

# Revolutionising glass recycling in Malaysia

O-I BJC Malaysia launched the Glass Ambassador Programme last year to support and encourage sustainability across the supply chain and establish separation at source glass recycling in the region. O-I BJC's General Manager Jeffrey Newton and Procurement Manager Gaginthira Rao provide an exclusive insight into the programme and explain their objectives for its development and expansion going forwards.



Jeffrey Newton, General Manager, O-I BJC.

The product of a joint venture in 2010 between Owens-Illinois (O-I) and Thailand's Berli Jucker Public Company (BJC), O-I BJC Glass Malaysia operates from Johor Bahru (one of four plants across Asia acquired in the deal) in south Malaysia, manufacturing high quality bottles and jars in flint, amber and green glass. Running two furnaces

and six production lines employing Press & Blow, Blow & Blow and Narrow Neck Press & Blow technology, the 350-people strong business has won the support of multinational customers from the food and sauce, beverage, beer, liquor and pharmaceutical industries.

### Glass ambassadorship

Aligned with a sustainability strategy that seeks to drive a circular economy with all the benefits surrounding glass packaging, working towards glass being the perfect choice for the most eco-friendly and sustainable packaging for the business and the planet, O-I BJC Glass Malaysia has targeted a number of initiatives aimed at growing and improving glass recycling. In May 2021 the company launched its 'Glass Ambassador Programme' focusing on increasing awareness around the circularity of glass, stimulating social impact, energising economic development, advancing manufacturing aptitude

and achieving a sustainable future. Glass Ambassadors promote the benefits of recycling glass, educating the public about O-I BJC's use of recycled glass to make new glass containers – a process that uses fewer raw materials and less energy, thereby reducing carbon emissions.

"The whole idea about the Glass Ambassador Programme is to connect and engage with all the stakeholders across the supply chain to improve glass collection, processing of the glass and delivery back to our furnace," explains Gaginthira Rao, Procurement Manager at O-I BJC and co-ordinator of the Glass Ambassador Programme. "Compared to some other countries, glass recycling in Malaysia is in its infancy, so we need to improve the collection system and divert the glass from going to landfill by engaging with local waste management companies and our customers, as well as recently with schools and government authorities."

O-I BJC is working with professional waste management provider to collect post-consumer glass within the community. This post-consumer container glass is carefully recycled into green, amber (brown) and clear (flint) glass, and foreign non-glass containments are removed to create furnace-ready glass.

"We have started initially with one waste management company covering one state in Malaysia, and gradually we are expanding into a few more," Mr Rao continues. "And we will keep going, also engaging with NGOs (non-profit organisations) for additional support. If we look into ▶



O-I BJC's Glass Ambassador Programme aims to improve and increase furnace-ready glass by working with customers, associations, suppliers and local leaders in Malaysia.



The Glass Ambassadors promote the benefits of recycling glass, educating the public about O-I BJC Malaysia's use of recycled glass to make new glass containers.

O-I's sustainability goals, using [a] high cullet percentage is one of our key objectives so we have to make sure we have enough supply in order to meet our sustainability goals and increase cullet use in production."

"The launch of the Glass Ambassador Programme received a lot

of coverage in Malaysia," reports Jeffrey Newton, General Manager, O-I BJC. "It is a holistic programme around sustainability and glass recycling. Working with stakeholders (brand owners, waste management collectors, the processors and the authorities), we have started breaking down what activities each can do individually and together [for] different programmes. Some of the activities are based on specific programmes and others are more ad-hoc activities around how to increase recycling."

### Internal engagement

In addition to educating communities and engaging with stakeholders, O-I BJC is communicating the message of the Glass Ambassador Programme to its own teams. "We launched a competition internally to reduce waste, how we can engage the community, how every contributor can make a change, why we should recycle, etc." reveals Mr Newton. "So we have started internally and externally boosting and shifting the mindset of sustainability and recycling. This is all under the umbrella of the Glass Ambassador Programme and it is a long-term strategy."

Under the '#WhyIRecycle' initiative, O-I BJC employees were encouraged to share their recycling testimonies (some of which appear on the company website), while O-I promoted the hashtag across its social media channels as a means of publicising 'stories about why we recycle and how we bring this vital practice to life each and every day'. Inviting followers to share their own 'why' and tag the company has elicited an enthusiastic response and prompted some interesting and inspiring answers.<sup>2</sup>

### Student recycling contest

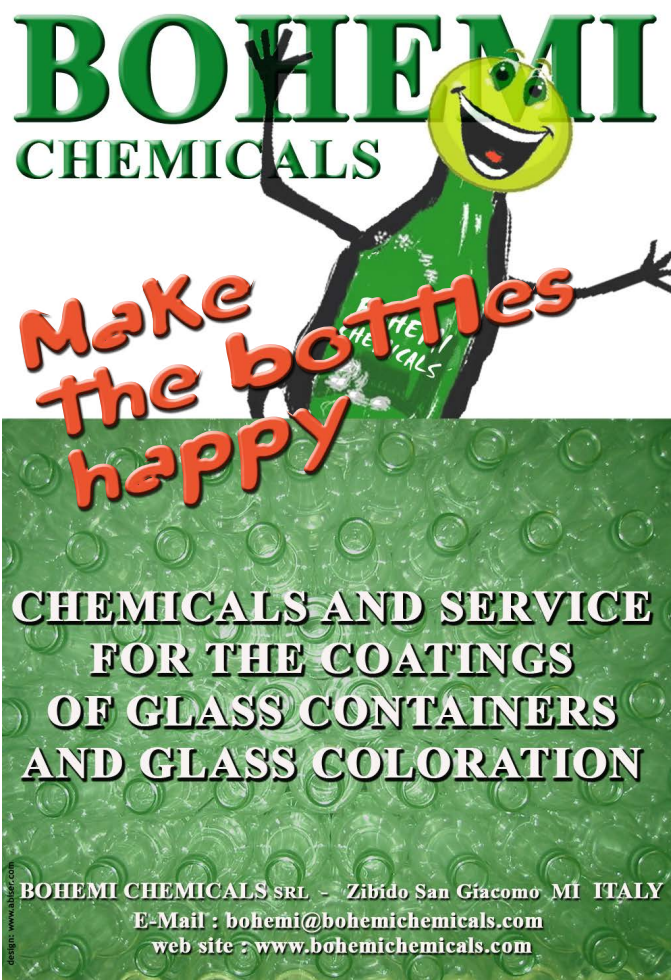
From September 2022 through to January 2023 O-I BJC Malaysia's Glass Ambassador Programme held its first student competition for glass bottle recycling through a strategic collaboration with integrated waste management provider, SWM Environment and with [the] support of Johor State Education Department, and the Johor Bahru City Council.

The Programme's intention was to reduce solid waste deposits in landfills by increasing public awareness of the benefits of glass bottle recycling for environmental sustainability and the circular economy, and the contest was run across 30 primary schools in Johor.

Employing training of trainers (ToT) sessions, the contest was designed to create a forum for sharing knowledge about sustainable waste management and glass bottle recycling practices and involving industry players and educators, with the schools functioning as small ambassadors for glass bottle recycling.

To encourage community involvement, O-I BJC supplied the participating schools with recycling bin facilities to assist recycling activities by students, teachers and parents, in addition to offering cash prizes as incentives, while SWM Environment awarded points via Kitarecycle, an app designed to incentivise recycling [with a points system] for more than 25 recyclable items.

"For schools this competition consists of a few sub-programmes – the first being train the trainers (training the teachers)," explains Mr Rao. "The second is a competition on the volume – who collects the most." The organisers anticipated collecting up to 10,000kg of used glass bottles for recycling. "The third one is a creativity poster competition," Mr Rao continued, "and the last one is a glass recycling corner. These different competitions provide opportunities to all the kids to win the different categories and keep them all motivated. The key of the schools programme is to drive awareness of glass being recyclable." ▶



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"It's one initiative of the Glass Ambassador Programme that we were excited to go ahead with because we are reaching and educating young generations," adds Mr Newton. "Malaysia is the perfect touchpoint to launch this initiative to kids that are so eager and open to building a new future. We've initially targeted primary schools and have trained the teachers to be our ambassadors about the benefits of glass and also how to recycle and why to recycle. Kids also have a way of influencing their families as well!"

### International experience

Jeffrey Newton joined O-I 2007, initially as a manufacturing trainee at O-I Peru and working his way up to Production Line Manager. In 2012, he left to work for Backus/AB InBev in the FMCG [fast-moving consumer goods] industry, returning to O-I in 2014 as an operation manager – this time in New Zealand, and going on to work in multiple manufacturing leading roles in Australia, Indonesia, and in a regional position within the Asia Pacific region (Asia and ANZ). A well-travelled Mr Newton was appointed General Manager of O-I BJC Malaysia in November 2020, bringing with him a wealth of experience regarding business practices and sustainability activities.

"There are benefits to being in different countries and being exposed to different states of sustainability around the world," he reflects. "I remember starting at O-I Peru and they were very active in sustainability with many activities happening on that front; it provided me with good experience. I've also had the opportunity to work in very developed countries in terms of sustainability, like Australia and New Zealand, so you can benchmark different countries and the stages of their journeys towards sustainability in the manufacturing process. That helps to bring different perspectives and co-ordination around the strategic approach that the company should be

taking around sustainability. My experience has helped shape me towards prioritising sustainability as a way forward in the organisation and to build a circular economy to benefit the environment and the industry."

### Team effort

As a joint venture, O-I BJC's sustainability efforts in Malaysia naturally benefit from both partners' cumulative know-how and extended reach. "We are in a position where we can learn from both companies," observes Mr Newton. "O-I puts a lot of effort into sustainability at a global level – we can reach out and learn best practices and try to integrate that into our business locally. The BJC group in Thailand is a very progressive company with a lot of sustainability activities and initiatives. Both companies are really aligned on sustainability as a way forward for glass and the future of the planet. We can engage and learn the best from both companies. We can benchmark and get more ideas. The local team is embracing what we want to do, especially as far as the Glass Ambassador Programme; all the stakeholders are involved in making this happen and we are linking with all partners directly or indirectly to drive recycling and improve sustainability. We can benefit from all ideas but in the end it is the local team working together with the Asia regional team that really makes the difference," he underlines.

"Our colleagues in Singapore are very active in working with us and we are operating like one team on this front," confirms Mr Newton. "We are [also] working with the global team and I can tell you that we are putting sustainability top of the agenda."

### The sky's the limit...

"In addition to the Glass Ambassador Programme, we are always looking at different ideas around sustainability regarding emissions and technologies – that never ends," says Mr Newton.

Does this include investment in technological advances to drive sustainability at the factory in Johor Bahru?

"In terms of actual technology, all I can say is we are actively looking at different solutions for more energy sustainable manufacturing," he responds. "Lightweighting is always a way forward to reuse raw materials and energy..."

For now, O-I BJC is continuing to promote the benefits of glass recycling and a circular economy in the region, setting up a net of glass collection hubs and proactively collaborating with customers, associations, suppliers and local leaders in the communities where it operates. "With glass recycling and sustainability being put into action, that has meaning; this team is doing amazing work in transforming Malaysia on these aspects," notes Mr Newton. "The global team is aware of what we are doing and is praising our efforts on sustainability.

"There is for sure plenty of potential moving forward and we will go faster and farther!" he enthuses. "We have had a very good start and the sky is the limit!" ●

1 <https://www.o-ibjc.com.my/glass-ambassador>

2 <https://www.o-i.com/whyirecycle/>



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### Further information:

O-I BJC Glass Malaysia, Johor, Malaysia  
tel: +60 72371 701  
email: [humanresource@o-ibjc.com](mailto:humanresource@o-ibjc.com)  
web: [www.o-ibjc.com.my](http://www.o-ibjc.com.my)

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