2022

Clean-Up and Recycle South Africa Annual Report

Photo captured by Soulbent Project

Plastics | SA

www.plasticsinfo.co.za

Clean-Up & Recycle SOUTH AFRICA

www.cleanupandrecycle.co.za

Introduction

Africa is the fastest urbanizing continent, with cities struggling to balance their extraordinary growth with sustainable waste management. Unfortunately, many of its countries are poor and do not have access to waste collection services so they often rely on unregulated dumpsites to get rid of their waste. According to the United Nations Environmental Programme report, South Africa discharges between 90 000 and 250 000 tons of waste into the environment annually. The current population of South Africa is almost **61 million** - a 1.28% increase from 60,04 million in 202, giving South Africa one of the highest urbanization rates in the world. This increase in population growth and urbanisation leads to higher volumes of waste generated, resulting in stinking heaps of waste disposed haphazardly in rivers, along roadsides and on beaches in urban areas.

Figure 1: Images showing polluted environment caused by littering and illegal dumping. Courtesy Plastics SA

This has a negative impact on the health and social wellbeing of communities as well as on the environment, placing more pressure on an already struggling waste management system in the country. **Litter** leaks into the environment posing a serious threat to marine life, human health and economies on local, regional, national and global scales. Littering is very visible throughout our country and aesthetically damages our beautiful environment, hampering the growth of our tourism industry and job creation.

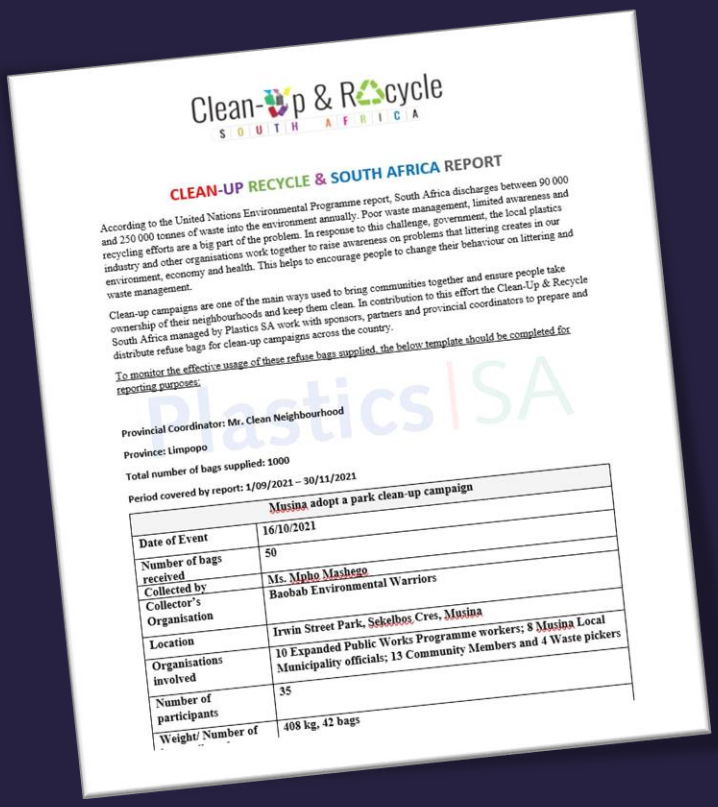
Current Solutions

To tackle environmental pollution, the plastics industry has been working collaboratively with Government, Producer Responsibility Organisations, Community Based Organisations and other Non-Governmental Organisations through clean-up and recycling projects. For the past 25 years, PlasticsSA has been coordinating and supporting roadside, beach and river catchment projects along the coastline, as well as inland rivers through the Clean-Up and Recycle SA and the International Coastal Clean-up projects. In these projects 4 activities are implemented and monitored:

1. Waste Management and Recycling
2. Litter booms
3. Clean-up campaigns
4. Education and Awareness

For the purpose of this report we will focus on clean-up campaigns, education and awareness. Clean-up campaigns are one of the main ways used to bring communities together and ensure people take ownership of their neighborhoods and keep them clean.

Figure 2: Tshwane University of Technology students (left) and Minister of DFFE Ms. Barbara Creecy (right) with colleagues during clean-up campaigns. Pictures courtesy of Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Environmental Affairs.



Clean-Up & Recycle SOUTH AFRICA

CLEAN-UP RECYCLE & SOUTH AFRICA REPORT

According to the United Nations Environmental Programme report, South Africa discharges between 90 000 and 250 000 tonnes of waste into the environment annually. Poor waste management, limited awareness and recycling efforts are a big part of the problem. In response to this challenge, government, the local plastics industry and other organisations work together to raise awareness on problems that littering creates in our environment, economy and health. This helps to encourage people to change their behaviour on littering and waste management.

Clean-up campaigns are one of the main ways used to bring communities together and ensure people take ownership of their neighbourhoods and keep them clean. In contribution to this effort the Clean-Up & Recycle South Africa managed by Plastics SA work with sponsors, partners and provincial coordinators to prepare and distribute refuse bags for clean-up campaigns across the country.

To monitor the effective usage of these refuse bags supplied, the below template should be completed for reporting purposes:

Provincial Coordinator: Mr. Clean Neighbourhood

Province: Limpopo

Total number of bags supplied: 1000

Period covered by report: 1/09/2021 – 30/11/2021

	Musina adopt a park clean-up campaign
Date of Event	16/10/2021
Number of bags received	50
Collected by	Ms. Mpho Mashego
Collector's Organisation	Baobab Environmental Warriors
Location	Irwin Street Park, Sekelbos Cres, Musina
Organisations involved	10 Expanded Public Works Programme workers; 8 Musina Local Municipality officials; 13 Community Members and 4 Waste pickers
Number of participants	35
Weight/ Number of	408 kg, 42 bags

Plastics SA

Clean-Up & Recycle South Africa - managed by Plastics SA - work with sponsors, partners and provincial coordinators to prepare and distribute refuse bags for clean-up campaigns across the country. To monitor the effective usage of the refuse bags supplied, the template on the left is used by the coordinators to collect data on any clean-up activity that takes place where the provided bags are used.

Clean-up campaigns are conducted in two ways, firstly via conducting clean-up campaign events and secondly through continuous clean-ups with teams that work on a weekly basis, to clean illegal dumps and any areas that need cleaning e.g. roadside, beaches and river clean-up campaigns.

Figure 3: River, roadside and beach clean-up campaigns conducted across the country. Pictures courtesy of Plastics SA and Msundusi Municipality

Clean-up actions

Over **500 000 plastic bags** were sponsored for clean-up campaigns and used by approximately **120 000** people including provincial coordinators, volunteers, NGOs, and communities during September 2021 – June 2022 to clean neighborhoods, removing waste from river streams, parks, and streets in South Africa. People don't usually weigh the refuse bags after clean-up campaigns as they do not have scales, but on average a bag filled with waste and recyclables weighs 4-5 kilograms. This means that over **2500 tons** of waste was diverted away from the ocean and the natural environment during this period.

During clean-up campaigns, recyclable waste fills thousands of refuse bags; however, of the 2500 tons collected, only about **2,3%** is taken for recycling after clean-up campaigns and the rest ends up on landfill sites. More work needs to be done to encourage people to separate recyclables from the waste during clean-up campaigns.

Figure 4: Plastic bags used during clean-up campaigns across the country. Pictures courtesy of Eco-Care Trust, Clean City SA and Mpumalanga DARDLEA

Challenges

Eventually the goal is to divert all recyclables collected during a clean-up campaign away from the landfill, but the current situation presents challenges that disturb the ideal flow of waste including:

- Unwillingness to participate from some public members because of negative perception.
- Poor quality material polluted by soil and other chemicals/substances.
- Lack of sorting material from waste during clean-up campaigns.
- No transport to take recyclables to buyback centers.
- No recyclers to collect the recyclables due to challenges of markets.
- Insufficient tools of trade such as trolleys and travelling distances.
- Discouraged recycling due to low rates from the “middle man”.
- Lack of investments in the environmental management sector.
- Plastics SA distributes plastics bags for clean-up campaigns, but the demand is increasing daily.

Figure 5: Recyclables collected during a clean-up campaign. Pictures courtesy Plastics SA

Constant littering has resulted in the accumulation of waste in the environment, and clean-up campaigns have become the main way of removing waste and reclaiming the environment. However, clean-up campaigns are costly, time consuming and certainly not a sustainable or permanent solution.

Education and Awareness

Although waste is removed, the main objectives of the Clean-up and Recycle Campaign are to **raise awareness** of the effects of litter on our lives, to promote waste management practices that keep the environment clean and to urge people to take responsibility for their own waste. During clean-ups, communities come together and teach each other about the effects of littering and the importance of a clean and healthy environment. This improves social cohesion, **builds a sense of civic pride** and fosters an appreciation of the environment.

Figure 6: Plastics SA on the left and Billy Bin on the right conducting awareness campaigns against littering. Pictures courtesy of Plastics SA and Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.

Billy Bin is the mascot of the national Good Green Deeds Programme, which was announced by President Ramaphosa in 2019. Billy Bin's mission is to bring awareness to the effects of littering and illegal dumping and he reminds everyone to keep their environment clean by not littering!

Figure 7: Art made from waste by learners of Little Republic Preschool to raise awareness during Earth Day 2022. Courtesy of Little Republic Preschool.

A dirty environment breaks the morale of a community and through clean-ups and awareness campaigns, residents get to experience how much can be accomplished with many hands and some coordination. It builds cohesion in the community and highlights that together they can address other social issues and work with government to improve local services etc.

Kwa-Zulu Natal province Floods Response

KwaZulu-Natal received approximately 400mm of rainfall in a period of 24 hours on the 11th and 12th of April, 2022, which is approximately 75% of the average annual precipitation. Consequently, floods hit the province and caused extensive damage to homes, businesses and public infrastructure. This catastrophic phenomenon left a trail of destruction and pain on families and communities that will last for years to come.

The floods further added pressure on the already struggling waste management system in the province, as chemical and solid waste leaked into the ocean and also swamped the beaches and rivers in the coastal areas. In response to this, the plastics industry, coordinated by Plastics SA is working with already existing partnerships in the Durban area to remove the solid waste and restore waste management facilities affected by the flood water such as buy-back centres, fish line bins and litter booms. The teams work in a well-coordinated manner and are focusing on 3 main pressure points along the coast including: Umgeni river catchment, the harbor areas and the South Coast of Durban.

Recommendations and Conclusion

In view of the fact that littering is a behavioral issue, it will take time to change people's bad habits and get everyone to manage their waste better. However, all of the green deeds, countrywide, assist in diverting the waste from landfill and create more awareness of the effects of waste. These efforts need to be maximized and supported to get more people involved. To achieve this, more investments are needed to support the Clean-Up and Recycle SA project so that more bags can be procured, as well as other tools that are needed during clean-ups e.g. scales, protective clothing, billboard advertising, TV adverts, radio etc.

Project made possible by funding and support from:

Ocean Conservancy, Kelpak, Pick n Pay, Plastics|SA, PETCO (PET Recycling Company), POLYCO (Polyolefin Recycling Company), SAVA (SA Vinyls Association), Polystyrene Association of SA, Packaging SA, Polo, Aquelle, Coca-Cola Beverages South Africa, National Recycling Forum, The Glass Recycling Company, Recycle Paper ZA, Tetrapak, Sasol, Safripol, Tuffybags, Dow, Fibre Circle, AECI, Let's do it, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment, African Marine Waste Network and 1000's of volunteers across the country!!

Thank you to the provincial Clean-Up coordinators for your dedication and hard work!!!

Compiled by: **Kabelo Phakoe** (Sustainability Project Coordinator)
Phone 011 653 4792 | Email: Kabelo.Phakoe@plasticssa.co.za