



## Sista Sista

**ENTREPRENEURS:** Jeanne Hugo & Lise-Marie Hugo

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**TEAM:** 2

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South Africa

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Sista Sista is a subscription service that collects non-recyclable plastics from customer's homes and delivers it to community partners who turn it into eco-bricks. Subscribers who join the community also have access to exclusive deals, ongoing education about living more sustainably as well as live support from the experts. This interesting business model gives customers a convenient and circular way to take care of non-recyclable plastics in their homes.

“We think it's important that people don't feel overwhelmed when trying to follow a more sustainable lifestyle.”

Words and photography by Chris de Beer-Procter



# ABOUT THE BUSINESS

Even with ever-rising public awareness about the waste crisis and its toll on our planet, many of us are unaware of just how many environmentally harmful non-recyclable plastics make their way into our shopping bags and homes daily, after which they inevitably end up in landfills.

“Single-use plastics are everywhere,” says Jeanne Hugo, co-founder of Sista Sista, a subscription service that collects these plastics from consumers’ homes. “The ratio is much higher than recyclable plastics,” she notes. In fact, the regular offenders are most likely in your pantry right now. “The most common non-recyclable plastics come from food packaging, like chip packets, chocolate packets, inners of boxes like cereal and tea,” says Jeanne. The sad reality of just how many tonnes of single-use plastic ends up in our landfills every day spurred Jeanne and her sister Lise-Marie to start Sista Sista.

*“It’s amazing to see people realise that you can actually make money by cleaning up the environment!”*

Their company helps divert some of these plastics into eco-bricks, instead of landfills. Eco-bricks are a construction material made by stuffing these plastics into plastic bottles, resulting in an effective and useful method of plastic sequestration. “The biggest issue with plastic is that it doesn’t break down, so the inventor of the eco-brick cleverly used this characteristic to its advantage,” says Jeanne. But the method, she notes, is not without flaws, “if it isn’t done properly, it can fail,” says Jeanne.

To be a plausible solution, the bricks need to be densely packed and plastics used within must be completely clean and dry or risk becoming vectors for bacteria, which compromises the structural integrity of the brick. To produce their bricks, Sista Sista has partnered with women in a local community who properly manufacture the bricks, ensuring that they are strong and safe. “Our partners and their community have become so passionate about the project. Seeing

how the business affects their lives is one of the most exciting things for me,” says Jeanne. The response from the community was so positive, in fact, that residents started cleaning up their own area to make the bricks. And so, the sisters decided that for each client’s monthly pickup (which generally creates 2 bricks), the company would sponsor 1 eco-brick from plastics collected in the community. They plan to train their staff to build with the bricks, adding many opportunities to benefit their communities.

But Sista Sista’s subscribers don’t just become a part of the eco-brick movement, they also gain access to nifty educational tools, ongoing tips and tricks for sustainable living, and exclusive deals on Sista Sista’s line of plant-based products which includes delicious nut milks and butters. In this way, Sista Sista is turning the problem of single-use plastics into an opportunity to build community around sustainable living, one eco-brick at a time.

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE

“Right now we’re focussing on expanding our client base. More clients means more eco-bricks!”



**ADVICE ON CIRCULARITY FOR ENTREPRENEURS**

*“Starting a circular business is not easy, but it’s incredibly fulfilling.”*

Like any other business, it will be challenging, but just remember that you are serving a greater purpose and that it will be worth it in the end. Stay true to your values, don’t be discouraged and just keep going!