

# First of its kind recycling project launched in Limpopo

A joint separation-at-source initiative between HDPE and PP plastics manufacturer, Safripol, and PET recycling company, PETCO, is being rolled out in Limpopo's Thulamela Municipality to target a cleaner environment and job creation. Gert Claasen of Safripol technology and innovation and Belinda Booker, PETCO's collections and training project manager, report on progress.



Celebrating the launch of the Separation-at-Source initiative in Limpopo are (From left) Avhashoni Tshifhango, Thulamela Municipality mayor, Tlou Sebola of PETCO, and JP Tambani, deputy principal of Tshedza Primary School, which was one of the recipients of the waste separation bins. The initiative aims to create more income opportunities for recycling collectors, while reducing waste that ends up in landfills.

**R**esidents in northern Limpopo are becoming eco-warriors thanks to a new campaign which aims to see environmental waste reduced and much-needed jobs created at the same time.

The separation-at-source project is being rolled out in the towns of Thohoyandou and Sibasa in Limpopo's Thulamela Municipality, thanks to a sponsorship of 200 waste separation bins worth over R160 000 by Safripol, a national company which manufactures high-density polyethylene (HDPE) and polypropylene (PP) plastics.

The handover of the bins was overseen by PETCO – the organisation responsible for PET plastic bottle recycling and collections around South Africa – in collaboration with the Thulamela Municipality; the South African Department of Economic Development; and the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries.

The colour-coded green (glass), yellow (plastics), blue (paper) and red (cans) bins will appear at schools and municipal offices in the two towns, allowing residents to separate out their household waste for the first time.

This means – at least for the households that take part

in the project – that only waste that cannot be recycled will end up in the municipality's landfills.

In turn, the municipality will be able to allow recycling collectors access to the separation waste bins, creating much-needed recycling income opportunities in the area. "We are committed to helping uplift communities and stimulating income generation wherever we can," says Gert Claasen, Safripol technology and innovation executive.

Belinda Booker, PETCO's collections and training project manager, said the support came at a time when the municipality could not afford the separation bins, which are a first for the area.

"The knock-on effect is that the environment will be less polluted, in addition to which the project will bring more attention to recycling as a source of income," she says, adding: "The PET recycling value chain created more than 60 000 income opportunities in 2018 and initiatives such as this underpin that value."

As part of its mission to empower municipalities throughout South Africa to recycle more, PETCO reached out to Thulamela Municipality late last year. "The municipality explained that it lacked the budget to embark on a waste separation at source initiative within Thohoyandou and Sibasa," Booker recalls.

Thulamela Municipality superintendent of waste management Vhutshilo Revele said the project would help create jobs. "We have partnered with recycling collectors within the municipality who will remove the bins when they are full," she assured, adding that recycling was important to the municipality as it mitigated environmental degradation and pollution.

Booker said working with the government to support the concept of waste separation at source would "actively improve the way municipal waste is managed, and consequently divert waste from landfills – all the while sustaining and boosting the green economy".

"Partnerships with government at all levels are key to unlocking meaningful strategies to address waste reduction behaviour in South Africa. PET plastic bottles are not trash and have value – and they should be recycled," she said, adding that it was heartening to see companies such as Safripol taking their extending producer responsibility (EPR) seriously.

"There is a huge need to support recycling, especially in rural areas where waste management is not well serviced or a priority." □



According to new statistics released by PETCO, 62% of all polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic beverage bottles placed on the market in 2019 have been recycled – a trend that is in line with global PET recycling rates.