

Engen KlevaKidz surpasses 700 schools visited across South Africa

Over the past 10 years, the Engen KlevaKidz's often life-saving safety messages have reached over a quarter of a million vulnerable children. Engen KlevaKidz is an annual educational campaign that uses industrial theatre to engage and educate young learners across South Africa about the importance of paraffin safety.

Engen is South Africa's leading marketer of illuminating paraffin. Branded Laurel Paraffin, the energy source is extensively used by many South Africans in wick feed and pressure lamps, stoves, refrigerators and heaters, amongst its various industrial applications.

"The use of paraffin in low-income homes in South Africa is associated with a number of problems such as children who drink it accidentally, the spread of fire when as many as 2 000 homes can be destroyed in a single blaze, and extensive burn injuries," says Engen's Corporate Social Investment Manager, Adhila Hamdulay. Since its inception in 2008, Engen KlevaKidz has reached over 280 000 learners in 700 schools across South Africa – from rural villages deep in Limpopo and the Eastern Cape to townships in Gauteng, the Western Cape and Free State. Engen KlevaKidz takes the form of an interactive educational stage drama using engaging characters to relay key safety messages in the learners' mother tongues, including: Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa and English, combined with jingles to reinforce the theme. Superhero safety educator, Mr Wise is the main character who educates young learners about how to identify and use paraffin safely while interacting with "learners" Bongzi and Junior and urges them to be careful when using paraffin. Stories are used to explain to the learners what to do if paraffin is ingested or inhaled. Mr Wise also focuses on the importance of being clean and washing hands after contact with paraffin, and how to store paraffin safely.

Prizes such as super hero masks and funnels are handed out to learners. This is because Engen believes that the learners are all heroes who have the inner strength and ability to take care of themselves, says Hamdulay.

"Young children in under-resourced households are often the primary day-time care givers, often looking after their siblings while their parents or guardians are at work. "Without supervision, and uninformed of the multiple dangers associated with using paraffin, children between the ages of 7 and 13 are often vulnerable, and it is these children who are the focus of Engen KlevaKidz," adds Hamdulay. Engen KlevaKidz has proven to be a powerful medium to stimulate children's imagination. The takeout messages are explored in pre-and post-behavioural assessment questionnaires illustrating the retention achieved through theatre. After each show, evaluations are distributed to determine the effectiveness of the production. Essentially it takes the form of a behavioural study measuring shift in knowledge and attendant behaviour with results highlighting the positive impact on children who are given the tools and know-how to deal with paraffin emergencies, storage and handling.

"Engen are South Africa's leading supplier of paraffin through the Laurel Paraffin brand. As a leading provider of petroleum products in South Africa, we take this to heart and are honoured to contribute to the livelihoods and the safety of people," concludes Hamdulay.