

Australian safe sex to save African lives

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Dustin Leonard: "I strongly believe that it is possible to succeed in business and help people."

A new condom company, founded by a recent University of Sydney Business School graduate, is offering Australians the opportunity to help "save a life" in Africa each time they have safe sex.

The company, called [HERO](#), says it will donate one "socially responsible

and environmentally sustainable" condom to the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa and other parts of the [developing world](#) for every condom it sells locally.

"HERO [condoms](#) are based on a very simple idea," said company founder, Dustin Leonard. "Having safe sex in Australia could save a life in Africa where the HIV/AIDS epidemic has already claimed millions."

Mr Leonard, who last year completed a Master's in International Business and a Master's in Logistics Management at the [Business School](#), plans to begin distributing free packs of condoms in the African nation of Botswana later this month.

The condom launch has been timed to coincide with the release in Botswana of an HIV/AIDS related documentary produced by Thinkbox Media at the Business School and the Norwegian School of Economics.



Participants in The Mr Positive Living contest, an event intended to facilitate the emergence of role models for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment.

The documentary titled *Walk the Talk*, focuses on the role that people already infected with HIV/AIDS can play in educating the wider community.

Botswana has been devastated by HIV/AIDS. In 2009 a quarter of the population between the ages of 15-49 was living with the virus - the second highest infection rate in the world after nearby Swaziland.

"Condoms are a key weapon in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Botswana and other parts of Africa but there is a [stigma](#) associated with their use and myths associated with the virus itself," said Mr Leonard. "We want to make condoms acceptable and readily accessible."

Mr Leonard believes that the variety of condoms typically available in Africa contributes to their unpopularity. "To encourage their use, every aspect of our condoms will be customized to reflect local preferences including packaging, foil wraps, size and thickness," he said.

The company is planning to sell around 3.5 million condoms in Australia in its first year and to match those sales with the distribution of another 3.5 million in Africa free of charge. HERO condoms will be manufactured in Malaysia in an environmentally friendly way from sustainable and natural materials.

"This is the first condom company of its type to hit the Australian market," Mr Leonard said. "We are hoping that it will appeal to young people who are looking for something innovative and new and are also socially concerned."

In addition to condoms, HERO is also planning to make antiretroviral therapies available to pregnant women to help prevent the transfer of HIV to their unborn babies.

"I strongly believe that it is possible to succeed in business and help people," Mr Leonard concluded. "We believe that with this product we can give [Australians](#) a chance to make a difference and help save a life every time they have [safe sex](#)."

Provided by University of Sydney

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