

11-year-old releases Covid-19 cartoon series in 11 languages

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While millions of South African learners are terrified by the Covid-19 pandemic, an 11-year-old entrepreneur has used the lockdown to create a cartoon series educating his peers about the new coronavirus.

Jan Louwrens, a grade five learner from Paarl Boys' Primary School in the Western Cape, added Captain Stay Safe to his already impressive range of robot characters. He could barely hold a pencil when he first designed Baggo Stonetrip, his first character, which now includes a host of unique robots, including Marsmellow and Bloodshrike.



Eleven-year-old entrepreneur Jan Louwrens of Baggo Stonetrip has teamed up with Food For Mzansi to provide child-friendly covid-19 safety information in 11 languages.

In a recent interview with *Food For Mzansi*, he says: "It is normal to feel a bit scared to go back to school in Covid-19. I'm not looking forward to it myself. This is why I made these comics to help kids stay safe."

Although the young inventor misses his friends dearly, he has found some escape in his T-shirt business called [Baggo Apparel](#). This is named after his first robot character. Around the country, kids and even adults who are besotted by the fictional world of superheroes and villains are wearing T-shirts featuring Louwrens' characters.

First, it was more of an 'undercover thing' with Louwrens and his fellow nerds, as he calls them, secretly rebelling against the school's rugby jocks. Word soon spread, and since he has been featured in many magazines and even television shows. Now even corporates are ordering T-shirts with his robot designs via his online business.

After being inundated by parents who were looking for Covid-19 information in different languages, *Food For Mzansi* called on Louwrens to share *The story of the Battle of Covid-19 and Captain Stay Safe* in all 11 South African languages.

Dr Zeinab Hijazi, a mental health and psychosocial support specialist for Unicef, estimates that 99% of the world's children are currently living with restrictions on movement because of the pandemic. He says: "The stakes could not be higher. If

not appropriately addressed, the mental health consequences for a generation of children and young people could far surpass the immediate health and economic impact of Covid-19, leaving long-term social and economic consequences in its wake.”

Food For Mzansi co-founder Ivor Price says: “For us, it was important to not merely translate information in languages such as Afrikaans, Zulu and isiXhosa. We wanted to fully understand children’s fears brought about by the pandemic. It just made sense to team up with Jan, a quirky robot inventor who has been making waves in the digital world.”



The story of the Battle of Covid-19 and Captain Stay Safe is the brainchild of 11-year-old Jan Louwrens and Food For Mzansi.

A new edition of *The story of the Battle of Covid-19 and Captain Stay Safe* will be uploaded on *Food For Mzansi*’s website and social media platforms every Tuesday. In the first edition, the characters experience the realities of the lockdown and social isolation, which has been a rather stressful time for up to 99% of the world’s children who are currently living with restrictions on movement.

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