

## **African Reclaimers Organisation**

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African Reclaimers Organisation (ARO) works around 3 principles, REDUCE – cutting back on the number of trash communities generate, REUSE – reusing disposables and RECYCLE – turning something old into something new and useful. ARO was formed by informal recyclers who work in landfills and streets, collecting 80% of used materials. ARO started as the Joburg Reclaimers Interim (JRC) and initiated its first March towards privatization of waste by the City of Johannesburg (COJ) on 13 of July 2016. In 2018 Members hosted their general meetings at Khanya College, and later that year, changed their name to African Reclaimers Organisation, to include all Africans in the field.

It consists of different branches within cities and provincially, and aims to save the environment from pollution daily. Reclaimers in South Africa contribute hugely to the recycling economy. The structure of the organisation includes the chairperson, coordinator, administrator and executive members of the community. The committee ensures that there is transparency and accountability within the organisation.

The tour to Bekezela helped people understand the important work that the reclaimers do, to remove the stigma attached to their work and remove the misinformation that all reclaimers are nyaope smokers. They also want people to understand the value of what they call trash and for their work to be recognised. In the tour, led by Luyanda Hlatshwayo, he indicated approximately 8000 Reclaimers work in the streets of Johannesburg. Reclaimers are given schedules to perform their duties in a week, phase 1 they collect reusable waste materials. In phase 2 these materials are sorted based on their respective organic names. Phase 3 is when the process reaches a selling point.

The work comes with its challenges, for example, Reclaimers are exposed to harsh working environments which threaten their health and the government does not want to formalise the work done by reclaimers. The work ARO does is important, they have started their small community at Bekezela where families live, they have built a creche for the children and parents are responsible for the daily running of the creche. They have donated food to the families and the truck assists reclaimers with collections. As participants of the school, we are very proud of the work the reclaimers do, they are not waiting for a government to give them jobs, they have created their jobs, and we cannot imagine what would happen to the environment without reclaimers. Participants also committed to building solidarity with the reclaimers by separating their recyclables from trash.

Interested volunteers can contact and make further enquiries on the details below. Email: [africanreclaimer@gmail.com](mailto:africanreclaimer@gmail.com); Contact: 069 321 5800; Facebook/social media: African Reclaimers Organisation

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