Selling to buyback centres takes work

Photo Essay

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Introduction: Buy back centre

There is a market for recyclable materials and reclaiming is a link in the supply chain of this market. The demand for recyclables has led to the establishment of buy back centres in many towns and cities. These centres weigh, buy, compact, and bale recyclables. They sell the baled material either to South African manufacturers or to international purchasers of recyclables. These materials are recycled to make new products. Some, such as certain glass bottles are washed and reused.
Preparing
Recyclers typically sell their sorted materials at buy back centres. It’s 7am Saturday morning and Papi Speakhang and Bheki Zwane are preparing to take their sorted materials to the buy back centre in Newtown. Their bags have been packed the day before. They have coupled two carts together to balance their bags.
Working together
The reclaimers help one another. When one reclaimer is hauling goods to the buy back centre, another reclaimer will assist. A reclaimer may both pull his own load and help push or steady the bag of the person ahead of him. They haul the ‘trains’ of coupled carts with their enormous bags up the hill and over the Mandela bridge to the buy back centre.
Working together
Newtown
They pass Bekezela, the informal settlement from where other reclaimers are moving towards the buy back centre. Some have up to 5 bags on their trolleys.
Newtown
At the buy back centre
The reclaimers assist one another to push their loads into the centre.
Inside the buy back centre, material will be weighed and reclaimers will be paid in cash.

Materials will be compacted and baled. The bales will be sold recycling industries.
Baled cardboard leaving buy back center
Reclaimers head back home with their empty bags and trolleys and some money in their pockets.