

Alcohol use must be discouraged to check GBV

TANZANIA Media Women's Association (TAMWA) has teamed up with another organization in a programme aimed at using the media to discourage use of alcohol in Kinondoni District, Dar es Salaam Region.

TAMWA has decided to discourage use of too much beer, spirits, wine, and locally made intoxicating drinks because a recent survey has shown that most gender-based violence are fuelled by such drinks.

It is an undeniable fact that gender-based violence is a well-recognized risk factor for HIV infection among women, simply because they are infected with the virus by their irresponsible male partners.

Through the media, TAMWA intends to examine the association between recent abuse by a sex partner with alcohol and sexual risk behaviour among female patrons of alcohol serving venues within Kinondoni Municipality.

We discourage excessive alcohol consumption, which plays a key role in sexual risk taking and gender-based violence that exacerbates HIV transmission.

It should be understood that there are multiple interrelationships among alcohol use with gender-based violence and HIV/Aids, indicating the need for a comprehensive HIV prevention strategy.

Such a plan should comprise alcohol policy and violence prevention programming, complemented by health education and care programmes to reduce hazardous alcohol consumption, and alcohol screening and treatment programmes for alcohol use disorders integrated with HIV/AIDS care.

We support TAMWA in this initiative, because as media, we have a special role to play in sensitising the public against excessive alcohol use, violence against women and the complex challenge of preventing and reducing HIV in our society.

We think that the media in this country should show the need for community-based health services specifically addressing alcohol use and sexual health in HIV prevention settings.

Three years ago for example, one survey in Rwanda showed that every third man who was drinking alcohol used to beat his partner, and such facts are not very far from our own situation in Kinondoni District today.

The cultural norm constituted in a society like ours is that the man decides, men dominate. It is a characteristic for many tribes where women's rights remain subordinate to those of their husbands.

In some tribes today, the existing perception of a man is that he should be tough, that he needs more sex than women and is always ready for sex.

Although women agree with their submissive role, they consider the beatings and forced sex as harmful violent acts.

We think time has come for men to be more aware of the harm and injustice of their acts and justify their behaviour with their male family role and that is our reason to support TAMWA in this initiative.