

Children found to be most at risk from malaria

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Insecticide treated mosquito nets reduce the chances of developing life-threatening malaria in Africa, however recent research shows that older children are the least well protected by nets in the community. The research, published in the open access journal *BMC Public Health*, has found that parents and their young children were much more likely to have malaria nets than older children.

"5-19 years olds are a particularly important group for two reasons", said lead researcher Abdisalan M Noor, from the Kenyan Medical Research Institute-Wellcome Trust Research Programme and the University of Oxford, "Firstly, they represent a large fraction of the population in most developing African communities. Secondly, while they may have developed a functional [immune response](#) against clinical disease before their fifth birthday, they will not have developed an immunity to the Malaria parasite and continue to contribute transmission in the community'

Noor and his colleagues report that, as an unintended consequence of attempting to achieve the targets of the Abuja declaration and Millennium Development Goals, children and [adolescents](#) over five are being put at risk. They said, "An estimated 80% of human-mosquito transmission comes from over-fives, with young adolescents and older [children](#) the peak age group. As a result, ensuring this age demographic is sufficiently protected from [malaria](#) should be viewed as important".

Noor concludes, "Where school attendance is high, the delivery of nets

through schools should be considered an approach to reach universal coverage and improve the likelihood of impacting upon parasite transmission".

More information: The use of [insecticide](#) treated nets by age: implications for universal coverage in Africa, Abdisalan M Noor, Viola C Kirui, Simon J Brooker and Robert W Snow, *BMC Public Health* (in press), www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpublichealth/

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