

THE WORLD | MORE COVERAGE, 17-22A

TANZANIA: REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

Tough battle goes on to eradicate malaria

Malaria, although preventable, kills more than a million people every year, most of them in Africa. Several African countries, including Tanzania, have begun aggressive efforts to eradicate the disease.

BY JOHN YEARWOOD
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ARUMERU, Tanzania — Gift Sivael was vomiting and had a high fever and convulsions.

Miriam Sivael had seen those symptoms in her 1½-year-old son twice before. "Severe malaria," she says.

Sivael scooped up the toddler and walked for five hours to the Arumeru District Hospital, where doctors quickly admitted Gift and began intravenous treatment. Two days later, he was well enough to return home.

"He's much better," said Sivael, sitting on her son's hospital bed and smiling. "I'm happy."

Gift was lucky that his mother acted quickly to save his life. Not so, according to the United Nations, for tens of thousands of other children in this East African country and throughout this vast continent who contract malaria. Although the mosquito-borne disease has long been eradicated in the United States and other parts of the developed world, it remains a major public health threat elsewhere.

ONE MILLION DEATHS

Up to 500 million people contract malaria every year in the developing world, including at least one million in Latin America. Globally, more than one million deaths are attributed to the disease every year, according to the World Health Organization.

Most of the annual cases and deaths are in Africa. In Tanzania, malaria rivals HIV/AIDS as one of the biggest killers of young people, government and U.N. officials say.

Malaria claims about 100,000 lives every year in this country of 37.4 million people, according to UNICEF, the U.N. children's fund. Of those, 80,000 are children younger than 5.

But the news is not all bad. Tanzania has begun an aggressive campaign on the mainland and on the nearby island of Zanzibar to control — if not eradicate — malaria.

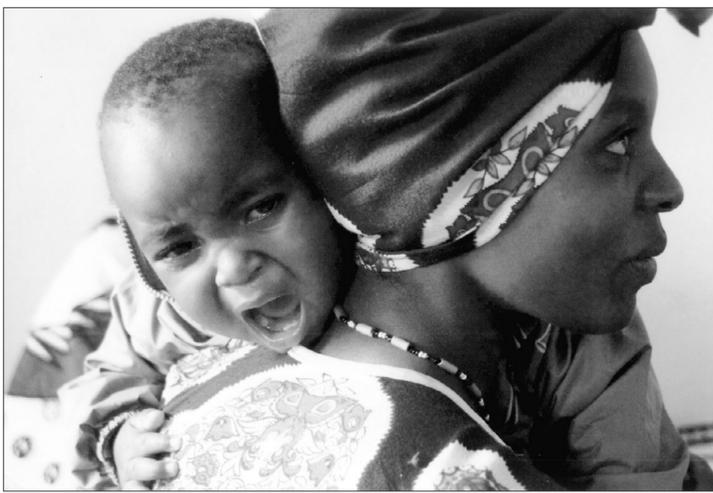
The campaign, aimed at increasing awareness of the causes of malaria, uses soccer tournaments and other sporting events to educate people about the disease. It also features free or low-cost distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets and a promising new combination drug treatment.

And in a controversial move, the government recently announced that it will use the chemical DDT in sprays against mosquitoes. DDT, banned after it was used to help eradicate malaria in the United States, has come under intense criticism for potential harm to people and the environment.

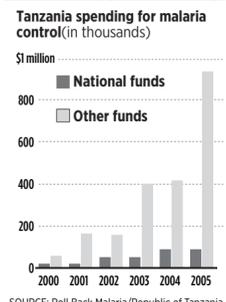
"In Tanzania, malaria is a No. 1 killer," said Joel Bendersa, deputy minister for information, culture and sports. "Let me just say that deaths caused by malaria are affecting my ministry in terms of depriving its manpower in journalism, cultural artists and sportsmen and women."

The campaign, largely funded by international organizations and foreign countries, including the United States, has begun to show results.

In one Zanzibar village, malaria cases have dropped



GOT HELP: Miriam Sivael holds her son, Gift, at the Arumeru District Hospital in Tanzania. Gift, 1½, is being treated for severe malaria.



SOURCE: Roll Back Malaria/Republic of Tanzania

substantially. Officials in the seaside village of Jambiani had listed malaria as the top disease, with more than 5,000 cases per year, before the campaign began. Last year, malaria had dropped to No. 14 on the list of most common diseases with just 47 cases, local health officials said.

Every home in the village has at least one bed net. Residents have also cleaned up their community, removing discarded bottles and conch shells, which become a prime breeding ground for mosquitoes after they fill with water during the rainy season.

"A few years ago, there would have been a lot of empty shells with water in them here," Fatuma Haroub said as she walked outside her small home a stone's throw from the Indian Ocean. "We got together, emptied the water and picked up the shells."

Government officials, especially Zanzibar President Amani Abeid Karume, laud the success of the anti-malaria campaign in Jambiani and other villages. In Zanzibar, his government has pursued a strategy more aggressive than the mainland's by distributing free bed nets to every household with pregnant women and children under 5. On the mainland, the government hands out vouchers, which cover most of the costs of the nets.

"Malaria has been a menace to this part of the world for a long time," said Karume, who

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has contracted malaria about a half-dozen times. "If anyone in this country tells you that he's a friend to mosquitoes, he would be a liar."

NEEDING HELP

Tanzania cannot succeed in its fight to eradicate malaria without financial assistance from donor nations, such as the United States, Karume said. The United States has pledged \$1.2 billion for 15 sub-Saharan countries over the

next five years, with \$11.5 million being released to Tanzania, U.S. Ambassador Michael Retzer said.

Still, billions more dollars are needed to meet the goal — committed to by African leaders — of cutting the number of malaria cases in half by 2010.

"We have proven in the U.S. that we can wipe it out," Retzer said. "We're making good progress here. It's taking more time than we wanted, but we're getting there."

WORLD BRIEFS

● MYANMAR

Pro-democracy leader's detention is extended

From Miami Herald Wire Services

YANGON — Spurring world opinion and a direct appeal from the head of the United Nations, Myanmar's ruling junta on Saturday extended the detention of the country's pro-democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi.

The junta issued her with a new order extending her house arrest by another year, said a Myanmar government official, who insisted on anonymity because he is not authorized to speak to the media. No public announcement has been issued about the action.

● ISRAEL
SHARON TO BE MOVED TO LONG-TERM CARE

JERUSALEM — Former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who has been comatose since suffering a massive stroke in January, will be moved from Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital to a long-term care facility in Tel Aviv today, officials said Saturday.

Hospital officials announced last week that Sharon, 78, would be moved to Tel Aviv's Sheba Medical Center, but did not say when the transfer would take place. The move has been discussed for several weeks, since Sharon has shown no signs that he will regain consciousness.

Sheba will try to take Sharon off a respirator and make other efforts to revive him, Channel 2 said.

Sharon underwent extensive brain surgery after massive bleeding in his brain Jan. 4.

He has had several operations since then.

● SOMALIA
FIGHTING ERUPTS AGAIN IN CAPITAL, KILLING 8

MOGADISHU — Fighting resumed in Somalia's capital between an Islamic militia and their secular rivals, after hundreds of residents fled some of the fiercest battles in Mogadishu in 14 years. At least eight died and 12 others were injured in the fighting, said Ali Bile, a medical worker at Keysaney Hospital, near where the battles took place in southern Mogadishu on Saturday.

The fighting in southern Mogadishu stopped after several hours, but sporadic gunfire continued in northern Mogadishu.

● SWEDEN
FEW LEADS IN THEFT OF MUNCH ENGRAVING

STOCKHOLM — Swedish police said Saturday that the theft last week of a valuable art piece by Norwegian master Edvard Munch was likely ordered by a black-market dealer in Europe, and that they had few leads.

The wood engraving *Toward the Forest 2* was stolen from a manor in southern Sweden late Tuesday.

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