**The doubting Thomases**

**DESPITE THE PUBLICITY, THOUSANDS BELIEVE IT'S ALL PROPAGANDA**

**Others claim a Kemron tablet**

**taken before and after sex**

**prevents Aids infection**

**By CHEGE wa GACHAMBA**

She looked straight into my face and

shouted above the din: "I have been

operating from here long before you

people started writing about *that* disease.

If there really was that thing you call

Aids, how come none of my colleagues has

died from it?"

That hit me like a thunderbolt. And before I had

even recovered from the jolt and digested the full

meaning of that remark, she added: "I have never

for one single moment thought there is anything

like Aids. It's all Government propaganda."

And did she take health precautions into consideration

when picking her men or did she just

pocket the Sh150 and hope for the best?, I asked.

"I do take some precautions. But that is because

of the other sexually transmitted diseases which

are a nuisance and can periodically put one out of

business. I don't think about Aids," she said.

She was on the beat at a popular 24-hour nightclub

in Nairobi. She was holding a beer. But she

was not drunk. As we talked, her trained eye kept

darting to faces of men milling around the rowdy

bar. Perhaps, she was trying to pick out prospective

customers.

Shocking as it may sound, that is what the

prostitute said about' the' dreaded -disease.

~ And she is not the only one who thinks like this despite all the massive countrywide campaign

on Aids and Kemron and the fact that 9,139 'Kenyans

had developed Aids by May and that there

may be 200,000 healthy carriers of the incurable

disease ..

Thousands of wananchi apparently think such

figures and the accompanying Aids campaign is all

Government family planning propaganda, while

the drug is a sales gimmick of some commercial minded scientists.

"They just want to make money," said another

woman whose boyfriend allegedly died of Aids.

"Hut here I am alive and well. Frankly, I don't

think there is anything like Aids," she said.

That is what another man who requested anonymity

thought until it killed his own brother. The

man who says he had never stopped "doing what a

man should do naturally," watched helplessly as

his brother, a long-distance driver withered his

way into the grave. I am now scared of women." To many, the disease would have to hit someone

very close before the message about its existence

sinks home.

But for a man who simply identified himself as

Dan, it took a video story of the late Philly Bongoley

Lutaya, the Ugandan musician who embarked

on a countrywide anti-Aids campaign after testing

HIV positive, to convince him that he had been

trending where the eagles dared.

A self-confessed playboy who changed girls faster than he refuelled his car, Dan says he is now a

changed man.

"Since I saw that video last month, I feel safer

going home alone or with my regular girl-friend

after a night out at a disco, Kemron or no Kemron,"

he says.

While launching Kemron on July 27, President

Moi urged Kenyans to follow the precautionary

guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health to

protect themselves from the disease. He cautioned wananchi against loose morals because

the anti-Aids drug developed at the Kenya I

Medical Research Institute was not an all-out-curefor

the dreaded disease.

But asked what she thinks of Kemron, a young

female dancer in a Nairobi disco which is popular

with prostitutes says: *"Hiyo* si *ni dawa ya*

*ukimwi?"* (Isn't that the anti-Aids drug?).

Well, but how does one use it? *"Unameza moja*

*kabla ya ... na ingine baadaye, na hautashikwa*

*na ukimwi."* (Swallow one before and one after,

and you won't catch Aids).

She had heard many radio programmes on the

dreaded disease and her boss had often warned her.

against getting lured by many men. So she

thought Aids was real.

But with the arrival of Kemron, all was fine, she

thought.

A twilight colleague of hers who operates from

the same club said diseases like gonorrhoea can

really affect business. But Aids just stays in the

body and one may not notice it until ten years

later. Well if I die then, my children will be ten

years older and able to fend for themselves," says

this mother of four.

She too has her reasons for doubting the existence

of Aids. "How come they never show us Aids

patients in mwananchi-oriented anti-Aids campaign

public *baraza* or in hospitals?"

She however admits never having read stories of

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Many twilight girls claim Aids does not exist and Kemron is just a commercial ploy.