

Pet project turns trash into treasure

**THEMBA KHUMALO
and SANE SHANDU**

DURBAN should soon be a cleaner, healthier place thanks to several City initiatives aimed at encouraging people to collect plastic bottles and other waste for safe disposal, rather than burning them.

One of the chief pollution culprits is discarded cold drink and water bottles made of clear plastic, or polyethylene terephthalate (Pet), to give it its scientific name.

The eThekweni Health Department's Deputy Head for Pollution, Siva Chetty, said these bottles caused many problems, including blocking stormwater drains and releasing carbon dioxide when burnt.

The Pet project, which encourages the recycling of these bottles, is being piloted at fast foods outlets, hotels, schools and Durban's busiest transport and trading hub, Warwick Junction.

The City's Health, Pollution and Risk Management Unit launched the project late last year with Durban Solid Waste, and a number of cooperatives have been set up to collect and recycle.

"The project will reduce health hazards and offer good business opportunities to disadvantaged communities," Chetty said. The project has already employed 10 women to identify, separate, sort, bale and recycle plastic waste.

Health Department Senior Technician for Pollution Control, Phumlani Ngema, said: "We are networking with other communities to participate in the recycling opportunities and they have shown a positive response."

He said that between November and March the cooperative has collected and recycled 1043kg of Pet plastic bottles, preventing it from going into landfills or being released into the air as carbon dioxide.

Hammarsdale Pet collector Nelly Hlongwane said: "This initiative has helped a lot of people, including me, earn some money. This is a rural



WASTE NOT: Nompumelelo Mgenge, of the Okuhlekodwa cooperative, works on a City project to recycle plastic bottles
Picture: ZIBUSE NDLOVU

area where a lot of people are jobless. By collecting these containers we're not only getting a financial incentive, but we are helping create an environmentally friendly area. These bottles affect crops and livestock when they are burnt or left lying around," she said.

A related project aims to discourage people from

burning plastic waste.

Ngema said this practice was a global problem and was known to be a contributor to global warming. It was common in disadvantaged communities and industrial areas and posed a risk to public health.

"We identified a need to educate people to change their behaviour. We also

want them to learn other means of reducing toxic emissions," said Ngema.

A third project, the safer drum initiative, focuses on containers used by industries to store chemicals which are often washed out and resold to the public who use them to store water, traditional beer and other food and drink.

"The aim is to remove contaminated drums from the market and introduce a new brand of drums which are safe and economically sustainable," said Chetty.

For more information call 031 311 3722 or to lodge a complaint about air

pollution call 031 311 3555.
khumalotk@durban.gov.za
shandusanelisiwe@durban.gov.za

Housing strategy explained

EMMANUEL KLEINBOOI
Housing Matters

THE Municipality has two main housing delivery strategies: in situ and greenfield projects.

In situ projects involve upgrading informal settlements, if the land is suitable for development.

In such cases, a government subsidy is allocated to existing residents.

Where a house or a shack is in the way of services such as roads, electricity, stormwater or sewage pipes, the homeowner has to be relocated to a greenfield project.

Greenfield projects are done on vacant land.

Anyone in eThekweni, provided they meet the qualifying requirements, is free to apply for a home in a greenfield development, but people from informal settlements get priority.

Opportunities to apply for houses in greenfield projects are advertised in newspapers and on radio.

For in situ projects, information is sent directly to people in the affected area.

Housing waiting lists from the former town councils that predated the Metro were scrapped by an eThekweni Council ruling, effective from 19 November 2002.

SDB funds training

THE South Durban Basin Area Based Management has funded training for non-profit and non-governmental organisations through its social programmes.

Twenty-five NGOs attended a recent three-day course, which included training in financial reporting, and how to draft budgets, business plans and project proposals.

Gloria Mavuso, Coordinator for the Lamontville HIV/Aids Support Centre, said: "I have learnt so much and gained more knowledge; now I won't have to hire someone to do our proposals."

Adelaide Sibiya, of Sizanodumo Community Development Organisation, said: "This workshop opened my eyes. It broadened my knowledge of finance." – Sifiso Xulu

Plaudits for permaculture, muthi initiative

IMAGINE Durban is supporting a number of projects to demonstrate sustainability in action.

One such project, initiated by the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa, is working to inspire children and teachers to start veggie and muthi gardens.

The aim is to improve food security, and encourage entrepreneurialism and sustainable muthi harvesting.

Six schools in the Inanda-Ntuzuma-KwaMashu area have



been participating in a two-part workshop on muthi plants and permaculture, co-ordinated by the society, at Phelelani Combined

School, in Ntuzuma. The society's Project Coordinator, Anisa Khan, who is a former teacher, said she was impressed with the results achieved and the enthusiasm of the schools.

During the first workshop recently, pupils and teachers were shown how to dig the soil, compost and water it, and how to grow plants.

Teacher Kipa Gasa, who is co-ordinating the schools, said: "We have seen barren areas turned into

beautiful gardens with rows of muthi plants and permaculture vegetable gardens, such as carrots and peas, growing together.

"Logs placed in the gardens give children a place to sit and discuss how they can reconnect with their cultural heritage and turn the muthi plants into a cash crop."

In the second workshop, at the end of this month, children will be taught how to propagate a single muthi plant into several shoots, which can be sold to raise funds.

Other Imagine Durban demonstration projects deal with issues such as community safety, greening of schools, revitalising open spaces, and organic farming.

The Imagine Durban demonstration projects have been made possible thanks to funding from the Canadian International Development Agency.

Funding was made possible by the Plus Network, a partner in the Imagine Durban project.

Visit www.ImagineDurban.org