

27 May 2022

Media Release

The SABS makes headway in developing the first standard for menstrual cups in the continent

The South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) has approved the start of the process for the development of a national standard that covers the technical requirements, testing parameters and usage guidelines for **menstrual cups**. Organisations, academics or interested individuals can express their interest to join the working group of the technical committee that will be tasked to develop the national standard.

“Millions of young women from around the globe, that come from poor communities, dread the onset of their menstruation for the simple reason that they have no resources to access the feminine hygiene products to help them cope with menstruation. Menstrual cups could be a product to alleviate the burden of period poverty and provide sanitary dignity to our girl children. The flexible, silicone based products can be reused during every cycle and last for many years. It is important that South Africans contribute to the development of a national standard that guides the quality of the products that have the potential to uplift the lives of our communities, says Jodi Scholtz, Lead Administrator of the SABS.

Every year on 28 May, Menstrual Hygiene Day is observed throughout the world to promote good menstrual health and hygiene and to raise awareness about the issues that face millions of girls and women. The day was first observed in 2014 and the 28th day represents the average menstrual cycle.

Scholtz explains that part of the global vision to eliminate period poverty is to ensure that everyone has access and can afford menstrual products of their choice, to eliminate the stigma around menstruation, provide basic information and to promote healthy hygiene which includes access to water and sanitation.

“Whilst menstrual cups are currently available in South Africa, there is no national or international standard that guides the technical specifications or usage guidelines of the products. The absence of technical criteria hinders the process for testing and certification. Untested sanitary products could be unsafe and cause unnecessary health issues and the development of a national standard will

ensure that all menstrual cup products are able to be tested for quality and performance, so that young girls and women can purchase products that are safe and reliable. The promise of alleviating the burden of period poverty and providing sanitary dignity in South Africa and the continent is possible through the development of a national standard,” explains Scholtz.

A menstrual cup is made from flexible material such as silicone or rubber, is in the shape of a funnel or cup and is inserted into a vagina to collect period fluid. The device can be worn for up to 12 hours and is believed to collect more period fluid than any other female hygiene product available.

The standard will be developed within Technical Committee 38, subcommittee 03 (TC038SC03) that focuses on medical textiles. The TC will develop a standard that will cover the requirements and test methods for menstrual cups; including requirements for disposal of the product, packaging, marking, user and care instructions. Any individual or organisation that is interested in joining the technical committee or working group can email info@sabs.co.za.

Once a working group has been established, it takes an average of 300 days to develop a national standard from scratch, however the duration of the process is dependent on the availability and commitment of experts, the availability of published research and documents, consensus within technical committee or working group, the robustness of the public enquiry stage and various other logistical requirements.

Ends.

Issued by:

Roshelle Pillay; Media Relations; 061 030 0133; Roshelle.pillay@sabs.co.za

Notes to the editor:

1. The attached pictures of menstrual cups are for illustration purposes. The technical specifications in terms of colours, materials it is made from and sizes will be determined through the national standard.

SABS



SABS



2. SANS 1812 - *The manufacture of washable, reusable sanitary towels*, was published in August 2020. The SABS currently provides testing and certification services against this standard
3. SANS 1043 – *The manufacture of disposable sanitary towels*, was amended and published in 2021 and relates to the traditional, disposable sanitary towels that are available in most retail stores. The SABS currently provides testing and certification services against this standard.
4. SANS 2078 - *The manufacture of tampons*. SANS 2078 was amended in 2021 and SABS is currently also encouraging participation in this working group or technical committee.