



GreenCape



Building collaboration

between industry, government and communities to support recycling in informal and low-income settlements

GREENUP, KHAYELITSHA, CAPE TOWN

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Background & purpose



Due to density of informal settlements, and the lack of access roads, it is not possible to operate a normal wheelie bin lifting service. Social issues also make it difficult for residents to ensure their bins are out for collection on certain days. Another challenge that residents face is that bins get stolen.

In order to alleviate some of the socio-economic and service delivery challenges in informal and low income settlements, many municipalities are investigating the development of innovative solutions that often involve collaborations between government, industry and civil society. One such collaboration has been piloted in Khayelitsha, Cape Town.

Khayelitsha is one of the largest townships in South Africa. The area has a high level of unemployment and limited income opportunities. The provision of basic services – including waste management – is also challenging. One of the main issues is accessibility, as many of the homes are informal dwellings.

This case study focuses on the GreenUp initiative in Khayelitsha, and highlights the potential of collaboration between government, industry and communities to implement recycling in a low income area, whilst at the same time enabling an improvement in livelihoods in the communities.

The case study is written for:

- ✓ Officials at national and regional level tasked with enabling the integration of waste pickers into formal waste management systems who may be looking for workable models and success factors.
- ✓ Decision makers in consumer goods value chains, specifically those responsible for extended producer responsibility (EPR) and corporate social responsibility (CSR).
- ✓ Officials at local government level specifically tasked to enable the integration of waste pickers into waste management systems at a municipal level. (For example, the City of Cape Town has an Informal Sector Integration Task Team).
- ✓ Community-based organisations and other non-governmental organisations with an interest in improving livelihoods in informal and low-income communities.

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Challenge

Providing waste management (and by extension, waste minimization) services in informal and low-income areas requires innovative thinking and resources, with traditional solutions such as communal skips and containers, as well as mainstream solutions such as provision of 240 litre bins not having optimal results. Despite provision of such services, illegal dumping hotspots are still very much prevalent – with the City of Cape Town, for example, managing over 3 000 such illegal dumping hotspots in 2021. Many of the materials that end up in these dumping spots include valuable recyclable materials.



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Tackling the challenge



GreenUp is a recycling initiative run by members of the Makhaza community in Khayelitsha, supported by a number of stakeholders. These stakeholders include the City of Cape Town (Solid Waste Management Department), Distell (a producer of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages), and Waste Plan (a waste management services company). GreenUp leverages the value of recyclable materials to provide an income stream to the local community.

GreenUp was launched in June 2019 by Distell (Africa’s leading producer and marketer of wines, spirits, ciders and other beverages). The initiative received additional practical and financial support from government (Western Cape Provincial Government and the City of Cape Town) to enable recycling in a low income area, reduce illegal dumping and clean up the area, while at the same time providing income opportunities to the local community.

The City of Cape Town provides temporary space¹ for the project as well as (three) containers for the sorting and storage of recycled material. Distell provides:

- 01• Mentorship and training for the group – including financial, business, and legal training relevant to SMMEs operating in recycling;
- 02• Personal protective equipment (PPE), scales, office equipment and recycling bags; and
- 03• A waste tracking platform which assists in tracking waste materials that are collected and waste reclaimer transaction.

Distell also assists the group with engaging with and drafting contracts with buyback centres for the recycled materials, and drafting agreements for recycling with local community shopping centres and businesses (including taverns and spaza shops) in Khayelitsha for access to recyclables.

¹ A long-term solution is still being developed to address space constraints

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How does this work?

- ✓ Reclaimers, ie residents in the community, who collect recyclable waste, are scheduled to work five days a week. On collection days they sort through refuse that has been placed out for collection to collect items with recycling value.
- ✓ They are equipped with 47 trolleys, scales to weigh the items on site and recycling bags. They also receive a bakkie from Waste Plan, (a waste management and recycling service) to assist in their efforts to reduce waste in the recycling industry.
- ✓ The collected recyclables are then sorted and stored on site, in three six-metre-long containers, provided by the City.
- ✓ The waste is sold to the buyback centre (BBC) in exchange for income.

5 Impact / Outcome

Two years after its launch in 2019, GreenUp had 62 members in the Makhaza community in Khayelitsha. This grew to 120 members in 2022. The collaboration allowed for access to resources from different organisations i.e. access to PPE and capacity building (in terms of understanding recycling, what materials to recycle, negotiating for better prices) provided by the industry partners, and aligned with support from the (municipal and provincial) government, including assistance with education and awareness programmes in the communities in which GreenUp operates.

Benefits to GreenUp members

- ✓ Availability of working space/land.
- ✓ Infrastructure and equipment – including containers, trolleys, scales.
- ✓ PPE, leading to increased visibility and acknowledgement by community.
- ✓ Skills development and training for members.
- ✓ Support with documentation to formalise businesses.
- ✓ Income opportunities for 62 members (R80 000 – R120 000 in 2020) (the number of members grew from 62 to 120 in 2022).

Benefits to businesses

- ✓ Diversion of packaging from landfill.
- ✓ Contribution to diversion targets (EPR) for companies and PROs.
- ✓ Demonstration of a potentially replicable model for extended producer responsibility.
- ✓ Reduced environmental degradation.
- ✓ Visible and impactful corporate social responsibility.

Benefits to municipality

- ✓ Landfill airspace savings.
- ✓ Annual cost saving (in 2020) of between R40 000 – R69 000 for avoided landfill (value of airspace).
- ✓ Additional savings in cleaning up dumping sites and transport of dumped waste to landfill.
- ✓ Contribution to improved service delivery.

Social and Environmental benefits

- ✓ Education and awareness programmes for the local community
- ✓ Diversion of materials from landfill (60-100 tonnes of recyclables in 2020)
- ✓ Reduced pollution of storm water systems and rivers.



Alderman Twigg has been a key supporter of the GreenUp project.

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Lesson learned

The GreenUp project is an example of how a community based project can be established in order to:

- ✓ Address waste management challenges (including illegal dumping);
- ✓ Enable recycling;
- ✓ Provide income (employment) opportunities in informal and low-income communities; and
- ✓ Support municipal service delivery goals.

Access to land and storage space allows for stockpiling of materials, allowing GreenUp members to generate a higher income due to (i) ability to process a higher volume of materials; (ii) material volumes make it more viable for bigger buyback centres to come and collect materials on-site, removing transport costs for GreenUp; (iii) better sorting practices, leading to better quality materials to sell to buyback centres.

This model holds potential particularly for the implementation of the extended producer responsibility (EPR) regulations, which mandate the incorporation of the informal sector. Collaboration between different stakeholders will be key to the implementation of EPR regulations from 2022-23, and the GreenUp case study outlines a potential method for collaboration, where different organisations contribute according to their mandates/interests and strengths to enable the objectives of the different organisations to be met.

There is a good appetite in communities to participate in the recycling economy, after overcoming the (initial) stigma attached to working in the waste sector.

Some of the members of GreenUp were new to the idea of recycling, but the support and training provided resulted in a shift to realising the opportunity in recycling. Having access to proper PPE and branded trolleys was also seen to have contributed positively to a sense of dignity and belonging.

Door-to-door education and awareness campaigns provided by GreenUp to the community resulted in shifting mind-sets and buy-in from the community, with many households either setting aside their recyclables for GreenUp members to collect, or dropping off recyclables at the site.

The above suggests that key enablers of the success of the GreenUp initiatives were:

- ✓ Provision of infrastructure to enable collective operation at scale.
- ✓ Facilitation to secure supply and offtake of recyclables to enable sustained operation for a large number of community members.
- ✓ Collaboration and complementary contributions to achieve the objectives of multiple organisations simultaneously.
- ✓ Training and awareness raising for informal collectors and other unemployed community members to recognise and realise the potential inherent in recyclable material available in communities.
- ✓ Raising community awareness and interventions to increase the dignity of collectors to leverage community support and participation.



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