



David and local youth based NGO 'Bona Naledi' preparing the community mobilisation team for HERO condom distribution in Botswana

# Got you covered

One in four acts of vaginal intercourse involves condoms, making them the second most used contraceptive method in Australia. But there’s still an outdated stigma that condoms make sex less pleasurable. For-purpose condom brand, HERO, is shifting the conversation around safe sex by speaking to a younger generation who are embracing sexual wellness. Here, CEO David Wommelsdorff talks health inequality, empowering a sex-positive community and giving back to communities in need.



Customised HERO condoms for donation in Botswana

### David, what inspired the launch of HERO Condoms?

When we learnt about the prevalence of HIV in Botswana, where approximately one in five people are living with HIV, we were inspired to see how we could support the grassroots organisations that were implementing community-led solutions. Condoms are expensive, relative to the cost of living, and clinics often lack supply, meaning many communities in Botswana do not have access to free-issue condoms, a critical component of effective HIV/AIDS prevention.

HERO is passionate about ensuring we operate from a rights-based perspective, so we really wanted to stand up for sexual and reproductive health rights for all, including the right to safe access to health services, full, inclusive sex education and health equality as a lever for reducing inequality overall — especially within communities experiencing compounding forms of disadvantage and discrimination.

### You call HERO a socially responsible company. Can you tell us more about how HERO supports communities in need?

Even in 2022 there are persistent forms of health inequality in almost every country, with access to safe and effective interventions for sexual and reproductive health a major gap in achieving health equality. Many communities lack access to condoms and sanitary products due to supply, weak local health systems, institutional, social or economic disadvantage or education. The fallout from the pandemic has only exacerbated these issues.

Our 1-for-1 model means we empower the people who inspire us, and support those who need a hand by ensuring for every HERO condom sold, one is donated to a community in need. To date, we have donated more than 2.3 million condoms globally.

### How does HERO incorporate and nurture inclusivity?

Since expanding our partnerships into Australia, we’ve worked with organisations we know have both internal practices centred around inclusion and diversity, and whose mission involves expanding equality to ensure the inclusivity of health services. For example, by partnering with Marie Stopes Australia, we are supporting approximately 40,000 people per year in Australia to have access to health and reproductive services, which are proven to impact equality indicators. The role of Marie Stopes as an accessible and culturally appropriate service provider in the Australian landscape is critical to expanding health equality in our country, which is a key indicator of overall equality.

HERO is committed to ensuring that even while we are a small team, we uplift the voices

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of the change-makers and organisations who represent people of all genders, sexualities and backgrounds. We approach partnerships, campaigns and strategies with the view that our job is to amplify our partners as they work to increase equality and human rights in their communities. Being an ethical, responsive partner is a major factor to this. In some situations, “inclusion” isn’t enough — more than just including everyone, we also need to take action to address power imbalances and inequalities through our actions.

### What are you doing to minimise the environmental impact of your brand?

We are very selective about who we work with and ensure our manufacturing and supply partners utilise ethical and environmentally friendly practices throughout their supply chain, including water treatment and recycling, and using recyclable materials when approved and safe to use.

We are working to further develop our earth-friendly power generation and agroforestry initiatives, especially at the manufacturer level, to ensure we are taking whatever climate action we can. We are always looking for ways to improve where possible and are committed to reducing our impact on people, place and planet, alongside our manufacturing and organisational partners.

### The culture around condoms is shifting, but there is still a stigma that condoms make sex awkward or less enjoyable. How can we make safe sex sexy?

It’s not just the culture around condoms that’s shifting, but also a social shift towards sex-positivity. That’s why we want HERO to start a new conversation about sexuality. We know from our fans, consultants and community partners that sex-positivity is creating radical change for people of all genders and sexualities, and helping centre sexiness around consent and respectful relationships.

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HERO 'Natural' and 'Ultra-thin' vegan friendly condoms

Caring for a sexual partner is a turn-on for pretty much anyone; even in a kink-context, consent is key. Contraception is a big part of consent and sexual boundaries and we are stoked that the conversation around sex is centreing around consent. The best way we can all destigmatise safe sex is to uplift the voices and messages of sex-positive creators, activists and artists, and do our bit to promote the sexiness of consent and contraception as part of this.

### What does sexual wellness mean to HERO?

Sexual wellness means people are empowered by their sexuality and the ways this impacts the other areas of their lives, particularly around consent and identity. This is more than just in the bedroom and it’s honestly pretty complex — including things like body positivity, understanding the negative impact of media, popular culture and harmful gender norms and power structures. Sexual wellness demands a world and a society where consent is key, and inequalities are reduced to ensure

the accessibility and appropriateness of sexual and reproductive health services and products for each and every individual.

### What’s next for HERO Condoms?

We are excited to grow our brand, but more than this we are passionate about finding new ways to create change, empower the people who inspire us, and make social change an inherent part of conscious lifestyle choices.

As we build our conscious product portfolio, we are excited to offer an option that is tailored to customers who shop based on their core values. This means that as we grow, we commit to ensuring our products remain ethically produced, sustainably sourced and vegan friendly, with a social purpose and transparent vision. We truly believe that together our community can transform lives, so we hope shoppers will use their purchasing power to support HERO and bring about positive social change.

For more information, visit [herocondoms.com](https://herocondoms.com) and [@herocondoms](https://www.instagram.com/herocondoms) on Instagram.