

How The Appliance Bank is helping support the unemployed through entrepreneurship

In partnership with household appliance companies and retailers, The Appliance Bank (TAB) is helping provide income-generating opportunities for SA's unemployed men. By donating their customer-returned merchandise and other products, companies such as Clicks, Checkers Hyper Stores and Home of Living Brands are supporting its efforts.



TAB, which forms part of award-winning non-profit organisation The Clothing Bank (TCB), provides a two-year training programme to unemployed men to establish their own sustainable businesses. The men repair the donated household appliances and sell them for a profit in their communities.

“Our partners generously contributed 56,000 items last year, which allowed us to support 67 businessmen, who in turn collectively generated profits of R3.3m. We would like to encourage more companies to come on board as we are planning to expand our programme to aid 220 men by 2020,” says Tracey Gilmore, chief operating officer of TCB.

TAB also supports the circular economy by preventing damaged appliances from being disposed of in landfills. At the same time, the initiative is helping impoverished communities access essential home appliances at affordable prices, thereby improving their living standards.

Partnerships that strive to solve poverty

Piloted in 2015 as a result of a strategic partnership with The Clicks Group, TAB now has operations in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban.

“As part of our enterprise development strategy, we partnered with TAB as we share the rationale in bringing about real job creation, entrepreneurship and sustainable economic growth. This initiative is contributing to positive change in our country’s communities,” adds Nina Sternberg, HR executive at Home of Living Brands.

According to Lunga Schoeman, CSI spokesperson for the Shoprite Group, the partnership with TAB is based on shared value, “TAB’s objectives are a natural fit with our aims and goals. Job creation and skills development are crucial ways we as business contribute to the South African economy and thus an initiative facilitating both is one we’re proud to be part of.”

Supporting men on their journey towards financial inclusion

In 2018, more men (51.4%) were unemployed than women, according to Statistics South Africa. In order to provide for their own households, many individuals are forced into self-employment. TAB provides beneficiaries with extensive financial, business and life-skills training, as well as coaching and mentoring to help them on their journey to self-determination.

“Through the relevant training modules, we encourage participants to have open dialogues about their individual situations in order to restore dignity and reduce anxiety levels. When stress levels decrease, these men are able to make healthy, well-informed decisions and we see their entrepreneurial mindset and spirit emerge, allowing them to become true role models in their communities,” adds Gilmore.

Beneficiaries are also able to include repair services as a further business opportunity in their communities. The objective is that each person should earn at least R4,000 per month in the programme, and to use this income and skillset to care for their families. Progress on poverty eradication is measured using the international Poverty Stoplight Tool (PSL). Last year, each business owner made an average profit of R7,000 per month.

In 2018, the TAB programme formalised its technical training and developed a comprehensive modular-based curriculum covering all aspects related to electricity and appliance repair.

“We are proud of the progress TAB has made thus far and excited to build on the programme’s contribution in improving our country’s entrepreneurial ecosystem and aiding job creation,” concludes Gilmore.

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