

TANZANIA has embarked on campaigns dubbed as 'Roll back Malaria' and 'malaria haikubaliki' which motivated citizens to use various preventive measures to prevent themselves against malaria infections.

The campaign is due to realization that this disease has significant impact on this country's manpower which eventually hinders social and economic production functions. In Africa malaria is the biggest killer of children under five years old, who account for with nearly 90 percent of all malaria deaths. It is estimated that a child dies every minute from the disease.

This disease is caused by protozoan parasites belonging to the genus 'Plasmodium'. It is transmitted by several species of infected female 'Anopheles' mosquitoes. Differences in the distribution of mosquitoes and in the behavior of potential human hosts contribute to the variation in epidemiological patterns of malaria seen worldwide. The majority of malaria-attributed deaths occur in Sub-Saharan Africa, where children under the age of five and pregnant women are the most at-risk.

Young children are much more vulnerable to all forms of malaria. In infants this is because their immune systems are not yet fully developed, while in under fives they have not yet developed effective resistance to the disease.

Fernando, S.D and other authors of an article titled 'The impact of repeated malaria attacks on the school performance of children' states that the burden of malaria in the tropical world today is estimated to involve 300-500 million episodes of acute illness and more than one million deaths per year, mainly in African children. This amounts to the loss of about approximately 44 million disability-adjusted life years annually, a conspicuous drain on human health by today's standards.

However, by its adverse

long-term effects on trade, foreign investment, and commerce, the impact of malaria extends beyond its direct effects on human health to the economic development of nations, costing African countries approximately 1-2% of their Gross Domestic Product. Even these estimates, however, fail to account for effects that malaria has long been suspected to have on the mental and physical development of individuals exposed to it, which have contributed greatly to the impoverishment of regions and nations affected by this disease.

In spite of this continued wide prevalence of malaria in children, the effects of malaria on mental and cognitive development of children have hardly been evaluated in controlled studies. As part of public awareness on campaign against malaria, this article is going to discuss the impact of malarial infections on the school performance of children.

Can malaria have a devastating effect on children's education? Malaria Consortium website argues that pregnant women are far more vulnerable to malaria than other adults: they are four times more likely to contract and twice as likely to die from malaria as other adults. This is due to the typical immuno-suppression associated with pregnancy and increased levels of the hormones cortisol and oestrogen.

In Africa malaria in pregnancy is responsible for 400,000 cases of severe maternal anaemia and 200,000 newborn deaths each year. Placental infection, premature birth and low birth weight (a significant factor in infant mortality) are also caused by maternal malaria. In addition, severe maternal anemia increases the risk of perinatal complications. Malaria, therefore, is seriously hindering the achievement of MDG Goal 5 (improve maternal health).

Repeated infections cause

