



Recycling Heroes 2026 Winners Announced

Immediate Release. London 18 March 2026 – The Global Recycling Foundation (GRF) has announced the winners of its 2026 Recycling Heroes Competition.

Our theme this year was “Don’t think waste – Think Opportunity” encouraging everyone to view waste as a valuable resource. We need to recognise the economic value of recycling helping drive Circular Economy and Sustainable practices.

All entrants had to submit a short video to illustrate how their projects and initiatives best demonstrated this year’s theme.

Ranjit Baxi, Founder of Global Recycling Day, said: “Once again the entries for the competition have highlighted an outstanding range of innovation and entrepreneurship, reflecting the passion which young people in particular feel about the environment. They realise that waste recycling does indeed present a golden opportunity.

“Political leaders should reflect on this desire to preserve the planet, and follow the lead to a goal which our future leaders are demanding.

“GRF understands the competing demands of the scarce financial resources available, but just as precious are the dwindling environmental resources upon which we all depend.”

This year GRF has also selected five start-up initiatives which deserve recognition.

The 15 winners will each receive \$500. The winners are :

1. RecyclesPay - African Clean Up Initiative , Nigeria

RecyclesPay is an eco-friendly educational support initiative designed to prevent school dropouts among children from vulnerable households. The programme enables parents to contribute recyclable materials in exchange for support toward their children’s educational needs, particularly school fees.

2 Spanish Federation of Recovery and Recycling (FER), Spain :

We believe that the true heroes of the circular economy are the men and women who work every day in our plants, transforming waste into valuable resources. Our mission is captured in our core philosophy: "To live to recycle, to recycle to live" (*Vivir para reciclar, reciclar para vivir*). This is not just a job; it is an identity and a commitment to protecting our planet for future generations.

3. The Nautilus Project, Gibraltar

The Great Gibraltar Beach Cleans (TGBC), founded in by The Nautilus Project and inspired by two siblings, Alex and AJ, is a community-driven initiative that has removed over 11 tonnes of marine litter from the Gibraltar coastline. Led by volunteers, these regular, rotational, and record-breaking events, engage schools and the community at large to protect marine ecosystems.

4. Dajopen Waste Management Solutions in Kitale, Kenya.

Dajopen composts urban biodegradable waste into high-quality organic fertilizer. The initiative trains other actors by providing practical skills and circular economy entrepreneurship pathways. Dajopen deliver core programs measurable environmental and social benefits.

5. Fatema Fruitwala (Green warrior. Earth), UAE.

We focus on upcycling textile and plastic waste into useful products while promoting responsible waste management. Through this initiative, we have successfully upcycled more than 20 tons of waste and continue to create awareness about sustainability, especially among children and communities.

6. MiReHu Nonprofit Kft, Hungary

The focus of the entire project is on waste prevention, showing the way that waste production is not the only way, like for example, a broken part can also be a unique design product. We want to show a way for people that they have so many options to make a sustainable life as easy as they offer their unnecessary furniture to reuse or buying used products.

7. Pipilika - Gold from E-Waste to contemporary jewellery, Ireland, UK

Create contemporary jewellery incorporating gold recovered from electronic waste. The jewellery sector represents the largest demand of gold across the world at around 50% and yet the take up by this sector of gold recovered from e-waste is low. The aim of this project was to demonstrate the journey from e-waste to contemporary jewellery and promote the use of recycled gold by the jewellery sector.

8. Triple R Recycling, Abuja, Nigeria

Our mission is to reduce plastic pollution in our communities by building an efficient waste collection and recycling system. We focus on collecting waste plastics from water ways, rivers and the environment, we also buy back plastic waste from households and aggregators, while creating income opportunities for young people and women.

9. The Circular Oasis at CR205 , Singapore

The Circular Oasis at CR205 was born from a simple yet transformative question: *Can construction wastewater become a resource that protects both people and the planet?* At King Albert Park Station CR205, our team answered that question with action—pioneering a closed-loop water recycling system that redefines sustainable construction practices. The project aligns with Singapore Green Plan 2030.

In an industry-first approach, we transformed treated site runoff into a multi-purpose asset through a cascading reuse model. Rather than discharging treated water, we channel it into an innovative evaporative cooling system, circulating it over worker rest area roofs.

10. Zero Waste ZP, Ukraine

PlasticOn is a community recycling workshop created by the Zero Waste ZP NGO in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine. The project was launched in 2021 by local environmental activists who wanted to demonstrate that plastic waste can become a resource instead of ending up in landfills. The workshop space and equipment were developed through crowdfunding, grants and volunteer work.

11. EnviroCom Australia

EnviroCom has provided environmental education and research services to government, local communities, schools and the private sector throughout Australia since 1998.

Our passion for sustainable outcomes, community empowerment, quality data collection and assessment and efficient resource recovery has assisted our clients to deliver innovative strategies and program elements.

12. Quest for Zero Waste Advocacy & Actions, USA

Initiative to build an environmental-friendly and material-efficient home as a living place for daily practising of resource saving and waste reduction and as a venue space for on-going showcasing, educating and advocating for zero waste.

13. Leafline Washable Sanitary Wear, South Africa

Leafline is a South African social enterprise transforming menstrual care through innovation, sustainability, and dignity. By manufacturing washable sanitary wear from natural fibres extracted from pineapple leaves, Leafline replaces harmful, chemical-based disposable products with safe, environmentally friendly alternatives.

14. Jhun-Jhun Agustin, Philippines

It all started with a desire to help provide clean energy to indigenous communities by donating solar lights in those communities. We learned about plogging - running while picking up litter, an activity that promotes healthy body and healthy environment. We started plogging and collected Waste as we were running. We collected Plastic Waste, sorted and generated revenue helping us to supply Solar Lights whilst promoting cleaner and healthier environment.

15. BLESSN EVEA SIGNATURE, Abuja, Nigeria

I'm passionate about transforming textile waste, fashion waste, and plastic waste into new, durable pieces through upcycling and recycling. My goal is to make a positive impact by reducing waste, creating jobs, and promoting environmental sustainability.

Start-up winners will each receive \$ 500.00. The winners are :

1. Business & Hotel Management School Sustainability Club, Switzerland

Store Recycling Innovation is a student led project promoting sustainability. Students meet weekly to develop new sustainable and recycling solutions. Students established the Re: Store which has been very effective in reducing waste by repurposing and reusing everyday student items and has benefitted over 250 students.

2 .Little Coffee Cup, UK

Little Coffee Cup and the Big Surprise is the UK's first children's book made entirely from recycled coffee cups. It transforms hard-to-recycle waste into a high-quality, fully recyclable educational product, delivering measurable waste reduction, scalable circular economy impact, engaging children and families in sustainability and responsible recycling behaviours.

3. LassaSafe, Nigeria

Mission: To reduce environmental risk factors for notifiable diseases by promoting sustainable waste management, recycling, and community sanitation practices that protect ecosystems and strengthen preventive public health.

4. BSU Mandiri - A Grassroots Movement, Indonesia

In 2025 alone, BSU Mandiri successfully diverted more than 11 tons of mixed recyclable waste, including plastics, metals, and glass from landfill. What makes this achievement meaningful is not just the volume, but how it was accomplished. Our initiative is powered by 8 active core volunteers, working professionals, mothers, and university students, who dedicate their time outside of work and study hours.

5. Jesús González, Mexico

I was in prison in California, USA, from 2024 to 2026, but it wasn't all bad. I took advantage of every opportunity to grow emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually. I strengthened my recycling skills. I learned the art of making beautiful bags, shoes, and other crafts. With these, I generated income to survive and buy toiletries and extra food or snacks. I believe I recycled more than 1,000 bags. Much of this craft ended up in the hands of some buyers. I am now continuing upcycling.

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About the Global Recycling Foundation

www.globalrecyclingday.com

The Global Recycling Foundation supports the promotion of recycling, and the recycling industry, across the world to showcase its vital role in preserving the future of the planet. It will promote Global Recycling Day as well as other educational programmes, awareness projects and innovation initiatives which focus on the sustainable and inclusive development of recycling.