

Zim: Women's rights activists condemn HIV/AIDS campaign

By [Dumisani Ndlela](#)

29 Nov 2010

The Population Services International (PSI) Zimbabwe is to withdraw all advertisements discouraging promiscuous behaviour by men after women's rights activists condemned it as sexist. The PSI, which has been at the forefront of campaigns against the spread of HIV/AIDS for over a decade in Zimbabwe, said it would completely pull out its billboards on the campaign by the end of November.

Its newspaper and television advertisements on the campaign had already been withdrawn.

"The billboards will be removed this month to coincide with a new campaign," a PSI spokesman said.

Demeaning women

Women's rights groups have attacked the PSI campaign against multiple sexual partners, but activists said the message demeaned women and portrayed them as the main culprits in the spread of HIV and AIDS. The campaign warns a man against the so-called "small house", a euphemism for second unofficial wife.

"Your small house could be having more lovers," one of the campaign adverts says, drawing men's attention to a network of lovers by the 'small house' and warning: "Don't get into this sexual network. Avoid HIV."

Another campaign message has a pot of honey, depicting a woman who attracts many men.

Irresponsible campaign

The Msasa Project, which deals with violence against women, has described the campaign as irresponsible.

The PSI insists its campaign was intended to influence behavioural change and that no offence was meant against women.

PSI Zimbabwe began operating in the country in 1996 in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare to prevent HIV and AIDS, control malaria and improve family planning practices.

ABOUT DUMISANI NDLELA

Dumisani Ndlela is a Zimbabwean journalist specialising in business and financial reporting, with experience reporting on commodities, stock and financial markets, advertising, marketing and the media. He has previously reported from a number of regional countries as well as from the UK and Germany on commodities and regional integration. He can be contacted on dndlela@yahoo.co.uk.

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