



AT A GLANCE

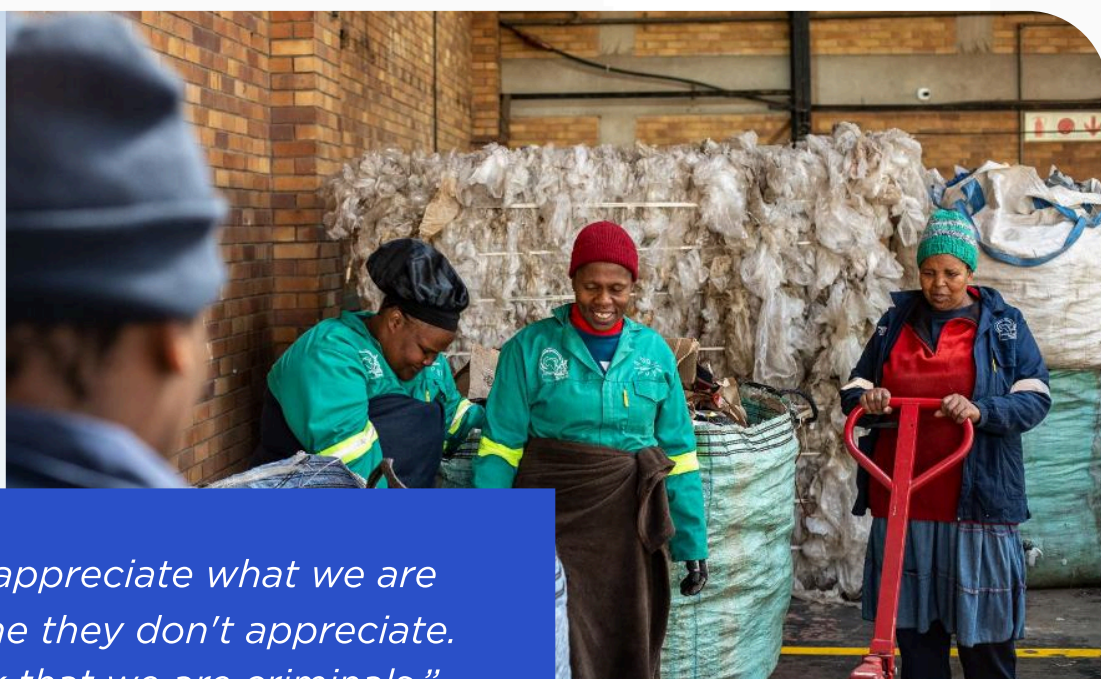
Region	Funding
South Africa	USD 420,000

Caption: Plastic waste sorted in Johannesburg in South Africa.
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Pioneering Registration of Plastic Reclaimers in South Africa

THE CHALLENGE

In South Africa, over 40,000 tons of plastic waste is dumped into the environment each year. Most of the plastic clogs drains, litters the environment, and ends up in the ocean. In addition, South Africa has a very low recycling rate of 15%-17% across all waste. On the frontlines in the fight against this waste are reclaimers who collect, sort, and sell recyclables to collection centers or directly to recyclers. They help to manage plastic waste that would otherwise be flying across the country's unique scenery, obstructing drainage and flood management infrastructure, or polluting the sea. Despite their vital role, reclaimers often face stigma and prejudice.



“

Some do appreciate what we are doing. Some they don't appreciate. They think that we are criminals.”

George Moyo
Waste Reclaimer from Ethekwini.

Caption: Reclaimers sorting waste at one of the sites in Gauteng province of Johannesburg.

RESULTS

With support from PROBLUE, the World Bank pioneered waste reclaimer registration in South Africa, in partnership with the African Reclaimers Organisation. As a result, reclaimers are working more safely, earning more money, and cleaning up South Africa:



Caption: Reclaimers receive cards that register them in the South Africa Waste Pickers Registration System

- Over 11,000 reclaimers were registered in the South Africa Waste Pickers Registration System (SAWPRS), the official registration system introduced in 2021. They were registered around the largest population centres in Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Kwa Zulu Natal, Free State, and North West.
- Their new cards helped reclaimers to get to previously inaccessible sources waste collection and processing sites and be paid by Producer Responsibility Organizations or mandated waste producers that are regulated by Extended Producer Responsibility.
- Registration has also promoted the rights of waste reclaimers. It has brought recognition, dignity, and economic opportunity and opened doors to future benefits. They have also benefitted from sensitization on safe and appropriate handling of waste.
- Waste collection has saved the municipality almost US\$ 54 million in landfill space.
- Elsewhere in Ekurhweni, South Africa, waste reclaimers are diverting over 13,000 kg of waste from ending up in landfills or the ocean, thanks to support by PROBLUE. Reclaimers are now being trained and upskilled. In addition, 18 reclaimers were trained on GPS trackers, to map their daily routes and create invaluable data on the service they provide and highlight which infrastructure investments the municipality could invest in to improve the working conditions of the reclaimers (e.g., collection centers, public lighting on most travelled routes).

LESSONS LEARNED

- The experience has been a win-win for reclaimers, the cities, the environment, and the country. By working to protect the environment, they are helping South Africa's cash strapped metros.

NEXT STEPS

- The African Reclaimers Organisation is working with some Producer Responsibility Organizations (PRO) and interested companies to continue and scale up this unique effort.



“

Really reclaimers are environmentalists. They assist communities by making sure that all the recyclables are collected. In doing that, they also assist the environment. Registration is actually a very big moment for reclaimers. This is a moment where reclaimers can be recognized for the work that they do. The card a reclaimer gets is very important – it is an identity, and a license. If reclaimers have that card, they really feel the sense of belonging, a sense of that they are licensed to do the work that they do. The work that reclaimers - they've saved the municipality R870 (\$54m) in landfill space. This means that they will be recognized for the work that they do and be paid for the service that they deliver to the environment and society.”

Noluthando Tutani, Programme Manager,
African Reclaimers Organisation.

“

To be honest, it has made a difference in my life. A very big difference. I'm able to do a lot of things. Now I've got kids that go to school. So, the money from recycling does make a big difference.”

Zama Precious Mtwungwa,
Waste Reclaimer from Ethekwin.

Programme Manager, African Reclaimers Organisation in front of waste being sorted and collected by reclaimers.

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