The national campaign against drug abuse continued, yesterday, in the Southern Province as senior government officials including ministers, engaged residents of Muhanga District to actively join efforts by reporting dealers.

The campaign also included destruction of illicit drugs which were seized in various operations aimed at breaking chains of supply.

The destroyed drugs are valued at Rwf11.4million. They Include 730 liters of Kanyanga (crude gin), 6402 pellets of cannabis and 138kg of cannabis, 5700 liters of locally made illicit brew and several illicit substances all seized in three months.

Speaking to residents at an event held at the regional stadium in Muhanga, the State Minister in the Ministry of Health, Dr. Patrick Ndimubanzi, embarked on side effects of abusing drugs, citing mental illness, liver and heart complications including non communicable diseases.

He pointed out that the role of family in fighting drug abuse is very crucial.

“Globally, there is an increase in drug use and the biggest percentage of those are youngsters. Drug abuse also comes with contraction of several diseases like non communicable diseases,” he observed.

Majority drug dealers and abusers in Rwanda are also said to be the youth, comprising of the over 70 per cent.

“A lot has been achieved in various aspects of development, but again a lot in education, health and resource development, among others is still hampered by such illicit drugs…It is high time you stand up to put an end on drug abuse by reporting dealers and abusers in your neighborhoods,” Dr. Ndimubanzi said.

He added: “It is your duty to overcome this challenge and contribute significantly to the socio-economic development of our country.”

He also urged the youth to prevent and stop abusing narcotics, and those battling consequences of drugs like addiction to seek medical help.

The exercise was also characterized by testimonies of former drug addicts.

In her address, the Minister of Youth Rosemary Mbabazi, said: “Those involved in drug trade do it in the most secretive way but still they get arrested because of the continued partnership with the people.”

She added that research indicates that children start using drugs as early as 11 years and challenged parents to always keep an eye on their children.

“When your family is marred in wrangles and conflicts, you don’t accord your children proper care and and pay close follow up, that’s how some end up in drugs. These children are the future of our country and that’s why we will do all it takes to protect them.”

“We have laws protecting whistleblowers, anyone who reports a drug dealer or abuser will be protected,” said Minister Mbabazi.

The Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIGP) in charge of Administration and Personnel, Juvenal Marizamunda said that the issue of drug abuse is of great concern.

“There are several types of drugs, some that come from the neighboring countries, others are locally manufactured. We are here to urge you to join efforts to protect the children, our homes and communities from thieves who are influenced by drugs, protect girls who are abuse by drug abuse and to prevent domestic conflicts and gender based violence, which are also largely caused by drugs,” DIGP Maria Marizamunda said.

All these, he aaid, have a big effect to the country’s development and people’s welfare and security.

The multisectorial anti-drug abuse campaign is conducted by the ministries of Health, Local Government, Youth as well as Rwanda National Police, among others.

The Governor of the Southern Province, Marie Rose Mureshyankwano said that in the last three month, cases of assault constituted the biggest percentage of crimes committed in the region with 72 per cent of them related to use of drugs.

Similar sensitization campaigns were held previous in the Northern, Eastern and Western regions where illicit drugs valued at more Rwf300 million, combined.

Separate discussions with owners of hospitality facilities such as hotels, bars,

restaurants and night spots; faith-based organisations; youth groups; grassroots leaders in some districts and former drug dealers have also been held.

The whole ideal of the campaign is to bring different groups on board to identify and rehabilitate addicts, prevent new users by killing the local market and break chains of supply.