

The Appliance Bank joins local SRI chapter in tackling e-waste in SA

In order to tackle South Africa's rising e-waste challenge, The Appliance Bank (TAB) has teamed up with the local chapter of the global Sustainable Recycling Industries (SRI) programme (2020 - 2023) to launch an ambitious project which is set to bring about economic opportunities while ensuring workable and safe solutions for the management of e-waste.



The local SRI project aims to build capacity for sustainable e-waste recycling by supporting related national initiatives and implementing pilot ventures. It involves various stakeholders, now including TAB, a training programme for unemployed men that gives them the technical skills needed to repair damaged and customer-returned small appliances.

In support of the circular economy, TAB prevents damaged appliances from being disposed of in landfills.

Job creator assisting in training

TAB came onboard to create training materials which will support the collaboration and help scale the intended impact of the SRI project in South Africa. The pilot project is kicking off in iLembe, KwaZulu-Natal which will see TAB working with waste pickers and providing technical appliance repair training.

Commenting on the initiative Tracey Gilmore, CEO and co-founder of TAB, says, "We are extremely excited to be onboard and honoured that the SRI team reached out to us to join the conversation and be part of this wonderful initiative. South Africa can only benefit from projects like the SRI that will create a more inclusive economy and contribute to sustainable growth."

Bringing new opportunities for sustainable economic growth

The SRI programme includes the participation of Egypt, Ghana, South Africa, Colombia and Peru. SRI aims at building capacity for sustainable e-waste recycling by supporting national initiatives and implementing pilot projects. The first phase of the SRI programme was implemented between 2013 – 2018 and is now in its second phase (2019 – 2023). The overall development objective of the SRI programme (Phase 2) is to create favourable framework conditions, which enables the development of a sustainable recycling industry for e-waste and any related waste streams.



In all its activities, the SRI programme strives for an inclusive approach of enabling beneficial economic conditions for both the formal industry stakeholders and the informal sector. Therefore, the programme leverages steps and strategies leading to both a resource preserving circular economy transition and contributing to actions on climate change mitigation through the recovery and reintegration of secondary raw materials into industrial processes.

The SRI programme is funded by the Swiss State Secretariat of Economic Affairs (SECO) and is implemented by the Institute for Materials Science & Technology (Empa) and the World Resources Forum (WRF).

Key outcomes and deliverables envisaged for South Africa

The national SRI project team aims to develop an e-waste policy (on national and local level), define minimum working conditions for the formal e-waste value chain partners, and facilitate strategic informal sector integration. It will

also assist with the development of both auditing skills and capacity to assess e-waste value chain operators and oversee the development of a national e-waste learner curriculum.

The pilot project in iLembe will see the team work with the informal waste sector to collect e-waste via a newly developed app.

South Africa among the most guilty of e-waste pollution in Africa



According to the e-Waste Association of South Africa (eWasa), each individual in South Africa generates about 6.2kg of e-waste and the Department of Environmental Affairs estimates an annual national tally of 360,000 tonnes. A technology economy study in 2014 revealed that more recycling of e-waste could bring notable benefits to South Africa. If the country manages to increase its recovery for recycling rates (currently hovering around 10%) up to 30%, it will yield an additional R32m per year injection into the weak South African economy.

One man's waste is another man's gold

TAB, which forms part of The Clothing Bank (TCB), provides a two-year training programme for unemployed men to establish their own sustainable businesses. The men, most of whom are fathers, repair the donated household appliances and sell them for a profit in their communities.

Last year, TAB had 89 active businessmen who sold goods for a profit of R5.4m and around 22,000 units / e-waste materials were recycled. Piloted in 2015 as a result of a strategic partnership with The Clicks Group, TAB has grown to have operations in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban.

TAB provides beneficiaries with extensive financial, business and life-skills training, as well as coaching and mentoring to help them on their journey to self-determination. In 2018, the TAB programme formalised its technical training and developed a comprehensive modular-based curriculum covering all aspects related to electricity and appliance repair.

“Apart from all the research learnings we will obtain from the SRI project, it provides an essential platform to build on our programme through improving our training material, continuing our contribution to improving our country’s entrepreneurial ecosystem and aiding job creation,” concludes Gilmore.

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