

Oral statement from Rabelani Mudau, Youth Activist, Afrika Tikkun and Action Aid South Africa

Your Excellencies, distinguished speakers, honourable members and delegates

It is a privilege to be invited to speak to this Assembly. I thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the young women I live and work with in South Africa. My name is Rabelani Mudau. I am a daughter, a sister, a student, an employee and a woman living in an urban informal settlement called Diepsloot in Johannesburg. Allow me to share a few stories of our experiences.

Story 1

I grew up close to my sister but I couldn't talk to her about sex since she never provided a space. All I was told about sex was if I engage in it I would either be pregnant or HIV positive. At the time I didn't know where to get information or services, so I decided to stay away from sex for no other reason but out of fear.

Even though I was studying I had to come back early from school to ensure that all the household chores were done. This was very hard for me because sometimes I would be tired. I tried finding a job but the money was not enough to cover expenses. It was not easy for me to work hard and earn little so I decided to quit and resort back to the house chores.

Story 2

"Last year I missed my injection date due to my matric exams and when I went to the clinic the following day they told me to go and buy a pregnancy test so they could test me before injecting me. I told them I didn't have money to buy the pregnancy test. They told me if I didn't no one would assist me."

Story 3

"I was once working at a call centre company and I earned very little. My manager wouldn't allow me to go attend my LGBTI Meetings or go for tertiary education registrations. He promised to fire me if he ever heard me talking about any of these. When I was sick he would deduct my money. I had to resign."

These stories represent the realities OF OUR lives as young women. Working with civil society organisations like Africa Tikkun, Wellness Foundation and ActionAid South Africa we the Young urban women, are organising to change these realities and claim our rights to SRHR, decent work and the redistribution of our unpaid care work. We along with young women from across the world, demand that the post 2015 agenda consider a holistic approach for development that address the challenges we face such as violence against women, lack of employment opportunities with decent working conditions. Too often solutions to youth unemployment are about finding jobs for young men while ignoring the specific barriers we face as young women to access work due to our unpaid care work responsibilities. This approach to development should respect our diversity as young women and ensure access to free quality public health information and services including SRHR that is youth friendly and non-judgemental.

Thank you.