Doctor: Aids to hurt Africa

By Nation correspondent

The director-general of the African

Medical and Research Foundation (Amref), Dr Michael Gerber, said yesterday agricultural and industrial production in Africa was bound to be affected by the scourge of the dreaded Aids disease.

During an Amref/American foundation for Aids Research (Amfar) workshop at the Jacaranda hotel, Nairobi, Dr Gerber said Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (Aids) continued to

rise in African countries.

In Africa he said, the very

young, the old, the sick and the

disabled, who are totally dependent

on the extended family,

could lose their livelihood if the '

epidemic was not controlled.

Dr Gerber said the disease had

reduced the supply. of trained

manpower in most African countries.

"A sample of workers in a

central African mining town taken

a few years ago showed 68 per

cent of skilled male workers tested

positive for HIV (Human Immune-

deficiency Virus)

"Many work away from their

families and indulge in casual sex or visit female workers," he said.

Dr Gerber said the Aids epidemic

could affect both the local

and foreign exchange earnings

and international commodity

prices unless ,governments in

Africa allocated more resources

to its management.

Whereas deaths from Aids in·

western countries occurred

among the sexually active people

in the 20 to 45 age group, in

Africa, it occurred within the 15-

45 age group.

He added that the mortality rate in Africa was bound to increase "several-fold" among ·the economically, and most socially productive age groups.

"Given the subsistence, labour intensive agriculture in many African countries, food production may be significantly reduced," he said.

The Amref boss said he was

concerned about the possibility of .

the disease being transmitted .

through breastfeeding. However,

he said the risk did not outweigh

the benefits of breastfeeding.

He said Amref would initiate a

major programme in South

Nyanza focusing on women and children’s health. The region has a very high infant mortality rate.

The facilitator of the, workshop, Dr David Nyamwaya, said the discovery of Kemron might

lead to a lot of complacency among the people who should otherwise, be cautious infected".

Mr Nyamwaya called, on people.,

to be careful. Kemron, he said,

was not a cure to the disease. "It

is a drug to help in the management

of the dreaded disease," he

pointed out.

The four-day workshop is

sponsored by Amfar and Amref.

**EEC mission gives Kenya medical kit**

,The director of medical services,

.Prof Joseph Oliech (3rd left)

receives medical equipment from

the head of the European .

Community mission, Mr T.

Rohrsted. The equipment worth

Sh29 million is part of the

.National Aids Programme. The

equipment is to be used in .

Nairobi and Mombasa. Looking

on is the Nairobi City .

Commission's medical officer, Dr

P.S Achola (2nd left)

,(Picture By NJENGA '

:MUNYORI).