



President Cyril Ramaphosa during his visit to Phumeza Ceshemba's Afriwaste recycling plant in Mdantsane, East London.



Ceshemba's recycling plant employs 17 men and women from impoverished communities who she is training.

my mother was a waste recycler." Ceshemba says it's high time people, particularly blacks, tapped into the waste economy.

"The waste industry is more than just about emptying your rubbish bag at home and it's more than waste pickers. This is a dignified industry that has the potential to create wealth and plenty of jobs for our people.

"We as South Africans need to come to a point where we say we are tired of waste and pollution. We need to realise the extensive damage that waste and litter is causing [and not] contaminate the fish in the sea or the vegetables on the ground."

Turning trash into treasure

Tapping into the waste economy

By Erica Mathye

They say one man's trash is another man's treasure, and Phumeza Ceshemba from Mdantsane in East London has found just the model she needs to create wealth from waste.

In 2017, this mother of two teenagers opened a recycling plant where she recycles and pelletises plastic material for business. Her message to South Africans is to "wake up and

think of waste management as a lucrative vehicle for creating work opportunities, keeping the environment clean and enriching future generations".

Ceshemba is the owner of Afriwaste. Her recycling plant employs 17 men and women from impoverished communities who she is training. "My goal is to see these very same men and women progress into good citizens who practice good, green deeds in their daily lives but more than that I want to see them running their own businesses in recycling."

Afriwaste collects and recycles an average of 120 tons of plastic waste every month from landfill

sites, homes and grocery supermarkets. Of the recycled waste, 100 tons of pellets are sold back to business for the manufacturing of furniture such as tables and plastic chairs.

Ceshemba received a visit from SA's first citizen when he was in the province headed to Sisa Dukashe Stadium in East London, where he launched the Good Green programme, which is about encouraging behavioural change for every South African to Reduce. Reuse. Recycle.

"To have my business profiled at a national level is extraordinary. Meeting President Ramaphosa is both exciting and nerve-wrecking. When I opened the business two years ago, I wanted to contribute in waste management and keep my community cleaner. I'm excited to be recognised as an agent of change the president has taken notice of."

Ceshemba always had a dream

of one day leaving her day job to start a business and she identified opportunities in waste. "Waste was a natural call for me because

The economic value in waste

- South Africa's waste economy is estimated to be worth a minimum of R15bn contribution to the GDP.
- The Waste Sector Survey showed that the formal South African waste sector employs nearly 30,000 people in 2012, of whom 20,092 are employed in the public sector - mostly in local and metropolitan municipalities - and 9,741 worked in the private sector.
- In the informal economy, there are plus/minus 62,147 waste pickers in the country (36,680 operating from landfills and 25,467 operating as trolley pushers).
- Diverting waste away from landfills also provides considerable social, economic and environmental opportunities for the country, including job creation and enterprise development.
- In South Africa the opportunities for diversion of waste will provide access to valuable resources through the development of recycling industries.
- By promoting the adoption of closing-the-loop production patterns within an economic system, the circular economy aims to increase the efficiency of resource use, with special focus on urban and industrial waste, to achieve a better balance and harmony between economy, environment and society.
- The circular economy provides a closed loop for better management of waste materials.
- The circular economy provides benefits in reducing gas emissions.
- The total value of waste in the economy is estimated to be at a minimum of R25bn worth of resources such as viable polymers, fibre, metal, glass and organics lost to the economy in 2012 through disposal as waste to landfill.
- The outcomes of the Chemicals and Waste Phakisa reflect 20 initiatives with defined targets in industrial, municipal solid waste, chemicals and waste minimisation work streams.

Five stages in plastic recycling

After the truck delivers plastic at a recycling plant, it needs to go through five stages so that it can be used for making various products.

- **Sorting:** Every plastic item is separated according to its make and type so that it can be processed in the shredding machine.
- **Washing:** Once sorted, the plastic

waste needs to be washed to remove impurities such as labels and adhesives. This enhances the quality of the finished product.

- **Shredding:** After washing, the plastic waste is loaded onto conveyor belts that run it through shredders that tear the plastic into small pellets, preparing them for



recycling into products.

- **Identification and classification of plastic:** After shredding, a proper testing of the plastic pellets is conducted in order to ascertain their quality and class.
- **Extruding:** This involves melting the shredded plastic so that it can be extruded into pellets, which are then used for making different types of plastic products.

Billy Bin unveiled at Good Green Deeds launch

President behind clean-up drive

By Salome Tsoka

President Cyril Ramaphosa unveiled Billy Bin, the cheery green mascot who is passionate about keeping the environment clean during the national launch of the Good Green Deeds programme at a packed Sisa Dukashe Stadium in Mdantsane, East London on March 8.

Ramaphosa said Billy Bin would be a constant reminder to all South Africans that the responsibility to keep SA clean lies with them.

The president also took a moment to pay tribute to late minister of environmental affairs Dr Edna Molewa, who died last year, and credited her for being behind the Good Green Deeds concept.

"We are here today to launch a national campaign to mobilise citizens, business, industry,



President Cyril Ramaphosa unveils the Good Green Deeds mascot, Billy Bin at Sisa Dukashe Stadium in East London.



Minister Nomvula Mokonyane, MEC Lubabalo Oscar Mabuyane, Working on Fire representatives and other volunteers after cleaning eBuhlanti beach in East London.



labour and civil society at large towards a common goal - cleaning up South Africa. By performing just one Good Green Deed a day, you can make all the difference," he said.

"Whether it is in recycling your waste or conducting clean-up activities in your street, your neighbourhood, school, or municipality, you must be the agent of change we want and need."

Ramaphosa took part in a

clean-up campaign in Buffalo City while a number of other clean-ups took place at taxi ranks in East London and King William's Town, as well as KwaDikela and at eBuhlanti beach and estuary.

Other clean-up campaigns took place across the country in places like Galeshewe, Mahikeng, Umsunduzi, Ladybrand, Polokwane, Sharpeville,



and Manenberg and Mamelodi.

Ramaphosa said he hoped the campaign will be embraced with enthusiasm in all municipalities around SA. "So, let us commit today that we will each do one Good Green Deed a day, for the sake of ourselves, for the sake of others, and for the sake of our country."

He called on young people to be at the forefront of the campaign. "We want you, the young people of this country, to take the lead in being part of ward-based environmental education and awareness raising. We want you to be at the forefront of clean-up campaigns; and to gain exposure to municipal environmental management functions as a source of attaining work experience," he said.