan Severe, 14, who is the youngest in the group, said he never imagined that there were people who could go to bed with empty stomachs. "I am grateful to be part of this team which is making a difference in communities," he said.

Samantha Johnson, 21, said volunteering was something that she enjoyed.

The US youth will do volunteer work for the next two weeks in schools, community centres, gardens and clinics, helping orphaned and vulnerable children as well as the elderly at their respective homes.

The poverty alleviation programme dubbed "Journey for Change" is a partnership between the Salvation Army, Angel Rock Project and Hope Worldwide.

The Rock family first visited South Africa on an official UNICEF visit in December 2005 and then they made a second visit in December 2006.

They decided to make a change and began their support by providing funds for educational assistance and sending monthly in-kind donations of new and used goods for families, including school supplies, baby supplies, toys, personal hygiene products, and clothing that are distributed throughout the community to the neediest families.

Today the Angel Rock Project hopes to change the quality of life for people living specifically in Diepsloot and Soweto by helping people open their own businesses through a micro-credit income-generating program.