

'No label No Buy' – The Advantages Are Universal by Stratos Copteros

Executive Summary

A ground-breaking multi-stakeholder appliance labelling programme is literally setting new standards of energy efficiency in South Africa; and leveraging the parallel paradigm of 'think global; act local' in applying, communicating and enforcing them.

Known as the Standards & Labelling (S&L) Programme, this project is geared at directly serving the public interest, by radically reducing household electricity demand and promoting sustainable energy use, in line with South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP), National Energy Efficiency Strategy of 2005, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is powered by the positive participation, ongoing collaboration and combined action of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); South African state actors like the Department of Energy (DoE), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI); the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS); the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS); as well as Eskom and the private sector, including manufacturers, importers, distributors, retailers and industry representative bodies. Together they form a cooperative partnership that collectively seeks to drive down electricity demand and greenhouse gas emissions, while strongly supporting a public consciousness of energy efficiency. This is being done by implementing the dual mechanisms of mandatory minimum energy performance standards (MEPS) and energy efficiency labelling, together with the regulatory, logistical and communications frameworks this requires. In this, the programme has also spawned a spate of exciting new innovations that empower informed consumer decision-making around long-term energy consumption and spending. These directly enable individual citizens to make informed decisions based on their own needs, and to reap both sustained and sustainable savings and benefits by consciously choosing to purchase energy efficient appliances. Simultaneously, the multiplatform communications campaign around the programme, has birthed a colourful SA energy superhero, spreading a nationwide message of energy efficiency and sustainability with fun!

Body Copy

“Vision without execution is hallucination”, said Thomas Edison, one of the great pioneers of the commercial electric current; and his words still perfectly apply in proactively promoting sustainable use of his invention today. As always, the devil is in the details; and to translate the forward-focused vision of broad global consensus on sustainable development, together with core tenets of South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP), into tangible impact on daily life, is both complex and demanding. But it is achievable; and could be by 2030. “Affordable and Clean Energy” is Goal (SDG) 7 of 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by leaders of 193 countries in 2015, while also being a key aspect of SA's NDP 2030; with 2030 as the common fulfilment target date for both. Other shared SDG and NDP priorities range from ending poverty and hunger, to climate action, gender equality, access to clean water, health care and education, equitable economic growth, and creating sustainable cities and communities, amongst others “Every day the men and women of the United Nations work to give practical meaning to the UN Charter”, said Secretary-General António Guterres in his global video message for UN Day 2018. And when it comes to transforming UN SDGs into lived realities in states around the world, their key implementing organisation is the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

With a permanent presence in nearly 170 countries and long-term relationships between it and the vast majority of nations, the UNDP serves as a key bridge between the world-wide vision of development as a core UN pillar and its sustainable achievement in individual states and lives – offering the global partnership, support, collaboration, expertise, and often funding, required. “Our role is translating broad worldwide agendas into specific action in particular national contexts”, says UNDP Resident Representative in South Africa, Ms Nardos Bekele-Thomas; a point that was reiterated by UNDP Country Director Walid Badawi. “We domesticate global goals in a way that is relevant to particular national environments and plans”, he said. “And we do this by being the implementing partner that supports the capacity of multiple stakeholders and governance structures to take national ownership of them”. This includes the signing of strategic frameworks of cooperation (SCF) between the UN and specific countries, as well as drafting a country programme document (CPD), which then substantively operationalises these through particular collaborative projects. For Badawi, a state like South Africa that has such a closely aligned developmental vision to that of the UN, gains crucial advantages from working with the UNDP, in that the latter takes principled and moral positions, is totally impartial and comes with no underlying agenda other than the development of the country. And it offers globally proven experience in implementing cutting edge development solutions around the world, while boasting the highest success statistics in the setting and meeting of project mandates and the rigour of its governance and monitoring procedures.

In South Africa, one of the core pillars of the CPD signed between it and the UN (currently being renewed), is greening the economy; and it again not only ties-in with NDP 2030, but links directly to the SDGs and global climate conventions the country is party to. It is here that the Standards & Labelling (S&L) Programme sits; and it is directly informed by South Africa's National Energy Efficiency Strategy of 2005, which calls for a significant reduction in residential energy demand as part of the nation's overall energy efficiency priorities. To achieve this reduction and simultaneously save South African consumers millions of Rand in needless cumulative energy spending, the project has facilitated the setting of minimum energy efficiency performance standards for a bouquet of household appliances, below which no appliance type can be sold and introduced compulsory energy efficiency labelling for all

relevant appliances. At the same time, it is leveraging the power of information and communication technology to educate consumers and empower their informed decision-making in purchasing energy efficient appliances. For S&L Project Manager, Theo Covary, who directly drives the project, the overarching goal is as simple as it is far-reaching. "Our ultimate aim is replacing inefficient household appliances and encouraging the penetration of new energy efficient ones in the South African market", he said. "There are no silver bullets that bring about instant transformation, but we have a lot invested in this project and we've taken huge strides."

Given the project's obvious potential environmental impact, its funding was accessed via the Global Environment Facility (GEF), whose motto of "investing in our planet" is actioned by providing funding to developing nations and to countries with economies in transition, in meeting the objectives of international environmental conventions and agreements. The UNDP is the largest implementer of GEF programmes worldwide, and a total of \$500million in GEF investment is allocated for South African sustainable development projects, from climate change and fire resilience, to biodiversity, localised economic development and community-driven resource allocation to name a few. So these are truly exciting times for Badawi, because the UNDP can be directly responsive to South Africans' needs – leveraging international assets and acumen to make immediate on-the-ground impact, in direct cooperation with the people and the structures of South Africa. The GEF has invested \$4.3 million in the S&L programme alone (over and above the South African government's contribution); and Badawi believes it provides yet another seminal opportunity for South Africa and the UNDP to cement their relationship through powerful and pragmatic partnerships. "We have relations that span over half a century with many states", says Badawi. "Our presence in South Africa is quite unique in that it is only 24 years old, beginning in 1994. We believe that there is still much more value we can add; and through projects like this, we forge the close-knit connections with government that allow us to serve the South African people together."

Again, key to the UNDP's methodology in all projects, is capacity building - particularly the capacity of the state and civic society to take national ownership and governance of key development areas. "The biggest challenge of development, and one of the most important ways of achieving sustainable development results", says Badawi, "Is to build and maintain strong multi-stakeholder platforms. And the Standards & labelling project is a shining example."

Dr Janice Golding, UNDP Programme Manager: Energy & Environment under whose auspices the S&L Project falls, believes that the powerful project partnership between the UNDP and the DoE in particular, as well as the buy-in and involvement of several other government departments and structures, together with the full spectrum of energy and appliance industry players, has been crucial to the amazing advances that this project has made. "It's about all of us working closely together to provide the products that we deserve as a country", says Dr Golding. Indeed, apart from the intricate involvement of obvious role-players such as the Department of Energy, DTI, NRCS and SABS, the project's steering committee includes an array of other state actors, from National Treasury, to the Department of Environmental Affairs, as well as representatives and representative bodies from commerce, the insurance industry, Eskom, manufacturing and testing facility role-players like the SABS. Ultimately, this wide-ranging inclusivity has allowed for multiple-perspectives to inform the strategy in an all-encompassing and holistic approach, and to create the tangible tools that take the vision of South African household energy efficiency into dynamic implementation. To date, big combined breakthroughs have been made. "This is a fantastic project!" says Dr Golding. "It's a real trendsetter because it creates a full spectrum chain of transformation; spanning

everything from changes in the regulatory environment, to empowering ordinary citizens to make enlightened choices that will benefit them and their families for decades."

From substantive scientific work done in drafting minimum energy performance standards; to devising and designing compulsory energy efficiency labelling for a variety of appliances; to shepherding the requisite changes in legislation and regulation, as well as bolstering the capability of the regulator and the relevant testing facilities to ensure compliance in the performance and labelling of appliances; to expediting approval processes for new locally manufactured and imported products before they launch; to pioneering tech innovations that directly enable consumers to make well-informed 'energy-smart' choices; and the launch of a dynamic consumer activation and communications campaign; the chain of transformation that Golding describes, does have many links indeed!

"This project is revolutionising the industry", says Tumelo Mashiane, Principal Inspector of the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications and one of its representatives on the steering committee; "It brings a lot of new life by creating common cause for all of us." Mashiane emphasised that a core priority of the regulator is standardising regulations and making the sampling, testing and approval processes for appliances as expeditious as possible. This is no mean feat given their vast numbers - both manufactured in, and imported to, South Africa - necessitating direct relationships with industry, testing facilities, SARS and Customs in assuring better enforcement and administration. "It is most important to us that more than just ensuring appliance efficiency, we make life more efficient for everyone we deal with," Mashiane laughs. One of the greatest challenges for the regulator, he believes, is the sheer volume of approvals required, with energy efficiency as only one of several benchmarks to be approved. For example, within a bouquet of a dozen appliance types, the regulator may receive up to 2000 applications per annum, which translates to 2000 new models entering the market every year. Manufacturers, understandably want as swift a process as possible and all industry representatives stressed both their commitment to the project and the need for it ensure a seamless transition from factory to retail floor. "We are working very hard to expedite more information, faster, to industry and consumers," says Mashiane. "Because our biggest motivation in wanting to spread the footprint of enforced standardisation, is to bring better appliances to all South Africans."

Thandiwe Maimane, Chief Director Communications, DoE, concurs. "The wider the scope of efficiency, the better for end users", she said. "Standardisation brings the assurance of greater savings through improved efficiency; and we are very pleased to be working in partnership with the UNDP and other agencies to incorporate global insights and experiences of other markets." Maimane believes that a key role of the DoE is to be an exciting and engaging advocate of energy efficient living. So for her, a crucial aspect of the S&L project is transformation of consumer behaviour through citizen education and technological enablement; as well as increasing retailer awareness in actively promoting the sale of energy efficient appliances. "The message is absolutely clear", says Maimane. "If it doesn't have a label, don't buy it. And if it does, use it to make a truly smart choice, which has long-lasting impact on your pocket." With many grey imports still entering the market through unofficial distribution channels, and lower-priced but highly energy inefficient appliances providing an obvious temptation for the immediately cash-strapped customer, one of the great challenges of the project is guiding consumers into taking a long-term view about saving and spending on appliances. Yes, highly energy efficient products tend to cost more than their lesser counterparts, but escalating energy prices mean that a less efficient, initially cheaper competitor, ends up costing its owner a far greater sum of money in ongoing electricity bills

over the life of an appliance. This point has also been explicitly made by the Minister of Energy, Hon. Jeff Radebe in several media interviews about the project, where he emphasised that the snowballing savings of an appliance efficient household, in time could be used to fund other critical needs such as children's education and for family fun rather than avoidable electricity expenses. In this, all project participants are completely aligned: The more seamlessly that industry can penetrate the market with superior energy efficient products; and the greater the motivation for retailers to sell them and for clients to buy them, the better it is for everyone. It is ultimately on the shop floor that this project culminates. And it is no wonder then that the Hon. Minister Radebe chose a retail environment to introduce it to the South African public.

"There is a right and a wrong in the universe, and the distinction is not hard to make", said Superman; and there were two champions of the clearly distinctive 'right' kind appliances at Hirsch's Homestore, in Fourways that day. The first, the Minister of Energy, Hon. Jeff Radebe himself, passionately and lucidly delivering the fundamental message of household appliance energy efficiency; not just as a national imperative, but of significant long-term economic benefit to individual families. The other, a sensational new South African superhero, Captain Energy – flamboyantly energising proceedings and colourfully drawing attention to the new, now compulsory, energy efficiency labelling on certain appliances and on his chest as his symbol of pride; with the colours of his costume a perfect match for the coding of the labelling. Each in their own unique way, they both drove home the DoE's core public communications' message of "saving energy, one appliance at a time"; with the minister bringing his immense personal gravitas and powerful endorsement of the project from the highest levels of government, and Captain Energy providing an easily recognisable appliance labelling comic-book style graphic icon, with a personal presence at key events. Indeed, this was the first of several vibrant retail events to come. And as the public launch of appliance energy efficiency labelling - now an irrevocable reality in South Africa - it was an outstanding success!

Home-stores such as Hirsch's, and certainly all appliance retailers, are the final frontier of this project. It is in their spaces that appliances are bought and sold – where the concluding purchasing decision is made and enacted. And so there, in the direct immediacy of the buying moment, energy efficiency consciousness has to be powerfully present! More than anything, it is this consciousness that the project's multi-platform media campaign has sought to pre-instill in the public mind-set; so as to influence people both as engaged citizens and savvy consumers, long before they even enter the retail space to make their purchase. This then allows the presence of the relevant labelling and branding in the retail environment to permanently plant the seed of making an energy efficient buy into already fertile soil. And it is this co-reinforcing combination of dynamic multi-platform communications and vibrant in-store presence, which became the hallmark of the appliance labelling brand campaign that began with the minister's launch event. Here now, at the public launch, the doyen of home-store retail in South Africa, Allan Hirsch of Hirsch's Homestore, the largest privately owned home appliance retailer in the country, eloquently endorsed the project, affirmed his group's commitment and strongly supported the honourable minister's message, before escorting him on a walkabout of the store. Engaging with all those present, it was most encouraging to see the broad-ranging representation of all stakeholders at the event, with several other speakers reiterating the across-the-board consensus about standardisation and labelling; making the unity of purpose truly palpable. The large media presence then ensured mass broadcast coverage across multiple national and regional radio stations, together with primetime television news inserts on the national broadcaster, the South African Broadcast Corporation (SABC), and other channels.

Part of the honourable minister's in-store walkabout included him affixing energy efficiency labels on appliance types for which the display of such labelling is now compulsory. To date these comprise of electric water heaters (geysers), washing machines, tumble dryers, washer-dryer combinations, electric ovens, fridge-freezer combinations and freezers, with plans for more electrical appliances to be added in the near future. And although labels are packed with useful information, at their most fundamental, the basic principle of the labelling system is essentially understandable to anyone who has ever received a school report or seen a traffic light before: Standards for appliance energy efficiency have been, and are being, set for an ever-expanding bouquet of device types, in accordance with global best practice benchmarks. A+++ is the highest grade of efficiency possible, but not all appliance types have reached their optimum efficiency potential. Some have A++ and others A+ and even A as their top possible mark. Below those then come B, C and D; with all the potential levels of efficiency for the relevant appliance type, listed on the label in simple colour coding: Dark green for top possible efficiency level, lighter green for the tier below and even lighter green still for the next level down; before reaching yellow, light orange and dark orange as increasingly sub-optimum and less acceptable efficiency levels; with red as completely unacceptable. The particular energy efficiency grade of a specific appliance is then prominently displayed in black on the label – allowing for easy comparison to the top tier of efficiency available for that appliance type – and consumers are encouraged to choose appliances whose exact efficiency level is as close to the top available grade for that appliance type as possible. So for example, if the top tier of efficiency for an appliance type is A++, and the exact appliance that one is considering buying is only B, then it operates with a lot of wasted electricity consumption. A better, 'energy-wise' choice that is closer to that piece of equipment's top energy savings' potential, could be made by selecting an appliance with an A or A+ rating, albeit that the more efficient appliances are also perhaps costlier. The long-term savings on electricity spending of the more energy efficient selection, will far outweigh its added upfront cost over the life of the appliance.

Now it's one thing encouraging consumers to keep the end-goal of enduring energy consumption savings in mind; and to thus make the additional initial investment in higher efficiency appliances. But it creates a far more dynamic relationship between purchasing decisions and purchasers, when the latter have a cutting edge hi-tech tool at their fingertips, providing a quick and precise picture of the cost discrepancies involved. Made public at the honourable minister's campaign launch event, it is the mobile application that every appliance consumer should have on their smartphone; the Appliance Energy Calculator, custom-created as part of the project. This quickly downloadable phone app directly empowers South Africans' appliance purchasing decision-making, by allowing its users to accurately estimate the running costs of different appliances based on their efficiency levels and their own personal variables such as expected frequency of use. So potential purchasers of key appliances can now immediately calculate their ongoing estimated electricity expenditure per particular unit and directly compare the true price differentials between less and more efficient appliances. Here, the far greater extended cost benefits of higher efficiency appliances become patently obvious and hopefully drive the purchasing decision towards the better choice. For Covary as project manager, a crucial breakthrough made by this app, is that it elevates the South African citizen from passive recipient of information and recommendations, to active participant in the process – one who is capable of making well-calculated, enlightened, individual and personally beneficial, financial choices by using the app, while dynamically driving energy efficiency as a national and global necessity. In this

regard, Dr Golding believes that the technological innovation which the project has spawned is one of its greatest contributions to energy efficiency in this country, because of the inclusivity it fosters. "Mom, dad, the kids, can now all be part of their family's appliance buying experience by engaging with the app. It has the potential to bring the whole household together on a journey into greater efficiency", Dr Golding emphasised. "And the coming QR code on appliances will make more information available to potential purchasers before making their choice."

Pioneered in China, the first state to include a Quick Response (QR) Code as part of its appliance labelling, the easily scannable code affixed on any particular appliance, provides direct online access to its entire user manual on the scanner's mobile phone; making more data available than just energy efficiency. In South Africa, incorporation of QR technology into the appliance labelling system is currently underway, beginning with the mammoth task of creating an all-encompassing appliance registration database, in a project partnership between local and Chinese specialists. Speaking at a stakeholder workshop about the introduction of QR Coding on South African appliances, Jiayang Li, a now private consultant who previously worked for the Chinese regulator that implemented the QR code, listed several benefits of the system for manufacturers and retailers, including easier after-sales service and being able set and manage better targets for loyalty programmes. Most importantly, because QR Codes per product model are issued by government, Li believes that they provide yet another official channel to promote efficient appliances, while providing a stronger deterrence to dishonest players in the market, by enabling open access to information and thus fair competition. Covary concurs. For him, a major advantage of government-issued QR Coding on energy efficiency labelling is that it makes the work of the regulator and its inspectors far easier, because of the seamless online access it provides on all of an appliance's specifications via its user manual in any inspection environment. "The kind of data about appliance efficiency being made available via the Appliance Energy Calculator and QR Codes, puts the power of knowledge into the public domain", says Covary. "Beyond the benefits to the regulator and responsible manufacturers, users of electronic appliances will now have unparalleled access to information in making educated choices about household devices which they'll have to live with for years." Ultimately, it is long-lasting shared benefit for every South African that this project seeks to facilitate and it is on all their vibrant participation that its success depends. So it is exactly this collective citizen buy-in that the project promotes, through a single multi-pronged creative communications' campaign that maximises the push-pull combination of public education via multiplatform media on the one side, and vivacious in-store presence on the other. In this, the push of consumers towards appliance energy efficiency thinking was effected through a combination of print media advertising, online presence and social media activity.

Apart from the large media attention garnered by the Minister of Energy's public launch event, project communications include several targeted initiatives. These range from www.savingenergy.org.za the DoE's highly informative energy efficiency web-site, brimming with information for consumers, retailers and manufacturers, to advertisements of varying sizes placed in a host of daily and weekly newspapers, including weekend editions, to strategic social media presence on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. All in all, the focus of the first phase of this campaign has predominantly been on citizen information, education and influence – introducing Captain Energy and energy efficiency thinking to the general public, while educating about the appliance label and energy calculator app. With the direct aim of changing consumer behaviour, the reception of relevant social media content has been extremely positive; and many posts were both extensively commented on and often shared. The "Did You Know?" aspect of communications has been particularly successful in that it demystified seemingly complex issues such as appliance efficiency and energy policy into

accessible discourse. Here, the insights gained from phase 1 have then informed the strategy of phase 2 in terms of enhanced social media activity and public mind-set infiltration; particularly given the approach to the festive season of 2018 when year-end bonuses are often spent on crucial household purchases. Of course the moment of truth is always at point of purchase; and with the retail sector firmly committed at the honourable minister's event, the in-store activation leg of the project's public relations campaign could begin in earnest – Captain Energy and his entourage of efficiency-promoting festive cohorts present in person and in vibrant, exuberant living colour at Makro stores around the country over a series of special Saturdays. "It's been so exciting to meet and educate shoppers in so many different cities", said Lerato Matoko of The Communications Firm who coordinated the national in-store activation campaign. "Many have vaguely heard of energy efficiency, but few really know what it means; and I just love seeing the 'lights go on' in people's eyes as they become transformed", she beamed. "The thrill of customers getting their vouchers, in total disbelief that there is no catch, was wonderful to watch!" laughs Matoko. "It was a classic win-win situation for everyone!" The Makro shopping voucher Matoko refers to, had the value of R800 and was given to all purchasers of appliances on which energy efficiency labelling was mandatory, as part of the activation that day. The only proviso was that the specific efficiency grade of the purchase was no more than two down from the highest optimum efficiency standard available for that appliance type. "Energy efficient appliances no longer cost more", points out Marcia Lephera, UNDP Project coordinator. "But where they do, we have negated the higher price via the voucher and encouraged consumers to make appliances' energy efficiency their primary purchase decision. And the individual Makro stores gained too, with the pre-sale of vouchers to the project", she continued. "The positive 'vibe' that the activation team created was just great for everyone," Lephera concluded.

With all the fun-filled fanfare of a mardis gras moment, Makro stores across six provinces experienced the positive energy of a full Saturday's efficiency-awareness extravaganza, as Captain Energy and a lively crew of promoters descended in full force! At the store entrance, an eye-catching gazebo and matching banners as a key focal point, with Captain Energy and an amiable, quick-witted master of ceremonies eagerly engaging with passers-by, as a hit music DJ played up-tempo vibrant songs. Here, vivacious dancers with labelling branding on their costumes crafted coordinated dance moves with both Captain Energy and the MC, while warmly interacting with shoppers, alerting them to that day's energy efficiency voucher special and distributing an array of other branded gifts and communication material, from informational flyers and leaflets, to T-shirts, caps. Fridge magnets and draw-string bags. Within the store, at the appliance section where the final buying decisions are made, was a combination of strongly branded appliance labelling communications material and on-hand project team members with a more detailed understanding of the appliance labels and the energy calculator app, interacting with prospective customers in tandem with Makro personnel, to positively influence those decisions. Here the vouchers were a significant boon, because they bolstered facts about the long-term savings from efficient appliances, with the immediate benefit of an R800 Makro voucher for buying one. And buy they did! The pilot retail activation took place at Makro Woodmead in Johannesburg, where vouchers were valued at R600 - of which 38 were given away to buyers of sufficiently efficient appliances on promotion. Immediate consumer response to the Woodmead initiative was most encouraging; and based on its results it was decided to raise the voucher value to R800 and extend the activation ambit outside of Gauteng into large cities of other provinces, as the "Provincial Energy Saving Activations Campaign". In the weeks that ensued, 38 vouchers were given away in Durban, 33 in Cape Town, 28 in Polokwane, 23 in Nelspruit, and 10 in Bloemfontein, which was negatively impacted by direct competition from a major Springbok rugby game. Indeed, one of the lessons learnt from the campaign is that individual activation dates make a difference

and that particular times of month matters greatly; with the first and final weekends being by far the busiest, because they coincide with the salary payment time of most customers.

Another crucial insight gained, is the vital importance of retail staff education in actively driving energy efficient appliance sales. Indeed, energy efficiency as a topic of public discourse is still relatively young, and the reshaping of mind-sets extends beyond the consumer to encompass all involved – including those on the retail ‘coal face’, directly interacting with and influencing potential appliance buyers every day. Thus, under current consideration is a dynamic retail staff education and inspiration programme, and strategic reshaping of the retail education campaign in perhaps being at times more precisely focused on the exact appliance sales environment; tactically bolstering sales personnel’s capacity to engage and entice clients at point of purchase. A final understanding that was gained, was the positive potential of interaction between targeted social media activity and retail activations – with social media providing a perfect platform for drawing attention to upcoming promotions and distributing great visual and captioned content about them after they’ve happened. And where they have happened thus far, many who experienced them have been changed into more concerned citizens, better informed consumers and generally happier human beings; whether it was an energy efficiency education, a chat, a funny interaction, or gifts, information material or a voucher that they received. As for voucher recipients; it was a little bit of the best of all!

“I can now actually fill the fridge I’ve bought with this voucher”, laughed one beneficiary. “I didn’t even know about the promotion and had decided on that model anyway; so this is my thanks from the universe for doing my bit for energy efficiency. What a great surprise!” Indeed, the availability of the voucher for a suitably efficient purchase, came as a delightful surprise to many! Some saw it as a kind of cosmic recognition of a good decision they’d made prior to coming to the store. Others were strongly swayed by the voucher to make an energy efficient purchase. A few had not even been shopping for appliances at all, until learning of the promotion. “It’s now or never”, laughed one. “The voucher’s a big score for me. But I had no idea this efficient labelling was even a thing.” In fact, very few voucher recipients knew it was ‘a thing’ either, till then, albeit that they became both believers and messengers afterwards. “I’ll spread the word”, smirked a skate-board teen, as he donned his new Captain Energy cap, slipped the flyer and leaflets into his back-pack and went to help his mother push her new hob set, with extractor, to the car. “It’s brilliant to invest in something that will save money. This year there will be a lot more Christmas cake to make”, she’d smiled. Another delighted recipient was ecstatic that he’d been able to buy the quality of washing machine he couldn’t have afforded without the voucher. “800 bucks goes a long way when you’re getting going in your own place for the first time”, he said. “You guys have helped me start off energy efficient and that’s supercool by the government.” His sentiments were not unique. Several voucher recipients expressed gratitude and excitement at being able to actually make the ‘right choice’ – with the voucher as motivator and enabler. And for all, their new awareness around appliance energy efficiency was a lesson they were both glad to learn and keen to share. “This has been such an eye-opener”, said a newly-wed “This app’s awesome! We only bought a small fridge-freezer for now, but it’s so good to know for when our townhouse complex is completed and we can move in. Then there’s a duplex to slowly stock up.” Most heartening about the campaign was how it spanned the entire spectrum of South African demographics, be it those beginning their lives, or those refurbishing their sunset years, and everyone in between. “Penny wise, pound foolish”, said a pensioner purchasing her first ever dishwasher. “I’m getting too old to hunch over a kitchen sink and I’m glad I didn’t have to skimp on what I bought, with the voucher’s help. Every cent saved on electricity is money I can use to spoil my grandkids.”

In the long run, more than anyone, it is her grandchildren and all future generations that stand to gain the most from the S&L project and the vital efficiency redress it brings. And with minimum energy performance standards having been set for air conditioners and geysers - two of the major electricity consuming devices - as part of the programme, the estimated total savings it is expected to generate by 2020 are 2.15 TWh of electricity and 2.1 CO2 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions; rising to 5.55 TWh and 5.49 CO2 million tonnes respectively by 2030 – hopefully as part of a world where the UN SDGs and the vision of NDP 2030 have not only been met, but exceeded! Until then and much after, long may the multi-stakeholder cooperation that is transforming common global dreams into shared South African realities, continue. A great start has been made, and as the project is again extended, there is much to look forward to still.