

Assalamulakum, Guten Tag. I am excited to be speaking on behalf of the youth participants to such a diverse set of individuals and organizations. Each and every one of you, in this room has their own unique experience that over the next two days, **you** can share with one another. Now, what comes to your mind, when you hear:

- unemployment
- job creation
- sustainable development, and,
- sexual and reproductive health and rights

(Slight pause)

Well, They all have 1 common factor..which is...YOUTH. Did you know that an estimated 75 + million youth around the world, are currently unemployed...75 million.!!

Now, lets simplify the youth, and put them into two categories:

1st **Young people** who are educated and underutilized, and the 2nd which is **those**-who have little to no education and live in marginalized areas.

A recent study, estimated that a total of 43 percent of the world's population is under the age of 25. And of the 43 %, half of them are comprised of young girls and women.

So lets focus for a moment on young women and girls, (for arguments sake) we can divide the issues they are facing into two categories ...

The first are girls and young women who have access to good education. It is almost close to a mandate that public or private entities need a certain % of their workforce to be female. However many young women end up leaving the company due to pregnancy, marriage or poor career prospects. In short, young Women are not being utilized to their full potential.

Now Going back to my four main points:

- youth unemployment
- job creation
- sustainable development, and,
- sexual and reproductive health and rights

Women are still seen as the people who take care of the home. Sometimes they also work yet they are still unable to make ends meet. This is particularly true in marginalized areas.

Which shouldn't be happening in this day and age because Women are crucial to the development of a country

And it is up to you, ladies and gentlemen, to create opportunities to harness their potential. Women, IF educated, HAVE THE ABILITY TO NOT ONLY RAISE children but work at the same time. Given the opportunity women can juggle almost anything!

And it's not that hard to harness a woman's potential. The most successful companies are realizing that they need women to [diversify](#), develop and grow... Take Google for example, it offers incentives and benefits to women and it is [one of the](#) most successful companies in the world. When women are engaged in the labor market we have the potential to create the world we want.

We need to ensure that women are provided with a good environment to be employed.

Coming back to the second issue, women with little or no education and living in marginalized areas, most of these women lack technical skills, let alone know how to read or write...these women are working in farms, being paid little to nothing and are unable to support themselves or their families. The same cycle repeats itself with their daughters...And the problem with this 2nd type of women is not just the mindset of men, but the women themselves.

Why??

Because they don't know [that life can be different](#). They have had little to no interaction [with](#) any form of education or life outside the villages they live in, which isn't their fault.

For example, in rural India, TV revolutionized the Women's movement.

The attitude towards Indian women is that they are expected to cook and clean and have lots of babies. Rural Indian women don't have a lot of control over their lives. Spousal beating is common, and the problem is that the women BELIEVE this is acceptable. Key word here being, they BELIEVE it is acceptable.

We all agree education improves women's circumstances in the developing world, but for Rural India the quicker fix was TV.

When homes got access to TV and cable, and women started seeing how [their counterparts](#) in the outside world were portrayed (through soap operas, movies and real life TV) their

attitudes quickly changed. Women demanded their rights, and as a result they gained more autonomy and an increased value in society.

So part of the problem was within the women themselves. A lack of AWARENESS that today's world is different. And if these women BELIEVE that this is the best they can get then they will never ASPIRE to grow.

People in poor countries deserve the information that will allow them to become independent and fulfill their potential.

We don't have to start from scratch, youth, in particular young women, can be trained and taught technical skills, much needed by their countries.

Companies gaining from these countries' resources, have a responsibility and should be pushed by people like you, IN THIS ROOM... pushed to realize their responsibility to the people in the places where they do business.

I want to end my speech by saying... We are like consultants, all of us in this room.

And we can come up with a million and one solutions and they can ALL be right. Because there is no single right answer. However the dilemma (and consultants will agree) is that CHANGE has to come from WITHIN your client.

By empowering youth, particularly young women, we can decrease unemployment and create better quality jobs. When young women have access to their Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, we can build a sustainable work force and ensure all women achieve their full potential.

We are ready, are you?

Thank you