

Sharpeville winning the war against waste



Before

A heap of rubbish lies across the street from residential homes in the township of Sharpeville in Gauteng.

Communities clean up illegal dumping sites

By **Salome Tsoka**

Illegal dumping sites have become common sightings in various communities around the country. These sites often stretch for miles, are hazardous to human health and displeasing to the eye. Over the years, the department of environmental affairs (DEA) has worked with numerous local municipalities, communities and other key stakeholders to help communities clean up such sites through effective clean-up campaigns.

However, despite these efforts, illegal dumping sites are an ever-growing problem.

According to deputy director of waste management Boitumelo Dlamini, the effectiveness of community clean-up campaigns lies in the community's awareness about waste and with municipalities that ensure that communities are kept clean.

"The effectiveness of clean-up campaigns depends on the consistency of the municipality's waste management efforts and in the awareness against littering. In areas where the municipality is active, the area remains clean and people become custodians of their environment," said Dlamini.

"One of the most important aspects of clean-up campaigns is education and awareness. The set-up, design and frequency of the clean-up campaigns determine the level of awareness that is built into people's minds."

According to the 2016 Stats SA Household Survey, an estimated 59% of households had their waste collected by the local municipality, while 2% had their waste collected from a central collection point or communal container. The other 34% of households disposed their waste at a communal dump or their own dump site, while 5% disposed their waste through other means.

Rustenburg local municipality spokesperson David Magae says the negative mind-sets of community members is one of the causes of illegal dumping.

"Many factors contribute to illegal dumping sites but a negative mind-set is one of the main



After

A rehabilitated illegal dumping site in Sharpeville which community members turned into a park.



Some tips from Plastics SA on starting a clean up campaigns:

- Pick the right project and location for your community, conduct either a roadside, river or beach clean-up.
- Make a detailed event plan.
- Choose an enthusiastic leader or co-ordinator.
- Recruit volunteers early by contacting local newspapers, community members and schools.
- Get supplies donated.
- Assign specific tasks during the clean-up.
- Make a plan for debris removal.
- If possible, try to reward your volunteers.

causes. When community members have a don't-care or negative attitude towards the environment, illegal dumping sites will occur," Magae said.

Illegal dumping sites can also become illegal graveyards.

How Sharpeville won the war against waste

Lebese Mothijoa from Sharpeville in Gauteng says community members decided to clean up an illegal dumping site after they discovered a dead baby buried in the trash.

"We came together and decided that this illegal dumping site has to go. During spring and summer the stench would bring flies and other pests and it got so bad that we couldn't even open our windows," Mothijoa said.

"The site has now been rehabilitated into a clean and beautiful park. Members of the community erected a white stone in honour of the baby whose body was found in the area."

Dlamini said illegal dumping sites are also bad for business and tourism: "Waste can also deplete natural resources that benefit the tourism sector. Poor waste management affects the aesthetic value and repels people from visiting those places."

Magae said that illegal dumping threatens wildlife and the environment. "Illegal dumping sites pollute local waterways and ground water. Oftentimes, the land on which illegal dumping sites once occurred may be left sterilised and unproductive."

According to the Stats SA report, waste generation in urban areas tends to be much higher than in rural areas. It also found that developing countries like SA will experience continuous urbanisation with the population in urban areas rising by 71.3% in 2030 and 80% in 2050.

Director for sustainability at Plastics SA Douw Steyn says as the founders of Clean-up and Recycle SA Week and the International Coastal Clean-up Day, which began in 1997, they often see a change through the clean-up campaigns they sponsor.

"We do see areas are cleaner where clean-ups are taking place but we should not be doing clean-ups - people should not litter. We should encourage responsible waste management and recycling," he said.

Waste-preneurs: a life line for communities



Tsakane Waste-preneur Project. /ELEANOR MOMBERG

Residents of Tsakane, near Springs in Ekurhuleni, collect glass bottles and other recyclables including newspapers, magazines, cardboard, paper, mixed plastics, cans, PET, polystyrene, Tetrapak and aluminium, to earn a living or supplement their income. These community members are Waste-preneurs.

The Waste-preneur project is a Wildlands pro-poor development and sustainability intervention. The project is supported by the department of environmental affairs' (DEA) Green Fund, which is implemented by the Development Bank of Southern Africa. The project has been expanded to Gauteng, where it is being piloted in Ekurhuleni, among other areas.

The Tsakane Waste-preneur projects employs 390 members of the local community, who have also started collecting foil paper, such as chip packets and sweet wrappers, as they contribute to keeping their town clean.

The Green Fund has invested more than R62.5m in the Wildlands Conservation Trust to expand the Waste-preneur project to enable the economic transformation of 21 communities, through the establishment of over 4,400 Waste-preneurs who have collected and bartered over 13,200 tons of recycling in the past four years.

The project has contribut-



ed significantly to the clean-up of the participating communities, many of them among the poorest in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. The Waste-preneur network has been expanded from 529 in January 2013 to 6,656 in December 2014.

In addition, 92 schools and 15 charities have been recruited and 60 Waste-preneur "sorters" contracted.

Environmental and socioeconomic impact

A total of 16,518,779kg of recycling was collected during 2014. An amount of R8.5m has been paid in wages to the recycling team between January 2013 and December 2014.

A total of R7.7m was paid or bartered for the recycling collected by the Waste-preneurs, schools and charities between January 2013 and December 2014. In addition, 5,679 person days of training for the recycling team and Waste-preneurs took place between April 2013 and December 2014.

Sponsors: Coca-Cola, ENGEN, Grindrod Limited, BHP Billiton and Unilever.