

◀ Rethaka is setting the tone for how we can do more with less, by designing and manufacturing homegrown, innovative and fashionable green products ▶

to eliminate the need for pads and tampons altogether. The fabric is made up of four separate layers that pull moisture away from you, is anti-microbial, super-absorbent and leak-resistant. The women changed their tagline from “For Women with Periods” to “For People with Periods,” to destigmatise the thinking around that time of the month. Thinx are currently working with the NGO Afripads in Uganda to train women to sell and make reusable cloth pads.

Lize Hartley, creator of Plasta

Three years ago, this Cape Town-based entrepreneur was inspired to create more accurate representations of skin tones when she overheard a black woman asking a white shop assistant for nude underwear. “She was struggling to explain that she needed something that was nude,” Lize explains. “There was a lot of confusion, because in fashion terms, ‘nude’ is referred to as a colour, though it’s actually a spectrum of skin-colour tones. I began to think about what other basic products weren’t available in a range of skin tones.” So Lize created Plasta, a range of three different-coloured skin-tone medical plasters – which can now be found in stores in South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and the Netherlands. “Eventually I would love to extend the range of tones to six or eight, to offer something for everyone,” Lize says.

Thato Kgathanye, creator of Repurpose Schoolbags

She’s just 23, but Thato – a circular economy industrialist and CEO of her very own company, Rethaka Resources – is streaks ahead of the pack in helping to improve the lives of others. She’s also been named one



Clockwise from top left: Thinx underwear, Rethaka Repurpose Schoolbags, SKOON. Skincare products, MDMflow lipstick and Plasta plasters

of South Africa’s *21 Icons*, currently airing on SABC3. And it all began with a university project that saw her turn a regular backpack into something extraordinary. Her bags are made out of recycled plastic to protect them from the rain, and also have solar-powered Consol lids that charge all day and provide light for township kids to study at night. “Rethaka is setting the tone for how we can do more with less, by designing and manufacturing homegrown, innovative and fashionable green products,” Thato tells *Grazia*. “Repurpose Schoolbags were inspired by turning waste into worth. In 2016 we will be launching a luxury brand called KIAMA, through which we will sell on a one-for-one model locally in SA and with European stockists. So, for every luxury handbag or accessory we sell under the KIAMA brand, we will donate a Repurpose Schoolbag to a township child.”

Florence Adepoju, founder of MDMflow beauty products

When she was 17, Florence worked behind the beauty counter of a shop in her hometown of Essex, England – and if there was one thing her job taught her, it was that if she wanted to wear super-hot lipstick shades to suit her skin tone, she’d

have to create them herself. Six years later, with an applied chemistry degree in cosmetics under her belt, Florence began crafting her bespoke MDMFlow lipsticks in a shed in her parents’ garden. The nine signature shades – mostly named for her hip-hop inspirations Kelis and Nicki Minaj – are sold online and all over the world, including London’s Topshop and Collette in Paris.

Stella Ciolli, founder of SKOON. Skincare

When it comes to finding the perfect skincare product, there’s really no such thing as “one size fits all”. Which is why Cape Town-based SKOON. Skincare founder Stella decided to make a range of locally sourced organic skincare products to suit the specific needs of customers across the country. Now you can mix and match her range of moisturisers and concentrates in the palm of your hand. As Stella says, “Skincare is an extremely personal choice. There is no wrong or right range – only a range that is right for you. You only have to ask yourself one question to test whether a range is working for you or not: ‘Does my skin look and feel healthy?’ And this is notwithstanding age or skin type, the brand or price of the product.” ■

Words: Guinevere Davies. Sources: Dailymail.co.uk; Vanityfair.com; Cosmopolitan.com; Nytimes.com; Emmajenation.co.za; Theprettyblog.com; Bust.com; Mic.com. Pictures: Gallo Images/Getty Images; Supplied.