

A photograph of Ricco Tshesane, a man with short dark hair, wearing a bright yellow-green high-visibility jacket over a striped shirt and blue jeans. He is standing outdoors next to a large, full sack of recyclables. In the background, there is a red brick wall and a window with metal bars. A black plastic bag and a red Coca-Cola bottle are also visible near the sack.

RICCO TSHESANE

“THE NEW COMPANY IS TAKING FOOD FROM OUR MOUTHS”

I come from Mafekeng. I've been in Joburg for 14 years now. For a short while I was working in construction. The job ended. I couldn't find another one. I started collecting other people's recyclables and selling them. I've been doing this for 12 years. Your rubbish feeds me and my girlfriend. I help my family back home with the money that I make.

I work every day, from 4 or 5am. It's tough but it means my family don't starve.

That was then. Now Pikitup has signed a contract with a private company in areas like Parkview, Saxonwold, Parktown and Parkhurst. I used to make R1800 a week. Now I only make R500-R600.

When I look at your recyclables, I calculate which one is the best to take. 1kg of your aluminium cans will give me R10. 1kg of your 2 litre coke bottles gives me R3,80. 1kg of cardboard R1,10. I only take your chick pea tins if I'm desperate. They only give me 40c per kg. So you can see, I need to collect a lot to have enough food to support my family.

In some areas the pick-up day for recycling is different from rubbish day. Sometimes we are chased away or beaten when we try to sort through the recycling bags. We hear the same stories from our friends working in other areas. This new company is taking food from our mouths.”

RICCO TSHESANE

PIKITUP'S RECENT OUTSOURCING OF RECYCLABLES COLLECTION TO A PRIVATE COMPANY IS CAUSING HARDSHIP TO INFORMAL RECLAIMERS. SEE HOW YOU CAN HELP THEM.

DID YOU KNOW?

- 1** There are more than 90,000 informal reclaimers in South Africa who make a living from collecting, sorting and selling recyclable waste and the numbers are growing every day as other jobs dry up. (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), 2016).
- 2** Informal reclaimers saved municipalities close to R750m in landfill airspace in 2014 (CSIR, 2016).
- 3** Between 80-90% of the paper and packaging waste which is recycled in South Africa, is recycled by informal reclaimers (CSIR, 2016).
- 4** Informal reclaimers' rate of collection of recyclables at 57% is among the highest in the world (Packaging SA).
- 5** Each informal reclaimer diverts up to 24 tons of packaging waste a year from our country's landfills (CSIR, 2016).
- 6** Informal reclaimers often collect twice the amount of recyclables as Pikitup.
- 7** Informal reclaimers provide a public and environmental service for free. Now that this service is being commercialised, they are excluded. In countries like Argentina, Colombia, Brazil and India, residents and municipalities recognise this as a public service for which informal reclaimers are paid.



**WE WORK HARD
EVERY DAY**

TSHEPO KONGISA

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I've been doing this job for a few years now. I couldn't find anything else. I come from Sterkspruit in the Eastern Cape but I've been living in Joburg since my mother passed on in 1997. I've passed Grade 11.

I was working as a fork lift driver at a warehouse. The job ended. Now I don't have the money to renew my fork-lift driving certificate.

We work hard to get enough rubbish to recycle. On Mondays we go to Parkwood. On Tuesdays to Melville. On Wednesdays to Parktown. On Thursdays it's Northcliff and on Fridays Emmarentia/Greenside.

Every day we're up at 4am or 5am. Thursday is the worst. That day it's 3am, even in winter. We must walk all the way from Braamfontein, where we stay, to Northcliff.

I used to earn about R200 to R250 per day from selling your rubbish. Since Pikitup signed a contract with a private company to take the recycling, it's dropped to R400 per week.

My friend who I work with, wanted to go home to his family in Vryheid this Easter. He supports his two children, his wife and his sisters at home. There was no extra money. He had to stay here.”

TSHEPO KONGISA

HOW CAN YOU HELP US?

- 1 Separate what can be recycled from your rubbish. If it's separated, we won't need to go through your rubbish in the black bin.
- 2 Put out your recyclables in a clear plastic bag.
- 3 Put the plastic bag out on rubbish day with your black bin.
- 4 You can see what is valuable for us – We don't want everything.
- 5 If the recycling company comes on a different day from rubbish day, put out other recyclables for them on that day.
- 6 Recognise us as workers. We are saving the environment for all our children.

**IF YOU
WANT
TO FIND
OUT MORE
ABOUT US:**

WITH SUPPORT FROM:



CONTACT THE INTERIM JOBURG RECLAIMERS COMMITTEE(IJRC)

EVA MOKOENA (CHAIRPERSON): KOKOMOKOENA2@GMAIL.COM
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