

## **Education and Sensitization will help curb HIV/AIDS, Alcohol and Drug Abuse**



### ***Ms. Catherine Amulundu delivers HIV/AIDS talk during the College HIV/AIDS, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Workshop***

HIV/AIDS, drug and alcohol abuse and misuse are common healthcare challenges that affect all types of people in society. Like HIV, addiction with drugs does not discriminate based on class, social status, race, religion or gender. But there are contributing factors that increase the use of drugs and alcohol amongst key populations which makes them more vulnerable to the serious health issues that go with drug and alcohol abuse. During the HIV/AIDS, Alcohol and drug abuse workshop organized by the University of Nairobi Health Services, speakers emphasized that alcohol and substance abuse is destroying young people, families thereby retarding growth and developments. Thus, education and sensitization activities will help break the cycle and slow down HIV/AIDS transmission and other sexually transmitted diseases (STIs) which are connected with alcohol and other drug abuses.

The workshop which took place on November 16, 2015 brought together college staffs and students. Other areas which the workshop addressed includes; reproductive health, behavior

change, stigma and discrimination and stress management. Also provided was the Voluntarily Counseling and Testing, VCT.

Currently, the status of HIV/Aids in combination of sexually transmitted diseases (STIs) is becoming a major challenge within the health sector. The high number of HIV infected patients with co-infection of STIs has suffered the consequences of their status when not diagnosed at an early stage, resulting in several deaths at an alarming space. Similarly, if one looks at the most common co-infection of HIV/Aids and TB, one will note that the immune system is compromised when unattended or not treated with urgency.

It has been said that alcohol is the number one killer in South Africa. Tobacco (cigarettes) is the second largest leading cause of death in our country.

Children as young as 12-years-old are becoming more and more sexual active and often engage with risky behaviour before reaching 15 years older. Recent reports had shown shocking information of youth still want to experience with alcohol, drugs and sex.

Vicks Phupheli from the Human Science Research Council stated that the new strategies of getting the message across should be thought of. Moral regeneration should be the order of day, a grass root level communication that will foster the understanding and culture among youth about what is morally acceptable when it comes to issues related to sex and substance use.

Mr Bob Daniel said, "Drug abuse by any form and not necessary through drug injection, can put a person at risk of getting HIV. Substance abuse has been linked with HIV/Aids since the beginning of the epidemic. We therefore appeal to those leaders who have vested interest in liquor and drug business to become more responsible in ensuring that the youths are not abused by their irresponsible action. We also urge the teachers and parents to constantly engage with pupils about substance abuse and its use as well as engaging in risky sexual behaviour and promiscuous activities."