**Problem Statement**

**Background & Stats**

Tourism is one of South Africa’s fastest-growing industries, contributing significantly to the economy. According to the **World Travel & Tourism Council**, the sector contributed **7.2% of GDP** and supported **1.68 million jobs in 2023**. This makes tourism a cornerstone of national growth, employment, and transformation.

**Problem**

However, in a report published on [**www.gov.za**](http://www.gov.za/) (*White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa, 2024*), it is noted that **rural tourism is suffering**. Despite South Africa’s rich cultural heritage, many rural areas remain excluded from the tourism value chain due to poor infrastructure, weak digital integration, limited visibility, and safety concerns. These challenges prevent rural communities from benefitting equally from the booming tourism economy.

**What Has Been Done Before**

To address some of these gaps, the **Basic Quality Verification (BQV) program** was introduced to help formalize and certify rural accommodations like homestays and guesthouses. Policies proposed in the 2024 **Tourism White Paper (gov.za)** also highlight the need for innovation, inclusivity, and digital transformation in tourism. While these initiatives lay a strong foundation, they have not fully unlocked rural communities’ potential or provided scalable opportunities for sustainable income generation.

**Why There Is a Need for Change**

There is a pressing need to **create more job opportunities in rural villages**. Existing interventions primarily focus on accommodation quality and compliance, but they do not provide immersive, commercially connected solutions that link rural communities directly to visitors and markets. Without such innovation, rural youth, women, and entrepreneurs remain on the margins of the tourism economy.

**The Solution: Roots to Realities Domes**

Our solution is **Roots to Realities**—an immersive, relocatable dome experience. These domes will move from city to city, showcasing **VR village tours** where tourists can experience daily life, cultural practices, traditional meals, clothing, and storytelling by elders. A **supporting app** will allow users to:

* Preview village “trailers”
* Book VR dome tours
* Reserve accommodation, classes, and cultural activities
* Purchase local art, beadwork, food, and clothing

If tourists cannot travel to rural villages, **we will bring the villages to them**.

**Impact**

* **Sparks interest** by using immersive VR to showcase authentic village life.
* **Creates jobs** by connecting tourists directly with local hosts, artisans, and service providers.
* **Generates revenue** for rural communities through bookings, product sales, and cultural activities.
* **Preserves heritage** while making it accessible to wider audiences.
* **Drives inclusivity** by equipping rural entrepreneurs with digital platforms and opportunities.