COMMUNICATING HIV and AIDS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN TANZANIA: A CASE OF TUSEME

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INTRODUCTION

Communication initiatives on HIV and AIDS

- media campaigns (television dramas, music, radio plays, stage plays, films and paintings)
- workshops
- Meetings
- seminars
- conferences
- Peers education
INTRODUCTION

There have been attempts by many organization and individuals to involve the youth in the communication process in HIV and AIDS. However, most of these communication processes have been geared towards mobilization campaigns, whereas the youths have only been used to put forward ‘adults agendas’ on HIV and AIDS. This paper presents TUSEME as an example where the youths (girls in secondary schools in Tanzania) are empowered and involved in examining and analysing their own situations and take initiatives in communicating the results of their analysis, as well as, using the obtained information to influence change in attitude, knowledge and practice.
TUSEME
TUUSEME

- TUUSEME, a Swahili word for “Let us speak out”, is, therefore, an empowerment process designed to enable girls to understand the gender construct of the society they live in, identify and analyze the emergent problems and how such problems hinder their academic and social development. Thus, TUUSEME aims at giving the girls a voice to speak out, find solutions and take initiatives to solve their academic and social problems.
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF TUSEME

1. To enable the girls to say what they see as factors leading to the problems of:
   a. School dropouts
   b. Poor academic achievement
   c. School girl pregnancy
   d. Sexual harassment
   e. Any other gender related problem as identified by the girls themselves.

2. To find ways through which the girls themselves can find solutions to the above problems.
ACTIVITIES

• As a project TUSEME is implemented in schools through the activities which includes:
  
  • **A. THE TUSEME PROCESS**
  
  • The TUSEME process was developed out of theatre for development movement to cater specifically for the empowerment of girls in secondary schools. I define Theatre for development as a participatory process of theatre production which involve the community members in researching, analysing, finding solutions to their development problems, and developing implementation plans as well as monitoring and evaluation tools. Theatre for development is carried out by facilitators who are both experts in theatre and social mobilization.

• The TUSEME process in schools lasts from one to two weeks and involves the following stages:
  
  • a) Preliminaries b) Familiarization c) Data Collection d) Data Analysis e) Theatre Creation f) Theatre Performance g) Post-Performance Discussion h) Developing action plan i) Training into Life Skills for Action
ACTIVITIES

• 2. RUNNING OF TUSEME CLUBS
TUSEME clubs are a student-centred structure to facilitate the implementation of activities towards the empowerment of girls, including those in the action plan. They also serve as speaking-out fora for students to discuss issues related to their social and academic welfare. They are in fact the pillars of the existence and development of TUSEME activities in the schools.

• 3. ORGANIZING TUSEME FESTIVALS
• The TUSEME festival is an annual forum that brings together representative groups of students and teachers of different background and experiences from all the schools that have Tuseme activities. The festivals’ main objectives if to create a wider forum for exchanging experiences, empowering each other and communicating to the larger public about girls issues and concerns in order to win public understanding and support.
4. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

It involves regular tracking of progress in the level of empowerment of girls in speaking out, self confidence, assertiveness, negotiation, decision making and other personal development skills; engaging with school management, teachers and other students; taking action to solve the problems identified, implementing the TUSEME action plan.

5. PRODUCTION OF TUSEME NEWSLETTER

The Tuseme newsletter is a forum whereby Tuseme and non-Tuseme students air their views concerning their academic and social welfare within and outside the school. Popular themes are on gender discrimination, genital mutilation, child labour, sex and its dangers to girls, academic achievement and issues of health and poverty. The newsletters which use both English and Kiswahili languages are distributed to more than 100 secondary schools each year.
STATUS OF TUSEME TODAY

- In 2004 the Ministry of Education decided to mainstream TUSEME into the national education system, and included it in the Secondary Education Development Plan of 2004-2009 (SEDP).
- The Forum for African Women Educationalists [FAWE], a Pan African Non Governmental Organization, based in Kenya, dealing with the promotion of girls’ education in Sub Sahara Africa, borrowed TUSEME from Tanzania for its programme on empowerment of girls.
- FAWE has so far spread TUSEME to fourteen countries in Sub Sahara Africa. These include Kenya, Rwanda, Malawi, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Senegal, Guinea, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Gambia, and Ethiopia.
TUSEMÉ and HIV and AIDS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

• Themes on HIV and AIDS have always featured in the TUSEMÉ programme. However, in the years 2000 and 2004 the coordinating team of TUSEMÉ decided to focus the programmes activities of the years on fighting HIV/AIDS among girls in TUSEMÉ schools. HIV AND AIDS became the theme of the TUSEMÉ process in schools.

• “Only ghosts will remain, only ghosts will remain, To swim in the rivers and ocean, and drink the protected waters of the Nile, Thames, Rhine, Ganges, Yangtze Kiang and the Amazon”
TUUSEME Process:

- TUUSEME process that was geared in combating HIV and AIDS in the schools was carried out in all the TUUSEME schools.

- The emphasis was put more in researching the circumstances or conditions that put girls at risk of contacting the HIV and AIDS at home and school.
RAISED ISSUES

1. The existence of teacher-student love affairs
2. Unprotected sexual intercourse between a girl and a boy.
3. Pregnancies among girl-students are a proof that unsafe sex is being practised.
4. Poverty makes girls engage in unprotected sex.
5. Some boys and men do not use condoms intentionally.
6. Some traditions such as female and male initiation rites create conditions that lead to spread of HIV and AIDS.
7. Love affairs with men and women who live in the school neighborhood.
8. Transport problem
9. Poverty
10. Peer pressures at school
ISSUES

**Solutions:**
1. Abstinence from sexual activities
2. Use of condoms for those who cannot abstain.
3. Empowerment of the girls in order to have a say on sexual matters.
4. Girls and boys to be responsible for their own bodies.
5. Initiations rites should be reviewed, as some of the elements are still valid. But activities that create breeding grounds for HIV and AIDS should be dropped or discouraged.
FOOD and HIV and AIDS
LESSONS LEARNED

1. Wide participation in the process
2. Freedom of expression.
3. Awareness-raising on HIV and AIDS.
4. Edutainment
5. HIV and AIDS is global as well as local
As knowing an enemy is a very crucial step towards winning the war, and then understanding circumstances that expose one to the dangers of contacting HIV is equally a very crucial step towards winning the war against HIV and AIDS. TU SE ME process has a potential of providing a forum for discovering, processing and sharing the knowledge on HIV and AIDS by empowering the youths, giving them the tools of analysis with which they research and analyze their problems and take initial steps to overcome them.