

Buy-back initiative for recyclables saves millions, pays millions

Packa-Ching, a Polyco recycling initiative supported by Shoprite, has seen over 10-million kgs of waste kept out of the landfill, with more than R10m paid out to community members.



Supplied image: Packa-Ching appoints business owners to run mobile recycling units in selected areas. They employ between three to five community members in their teams. With 15 units now servicing more than 80 communities across South Africa, Packa-Ching has created more than 57 jobs.

With mobile units operating in low-income areas where recycling infrastructure is hard to come by, Packa-Ching incentivises communities to collect and recycle waste. Recyclable packaging materials, including plastic, glass, cans, and paper, are weighed, and community members are paid instantly via a cashless eWallet system. The funds can be used at any participating retailer or can be withdrawn or transferred to anyone in South Africa.

Packa-Ching launched its first mobile unit in August 2017 in Langa, Cape Town and has since expanded nationwide. The 15th Packa-Ching unit recently launched in Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal. The initiative's unique model is entrepreneur-focused, and each unit is owner-operated. The programme provides an income-earning opportunity for both the community members and the waste entrepreneurs.



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“Newcastle is a job-scarce area and we’ve seen the positive impact that our first unit had on our business and the community. As more people see value in recycling, the demand has grown tremendously. People can earn a living and with our new unit we’ve created five permanent jobs,” says Phila Dlamini, co-owner of Mpilenhle Packa-Ching in Newcastle.

Servicing more than 80 communities and schools across South Africa, Packa-Ching has created more than 57 new jobs since its inception via the Shoprite Group’s participation in the [YES \(Youth Employment Service\) initiative](#).

“Shoprite got involved when we started the Packa-Ching Mobile buy-back centre, through their sponsorship and support, we are able to pay the employees,” says John Ndava, project manager of Packa-Ching in Philippi, Cape Town. “We have created employment for them, they are able to take care of their families. The education involved helps enhance their personal development and prepares them for further opportunities within the waste and recycling industry.”

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