



NEWS

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ROAN NEWS

Bringing recycling to the Windhoek community

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A new initiative to encourage us to recycle our waste has taken off in Windhoek! Recycling stations placed in spots we regularly visit make it easy to recycle our glass, metal, paper and plastic waste. Windhoekers have responded rewardingly, making us hopeful that the initiative can, in time, be spread throughout the country.

Exactly three years ago, a dozen Namibians went to Denmark to learn about 'cleaner production', or CP. Before we left, none of us really knew what CP was or what to expect from the study tour that Danida had sponsored. We learnt, though, that the intention of CP is to minimise waste and maximise product output. Reduce the materials and energy used to make a product, and reduce the waste and emissions that the process or product generates. While **reducing** is the first priority in the process to cleaner production, **re-using** and **recycling** follow as the second and third priorities. The Three Rs rule!

The visits to recycling plants, waste management centres and seeing what schools and community centres can do in this regard was a total eye-opener to all of us. The public sector cannot and should not be expected to do everything alone! Initiative and action from the private sector can go a long way. Whilst reducing waste needs the concerted action of the policy- and law-makers and re-using is more up to industry, communities can play a significant role in recycling waste. We can proudly say that, Namibia is starting to catch up!

While recycling has been an option in Namibia for some years, for the most part, it required individuals to deliver their waste to the relevant recycling company. In late 2008, a number of partners from the private sector came together to start a recycling initiative that brings recycling to the community. The first steps of this new initiative have been taken in Windhoek.

Rent-A-Drum and Collect-A-Can – the recycling companies in Namibia – have always had an interest in setting up recycling stations, the difficulty has been where to do it? ... They need to be conveniently accessible to the public. While the Windhoek Municipality welcomes a recycling initiative in its city, it is against having recycling stations in public areas, fearing that they will become messy and that it will become the task of the Municipality to keep them tidy and manage them. The Municipality insisted that they should be on private land only.

NEWS and the NMA – the Namibian Manufacturers Association, which represents members such as Plastic Packaging, Namibia Polymer Recycling Company and the City of Windhoek Solid Waste Management Department – negotiated with shopping centres to have recycling stations in their car parks. These areas provide easy and convenient access to the public, and come with a landowner who has an interest in drawing the public there and in keeping the area neat and tidy.

Four shopping centres bit the bullet. Financed by the shopping centres, themselves, the Namibia Breweries Limited (NBL) and The Glass Recycling Company (a South African based company that recycles our glass), the first four recycling centres were set up at //Ae//Gams (by Woermann, Brock & Co), Auas Valley (by Ohlthaver & List), Wernhil Park (also by Ohlthaver & List) and Maerua (by Joseph & Snyman).

They have been up and running for six months. The response from the public has been overwhelming! Whilst it was expected that at first they would only require emptying twice a month, within weeks, as the word spread, the stations at Maerua and //Ai//Gams required emptying on a daily basis, while Auas Valley is emptied every second day! As part of the next step in making more stations available to more people, ten schools in Windhoek have also set up recycling stations – Auas, Emma Hoogenhout, International, Khomasdal, Khomas High, Mandume, St Georges, The Convent, Tobias Hainyeko and Westside High. The schools will not only earn income from the recyclables they collect, there's a chance to win prizes. To get recycling at these school stations going, Collect-A-Can, Namibia Breweries Limited, The Glass Recycling Company and Rent-A-Drum are sponsoring prizes for schools that collect the most recyclable goods.

The next big step is to spread the recycling initiative across the country. This will take time and negotiation with more partners. One of the biggest obstacles is making the transportation of the recyclables to the main collection centres cost-effective. Although many trucks carrying goods travel to even the most remote parts of the country and usually travel back empty, there are laws and regulations prohibiting the transport of recyclable products in the same trucks that carry foodstuffs,



for instance. Finding suitable managers to manage and service the stations all over the country is also a challenge. However, the recycling partners are positive that with some imagination, negotiation and political will, it will be possible in time.

How you can do your bit...

Find a centre

For those of you in Windhoek and who don't have children at one of the ten schools listed above, make //Ae//Gams, Auas Valley or Maerua your favourite shopping centre! (Wernhil has stopped recycling for now.) When you go shopping, take your recyclable plastics, paper, glass and metal to drop off. The recycling stations at these shopping centres can be found in the car parks:

- //Ae//Gams, at the Stein Street exit;
- Auas Valley, ten metres from the entrance off Besser Street;
- Maerua Mall, between the Checkers and Stuttafords entrances

Take your recyclables to a station

At each recycling station, there are four containers – one each for tins and cans, glass, plastics, and paper. Many packaging materials can be recycled, but some of the more complex ones, such as polystyrene, cardboard boxes, and tetrapack (used for beverages in boxes) cannot be recycled. More details follow, below.

Metal

- cool drink cans, beer cans
- canned food tins
- spray cans
- aluminium food containers, foil



But, please, no household & electrical goods, tools, toys – these thicker metals require different processes of recycling.

Glass

- glass bottles and jars
- food glass
- drinking glass
- glass cutlery



But please put the screw caps in the bin for metals. The metal anchor for caps, as well as the labels on bottles, are okay to leave on, though. No mirrors or energy saving bulbs please!

Paper

- office paper
- packaging paper
- newspapers
- magazines



Card and thick paper are okay, but the glues and resins used to make up most cardboard boxes, make them unacceptable. No complex cardboards, please!

Plastic

- clean plastic bags & cling wrap
- plastic juice & beverage bottles
- cleaning liquid containers
- cream, yoghurt & other dairy cups



No plastic furniture, nappies, Styrofoam or polystyrene, please!

Keep in mind...

As these stations are located on private properties, we kindly request you to be responsible about using them:

- No food waste, garden refuse, bulky waste, scrap metal, batteries, chemicals, oils, paints, etc.
- Make sure you use the correct bin for your recyclable waste
- Only empty containers, bottles and tins – and if you rinse them in your used washing water, that's even better!
- Keep the area around the recycling stations clean and take your non-recyclable waste back home!

Spread the news!

Talk about it, use it and encourage your friends to use it.

And, for those of you not in Windhoek ...

Another big step that has to come is creating awareness, not just about recycling, but also about the other two of The Three Rs:

Re-use

Namibia has traditionally been good at this already, but only in some sections of our society. Everybody can do their little part in that – they just need the ideas.

Reduce

Change your habit! Can we really afford living a life of abundance and waste? Or need we change that and achieve SUSTAINABILITY?