

How local women breathe new life into bread bags

Today, 24 June, marks International Upcycling Day, and the women of Re.Bag.Re.Use prove that a once discarded item can be repurposed and given new life.

Based in Hout Bay, Cape Town, the initiative brings together 21 women – 15 crocheters and six cutters – who repurpose discarded bread bags into multifunctional items.

Through their hands and hooks, plastic waste is given new life as sustainable products that not only reduce environmental harm but also generate income, spark creativity and foster community pride.



PR & COMMUNICATIONS

Re.Bag.Re.Use: Africa's only winner at the Global Alliance World PR and Communication Awards 2024

28 Nov 2024



Patience and purpose



Joana Mnisi. Image supplied.

Joana Mnisi was one of the first women to join Re.Bag.Re.Use.

A grandmother with a gentle smile and a determined spirit, Mnisi has become a quiet yet powerful presence in the group. Armed with patience and purpose, she transforms empty plastic bags into multi-functional crocheted creations.

“Each stitch is a small step towards a cleaner environment,” she says.

“When my grandchildren visit, I show them what I’m working on and remind them that waste doesn’t have to be wasted. It’s something we can reuse. It’s something we can learn from.”

Mnisi's craftsmanship is second to none. Her attention to detail and commitment to excellence set a high standard for the team. For her, the journey is both environmental and personal.

She continues to learn new patterns and techniques, proving that growth has no age limit. "I never imagine would be learning like this at my age," she says. "Every project teaches me something new."



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Bread bags as heavy as baby elephants

The Re.Bag.Re.Use team has repurposed 14,843 Blue Ribbon bread bags from June 2024 to May 2025. This weighs in at just under 104kg, roughly the weight of a baby elephant.

Since the project began in April 2020, they have collectively diverted more than 144,000 bags from landfill and over 1,009kg of plastic has been saved.



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"At Blue Ribbon, we believe in creating a better tomorrow through the choices we make today," says Jene Bosman, senior brand manager at Blue Ribbon.

"Supporting Re.Bag.Re.Use allows us to contribute to cleaner communities, while empowering women like Joana to teach the next generation the value of upcycling and environmental care."

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