Article on Nyambene misleading

The *Nation* should apologise to

Nyambene District residents for publishing

an insulting statement from a

Government officer in the district *(Daily*

*Nation,* October 26).

Nyambene is known for its disciplined and

cultured people. The officer had not done any

research concerning *miraa* nor the cause of

sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

STDs had affected almost the whole world

even before *miraa* was discovered. To prove

the officer wrong, Aids did not originate from

Nyambene District.

The district's population is very high compared

to other parts of the country. It is

wrong for the officer to connect *miraa* chewing

with child labour problems and illiteracy.

We have a large number of educated people in

the district, despite *miraa* production.

Any problems pertaining to child labour,

illiteracy, STDs and under-population in the

district are similar to those experienced in

other areas.

It, does not mean that we get these problems

in this district alone.

Research conducted by the out-going Meru

District Officer, Mr Machira Apollos, for a Canadian project indicated ignorance on his

part regarding the people he has been living

with. Why has he been quiet all this time?

The young *miraa* traders who travel all

over the towns in the country are not the only

people who travel for their daily bread. These

people are disciplined, cultured and most of

them are Christians.

So, I would like to dismiss the allegation

made by Mr Apollos as a lie.

I was born in the district and I have known

*miraa* as our cash crop, therefore the residents

should be respected, not insulted.

These people did not apply to be born in

this district as other people also did not apply

to be born in their respective areas.

Was the officer telling us that the areas

mentioned in the report are the worst-hit by

STDs in' the world?

Aren't there any other areas affected by the

diseases?

In areas such as Kisumu where fishing is a

way of life, or where coffee, tobacco and cotton

are grown, children, who have to work to

get school fees, are affected by these activities,

so Nvambene is not an exception.

Coffee, "tea and cigarettes, according to

medical research, have proved worse than *miraa* on human health, yet they are still

grown for human consumption.

*Miraa* is not responsible for child labour,

nor do we force children to work in *miraa*

plantations. It does not reduce appetite nor

does it effect sleep. It does not reduce sexual

desire either.

If anything, the officer's statement might

cripple *miraa* business in the district.

I appeal to the Government to issue licences

to *miraa* sellers in the district. Presently,

this business is mainly done by people

from outside the district.

It is high time Nyambene people sold their

crop, even to foreign countries, by themselves.

If tobacco and beer have a market within

and outside the country, I don't see why the

Government should not help *miraa* sellers

get a market in foreign countries.

The Government should assist in scrapping

the Meru Country Council system of asking

*miraa* businessmen to pay cases.

*Miraa* cess should be done away with for

the betterment of our people.

The Rev Joseph Gichunge,

Nyambene District YK'92 chairman,

and the Rev Mirithi Kiunga,

organising secretary.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Around three per cent of women

attending routine antenatal care

are currently estimated to have

HIV antibodies." - *A United*

*Nations Children's Fund*

*(UNICEF) report' which says*

*the number of Aids cases in*

*Kenya doubles every nine*

*'months.*