

Condoms vs chocolates in the Philippines on Valentine's Day

February 14 2015

A condom maker in the Philippines capital Saturday found their Valentine's Day giveaway challenged by a church group who tried to persuade people to swap the contraceptives for chastity and chocolates.

A colourful flower market in Manila became the unlikely battleground over the use of contraception in the Catholic dominated Southeast Asian country as the church group countered the [free condoms](#) with chocolates and sweets—complete with printed messages encouraging chastity.

"Exchange your condoms for candies, #WeKeepLoveReal," read the signs carried by volunteers from the Christian advocacy group Filipinos for Life.

"Condoms send the wrong message that Valentine's is about sex, when it's really about love," volunteer Anna Cosio told AFP.

DTK Health, the country's biggest condom manufacturer, plans to give away 40,000 condoms over the weekend, the company's head of marketing Emmanuel Alfonso told AFP.

Offering free condoms alongside stalls selling bouquets of red roses, balloons and chocolates for Valentine's Day will help erase the stigma attached to contraceptives, Alfonso said.

The country's ultra-conservative Catholic Church continues to preach against [contraceptives](#), likening its use to abortion, despite failing to

block legislation to make them widely available to the poor.

In the past, the government handed out free condoms on Valentine's Day but didn't this year to avoid drawing the ire of the Church, health department spokesman Lyndon Lee Suy told AFP.

But he stressed the ministry was not giving up its safe sex advocacy, especially to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS.

"Every time you do it, sex should be safe, not only during Valentine's," health Lee Suy said.

While men casually accepted the condoms from the DTK models in tight blue t-shirts and shorts, some bashful women handed them back and then scurried away.

But some people got both candies and condoms.

"I already ate the candies. The condoms, I can't use it yet because I'm only 16 and I don't have a girlfriend. Maybe I will keep it in my wallet for good luck," college student Danny Villegas told AFP.

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