



Friendly Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Information and Services do matter for everyone

By Tlali Matela (Mr)

“Provision of Youth Friendly Services should not be a privilege, but a right to every young person who lives in Africa. I have a right to decide whether to access SRH services or not. I do not speak for myself alone, but for masses of young people in this country and neighbouring countries who are denied access to friendly SRH services on the basis of the skin colour, age, or disabilities” said Nthabiseng Mogashoa, a member of the Siyakwasi Youth Network, a Social Activist and a Student at the University of Kwazulu Natal.

Ms Mogashoa was addressing the masses that had come for the launch of #BecauseWeCan Project on Thursday the 27th February 2020 at Garden Court Nelson Mandela Boulevard, Cape town. #BecauseWeCan Project is a unique coalition of youth serving SRHR organisations and faith organisations

that have come together to develop a joint campaign to promote young people’s access to sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services in 8 Southern African Countries namely, Lesotho, Botswana, Eswatini, South Africa, Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique and Namibia.



The Siyakwasi Youth Network with the IPPF Africa Regional Director during the launch of #BecauseWeCan campaign

The campaign aims to ensure that governments in the 8 African countries deliver on the promises made in the Eastern and Southern African Ministerial Commitment, famously known as ESA Commitment, and Maputo Plan of Action in 2013 and 2016 respectively. In both documents, governments have pledged support in ensuring that women and young people have access to scientifically proven information and friendly SRH services, and they have comprehensive knowledge about their sexuality.

Speaking at the same launch Mr Jacques van Zuydam, Chief Director for Population and Development at the South African National Population Unit in the Department of Social Development acknowledged that Policy Makers have

often failed to work with young people in addressing health concerns of young people. “We launch the campaign because we recognise that more needs to be done. We often make that honest mistake of thinking that these young people’s issues are the same as ours and we know them because we were once young. And before we realise it, we are taking decisions for the people whose generation is younger than ours, and have their issues, and take for granted things that never even existed in our time. We can address young people’s Sexual and Reproductive Health issues without young people taking the lead” said Mr. Zuydam.



From left to right; Mr Jacques van Zuydam, Ms. Nthabiseng Mogashoa, Ms Marie-Evelyne Petrus-Barry, Ms Patsy de Lora and Dr Granville cutting a ribbon to launch #BecauseWeCan campaign

#BecauseWeCan campaign has presents a unique opportunity to young people in the 8 SADC Countries to be part of plans that affect them, particularly in ensuring that. Most the SADC Countries have made a considerable progress in implementing the Maputo Plan of Action and ESA Commitment in their respective Countries, however monitoring of such progress remains critical.

Nthathi Thokoa, LPPA Youth Action Movement Chairperson, who had attended the launch in Capetown, asserted that indeed young people have been left behind “Unfortunately we are the target of these policies and strategies, but we are never consulted. Times change, so are the challenges that generations face” emphasised Ms. Thokoa in an interview.