

McDonald's Happy Meal readers now encourage reading in isiZulu

McDonald's South Africa, through its Happy Reader Program, is advancing its efforts to encourage reading among children in South Africa with the introduction of a new series of children's books. The "Little people, Big dreams I can" series will be available in English and Isizulu.

These new books are the next step in the McDonald's SA journey to encourage literacy while promoting children's exposure to different languages.

Isizulu is one of South Africa's 11 official languages and has roughly 12 million native speakers, according to the 2011 census. Approximately 24% of South Africans speak it as a first language and over 50% as a second language. As one of the Nguni languages, it is closely related to other major languages such as isiXhosa, isiSwati, and isiNdebele, and is the language that most English, Afrikaans and foreign speakers choose when learning a South African language.

In a nation where 80% of people speak a language other than English as their first language, McDonald's SA is proud to address literacy issues with language diversity in mind.

The 'Progress in International Reading Literacy Study 2016' revealed that 78% of grade 4 learners are unable to read for meaning in any language. Local African languages make up just 2% of children's books that are commercially published in South Africa.

As a company that prides itself on diversity and our commitment to fostering community, McDonald's SA has been offering children's books, as an alternate option to toys, with every purchase of a McDonald's Happy Meal, since 2019.

"The ongoing literacy crisis in South Africa requires that organisations who care about the future of this country contribute towards encouraging a love and culture of reading," says Telma Tsironis, Marketing Director at McDonald's South Africa.

"If we want to increase children's literacy and love for reading, we must develop meaningful stories in vernacular languages," she adds.

South Africa's culture is firmly based on the beautiful art of storytelling, from the old ritual of telling children stories around a fire during mealtimes, to the present tradition of reading bedtime stories.

"**Little People Big Dreams I can be**" is a series of stories by children's book author, Maria Isabel Sanchez Vegara and through this series, McDonald's has brought the magic of storytelling to every Happy Meal and encourages children to dream big.

Titles to be made available in isiZulu include **I Can Be a Sports Champion** which features the stories of world champion boxer Muhammad Ali and other sports heroes. **I Can Be a Brave Adventurer** features the story of the first woman pilot, Amelia Earhart among other adventure pioneers. Children can also read about art legends such as Frida Khalo in **I Can Be an Innovative Designer**.

“We are proud to introduce the “Little people, Big dreams I can be” series, which will be available in English and IsiZulu. We want to encourage parents to read to their children while introducing a world of possibilities to South Africa’s young minds,” continues Tsironis.

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