

Youth groups help cut drug use, raise HIV awareness

By Frank Aman, Singida

The introduction of youth groups focusing on the prevention of substance abuse and providing reproductive health education among teenagers in various parts of Singida municipality has helped to combat drug abuse and increase HIV awareness in the region.

A report on a survey carried out by the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU) released at mid week observed that youth clubs introduced Youth Movement for Change (YMC) has reduced the number of kids using drugs.

One of the beneficiaries, a resident of Mitundu ward in Manyoni district,

Kibe Athuman told this reporter on Thursday that since he joined Maendeleo Youth Club it has helped him to walk away from drug abuse.

He said that for a period of two years, he was using marijuana, a situation that forced him to indulge in crimes like theft, also hindering him to do agriculture or other gainful activities.

"Maendeleo Youth Club was formed in order to address under-age drinking and other issues related to youth alcohol, tobacco and drug use in the ward, as it was clear more youths were getting carried into marijuana use," he said.

The secretary of the Maendeleo Youth Club, Seleman Ramadhan said

that the said youth clubs were leading youth activities in the region, in schools and out of school.

Gervas Samweli, a youth leader from Mwangaza Youth Club in Ntuntu ward said that the groups had also helped them to understand reproductive health and helped to foster use of condoms.

Many youths were not aware that the prevalence of HIV was significantly contributed by misuse of condoms, but since the introduction of Tanzania Men as Equal Partner (TMEP) campaign, this has helped the youth to learn to protect themselves.

In another development, YMC Program coordinator Fidelis Yunde

said that YMC, as a Tanzanian NGO with a mission of improving the livelihood of youths in and out of school, it was giving seminars on life skills and HIV. The NGO activists work in youth lobbying and advocacy and promote youth dialogue on HIV and development, he said.

YMC collaborates with key stakeholders like the government, NGOs and donor agencies in order to identify impediments, thus reach a consensus on guiding and motivating the youth as a pillar of the nation's future prospects.

In TMEP the youth movement was working with Health Association Promotion and Action (HAPA) to implement the project.