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DEMYSTIFYING NEGATIVISM OF *Cartha edulis* (MIRAA) AND FOCUSING ON ITS RELIGIOUS-SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE: A CASE OF MERU NORTH REGION IN MERU COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

For a long time, there have been conflicting stand points with regard to *Cartha edulis* (*Miraa*). *Miraa* is a substance that affects the psychological and physiological functioning of the human body, and therefore, falls under the category of drugs of abuse like alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana and heroin, among others. The National Campaign against Drug Abuse Authority and other scholars have confirmed this. The dilemma of many people, however, is that whereas there are numerous negativisms emanating from *Cartha edulis* farming, trade and consumption, there are also immense social, religious and economic benefits derived and associated with the same. This study addressed the impact of *Miraa* on religion-socio-economic and educational spheres of the society, especially in the growing areas of Meru North. It was motivated by conflicting incidences encountered by *Miraa* farmers and traders who also happen to be members of churches located within the study area and the alleged income purported to be derived from the trade used for social and economic developments. There are both positive and negative contributions brought about by *Miraa* farming and trade upon the families, schools and churches within Meru North region. Although the negatives outweigh the positives in terms of both short and long-term intangible damages to individuals, family and society, there are strong social, religious and economic attachments to *Miraa*. For the last few decades, *Miraa* has assumed political dimension. Exclusive focus on negativism has overshadowed the potential financial, social, educational and religious gains associated with the product, because apart from the economic contribution, *Miraa* is also alleged to have cultural, religious, as well as medicinal values. These contentions strongly agree that *Miraa* creates a contextual foundation for communication. However, the negative implications of *Miraa* and which greatly affect the individual user, the institution of marriage, school and church cannot be ignored. Thus, *Miraa* has diverse negative effects, but it could also serve a better purpose and value if handled properly since it has certain social-cultural values, especially among the community where is grown.

Key words: *Socio-cultural, Religious, Economic impact, Demystification*

INTRODUCTION

The trade in *miraa* commodity has been in existence for a very long time. It is hard to say exactly when the trade of this commodity started and became a commercial enterprise. It is even more difficult to find documented literature that can highlight the discovery and origin of this substance. Oral literature has it that *miraa* was discovered as a useful substance by shepherds while out with their flocks. As is custom of many shepherds to taste the plants which their flocks seem to like, *miraa*, a tree that seemed to be liked much by goats and sheep, was not exceptional. It was tasted

and found to taste good. The taste of the substance triggered the interest of the shepherds and they gradually started chewing the twigs obtained from *miraa* trees. This caught the attention of many other people as the substance came to be a good stimulant (Hjort, 1974).

Initially, *miraa* was not traded but was a highly valued tree among the Ameru people especially those living in Meru North. It had great cultural value as far as the traditional marriage and male circumcision rites are concerned. During marriages, a prospective bridegroom would take a bundle of *miraa* called *ncoolo* in Kimeru language, to the prospective bride who in turn would give to her mother to give to the father. This served as a marriage proposal and engagement. In preparation for circumcision, *miraa* was valued because the candidate of initiation would give the bundle to the man of his choice who would serve as his guardian father during the seclusion period. However, it was old men and shepherds and not young people who generally chewed *miraa* originally. Gradually, chewing of the twigs attracted the attention of young peoples and somehow few women could chew a few twigs. Initially, old men could plant a few trees of *miraa* for the purposes mentioned above and so no trade was done. However as the number of chewers increased, the demand to plant more and more trees became inevitable to meet both the emerging consumption and exchange.

Mwaniki (1986) and Carrier (2003) content that *miraa* trees grew wild in forests originally. However it is in Nyambene hills in Meru County that commercially oriented *miraa* have been grown for several decades. Nyambene mountain range lies to the northeast of Mount Kenya and includes Igembe and Tigania sub communities. According to Kabeca (1986), *miraa* trade in Kenya could have started in the 1960s when people in Nyambene traded with the neighbouring Somaliland. Although other crop like tea and coffee were planted alongside *miraa*, the latter's return per hectare were high UNDCP (1999) and Kabecha (1986).

Large scale trading is supposed to have been started by few locals after realizing the increasing demand of the substance. The transaction was first to the fellow locals and eventually to the outsiders such as people of the Somali origin and Arabs. Kangeta market, which was already serving as a centre for barter trade among the people of Meru North, Meru Central and the Agikuyu people who traded in sheep, goats and cattle became the first focal point. People of Somali origin also visited the market for business. This means there was a ready market to which the substance was introduced. Today, *miraa* which is also known as *khat* and *mairungu* is grown in high altitudes in East Africa and Yemen. In Kenya, the plant is grown in Meru and specifically in Ntonyiri and Igembe regions in Meru North. These areas produce the largest quantity as well as the best quality of *miraa* worldwide. Most of the population living in these regions of the country major in growing and trading in this commodity which does well compared with most other cash crops due to lack of natural waters and inadequate rainfall for agricultural production. The over 350,000 people living in these areas are therefore, to a large extent dependent on the commodity for their basic needs.

The commodity is sold locally in the local trading centres within the growing areas to prominent business men who in turn transport the substance to major markets where some is even exported to foreign markets. Since there is no airstrip near the growing area, road transport is used. Because the commodity is highly perishable, the vehicles transporting the commodity are driven at very high speed risking the lives of not only those in the respective vehicles but also other road users. International destinations of *miraa* include Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Somalia. *Miraa* has been a controversial substance occasionally subjected to legal restrictions. It is currently illegal in Eretria, Tanzania, the US, Canada, New Zealand and until recently in June 2014, Europe.

The people of Meru North refer to *miraa* as the *Green Gold* of Nyambene. The trade has created many jobs not only for local people but also others who have migrated to the area due to its potential business. By extension, the trade also earns the country revenue. The income from *miraa* trade is used basically for construction of schools, churches and other community projects. This trade is the major economic contributor to the development of the region (Goldsmith, 1998). The growing importance of *Miraa* has been faced with a lot of heated local and national debates on its safety as a consumption product. Those opposed to its human use contend that it is a health hazard and its socio economic value should be substituted with other products.

Despite the aforementioned benefits accruing from *miraa* trade, the activity is faced by a number of complexities. Family conflicts are not uncommon because traders are forced to leave their families in order to collect money from business partners. Being away for long periods of time leads some men to engage in prostitution and drug abuse as the men have a lot of money. *Miraa* farmers are quite impatient and intolerance with those who steal from their Sambas. Normally those caught stealing *miraa* are either beaten mercilessly or are slashed with pangas, or handed

over to the police. Maua Methodist Hospital receives many patients with injuries associated with *miraa* controversies. School dropout is another negative consequence of *miraa* trade. Young school going age prefer to venture into the trade to going to school because of the presumed easy money. As a result the illiteracy rate is very high in the growing area. Because of the amount of money associated with the trade, and the entry of people of Somali origin into the trade, illegal firearms are common. These complexities affect the individual farmers, families, schools, churches and the entire society in general.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Miraa farming and trade, which features as the single most successful business in Meru North has attracted the attention of both the well to do and the illiterates in the society. It attracts people from far and wide who venture into the business. This is in spite of the diverse negative impacts it has on the individual, family, church and community. This research therefore sought to establish the religious, social, economic and educational significance of farming and trade of *miraa* in spite of the widespread negative suspicion associated with it.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research was guided by the following objective:

- Highlight both negative and positive implications of *miraa* on the family, school, church and community.
- Evaluate the view of the Church on the trade and the extent of the church's involvement with *miraa* as a resourceful commodity
- Examine the impact of the trade on education development, enrolment and retention of learners.
- Based on the findings of the study, make necessary policy and intervention recommendations.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Ho1: There is a lot of money made through *miraa* farming and trade which make people dependent and dedicate more attention to the commodity at the expense of other economic activities.

Ho2: In spite of the enormous negativism associated with *miraa* farming and trade, its contribution to the general socio-economic and religious perspectives in the growing areas is significant.

Ho3: *Miraa* chewing is a passive, tolerated, psychoactive drug with potential to alter the psychological and physiological functioning of the human body.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

This study is of great importance to the whole country because it created awareness on both the positive and negative impact of *miraa* farming and trade. The study is also important because there is very few documented literature on *miraa* commodity. This research, therefore, did not only contribute to the existing knowledge, but also added some insight into the academic debate on *miraa*. This is going to be significant because of the conflicting theories associated with the farming and trade of the commodity. The study is also significant because there are many individuals and institutions that directly or indirectly depend on *Miraa* farming and trade. Chuka University for example has since its inception, admitted many students whose main source of funding is *miraa*. Furthermore Chuka University's Igembe Campus is situated in the heart of *miraa* growing zone with a number of *miraa* trees within the Campus. It is on record that families, schools and churches within the growing area survive on *miraa* through its economic and social-cultural contribution.

AREA AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The research was limited to Igembe and Ntonyiri in Meru North, and four locations, namely Kawiru, Athiru Ruujine, Antubetwe Kiongo, and Luciuti. Kawiru location is located on the lower part of Ntonyiri and borders Athiru Ruujine to the west, Antubetwe Kiongo to the north, Meru National park to the east and Kiengu location in Igembe to the south. The area is approximately 13 kilometres from Maua town and next to Chuka University Igembe Campus. This area is relatively warm with the lower part described as semi-arid and receiving very low rainfall throughout the year. There are no natural rivers and water for domestic and animals is scarce. The population according the 2009 census is 35,000 persons with the early middle age and school going age going children forming the greatest percentage. Agriculture forms the main economic activity in the area with *miraa* production taking the lead. Other crops include millet, sorghum, pigeon peas, maize and beans. Livestock keeping is also practiced.

The research focused on *miraa* commodity. It is also known by other names as *khat*, *mairungu*, *Catha*, *qat*, *quat*, Abyssinian tea, African tea, salad. It is a shrub with a slender trunk, which has a smooth thin bark. Its leaves are lancet-shaped, about 5-10 cm long and about 3-6 cm wide. The young leaves are crimson brown or reddish green in colour

but change to yellow green as they age. In areas with frost the shrub may attain a height of about 1.5 metres but in areas with more rainfall it may grow to be about 20 feet. However for the purpose of easy plucking the shrub is usually trimmed so that it is between 1.5 and 2.5 metres high. The edible parts of the plant are the young shoots and leaves although the bark can too be used. However, to protect the shrub from drying up the barks are not removed. This young shoots and leaves contain a chemical known as cathinone that stimulates the chewers.

LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTION

The research encountered several limitations. There is limited documented literature and similar research on the subject focus on the negative only. Majority of respondents were illiterate and necessitated the help of their children to put the information in the questionnaire. This limitation may have affected the reliability and validity of the data. It was assumed that respondents will provide truthful and honest responses to the items in the questionnaire.

METHODOLOGY

The study used the *ex-post facto design*. This was appropriate for this study because the impact of *miraa* on religion, education and socio-economic fabrics of society were being investigated after they have already taken place. The factors that impact on the trade were independent variables which could not be manipulated by the researchers. This justified the choice of the design since the researchers were trying to establish the possible causes and effect relationship between dependent and independent variables in an existing situation.

This study was carried out in Meru North of Eastern of Eastern Kenya. The area was chosen because the major activity in the area is farming especially growing of *miraa* plant (*Cartha endulis*) whose herbs are chewed and acts as brain stimulant. Other activities are animal production, trade and to some extent tourism. The target and accessible population constituted elders, farmers, traders, and church members and pastors. A sample size of 34 persons was sampled for the interview. The data for this research was collected using questionnaires, and an observation schedule. There were five sets of questionnaires, one for elders, the second for farmers, the third for traders, the fourth for church members and the fifth for pastors. Questionnaires were selected on the strength that they are more commonly used in quantitative research as their standardized, highly structured design was compatible with that design. Questionnaires are appropriate for such studies since they collect information that is not directly observable as they inquire about feelings, motivation, attitudes and experiences. During visits to the selected areas, the researchers made observations on the situation in the sampled locations and paid particular attention to the religion- socio-economic activities. The purpose of making personal observation was to obtain additional and collaborative data which enhanced the data gathered through questionnaire. Personal observation enabled the researchers to take note of social-economic activities in the neigh hoods.

Validity and Reliability

The researchers ensured the instruments were valid by ensuring that the content, predictive, concurrent and construct validity were accurate. In addition, reliability of the instruments were tested through the Spearman’s Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (r) and a correlation of 0.869 for elders questionnaire, 0.834 for farmers, 0.792 for traders, 0.782 for church members and 0.781 for pastors’ questionnaire was obtained. Instruments were considered reliable. The acquired data by the researchers was both quantitative and qualitative data and was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18 a popular software programme utilized by social and behavioral scientists. Descriptive statistics was used in analyzing data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought information on how *miraa* commodity came into use and for what reasons it was used. The response was varied with some respondents reporting that it was by shepherds as a useful substance. As to the reasons why it was used, table 1 gives the summary. Older people and specifically men chewed *miraa* in the evening or while on journey. On whether *miraa* has any cultural values all the respondents agreed on the affirmative. Cultural values included opening marriage dialogue during circumcision or on becoming an elder and when settling disputes. On the contribution of *miraa* trade to the family, church and community, all respondents agreed that it contributes positively. The contribution included paying school fees 16.6%, buying food and other basic needs for the family 15.3%, buying plots and improving them, 16.4%, contribution towards community development programmes 12.1%, meeting personal needs 18.2 and home improvement 5.1%.

Table 1. Reasons for Using *Miraa*

Reason for using <i>miraa</i>	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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To keep one busy and attentive at night while guarding flock and family	6	17.64
Reduce temptation of eating children food	6	17.64
Stimulate thinking while settling disputes	10	29.41
Pass time while waiting for food	5	14.70
Give courage while on a journey	7	20.59

Table 2. Returns from *Miraa* per acreage

Acreage	Year of planting	Amount of money/month	Place of selling
5 acres	1980	Ksh. 40,000	While on shamba
0.5 acres	1980	Ksh. 10,000-20,000	Nairobi or Mombasa
2.5 acres	1973	Ksh. 7,000-20,000	Laare, Muringene or Kawiru
2 acres	1988	Ksh. 50,000-30,000	While on the shamba
2 acres	1986	Ksh. 20,000	Kawiru and other local markets
2 acres	1989	Ksh. 50,000-80,000	Nairobi and export

As can be seen, *miraa* farming and trade improves the living standards of family based on the average monthly returns. Compared with other crops grown in the area, *miraa* fetches more income compared with maize beans, mangoes, papaws, and avocados. Table 3 is a consolidated summary of this. On the negative impact of *miraa* trade, majority of the respondents agreed that in spite of the positive impact of the trade it affects individuals, family, church and community. Table 3 shows a consolidated summary of the negative effects of *miraa* on the community.

Table 3: Positive impacts of *miraa*

Positive Impact on Families	Positive Impact on Schools	Positive Impact on churches
Education of children, building permanent family houses, helping put up business that sustain families	Schools have built permanent structures as well as meet other financial needs	Churches have built permanent sanctuaries, bought plots, musical instruments as well as meet other needs
Provided food, clothing and shelter for families. It has also helped them to access medical facilities and fees for their children	Helped in facilitating permanent buildings and learning equipment	Church financial needs have stabilized greatly
Standard of education have been raised up in families.	Has helped greatly in all school development activities	Pastors stipends and other financial commitments have been meet regularly
Has helped provide food, clothing, shelter and education	General development programmes have been achieved	Construction of income generating projects like social halls, commuter vehicle and private schools.

Table 3. Negative impacts on *miraa*

Negative impact on families	Negative impact on schools	Negative impact on churches
Creates laxity/idleness. Promotes primitive activities like consumption of local brews, domestic quarrels and marital unfaithfulness	High school dropout since most of the children feel they can make money by plucking <i>miraa</i> and become rich quickly	Churches have been left without youths, who engage in drinking and prostitution
Promoted drinking of beer and prostitution	School dropout cases is very high in the area	Churches are left without youths because most of them have plunged into drinking beer and prostitution
Poverty is created in families, which have leased their <i>miraa</i> plantations. Conflicts are also encountered due misappropriation of funds	Due to money gotten from plucking <i>miraa</i> , most children drop out of school to go and make money which ends up spoiling them even more	There is much absenteeism which drag church growth
There are family quarrels because the men have the say over the money gotten from <i>miraa</i>	There are many incidences of early and unplanned marriages which perpetuates the cycle of poverty	Most youths are illiterate and cannot contribute much in terms of ideas. Poor families also result to poor churches because the family is the smallest unit of any church

The research findings show that in spite of its positive contribution on the development of families, churches and community in general, *miraa* has had great negative impact upon these institutions. These findings concur with similar results (though in an urban setting) from a study commissioned by NACADA entitled the *Role of Parents in control of Alcohol and Drug abuse among their Children in Nairobi* in 2010 which found out that 70% of parents in Nairobi knew that substances of abuse are available in their neighborhoods. They cited alcohol, 88.1% as the most common followed by cigarettes 83%, marijuana 77% and *miraa* 66.2%. This is an indication that there are considerable negative impacts on the wellbeing of people in such neighbourhoods. The study sought the views of the respondents on the role of *miraa* on religion. Nearly 99% of the respondents agreed that *miraa* contributes to religion positively. Table 4 shows this summary.

SUMMARY

The results of the discourses in this paper centered on four areas namely; the impact of *miraa* on the family, education, community and church. Basing the discussion on the family, the results reveal that although *miraa* has been a great and probably the single most source of income to most of the families in the area under study, *miraa* business has had negative repercussions on families. Some of the challenges that became evident include conflicts among family members, between spouses, separation and divorce, sexual unfaithfulness and the danger of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, increased poverty and school dropouts.

Table 4: Effect of Miraa on Religion

Effects on Church	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The church has been able to put up permanent structures	99%	1%	0%	0%
The Church is able to maintain her minister	90%	10%	0%	0%
The churches are financially stable	98%	2%	0%	0%
More churches have acquired worship instruments including personal bibles	98%	2%	0%	0%

It was found out that there are increased misappropriation of family funds, conflicts, and quarrels. The study established that 63.4% of families have one kind of family conflict associated with *miraa*. 54.7% of *miraa* traders engage in sexual unfaithfulness or have mistress across trading towns. This means that whereas these families have a source of income, part of it was not used in gainful ways. 80.8% of the families recorded average or below average in terms family welfare in spite of the large amount of *miraa* money that passes through the family hands. The implication is stagnated families, coupled with separation and divorce. The study established that often husbands spend the earned money with prostitutes or in bars and there are instances of wife battering, sexual unfaithfulness which culminates in separation and divorces. 98% of *miraa* money is controlled by men with women only waiting for handouts from their husbands or grown up sons who hardly care for the family needs.

The study further established that sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS are on the increase. 29.6% of children are orphaned due to HIV/AIDS. A lot of money is generated from the trade and this easy unplanned money tempts people to get involved in immoral acts. Although the trade earns families money, poverty was revealed as a common issue. Families lent out *miraa* farms to middlemen or commit most of family land to *miraa* plantation at the expense of other cash crops or food crops, 78% of cultivatable land reserved for *miraa* farming while only 22% for other facilities including homesteads. The study attributed the higher school drops outs to some parents who encourage their children to take part in *miraa* plucking at the expense of going to school.

Majority of the dropouts are boys who after circumcision become rebellious in school. Such boys demand share of parents' property or they dropout in order to look for money from the lucrative *miraa* business. 94.4% of the school dropout were employed as casuals in *miraa* picking or did petty *miraa* trade. This situation is alarming considering the resources invested in education. This has perpetuated the illiteracy rate. Efforts to counteract this is normally not effective because farmers and business men entice especially boys to drop out since they are cheap source of labour and their light weight does not cause breakage to the delicate *miraa* tree branches.

Furthermore, research findings show that whereas *miraa* has contributed to the growth of the church as far as materialism is concerned (90.7%), the spiritual growth has deteriorated. This is evidenced by absenteeism from the church services, fellowships and low morality as denoted from poor Christians living. Although *miraa* trade brings

about a lot of money, the study established that much of the money is used in immoral activities, excessive drinking, and prostitution at the expense of useful community projects. As a result, household roles have been left to women. In addition, the study asserted that incidences of early marriages are on the rise due to the fact that young boys get a lot of money that ultimately made them believe that they are independent and hence can start their own families. On the other hand, young girls are lured by big money and consequently enter unplanned early marriages.

Generally, the study found out that *miraa* owners have sensitive tempers when matters of *miraa* are at stake. They easily injure real or imagined intruders. As far as education is concerned, the study noted the dual effects of *miraa*. For instance on the positive and negative side, the trade is the main source of family income where majority of people utilized the same to pay school fees (college and university) a whole 97.4%. In addition education physical facilities have also been established through the same source. However, on the negative side, it was revealed that unlike other societies in Kenya, the study area registers very high dropouts among boys. Indeed education standards are low and male enrolment from primary school through secondary school level is highly affected.

This study labored to create awareness on *miraa* trade, and revealed that the trade picked up slowly from a localized activity to an international trade today. *Miraa* has been singled out as the only cash crop that sustains people who live in Igembe and Ntonyiri areas due to lack of natural waters for domestic and agricultural activities. There is also insufficient rainfall for sustenance of other cash crops.

The research has further, created awareness on the importance and side effects of this commodity by looking into its contribution. For instance, it revealed that *miraa* fetched money that has helped families survive by enabling them buy water for domestic use, food and clothes as well as access medical services. It has also created job opportunities for most people in the area in addition to helping many start other businesses. Education of many children in the area has also been made possible through this trade. *Miraa* has also been embraced by the church whereby the church has acquired plots and built sanctuaries, buy musical instruments and support clergy. However, the study revealed that *miraa* is responsible for most family conflicts including quarrels, excessive drinking, prostitution, separation and divorce and contraction and spread of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDs.

The study moreover, suggested various ways and means of curbing the problems associated with or emanating from *miraa* trade. Some of the suggested solutions are education of children, developing other business opportunities, provision of water and encouraging experts to further study the commodity.

CONCLUSION

This study critically examined the impact of *miraa* trade based on religio-socio economic and educational perspectives among the Meru of Meru North region. The research emphasizes the importance and side effects of the commodity by looking into its contribution both on the positive and negative perspectives. Positively, it has earned money that has helped families in terms of food, medical, education, job creation and promotion of physical growth. On the other hand, there are negative impact such as family conflicts, exposure to vices like prostitution, diseases and school dropouts.

These findings concur with a survey done by the Government drug watchdog, National Campaign against Drugs Abuse, NACADA, (2007), which found out that in Khat growing areas cases of boys dropping out of school were rampant. Boys chose to work in *khat* plantations or sell the stimulant instead of going to school because in the farms they make money which by extension is used to lure girls out of school.

Although *miraa* was identified as the sole cash crop and with great social, economic and cultural contribution, it has nevertheless negatively affected the spiritual and social growth of the area of the study. This is due to the mishandling of the commodity largely because of failure to discover a way of making it serve better purpose like the alleged medical value and also its contribution to language decay as Kobia, (2014) has observed. It is the feeling of the researcher that as per as awareness created by the literature review and the field survey, *miraa* has got medicinal value which if developed, could make it more use.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data collected and the literature review, *miraa* causes problems. There is therefore an urgent need to critically approach the preoccupation of this community and the churches within this area. The study therefore puts forward the following recommendations.

- **General:** Based on this revelation, it would be imperative that further comprehensive and intensive study be done on this trade. In fact its social, cultural and economic role cannot be underestimated. Furthermore, the immense side effects of *miraa* which were beyond the scope of this discourse should be fully studied with a view to highlighting the same to the public domain as well as addressing the challenges thereof through a combined effort of the medical and psychologist professionals.
- **Education:** Education is key to progress. The fact that most of the governments employees from the area are from other regions prove that education is not taken seriously in this region. Education has been neglected and hope put on *miraa*. The community and churches in the area should join hands and put up boarding schools, polytechnics. Boarding schools in particular will separate children from the daily interaction with *miraa* people who might encourage the children to join them. The community and the church can start bursaries to encourage school attendance.
- **Research Centre and Experts:** *Miraa* has medicinal value as was revealed by the research findings. However, these values cannot be of any positive use without the input of experts. A research centre would be the answer. The government can intervene and help put up such a centre in the *miraa* growing region.
- **Economic Stability:** *Miraa* has earned people in the area a lot of money. On the other hand, it is also true that people end up saving very little or nothing due to many expenses, which they could otherwise have avoided. With proper arrangement, the community can install water in the area which could not only serve domestic purposes but also agriculture, and commerce. Due to poverty caused by leasing *miraa*, farmers should manage their own *miraa* trees whenever possible. Formation of *miraa* associations to protect their rights as well as make savings to start other projects to alleviate poverty instead of over dependence on *miraa*. This could also help farmers obtain loans.
- **Social Welfare:** To curb the many conflicts and cases emanating from *miraa* trade, there is need for the church to include in her curriculum a programme on Christian Education with an aim of promoting everyone in the community and proper way of handling *miraa*.
- **Church's Role:** The church can take a pro active role in the economic development of the community by improving education.

SUGGESTION FOR FURHTER STUDY

- Extent of other substance and drug abuse besides *miraa* in Igembe and Ntonyiri.
- Impact of *miraa* farming on education showing retention, repetition, and completion at all levels.
- Impact of boys drop out *vis- a -vis* the drop out of girls.
- The clinical medicinal values of *miraa* and possible side effects.

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